

**On How Practical Identities Form a Successful
Guide for Practical Deliberation:
Unification and Exploration as Ideal**



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Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself;
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)
Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself"

Introduction

Once in a while we find ourselves in a situation in which we do not know what to do. Examples of such situations are easily found, you may be conflicted between going home on time to bring your kids to bed and having drinks with colleagues; you may be confused about whether you want to continue your relationship and on what terms; you may be uncertain about your commitment to your career. If we find ourselves in such situations, we naturally want to escape this state of “not knowing what to do.” This dissertation focuses on how we can overcome, through practical deliberation, a specific source of “not knowing what to do:” volitional disunity.

Volitional disunity is defined by conflicting commitments to life-defining projects—such as a career, a hobby, or friendships. Such conflicting commitments tend to paralyze us, because they guide us in incompatible, even opposite, directions in our deliberations about what to do. Volitional disunity can be caused in different ways: by two or more commitments that conflict with each other; a commitment to a project that conflicts with a commitment one considers taking up; or one is conflicted regarding a commitment to a particular project. To illustrate these respectively, if you are both committed to being a good parent and a fun colleague, you might be conflicted about joining spontaneous drinks after work; if you cannot determine whether you want to be single or in a relationship, you may be undecided about whether a break-up is your best option; and the hardships that come with your career may divide your will regarding it causing you to be uncertain whether you want to maintain the commitment.

In this dissertation, life-defining projects are understood as *practical identities*—descriptions such as being a parent, a partner, a colleague, or pursuing a career under which you understand yourself and find your actions worthwhile to undertake.¹ As stated, if these practical identities are in conflict, they *prima facie* fail to give guidance in your deliberations about what to do. Intuitively, the first, and

¹ Despite the voluntaristic associations that the notions of “commitment” and “practical identity” may stir up, I want to keep clear of the realist/constructivist-controversy underlying the acquisition of our life-defining projects (see **Section 1.4**). What is of importance is the volitional structure in which what we do is grounded (via reasons) in abstract self-understandings, which I call practical identities; it is of less importance for the main argument, as I will show throughout this dissertation, how these descriptions are acquired.

simplest, response to such conflict is to want to overcome it by prioritizing the conflicting identities and therewith overcoming the volitional disunity by dissolving it. Deciding that being a good parent is more important, you know you should go home; deciding that the single life is only attractive in your imagination, you know to stay in the relationship; and deciding that the successes of your career outweigh the hardships, you know that you should stay committed. The intuitive response, that is, alludes to a *Unification Ideal*: in order for your practical identities to form a clear decision-making framework to decide what to do, you need to shape your identities into a coherent and harmonious whole.

This Ideal finds articulation in the philosophical literature. Harry G. Frankfurt tells us that the “totality of things that a person cares about—together with his [wholehearted] ordering of how important to him they are—effectively specifies his answer to the question of how to live” (2004, 23). In addition, Christine M. Korsgaard says that “we have many particular practical identities and so we also face the task of uniting them into a coherent whole” (2009, 21). In similar vein, Alasdair MacIntyre claims that unity consists of narrative unity such that “To ask ‘What is the good for me?’ is to ask how best I might live out that unity and bring it to completion” (2008 [1981], 218). The overall image these citations convey is that, within philosophy, unification is also perceived as an ideal to strive for.

I speak of an ideal because all discussed authors acknowledge (implicitly) that a requirement is too strong: it is acknowledged that a person might not always be capable of unification and thus needs to accept her conflicting identities as a conditions of her action(s). Frankfurt, for example, suggests that if you cannot overcome volitional disunity, “be sure to hang on to your sense of humor” (2004, 100). In line with this, Korsgaard tells us that “the work of pulling ourselves back together” means to “harmonize [our practical identities] when we can” (2009, 126). Additionally, philosophers defending narrative unity often make the claim that the “potential threat” of volitional disunity “is something that can be integrated” into our life narrative (Schramme 2014, 35). This does not repudiate that these authors perceive unification as an *ideal* to strive for as most subscribe to an idea expressed by Marya Schechtman: “the more the different elements of a person’s life hang together the more definitive she is as a character, and so the better-defined her identity” (Schechtman 1996, 98). In this dissertation, the Unification Ideal, proposed

as standard answer to how practical deliberation should deal with the problem of volitional disunity, is under scrutiny.

The problem of volitional disunity is “not knowing what to do” and the unification of one’s identities by prioritizing them is the proposed solution. Unified, your identities form a clear decision-making framework for practical deliberation as they provide guidance for how to prioritize the courses for action open to you. In this dissertation, I argue that striving for the unification of one’s practical identities is not necessary in order for your identities to form a clear decision-making framework for practical deliberation. The central point will be that persons experiencing volitional disunity do not need to be paralyzed and thus can successfully determine, through practical deliberation, what to do despite their volitional disunity. The basic claim is that the quoted authors seek a specific kind of certainty in action, a decisiveness in being sure, that I question. My argument therewith aligns with several philosophers coming from a feminist philosophical background who argue that conflicting identities can be constitutive of who a person is (e.g. Benson 2005, Lugones 1987, Meyers 2000). It takes however a different viewpoint by approaching disunity not from self-constitution but from practical deliberation.

The negative claim of the developed argument can be illustrated by that the Unification Ideal does not help to settle the conflict between two conflicting identities: conflicting identities can be unified by prioritizing either one over the other. For example, if Juliet has to choose between her identity as lover of Romeo and her identity as member of the Capulet family, she can prioritize either in order to live up to the Unification Ideal. Which identity has to gain priority is not settled by the ideal and thus we still need some additional principle of choice in any case.

The positive side of the developed argument is that conflicting identities themselves can constitute a clear decision-making framework for a person. Take as an example a person who being raised within a Christian religious environment identifies with being a Christian. In early adulthood, she encounters revolutionaries and starts to identify as a revolutionary as well. As long as she holds on to both identities, she likely will be volitionally divided “between the Christian prescription that one should not kill and the revolutionary prescription that violence should be used when necessary to bring about needed social reforms” (Bauhn 2016, 8-9).² The

² Per Bauhn gives the example of Father León in Graham Greene’s *The Honorary Consul* (2016).

objective of this dissertation is to provide plausibility to the idea that the ideal(s) guiding practical deliberation as fundamental principles of choice allow for the expression of both identities in her actions. She does not need to choose (in a strained way) between the relative importance of the involved practical identities. The objective is to give plausibility to the idea that a person need not to be volitionally unified, need not have her practical identities harmoniously prioritized, in order to provide herself with a perspective on what to do.

Based on both sides of the argument, two aims can be articulated. The first is to inquire into and critically scrutinize the reasons that are given for the Unification Ideal. Roughly, it can be stated that volitional disunity is introduced as a problem for an agent, since she cannot determine how to act in an autonomous and authentic way. In this dissertation, I argue that the problem of volitional disunity does not lie in the disunity itself, but in the difficulties to form a perspective on what to do under conditions of disunity. The second aim is to articulate an ideal that a person can follow in practical deliberation under conditions of volitional disunity. I will suggest that the difficulties of volitional disunity are surmountable if a person is guided in her deliberations by the Exploration Ideal: a person can explore, first, whether she has to or wants to understand the disunity as expressive of herself; second, she can explore the different ways in which she is comfortable expressing the disunity. This gives us the following research questions:

1. Is the Unification Ideal always the ideal to strive for in practical deliberation, or are there situations in which striving for unity is ineffective or even contra-productive as when the volitional disunity is constitutive of a person?
2. How plausible is the Exploration Ideal as an ideal to strive for in practical deliberation under conditions of volitional disunity?

Furthermore, since the Unification Ideal is widely found within the philosophical debate, I answer a third question in **Chapter 2**:

3. Why does the Unification Ideal has such an appeal to philosophers that it is introduced as the ideal to strive for in practical deliberation?

The global content of the developed argument

In this dissertation, three different theories of agency are investigated in light of the claim that our practical identities, understood as the fundamental normative entities of deliberation, need to be unified in order to constitute a clear decision-making framework for deliberation about what to do. In other words, these theories defend the claim that to successfully employ her agential capacities a person needs to let her practical deliberation be guided by the Unification Ideal. The Unification Ideal is introduced in order to secure the successful transition from a person's normative foundation (i.e. her practical identities) to concrete actions (as expression of her identities) in such a way that the person can decisively choose one specific action. Here is one way to explain this. A person's actions are the realizations of the life-defining project a person has. In order to make the pursuit of each project rational, the pursuit cannot be undermined, as this would be counter-productive of the aim to realize the project. In other words, undermining is taken to be a sign of non-commitment. Therefore the conflict needs to be solved. Without doing this, the agency, the capacity of agency, itself comes under pressure because a person cannot be understood anymore as successfully pursuing either of the projects: she shows self-undermining behavior regarding her commitments. As such, the claim follows that a person is bound to an ideal of unification of her practical identities in order to secure the soundness of her normative foundation, her practical identities: the projects she aims to realize in her actions.

In opposition, I will argue that the Unification Ideal is not always an ideal to strive for in practical deliberation. I do so by arguing for four points: a person can obtain an action perspective despite volitional disunity (**Chapter 3**); a person can achieve practical orientation despite volitional disunity (**Chapter 3**); the unification of a person's practical identities can undermine the unity of her agential capacities, and the latter unity is more important (**Chapter 4**); and the unification of one's practical identities undermines the rationality of radical or transformative choice, of aspiring to be someone else, which is implausible (**Chapter 5**).

In contrast to the Unification Ideal, I develop a positive view based on the idea of exploration. It seems to me that (human) agents can handle much more discordance among the normative grounds of their deliberations and actions than often is acknowledged (see, for example, Ami Harbin's discussion of the phenomenon of disorientation, Harbin 2016). I propose a concrete strategy of how

an agent searches for orientation in action by exploring the conflict constitutive of her will. This Exploration Ideal is developed in **Chapter 6**. I start off, however, with introducing practical deliberation, practical identity, and the Unification Ideal come together as standard answer to the problem of volitional conflict in **Chapter 1**.

Chapter 1 Practical Identities as Guides for Practical Deliberation

Section 1.1 *Introducing the deliberative stance*

In our daily lives, we often know what to do. Say, for example, that on a particular day a colleague asks you whether you would like to join an after-work group outing. Since your child has a school performance that evening, you decline. How do you know what to do? Because your mind is made up about the relative importance you assign to being a parent and being a colleague and this guides you in your deliberations about what to do. In the technical language I will introduce in this chapter, you find it more valuable, in this particular choice situation, to give expression to your practical identity as a parent than the practical identity as a colleague and thus you have a decision-making framework that provides a clear perspective on what to do (i.e. one action is presented to you as more valuable).

However, sometimes your identities fail to give you such clarity. Let's assume the group outing with colleagues emerges as a perfect opportunity to show your involvement at the department. This is of value to you, since you would like to be considered for an upcoming tenure track position. Since you are not clear on the relative importance of your identity of pursuing a career and being a parent, you feel torn. Both identities pull you in different directions by indicating a different course of action as a valuable expression of who you are. Most likely in such cases, you're stopped in your tracks and thrown into a deliberative stance. From this deliberative stance, you may consider the reasons you have to choose one action over the other that stem from both identities and try to see whether one identity, at least in this situation, gives you stronger reasons to give expression to. You could also try a different take on the situation by introducing a third identity you have committed yourself to: say, you already promised your daughter that you would attend her school performance. From the evaluative stance of your moral identity you see it as valuable to keep your promises and you evaluate this as a strong reason.

Your reflections might also go to a deeper level, as you may realize by being stopped in your tracks that your career is not so important to you as you thought, or you may realize that you experience family life as more restrictive than you thought you did before this situation. In this case, you start to deliberate not only on what to do in this situation, but also on the commitments to your practical identities in general. This simple example of practical deliberation brings an important point forward. If your practical identities fail to successfully guide your deliberations

about what to do, you become aware of the contingency of your commitments to your identities. i.e. You become aware of the possibility to question your practical identities. It can be said, then, that the decision problem you are confronted with is not *solely* “what to do?” but also “how to give expression (through my actions) to who I want to be?”

To summarize, the deliberative stance deals with the question of how to give expression to your practical identities in your actions. The focus of this dissertation lies on what ideal can successfully guide our deliberations to move in deliberation from conflicting practical identities to a choice for action.

Section 1.2 *Practical identity*

Let me introduce practical identity, one of the central concepts of this dissertation, by the author who placed this notion central in contemporary debates, Christine M. Korsgaard. For Korsgaard, a practical identity is “a description under which you value yourself, a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking” (1996b, 101; cf. 2009, 20). A practical identity is a description under which a person understands herself providing her with reasons for living her life in a particular way and undertaking those actions that are expressive of this description. In other words, a practical identity provides the evaluative stance from which reasons for action are evaluated or endorsed. As someone’s lover, you value to buy a present for your yearly anniversary; as a parent, you find yourself to have a reason to care for your child. Thus, you give expression to a practical identity by acting on the reasons endorsed from the evaluative standpoint of the practical identity (1996a, 179-180). In this way are practical identities the normative rock bottom of practical deliberation—they provide us with evaluative stances.

However, a practical identity is not *merely* a description, but also an ideal that a person strives to express and realize in her actions. In other words, an identity is a description of a person, which she makes true of herself by acting in accordance with it. This is supported by Korsgaard: there “is a kind of backwards determination in the construction of” your identity, since it is an open question as to “whether you make progress towards being the sort of person you have (presumably) resolved to be” (1996a, 181). For example, in committing yourself to the practical identity of being a parent, you resolve to become a good parent to your children and you show

this resolve by striving to realize this ideal in your actions. The way a practical identity provides an evaluative stance can be understood in similar way as an aspirational project in which you aspire to embody a certain ideal in your actions (see Callard 2018 for an analysis of aspiration). To clarify the concept of practical identity further, it is useful to place it in light of three contrast classes (see **Figure 1** on **page 10**).

The first contrast class is found in the descriptions attributed by others to us: another person may describe you as stubborn or arrogant without this description being or becoming a self-description in the sense of a practical identity. A necessary condition for an identity to count as a practical identity is that the person ascribes, or under ideal conditions would ascribe, this identity to herself. A second contrast class consists of the potential practical identities that a person does not find fitting or appropriate for herself. This can be divided in two further sub-classes. Either a person denies the concept as a possible self-description (being asked whether you are an introvert or extrovert, you deny these categories as possible self-descriptions for any person, you find them irrelevant as descriptions of persons) or she accepts the relevance of the concept as possible self-description for other people but denies that the concept appropriately describes her. For example, you can accept that there are persons that identify with being a nerd, but you deny that you are one. In other words, the identity lacks practical force.

The third contrast class consists of self-descriptions which are understood by the person as fitting, but which do not fall under descriptions under which she values her life. It may be thought that such a description are neither action guiding because the person's life does not light up as worthwhile under it: Why would a person act on a self-description under which she doesn't value her life? My suggestion is that a person can value her actions under a certain description without being committed to valuing her life under the same description. This suggestion reflects Harry G. Frankfurt's understanding of identification as acceptance (Frankfurt 2002, 161). Consider a person who is shy and affirms this of herself. Let's suppose, this person seeks therapy because she is dissatisfied with being shy and wants to change this. My suggestion is that by seeking therapy, the person affirms, or accepts, the self-description "shy" as fitting, but with a negative evaluation of it. This allows for a person to strive to *overcome* this aspect of herself. In that sense, the shyness, negatively evaluated as a description that makes your life worthwhile,

could be a source of reasons to go to the therapy. The difference with this third class and the second class is that if a person accepts a self-description as possible but denies it is fitting for her, she denies it as a source of reasons *at all*. This amounts to, in a way, that the shy person *ignores* her shyness as a source of reasons that may feed into her practical deliberations. The possible repercussions of this third contrast class for the definition of practical identity are not further explored, since it would distract us too much from the core argument.

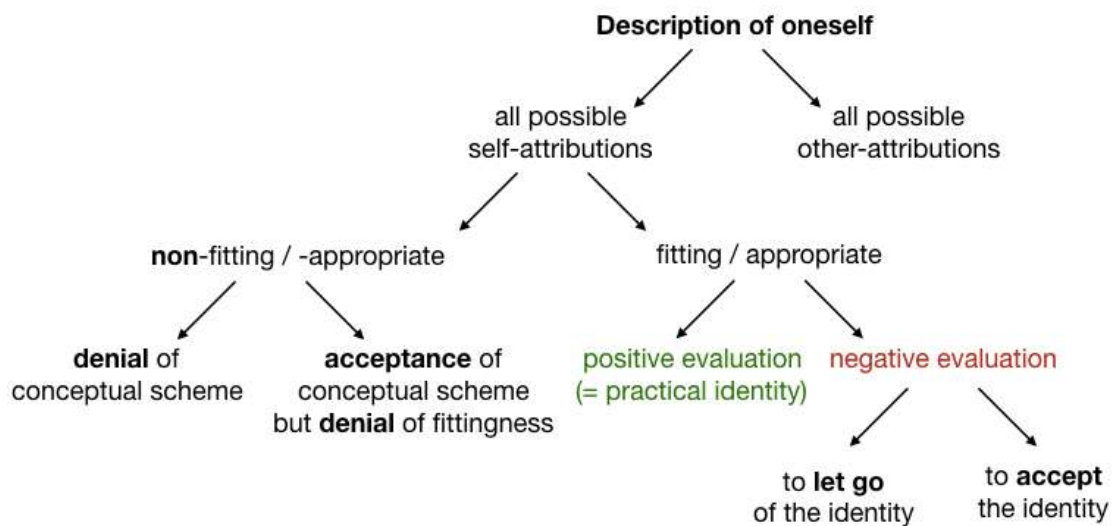


Figure 1 Conceptual distinctions surrounding the concept of practical identity. If a person attributes a description to herself, finds it appropriate and evaluates it positively, then it is called a practical identity to which the person has committed herself.

Section 1.3 *Practical deliberation*

The other central concept of this dissertation is practical deliberation. In this section, I clarify this concept by distinguishing between two levels on which practical deliberation takes place and which each have their own success condition: the level of the action which has deliberative success means the choice for an action and the level of practical identity where deliberative success means the obtainment of, what I call, practical orientation.

That practical deliberation takes place on two levels shows in that these two levels can come apart. Intuitively, it seems to be the case that both are intimately connected by the question of how to give expression to who you are and want to be in your actions. To deliberate about what to do is to deliberate about how to give expression to who you are and want to be, and to deliberate about who you are and want to be is also to deliberate about what action would give expression to this.

However, to conceive of this intuitive link too tight is problematic for two reasons related to how practical deliberation is conceptualized. First, a person can be undecided regarding which set of practical identities she would like to express and nevertheless deliberate about what to do. For example, if two options are equally good with regard to her practical identities, a person might just choose one of the two options (to not become Buridan's donkey). Similarly, a point utilized in **Chapter 6**, a person who is unsure about her commitment to an identity can explore what it means (for her) to give expression to this identity by expressing it in her actions—in this way she can explore what it means for her to aspire to a certain ideal in her actions. Second, a person may be settled on who she is, but nevertheless be undecided about what to do. A person committed to both the pursuit of a career and being a parent may nevertheless feel a conflict regarding what to do if she is confronted with a situation such as the one described in **Section 1.1**. She still has to decide what to do in this concrete situation and thus further deliberation about what to do is required without, necessarily, involving deliberation about who to be (I further argue for this in **Chapters 3 & 4**).

As indicated above, both levels on which practical deliberation can take place come with their own success condition for deliberation. If practical deliberation terminates in choice it is successful on the level of deliberating about what to do. If deliberation results in, what I call, practical orientation it is successful on the level of deliberating about who to be. Practical orientation means that a person has a view on the identities by which she wants to be guided and has the feeling that this view is complete—it is a way of “being at home” with oneself. In the words of Frankfurt, practical orientation is “a state constituted by the absence of any tendency or inclination to alter its condition” (1999, 104). I further explore this notion of practical orientation in **Chapter 3**.

Many authors discussed in this dissertation hold that both success conditions are, ideally, realized together and thus that both levels of deliberation are tightly linked. The idea is that as long as a person's identities are conflicted, as long as there is volitional disunity, a person's process of deliberation is hampered, thereby paralyzing the person in her deliberations about what to do. I, in contrast, argue for a looser connection between both levels and thus a looser connection between both success conditions opening up the possibility to introduce the Exploration Ideal in **Chapter 6**.

With this distinction in hand, I want to make use of the opportunity to point out that the developed argument is meant to stay neutral on *where* practical identities stem from. As will become clear in the proceedings, I discuss Frankfurt's theory of the will, Korsgaard's theory of agency, and I reconstruct a version of the narrativist position on practical deliberation. However, in Korsgaard's theory we *construct* our set of practical identities by identifying with them whereas in Frankfurt's theory we *discover* our cares as our will has a reality of its own. Such origins of our practical identities do not play a major role in the developed argument, since I am interested in how to conceive of the connection between the two levels on which practical deliberation takes place. As such, it is of less importance where practical identities come from. I address this issue throughout the dissertation: for example, in **Chapter 4** I argue that there is a non-constructivist aspect to the origin of practical identities in Korsgaard's view.

Second, with regard to Frankfurt's theory of the will specifically, it might be thought that for Frankfurt cares can guide a person in her actions without her being aware of them. In **Chapter 3**, I explain that I am interested in the role cares have in practical deliberation (and not per se in their role in action). Insofar cares play the role in deliberation I am interested in, I postulate that a person is aware of them, necessarily so. The other, say subconscious, role cares play by influencing how we act (and how we deliberate about what to do), I categorize as that such cares are part of a person's circumstances because they appear to her (insofar they consciously do appear) as motivational forces. They do not become normative suggestions, since we are unable to put ourselves at a distance towards them (**Chapter 2**). Such motivational forces do get a place in the proposed conceptual framework, but first clearly in **Chapter 6** (see also **Section 1.7**).

Section 1.4 *How practical identities form a clear decision-making framework for practical deliberation: the standard answer*

With the explanations of practical identity and practical deliberation in hand, we can explicate the view held by most authors on how practical identities, as the fundamental normative entities, can guide practical deliberation successfully. Throughout the dissertation, I will refer to this view as the standard answer.

This answer starts from the idea that a coherent set of practical identities forms a clear decision-making framework for a person's practical deliberation, since

this framework provides the person with a decisive judgment regarding what to do. If the person's set of identities includes volitional disunity pertaining a specific choice situation, the decision-making framework gives conflicting guidance: it indicates two incompatible actions as worthwhile to undertake. The person is, as a consequence, depicted as being left unable to form a decisive judgment between these two as her practical identities are seen as normatively fundamental. As I will show in this dissertation, volitional conflict is depicted as leading to a person's inability to decisively decide what to do. This alludes, then, to a Unification Ideal in which a person's practical identities need to be unified into a harmonious whole.

This initial image of how we can get to a Unification Ideal does find resonance in many authors in the philosophical debate (Korsgaard 1996b, Frankfurt 1988, Chapter 2, Schechtman 2014). As these philosophers often start to build their theories from an example of volitional disunity, I follow suit in introducing the standard answer. Say, on a specific evening you want to go swimming and you want to go to the movies. The moment you become aware of the conflict between both desires, you take a step back into the deliberative stance: you take reflective distance towards the desires and you reflect on them and the reasons you have to satisfy them. Let's assume, it holds that you can only do *one* of the two actions so you have to choose. Maybe you have reasons to prefer one of the two actions: swimming is healthy and the movies would be relaxing. Suppose further, then, that your reasons conflict too: you value health and relaxation equally.

The standard answer proposes that you take another step back and reflect on the goodness of those reasons. This process of distance taking could repeat itself infinitely if you would find no normative rock bottom to your deliberations and we normally *do* find such a rock bottom. In this dissertation, the concept of practical identity functions as reference for the normative rock bottom of deliberation. This is allowable, as practical identities provide the evaluative stances for practical deliberation and therefore are the plausible candidate for "a place" from which there is no further place to step back to. However, if the conflict occurs also on the level of the normative rock bottom of practical deliberation, i.e. a conflict between your evaluative stances, you truly seem unable to decide what you should do. Say, being a healthy person and being a person who experiences joy are in conflict with each other. What should you do then?

The suggestion of the authors that I group together is that you *are* able to take distance towards this normatively fundamental level of practical identities. This distance taking does not bring you to a “deeper place” of normativity, but does allow you to gain an eagle eye perspective over all of your practical identities (pertaining to the choice situation). It is from this eagle eye perspective that you can prioritize your identities into a harmonious whole, dissolving the conflict. In this way, the conflict cannot withhold you to choose and act. However, such activity itself is in need of a standard of some sorts. It is here that authors introduce a form-based principle that sets the ideal of the unification of one’s practical identities as the highest ideal. In other words, in order to create for yourself a clear decision-making framework from which decisive judgments on what to do can follow, you need to be guided in practical deliberation by a Unification Ideal.

We find the Unification Ideal articulated in the philosophical literature. For example, Marya Schechtman writes that “to think of our lives in narrative terms is to see all of the different perspectives one experiences and accesses as part of a single life—one’s own life—and to take on the task of understanding them all as part of a unified whole” (2016, 31). Similar claims are made by other philosophers engaged with in this dissertation: “Unless a person is capable of a considerable degree of volitional unity, he cannot make coherent use of freedom” (Frankfurt 1999, 102) as wholeheartedness “just requires that, with respect to any such conflict, [a person] himself be fully resolved. [...] In other words, he must know what he wants” (1999, 100); “we have many particular practical identities and so we also face the task of uniting [our particular practical identities] into a coherent whole” (Korsgaard 2009, 21); “To ask ‘What is the good for me?’ is to ask how best I might live out that unity and bring it to completion” (MacIntyre 2008 [1981], 218). These quotes align with our natural response to motivational conflicts: if you are undecided between pursuing two incommensurable courses of action, it is natural to pause and to deliberate about whether you have more reason to pursue one course of action over the other.³

³ A person could not only do this by deciding which identity is more important to her, but also by deliberating about what action has greater consequences. For example, a person who both understands herself as partner and as employee might always choose for her work, because she knows that her partner forgives her more easily for not being available as her employer despite the fact that she prioritizes her identity as partner as more important. Even though this may be the case, in the end our commitments to our practical identities and their prioritizations need to get expressed in our actions. As they include an ideal we can fail to live up to this ideal—as the above-described person might do.

In contrast, human experience is full of examples where volitional disunity cannot be solved through unification, because a person finds herself unable to prioritize her practical identities; for example, a person who both wants to pursue a career and an available parent for her children. The volitional disunity defines in such cases the person's set of practical identities. Critical responses regarding the Unification Ideal along these lines can be found in the philosophical literature. Philosophers have inserted the idea that disunity is possibly valuable for a person into the debates engaged with (Gunnarson 2014, Lippit 2007, Meyers 2000, Marino 2011). Furthermore, similar responses have been developed from non-ideal theory (e.g. Calhoun 1995, Friedman 1986) and feminist thought (e.g. Lugones 1987/1990). For example, Paul Benson, a feminist philosopher, claims that "volitional authenticity matters more than volitional integrity" (1994, 667) referring to the idea that in some cases it is better for the conflicted person to "preserve some motivational disunity" as it might be constitutive of who she wants to be (ibid.). In line with these philosophers, I critically assess whether there is support for the Unification Ideal as the sole answer to the question of how practical identities form a clear decision-making framework for practical deliberation.

To be clear, I do not argue that striving for unity in deliberation is always wrong. I want to point out, first, that striving for unification (as ideal) in certain situations of volitional disunity can be non- or even counter-productive. Second, there is a different way of overcoming the problem of volitional disunity as I argue in **Chapter 6** by introducing the Exploration Ideal: the paralysis can be overcome by exploring the conflicting pole of the volitional disunity in and through one's actions.

Section 1.5 *Contextualizing practical identity: social role, personality & person*

In order to set up the critical discussion of the standard answer (**Chapter 3 to 5**), I will place the concept of practical identity into its broader theoretical and practical context in the rest of this chapter. To this end, I clarify the concept of practical identity further in this section by distinguishing it from the concepts of social role, personality, and person. I start with the concept of social role. Common examples of social roles are sister/brother, daughter/son, student, employee, friend, citizen, etc. Since these terms are used as labels for practical identities as well, the need to clarify the distinction is readily observed. There are three aspects in which practical identities differ from social roles.

First of all, the difference may best be understood in the way a social role is not “one’s own” as a practical identity is. Through a person’s commitment to her practical identity, the identity becomes an expression *of herself*, of who she is and wants to be. If a person takes up a social role, on the other hand, she, in a way, “play acts” the role. Let me elaborate on this. To be committed to a practical identity and to evaluate the ideal positively means that a person not only wants to play the role, but she wants to be the identity in question—to express oneself as being that identity. It is possible to commit to a social role and accept it as genuine expression of oneself: the role becomes one’s practical identity. One way to summarize this point is to say that not being able to play the social role is all the same to the person, not being able to express the identity feels like a loss as an identity is a description under which the person’s life becomes meaningful to her.

Another difference is that a social role is less one’s own articulation. A person has more freedom in shaping a practical identity whereas a social role is defined more strongly by a negotiation between those who play act the role and those who have expectations of the role played. This does not imply that a person’s identity is immune to social influence or that it should be. Identities are expressed in a context that is, for the most part, defined by intersubjective interactions: a person gets positive feedback, critique, etc. on how she expresses herself from within her social environment and, in all likelihood, this influences how she thinks of herself and how she expresses herself in her actions. However, the success condition of playing a social role is dependent on whether a person establishes the social function of the role, the success condition of expressing an identity is whether the person establishes the ideal of herself that she wants to committed herself to.

A last difference is that practical identities are (often) more concrete and are less situation-sensitive than social roles. A person may play the role of being a waitress with great hospitality, but the moment her shift is over, the hospitality may be gone whereas a person who understands herself as a hospitable person will, in all likelihood, stay hospitable over a range of situations during and outside of her work hours. To phrase it a bit coarsely, a social role is adopted if the situation asks for it, whereas a practical identity is expressed when the situation allows for it.

Let us turn to the difference between the concept “practical identity” and the concepts “personality” and “person.” Confusingly, authors in the debate use the notion of practical identity both to refer to particular identities *and* a person’s set of

identities. The following two quotes by Korsgaard make this clear: “Our practical identities are, for the most part, contingent. [...] Some we are born into [...] and others] we adopt for reasons” (Korsgaard 2009, 23) and “The work of pulling ourselves back together is also the work of pulling those identities into a single practical identity” (2009, 126; the same tendency can be observed in Davenport 2012, 10-19). In order to prevent confusion, I will use in this dissertation the notion “personality” to refer to the whole set of a person’s practical identities.

Some authors refer to a more inclusive concept of identity or personality than how I use it. This comes to the fore in the definition given by Owen Flanagan, for example: ‘Identity in this thick, rich sense [...] is constituted by the dynamic integrated system of past and present identifications, desires, commitments, aspirations, beliefs, dispositions, temperament, roles, acts, and actional patterns, as well as by whatever self-understandings (even incorrect ones) each person brings to his or her life’ (1991: 134-135). I will not include the more passive aspects of this list in the notion of practical identity, although these aspects obviously do co-constitute the substance of a person. As I will make clear later on in this chapter and dissertation, the passive aspects I interpret as the (inner) environment of a person. My focus is on how practical identities, as self-understandings and ideals, can constitute a clear decision-making framework for a person’s practical deliberations.

A personality belongs to someone: a person. The notion of a person will be understood in this dissertation as a being capable of having a personality (a range of practical identities): the notion of a person refers to the bare *existence* of the person. John J. Davenport puts this in Heideggerian terms: “no *so-sein* or mode of being is ascribed to [“person”] but only *da-sein*, existence” (2012, 21-22). “Person” is a simple notion, a placeholder or reference point with which it makes sense to talk about changes occurring within the personality (the substance, the *so-sein*,) of a person. The metaphysical question of the *persistence* of a person—what has also been called the re-identification question—won’t be a topic in this dissertation (see Bauhn 2016, 1-4 for a short discussion of the relation between personal and practical identity). The interest of the presented investigation lies in how the substance of a person, her practical identities or her personality, can form a decision-making framework that successfully guides her practical deliberations.

Section 1.6 *Contextualizing practical identity: commitment & expression*

In the foregoing, I have said that a person shows her commitment to a practical identity by giving expression to this identity in her actions. Korsgaard provides a clear illustration: imagine a person who identifies with the identity of being Charlotte's friend. However, despite being Charlotte's friend, "it never occurs to [her] to do anything in particular to make Charlotte happy" (1996a, 180). For example, looking at the calendar and seeing that it's Charlotte's birthday, doesn't lead her to call Charlotte for her birthday. In the next two sections, I clarify further what it entails to have a commitment to an identity and to give expression to it.

The *expression* of a commitment is essential to show one's commitment. A philosopher who has approached this topic from within a Heideggerian framework, Robert B. Pippin, formulates this as follows: "what turns out to confirm [a practical identity], is not fidelity to an inner essence but is ultimately a matter of action, what we actually do, a matter of engagement in the world [...]" (2005, 309). It is not enough for a person to commit herself to an identity solely "in her mind." She needs to express her commitment and therewith establish in her actions the identity as hers. So a person understanding herself as being Charlotte's friend has to think of Charlotte's interest on at least *some* occasions. In other words, she needs to give expression to her commitment. As Korsgaard points out, there "is a kind of backwards determination in the construction of one's character" because whether you are actually committed "depends on what you do in the future – on whether you make progress towards being the sort of person you have (presumably) resolved to be" (1996a, 181). In other words, "the future establishes whether you have really made the [commitment] or not" (*ibid.*, 180).

A person's commitments to practical identities, and her prioritization of these, cannot be "read off" a single choice situation. Consider the example in **Section 1.1** again, in which a person is conflicted between the practical identities of being a parent and pursuing a career regarding a single choice situation. It is not correct to say that if she chooses the outing over visiting her daughter's school performance, she gives expression both to her career-identity and to her prioritization of this identity over her parent-identity. It might be the case that she always has chosen to go to the school performance and that she feels uncomfortable about declining the invitation for an outing once *again*. Or she could choose to go to the outing, not as a choice of her career-identity over her identity as a parent, but because she takes into

consideration that her daughter has several performances a year and a conflict with such an outing only happens this one time. The commitment to an identity and to a prioritization of a person's set of identities shows in the continuous expression of the identities and their prioritization, i.e. over the course of multiple actions.

Although it is important to give expression to one's commitments over the course of multiple actions, three qualifications need to be made. First, changing habitual actions, in which our practical identities are expressed, can be a difficult and arduous process. A person who wants to change the prioritization of her practical identities, for example, can fail at times to install this change in her actions because of her deeply ingrained habitual actions that express a different, the old, prioritization. For example, a workaholic who commits herself to being more available and involved with her family—to being both more a parent and a partner—may fall into the trap of working too much again, leaving her too little time for her family. The identity of family, that is, needs to become her first nature and her identity of work needs to be removed from her first nature, her habits. Again, Korsgaard asserts to this as well: "Although adopting [a commitment] is a volitional act, it is one that you can only do gradually and perhaps incompletely" (ibid.). Here we see the aspirational aspect of practical identities: they are ideals we *strive* to realize in our actions, even after we have acquired a complete understanding of what the ideal consists of (for us).

Second, sometimes we fail to see a person's commitment to a practical identity, because we have a different understanding of the identity than she does. This means both have different expectations of what it means to give expression to the identity. For the other person, caring for one's family may mean to be there for them in times of trouble, while for us it means to spend all our time with them.

Third, an important qualification lies in that her environment can make it *impossible* for a person to express her commitment to an identity. In Nelson's *Damaged Identities Narrative Repair* many good examples can be found (2003). One of these examples is that of a mother who is expected to be the primary caretaker of her children—even in circumstances in which she has a job and a social life of her own. It is because such expectations are laid down on the mother by her social environment that she is *less* free than the father of her children to pursue and express other identities such as the pursuit of a career, maintaining worthwhile friendships, and enjoying hobbies.

Section 1.7 *The plasticity/rigidity of personality: imagination & environment*

In this section, I further discuss how a person's environment affects her personality in terms of the plasticity and rigidity of a person's commitments. I will do this first by introducing the role of the imagination and imaginative projections in practical deliberation.

The imagination seems to be an essential faculty in questioning the normativity of a practical identity. It is by imagining different possibilities for the future that we can question both the prioritization of our practical identities regarding a single occasion ("Do I need to grade papers now or visit the soccer match of my daughter?") and our lives in an overarching way ("How important is it to me to pursue a career over having a family?"). By imagining being a different person, we can both question our commitment to a specific identity ("Is it worth playing fair if I see so many people around me cheating?") and question our commitment to the whole set of our identities as we might do during a quarter- or midlife-crisis ("Is this the life I had imagined for myself when I was young?").

In enabling us to question, our imagination gives great plasticity to our personality. By imagining an alternative, we can question whether our commitment to most, if not all, identities is something we are satisfied with.⁴ At the same time, it is important to be aware of the limits we encounter in expressing our commitment to our practical identities. Our personality, that is, is not only characterized by plasticity but also by rigidity (see, e.g., feminist thinkers such as Diana T. Meyers (2004) who emphasize this aspect of personality). I discuss here the plasticity and rigidity of our personality in light of the capacity of the imagination first.

It's a plausible claim that a person can only be guided by a commitment to an identity if she is able to *imagine* her commitment to the identity. This is true on two levels. She must be able to represent (imagine) the identity in her deliberations and, secondly, she needs to be able to understand *herself* committed to the identity. In other words, the identity needs to appeal to the person as "possible-for-me." A person who has always met the same stereotypes in her life may not imagine being someone else than those stereotypes: living in poverty, she cannot imagine herself going to college even if the chance were to present itself, say, in the form of a

⁴ As I will point out in **Chapter 3**, this stands apart from whether we can actually give up the connection. Think also back to the workaholic example.

scholarship. She is unable to imagine *herself* (successfully) going to college, as no one in her surroundings has been capable of doing so.⁵

If this is plausible, it follows that for a person to commit herself to a practical identity means to have an imaginative projection in which she thinks of herself as that person (who goes to college) and, furthermore, to appoint a basic plausibility to that description. It needs to be a *live* option for the person. The plasticity of a person's personality depends, then, on her imagination. Imagining to be committed oneself to a certain identity, one imagines what expressions are allowed, required, or forbidden, how it fits or conflicts with other identities one has—i.e. one thinks about the consequences of such a commitment for the shape of one's personality.⁶

Korsgaard points us to a second source of limitations for a person's commitment to and expression of practical identities: her circumstances or environment. In her discussion of why a person may shed her practical identities (1996b, 120-128), she says: "where the facts make [the expression of an identity] impossible, the conception may cease to have practical force" (ibid., 120). What Korsgaard does not make explicit is that a person's environment can make her commitment to a practical identity to be without practical force from the start. For example, if you are banned from the bar, it is impossible to be a lawyer as you are not allowed to practice law; or if a person does not have a talent for sports then becoming a professional sports player is not open to her—maybe she is creative, and this opens up possibilities to become a designer, an artist, or a scientist. However, if the person lives in a patriarchal society, she might not be allowed to work or be creative in these ways: she needs to express her creativity within those tasks that women are allowed to do (or become a dissident, of course).

All the examples discussed in this section are illustrative for how a person's environment can be both restrictive and enabling for the expression of her identities. As the just given examples illustrate, the environment of a person can be divided into four aspects: a person's natural and social circumstances and her bodily

⁵ A person may become aware of the fact that her circumstances limit her imagination causing her to desire radical change in her circumstances. A fine example is found in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in which Nora Helmer feels imprisoned by the patriarchal discourse of, first, her father and then her husband. Nora realizes that her circumstances prevent her from imagining different commitments and by the end of the play, she tells her husband, Torvald, that she is leaving him to reinvent herself—to quit playing the doll-part that first her father and then her husband had designed for her.

⁶ Imaginative projections can come apart from a person's commitments and her expressions of her commitments making her projections alike to daydreaming. For example, a person may fantasize about a life with completely different commitments; or, with big life decisions such as choosing a (new) career, a person may imagine who she might become and what her daily activities are going to be.

and psychological reality. A strong influence in modern societies on all of these four factors is technology, both in terms of plasticity and rigidity, since it allows for the intervention in all of the four factors. Examples of how new digital and social media are used to shape the digital infrastructure on which we move thereby creating a powerful, limiting social circumstance on a person's self-expression is widely discussed, for example in Franklin Foer's *World Without Mind* (2017) or in light of China's new social ranking system. The ways in which technology enlarges the plasticity of a person's personality can be illustrated easily: a person without athletic talents can become an e-sports player; drug therapies allow us to treat psychological disorders such as depression or schizophrenia; plastic surgery allows us to change our appearance; and deep brain stimulation may help people "overcome" severe autism (cf. Robison 2016) just as it can treat Parkinson's disease and obsessive-compulsive disorder. As such, the availability of technologies and the openness of societal structures have a tremendous influence on the identities, imagined or real, which persons commit themselves to, consider, and express.⁷ In **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 6**, the connection between a person's personality and her environment will be further explored.

Section 1.8 *The structure of the critical chapters and a remark on a different notion of practical identity*

To end this chapter, I wish to explain the grounds for why the discussed authors propound the standard answer, including the Unification Ideal, as the solution to the problem of volitional disunity. These grounds will be critically discussed in **Chapters 3 to 5**.

The first ground relates back to the metaphor of distance taking that is used in visualizing the process of practical deliberation (**Section 1.3**): a person experiences a conflict of desires and takes distance towards her desires. A level higher, she experiences a conflict between reasons and moves higher again. Once she reaches her practical identities however, she cannot move any higher. It is here that the solution is found in taking distance towards one's practical identities in order to unify them into a harmonious whole. By making the highest level of rock bottom normatively coherent, lower-level conflicts can be solved by prioritizing them according the prioritized practical identities. In **Chapter 2**, I question whether

⁷ Feminist philosophers and defenders of relational autonomy concepts have articulated such views with regard to societal structures—see for example Anderson (2003).

this use of the metaphor of distance taking to visualize the process of practical deliberation is justified.

An assumption that is bound up with this image of distance taking is the tight connection between the two levels on which practical deliberation takes place. In the standard answer, a conflict between two desires is understood as reason to deliberate about how to give expression to oneself. The implicit assumption is that if a person is clear on the priorities of her practical identities and thus has a unified personality (at least with regard to the conflict) then it is clear which action she has to undertake: a cascade follows from rock bottom normativity, to the person's personality, and eventually to the choice for a concrete action.

The Unification Ideal is further supported by the assumption that as we can only do one action at a time, we have to choose a single action to undertake. As Korsgaard points out, "on any given occasion, we can only do one thing." Thus when you are feeling torn then you need to "Make up your mind, or even better, Pull yourself together" (2009, 134). Based on this assumption, several authors suggest that we need to have reason to favor one action over the other. Since the normative rock bottom is our personality, the idea is that our practical identities can only offer such a reason if they are not conflicted. Under conditions of volitional conflict, our practical identities provide us with no decisive judgment on which action we have most reason to undertake. This can be understood as yet another way in which the two levels are understood as tightly connected: as we can only do one action at a time and practical identities are the normative source of reasons, clarity at this level of identities gives us clarity about what to do. This is discussed in **Chapter 3**.

A further ground that is given is the unity of a person's agential faculties. It seems to be true that in order to ascribe the choice and action to the person, her agential faculties need to be the source of the action and not a force either in her (a rogue desire) or outside her (as in coercion). In **Chapter 4**, I discuss whether the Unification Ideal follows from the unity of a person's agential faculties.

The last reason is the need of a person to be intelligible to herself. The concrete thesis that is discussed is that a person only acts intelligible over time if her personality is unified into a coherent autobiographical narrative. Here the diachronic unity of personality is seen as essential for the agent to be intelligible to herself and therefore this unity becomes an ideal to strive for in practical deliberating. I discuss this reason for the Unification Ideal in **Chapter 5**.

I close this section with a short remark on the specific understanding of practical identity that I employ in this dissertation. On this understanding the focus lies on the individual and her capacities involved in practical deliberation, commitment to practical identities, and the choice of action based on her practical identities. Within the philosophical literature however, another conception of practical identity can be found which was first developed within the traditions of pragmatism (e.g. Mead 1934) and the Frankfurt School (Habermas 1984, Honneth 1995). This conception focuses on social recognition and the relational nature of humans (see for a historical account, Habermas 1988). The basic idea is that humans develop the capacity to shape their own identity within an intersubjective environment. It is within this ontogenetic thesis that the conceptual foundations of a person's identity are traced back to intersubjective mechanisms such as language, interaction, and recognition. The expression of a specific identity is understood as standing for something within a social environment and is, partially, driven by the need of recognition by others. This conception is not used in this dissertation.

Section 1.9 *Summary*

A practical identity is both a self-description and an ideal. Practical identities constitute a decision-making framework for the person that guides her in practical deliberation. Therefore it can be said that a practical identity has an aspirational aspect in that a person aims to make the description true of herself by expressing it in her actions. Here the difference with a social role can be found: a social role is something that is play-acted or impersonated whereas an identity is understood as expressive of the person herself.

The commitment to and the expression of practical identities takes place in a wider environment. This environment, which can be analyzed in a person's natural and social circumstances and her bodily and psychological reality, influences the plasticity and rigidity of a person's personality—the whole set of a person's practical identities. Imaginative projections play a key role here: only if a person first imagines a practical identity can she decide to commit herself to the identity. She needs to understand the identity as “possible for her” in order for the identity to be part of her decision-making framework.

I have pointed out that practical deliberation can take place on two levels with each its own success condition: on the level of practical identities where success is defined by practical orientation and on the level of actions where success is defined by the choice of an action. The success conditions go often hand in hand, but I have pointed out that this does not need to be the case. I have pointed out that, among other things, the standard answer seems to presuppose a close link between both success conditions; i.e. the one cannot be realized with the other. The underlying reasons for this that will be discussed is the idea that we can only do one action at the time in context of Frankfurt's theory of the will (**Chapter 3**), we need to be unified agents in order to be in control of our action in context of Korsgaard's theory of agency (**Chapter 4**), and unity is required by self-intelligibility in context of reconstructed view of narrative theory (**Chapter 5**).

I will start now however by arguing that the metaphor of distance taking used by all authors defending the standard answer to visualize the process of practical deliberation explains why the Unification Ideal has such a significant role in philosophers' theorizing on the role of practical identities in practical deliberation.

Chapter 2 Distance taking: A Metaphor for the Movement of the Practical Mind

In the foregoing chapter, I introduced the metaphor of distance taking as a description of the ability to take a step back from desires, reasons, and practical identities enabling the evaluation of them as the source and ground of our actions. In this chapter, I aim to dive deeper into the use of this metaphor by critically assessing its limits for (the purpose of) visualizing the process of practical deliberation. More concretely, in this chapter I attempt to show that the authors discussed in this dissertation visualize the whole process of practical deliberation (the capacity to have evaluative attitudes towards one's desires, reasons, and practical identities) by relying on the metaphor of distance taking. I argue, in contrast, that the metaphor of distance taking helps us, more restrictively, to visualize only one, albeit important, aspect of the process of practical deliberation: the ability to pause the motivational force of desires. In this way, I provide a critical answer to the third research question: Why does the Unification Ideal has such an appeal to philosophers that it is introduced as the ideal to strive for in practical deliberation?

I start out by sketching the historical origin of the metaphor of distance taking as an explanation for why it has gone unnoticed, and especially, without being reflected upon in the contemporary debate (**Section 2.2**). Subsequently, I succinctly describe a theory regarding the use of metaphors (**Section 2.3**) with which the limits of visualizing the process of practical deliberation can be assessed (**Section 2.4**). In this last section I make the link between distance taking and the Unification Ideal explicit.

Section 2.1 *Distance taking as metaphor—a historical introduction*

For this section, my aim is to illustrate that the modern use of distance taking—in which a person takes distance towards her motivational states in order to evaluate them—can at least be traced back to René Descartes' *The Passions of the Soul*.⁸ I embed this discussion in how the problem of the subject-object divide arose from Descartes' philosophy and I sketch very succinctly Martin Heidegger's response to this problem. This will bring us in full circle back to the modern use of distance taking.

⁸ It can be claimed that already Augustinus struggled with this problem. However, Descartes placed this problem within a mainly mechanistic worldview for the first time.

Descartes and the metaphor of distance taking

Descartes developed his philosophical ideas within the new scientific paradigm of the modern natural sciences. This paradigm came into existence in the Reformation and Renaissance in which new discoveries in astronomy (Galileo and Copernicus' heliocentric theory) and the medical science (Harvey's theory of blood circulation) did not go well together with Aristotle's teleological understanding of the world. Descartes proposed to exchange Aristotle's teleological worldview in which a bird grows from an egg, because it is the inherent purpose of the egg to become a bird with a (causal) mechanistic view of nature. In this worldview, all matter is subject to general (natural) laws and only moves as it is moved by other matter—not because of purposes inherent to the matter. This does not mean, though, that Descartes established a clear and complete break with the Christian confession, the tradition he was raised in. He defends the view that the world is of intelligent design in order to hold on to the existence of God. Furthermore, for Descartes the human being is capable of gaining insight into how God designed the world—into the laws of nature—by its “god-like” part: the soul. Descartes identifies the soul, as the part of the human being capable of understanding (God's design), as home to a person's rational capacities and thereby home to its essence.

Furthermore, and in conformity with the Christian confession, for Descartes, the soul and the body are not *essentially* linked. In this context, Descartes introduced the idea of distance taking as a way of “the mind” to “detach itself from the senses” (Descartes 1911 [1641], 4-5). For Descartes, the mind, in detaching itself, creates in two different ways the possibility to turn its attention inwards: it can turn itself unto itself and take itself as object of reflection. This had led to the problem of the subject/object-divide to which we return shortly. However, it also allows the mind to turn its attention towards the mental life connected to the body, such as passions and desires. I will first shortly introduce this second way of turning attention towards oneself: namely, by taking distance towards herself, a person enables herself to take an evaluative stance towards her own motivational states. In the next subsection, I will then show how the critique of Heidegger on the object/subject-divide allows us to return to this second way of turning attention unto oneself.

According to Descartes in his *The Passions of the Soul*, passions are part and parcel of the survival mechanism of humans. Other animals survive through instinct—their ingrained nature (see Descartes 2015 [1649], 250). Humans, on the other hand, have a free will because of their rational soul and, free from instinct, can decide themselves on what they will do. It is here that the passions help the soul in its activity of introspection and deliberation about what to do: passions show us when something of relevance happens. Love, for example, is a passion “of the soul caused by the movement of the spirits that incites it to will itself to be united with objects that appear to be beneficial to it” (ibid., 227; cf. 250).

But unlike instincts, passions are *normative suggestions*. They can but do not have to be taken up as reason for action: humans can decide to act differently, or contrary, to what their passions indicate. This need stems from Descartes’ observation that passions are habitually connected to certain actions. It is therefore not always the case that the habitual action is the one called for in the situation. If for a person fear is habitually connected to fleeing, the fear she experiences at the sight of a bear makes her want to flee. However, the rational part of a person’s soul, knowing that in this instance it is better to stand as still as possible, may override the passion’s habitually dictated action. Descartes refers here to the language of distance taking by saying that one can overcome these “shortcomings of one’s nature” by “separating within oneself the movements of the blood and the spirits causing the passions in our soul from the thoughts [which belong to the soul] to which they are habitually attached” (ibid., 278). By distance taking, we enable ourselves to reflect on the goodness or badness of the passions within us. Here in Descartes we find the use of the metaphor of distance taking as it is still used today as I aim to show below: namely, that we have motivational states such as passions and desires from which we can distance ourselves making them into normative suggestions for action. These we can take up in deliberation to ask whether we have good reason to act on them.

*The practical relation of oneself to oneself*⁹

Let us turn focus on the second way in which Descartes explicates that the capacity of the mind can turn its attention inwards and how this way introduces the problem of the subject/object-divide. In making use of the method of radical questioning, the

⁹ For this section, I am influenced by Paul Stern’s translator’s introduction to Tugendhat (1986).

rational soul, detached from the body, takes itself as object of reflection (and attention). For Descartes, this is a way for the soul to ask after its own true nature and to obtain certain (self-)knowledge.

Philosophers after Descartes have problematized the idea that if the reflecting self inquires into itself as self-as-object it truly is able to grasp its own nature. The problem that the reflecting self encounters is that it does not gain knowledge of itself as *active, reflecting* self, but solely as the object of reflection. These philosophers have pointed out that it is unclear, and thus an open question, whether the reflecting subject is identical with the self-as-object on which it reflects: the subject and object of reflection are separated by the reflective distance the reflecting self takes towards itself. Therefore it becomes difficult to understand how it grasps its *own* activity by inquiring into the nature of the self-as-object. In words familiar to German Idealism, because of the reflective distance, a divide exists between the reflecting subject and the reflected upon subject-as-object and it is not obvious how this is to be bridged. Different answers to the question under which conditions subject and object can be thought undivided have been articulated throughout the subsequent three centuries by Immanuel Kant, Johan Gottlieb Fichte, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and the romanticists philosophers such as Friedrich Schelling and Arthur Schopenhauer.

These answers are not important for the historical reconstruction of the argument in this chapter, as we are interested in the critique by Heidegger of this divide. Heidegger (and also Ludwig Wittgenstein) has argued that the subject/object-divide is a non-problem: a problem that does not truly exist as there is no real opposition between a subject and an object. I will here follow Ernst Tugendhat's interpretation of Heidegger's critique, delivered in his *Self-consciousness and self-determination* (1986), since Tugendhat's emphasis of self-determination allows us to connect it to the contemporary debate we are in this dissertation interested in (see for this connection Robert Stern's introduction to the translation of Tugendhat's book; Stern 1986). Tugendhat introduces Heidegger's (and Wittgenstein's) argument with reference to how the modern tradition has been led astray by two influential models of self-consciousness that rely on metaphors from the domain of sight.

One is the subject-object model just introduced, in which self-consciousness is thought of as a relation between a subject to itself as object. This creates the

appearance that a person can have herself “before” herself. The other model is the epistemological model of the inner gaze: self-consciousness, through an inner eye, provides a person with a special kind of access to herself in which the person can observe herself. This relates back to the first possibility that distance taking opens up, as was illustrated above with Descartes. What both models share is the idea that the attention of the person is turned inwards enabling her to *observe* the “core” or “truth” about herself and the kind of being that she is.

Heidegger has given a critique of these images of self-consciousness from a more practical perspective (whereas Wittgenstein can be said to have done so from a more theoretical perspective; see for this observation the way Tugendhat interprets both authors’ critiques). For Heidegger, self-knowledge is not about turning one’s gaze inward in order to apprehend the truth about oneself as if one can ascertain who one is through observation. Rather, on Heidegger’s view, self-knowledge is produced by “adopting a practical, volitional stance toward the unavoidable question of how one is going to live” and one does so by taking an evaluative attitude regarding one’s motivational states (Stern 1986, X).

Heidegger argued that the self should not become a reified object in reflection, a subject-as-object that can be inquired into by methods of observation. Rather, and roughly, the self is for Heidegger the practical stance taken up while regarding one’s motivational states: the practical stance reveals itself in the choice of a person for how she gives expression to herself thereby determining for herself what it means to lead a good life. A person, in order to be an authentic person, must not simply be led by desires and other motivational states, but takes a stance towards these states and as such determines herself.¹⁰ So the practical relation to herself is not one of a subject to an object, but rather one of the self-determination of a person: a person determines the way in which she wants to relate to her desires by forming higher-order evaluative states regarding her lower-order states such as desires and moods. Paul Stern puts this more generally, persons “always exist in such a way that they must adopt a practical relation to their existence (affirmative or negative) in which they evince an understanding of who they are and what they are doing with their lives” (ibid., xix). Tugendhat has called the relation that is created

¹⁰ Within the theoretical domain, the introspective model of self-knowledge (of structuring our self-relation) is replaced with other models: e.g. Richard Moran introduces the transparency-model (2001) and more recently Quassim Cassam on a third-person observational model (2014).

by evaluating one's own motivational and normative states *the practical relation of oneself to oneself* (1986).

This practical relation of oneself to oneself is an abstract relation of the mind to itself; it is, as it were, a *movement of the mind* by which it relates to itself. As I will explain with further detail in the next section, such an abstract movement of the mind is in need of a visualization by which it can be grasped. It is my suggestion that Descartes' image of distance taking, a metaphor from the spatial domain, is still often used to do so. Thus contemporary authors visualize the practical relation of oneself to oneself by the distance taking from one's motivational states in order to evaluate them. However, doing so raises the problem of a standard: if a person's deliberations consist of stepping back, she always seems able to repeat this with the implication that she is in need of an evaluative stance from which she can be sure about her evaluation her motivational states. In other words, through the metaphor of distance taking, persons seem to be in need of a *source of normativity*.

Authors before Heidegger and Wittgenstein could fall back for such a standard on the idea that every person has a substantive core that defines who she is, and of which knowledge can be gained as with any other object of observation. This certain knowledge of oneself acquired through observation could be utilized as the normative foundation of deliberation. After Heidegger's critique however, the search for such a standard has focused on the formal features of a person's will or agency defined by "the capacity for reflective self-evaluation" (Frankfurt 1988, 12). Let me illustrate how I take it that the discussed authors visualize the practical relation of oneself to oneself in terms of distance taking.

Distance taking as metaphor in the contemporary debate

Authors propounding the standard answer see distance taking as the movement that enables a person to take on an evaluative stance towards her desires, reasons, and practical identities. Although these philosophers do not try to define the essence of being a person by the search for certain knowledge, the gap introduced by Descartes between the self and a person's passions is, in a way, kept into place by visualizing the activity of practical deliberation as something that takes place *at a distance* from one's desires, reasons, and practical identities. This use of distance taking is widespread. Korsgaard, for example, says that when "you are aware that you are tempted, say, to do a certain action because you are experiencing a certain desire,

you can step back from that connection and reflect on it” (2009, 19). It is the reflective “distance from our impulses [which] makes it both possible and necessary to decide which ones we will act on: it forces us to act for reasons” (1996b, 100). Frankfurt tells us that we can “detach ourselves from [the immediate content and flow of our own consciousness], and to observe it—as it were—from a distance” (2006, 4), which, as Frankfurt expressed succinctly in earlier work, creates the possibility for “the capacity for reflective self-evaluation” (1988, 12).

Authors defending a narrative theory make use of this metaphor as well. Marya Schechtman tells us that the fact that we can reflect on ourselves “allows us to step back from the flow of experience and from the pull of our various motivations and ask what we ought to do, introducing normative possibilities that are not there for beings that do not have reflective capacities and opening up new dimensions of experience and interaction” (2014, 76). J. David Velleman states: “You can dissociate yourself from other springs of action within you, by reflecting on them from a critical or contemplative distance” (2000, 30). In addition, Alasdair MacIntyre points out that he shares a starting point with Frankfurt: “Frankfurt’s starting point is close to my own, a conception of human agents as differing from animals of other species in our ability to stand back from our desires and other motives and to reflect upon whether or not we desire to be motivated as we presently are” (2016, 44).

Both Korsgaard and Frankfurt however, and narrativist philosophers as well, use the idea of distance taking both to visualize the way in which a person gets into the space of practical deliberation and also for the structure of this space. In other words, practical deliberation itself is seen as a process of steps of distance taking; or to paraphrase Korsgaard, a further stretch of distance-taking requires a further stretch of endorsement (1996b, 119). This shows that the metaphor of distance taking is key for these authors in visualized the practical relation of oneself to oneself.

Although the focus is on the metaphor of distance taking, in addition to this metaphor these authors are in need of another one. This is due to that distance taking creates a specific problem: if we place ourselves at a distance from our desires, reasons, and practical identities in reflection, we need to *dissolve* the distance in order to become active, acting selves again. This problem is solved by introducing the act of identification or endorsement. Frankfurt tells us that as reflexivity and thereby distance taking “impairs our capacity for untroubled

spontaneity” (2006, 4), we need the “fundamental manoeuvre” of identification (ibid., 11) so we can take “*responsibility for*” our “own attitudes and dispositions” (ibid., 7). At the distance towards ourselves, we deliberate on the question whether we want to identify with a first-order desire or deny it its influence—we create second-order volitions (1988, 16). Every movement of distance taking requires a further movement of endorsement to get us back to being active beings.

Now, it is my contention that the uncritical use of the metaphor of distance taking leads these authors into certain pitfalls. For example, insofar we always seem to be able to take a further stretch of reflection by distancing ourselves another step, we seem to be in need of a *source of normativity*—it becomes unclear what the normative rock-bottom can be as an infinite regress threatens. Although these authors do not search for a core self, they still form a normative rock bottom as the fundamental standard for justifying the choice for an action in which practical deliberation terminates. For example, a person does not only take distance towards desires in order to evaluate them, she also engages with desires in order to understand them better. This engagement means to grapple with the desire in order to get a better understanding of it: the desire is not something *immediately* known, but something that can appear as something strange to oneself as well. A simple example is if you find a desire for something sweet in yourself. This desire may be a reason to reflect on what kind of sweetness you desire: chocolate, candies, fruit, or juice. Thus a person can inquire into what exactly she desires as this is not (always) immediately clear and she does so by engaging with the desire. The movement of distance taking does not capture this aspect of the practical self-relation.

I question however whether it is warranted to visualize the practical relation of oneself to oneself in terms of a process of deliberation that is constituted by the maneuvers of distance taking and identification. I argue in **Section 2.3** that a more restrictive use of this metaphor in visualizing the practical self-relation seems appropriate. Before I do so, I first introduce some theoretical considerations on the function of metaphors in order to create the right context in which it can be shown that metaphors *are* necessary, that the metaphor of distance taking does have its (specific) place in a theory of practical deliberation, and to show that metaphors should be applied critically.

Section 2.2 *On the function of metaphor in general*

Korsgaard, Frankfurt, and others use distance taking to visualize the practical relation of oneself to oneself: the capacity to take an evaluative stance regarding how you want to act and who you want to be. However, I contend that distance taking should not be the sole image used in visualizing this relation. Before making my case for this, I will introduce some general background on the theory of metaphors by 1) specifying the necessary use of metaphors for the movements of the mind and 2) by sketching some general ideas on the use of metaphors.

Relational determinations and visualization through metaphors

Paul Ziche, in an article on the creative potential of dead metaphors, shows convincingly that relational determinations (*relationale Bestimmungen*) are best grasped by comprehending these relations figuratively through the use of metaphors.¹¹ Simple examples of relational determinations are causality or argumentation, as in “A follows from B” or “A is the reason for B” (Ziche 2005, 127). The visualizing power of metaphors has made the use of metaphors in philosophy pervasive. Ziche gives the following examples: “Wenn Leibniz von den >>Fenstern<< der Monaden spricht, Hegel vom >>Leben<< des Begriffs oder die gesamte philosophische Tradition vom >>Aufstieg<< zur Wahrheit, liegen eindeutig metaphorische Redeweisen vor” (ibid., 123).

Now, there seems to be a special class of relational determinations for which it is true that its members cannot be grasped *without* the use of metaphors. This class can be called the “movements of the mind,” or as Ziche classifies it, the “rules of reflection” (*Regeln der Reflexion*) that describe the functioning of our capacities for practical deliberation and theoretical reasoning (ibid., 127). Ziche locates the reason for this in that we, as persons, encounter the need for visualization (*Veranschaulichung*) in deliberation and reasoning. Yet, regarding the movements of the mind we lack any sort of sensory input. Without visualization, we find ourselves incapable of grasping the movements of the mind and as such we find ourselves in need of an image or illustration: “die Forderung nach Veranschaulichung [führt] hier mit Notwendigkeit zur Metapher, also zu einer übertragenen Veranschaulichung”, because metaphors are capable of giving insight into movements of the mind by showing “eine gemeinsame Struktur” (ibid., 128).

¹¹ The idea that relational determinations cannot be grasped *without* the use of metaphors lies at the foundation of George Lakoff & Mark Johnson’s theory of metaphors in *Metaphors We Live By* (1999).

Immanuel Kant is an example of an author who has made extensive use of metaphors in order to grasp the movements of the mind. He uses spatial metaphors, for example, to explain the faculties of the mind and how they relate. Our faculties have their own “domain” in which they reside; they have their own legislative “territory” over which they rule; and the gap between practical and theoretical reason is understood as a “chasm” that needs “to be bridged” by (reflective) judgment (see for recent attempt to map the use of metaphor in Kant: Kauark-Leite, et al. 2015). Ziche refers to a passage in which Kant clarifies the depiction of concepts that are not descriptions, but rather “ein Symbol für die Reflexion.” Kant refers here to metaphors such as “ground,” “depends on,” “follows from,” and “substance” (Kant KU par. 59, A253f., B257 as cited by Ziche 2005: 123-124).

Just as the examples given here, the practical relation of oneself to oneself consists of different movements of the mind. A person evaluates, judges, forms intentions, takes distance, deliberates, and imagines. Authors propounding the standard answer visualize these movements through distance taking and the subsequent need for endorsement. However, it is problematic to restrict oneself to these two metaphors for the visualization of the practical self-relation. At least, I will argue for this in the next section.

Moreover, to have a metaphor available to visualize the practical movement of the mind does not mean that all images that could visualize this movement are exhausted. As Ziche makes us aware: “Sogar für ein- und dieselbe Relation sind, wie Kant zeigt, unterschiedliche metaphorische Veranschaulichungen möglich: Der Schlußsatz >folgt< aus den Vordersätzen, >hängt< aber von ihnen >ab<” (ibid., 128). Before arguing for the plausibility of the two above-mentioned reasons, I will say something about the way metaphors can trigger us in finding new perspectives on and understanding of an object of reflection and how they can hide from us.

Creating new insight and reviving hidden metaphors

Take “Juliet is the sun” as an example for a metaphor.¹² Linking the sun metaphorically to Juliet makes it possible to transfer the qualities of the sun to Juliet. All of a sudden Juliet is radiant, gives warmth, and indicates the beginning and the end of the day (for Romeo). Such is the power of metaphor. However, it is not the case that Juliet has all these qualities in the same way as the sun: the transferred

¹² I have found out afterwards that Stanley Cavell explicates this specific metaphor in a similar way in his ‘Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy’ (1969).

qualities beget a new meaning as qualities of Juliet. Even on a cold winter day the thought of Juliet can warm Romeo whereas the sun has no such power. The radiating Juliet may blind Romeo, but not in the way as the sun, looking directly at it, does.

A metaphor transfers the qualities from, what is called in the literature, the secondary subject of the metaphor (the sun) to the primary subject (Juliet). In doing so, the metaphor creates new meaning or opens up further understanding of the primary subject.¹³ This defines the function of metaphor: it makes us creative, or in Kant's terminology, the metaphor allows us to "think more." Two authors who have written extensively on (the function of) metaphor are Paul Ricoeur and Max Black. For Ricoeur, a metaphor lives in the sense that it makes us see the world in a new and different way (1976/1986). In a similar vein, Black has argued that a metaphor creates new meaning by disclosing unfamiliar insight into the primary subject (1962/1993).¹⁴

Despite the disagreement in the debate on the truth-value of metaphors—as Donald Davidson (1978) points out, we would rather say that a metaphor is badly chosen than that it is false¹⁵—metaphors do seem to have the power to create new qualities in the primary subject, the ascription of which can be true or false. As Davidson agrees, the "visions, thoughts, and feelings inspired by the metaphor" can be "true or false" (ibid., 41). However, the qualities of the primary subject are not contested on the same grounds that they would be contested upon in the secondary subject. To reject that Juliet is radiant and gives warmth is not to claim that plants do not start to grow when she shines upon them with her smile. Rather, rejecting that Juliet has qualities of the sun means to argue that she is cold-hearted or that she never smiles; or, perhaps, is a way of pointing out that Juliet is depressed and therefore far from radiant. The contestation of the qualities transferred from secondary to primary subject does not (necessarily or only) happen on the ground that the primary subject fails to be the same as the secondary subject or by contesting the metaphor as metaphor, but by questioning whether the qualities of the secondary subject in their newfound meaning apply to the primary subject.

¹³ Throughout this section, I always speak of creating new meaning or opening up/discovering new meaning. This has to do with the two main relationist accounts of metaphors: 1) the comparison theory holds that new meaning is discovered in comparing the primary subject with the secondary. 2) The interactionist theory holds that new meaning is created through the interaction between the primary and secondary subject. The difference is, for the argument of this chapter, negligible.

¹⁴ With referencing only these two authors I focus on the relationalists account of metaphor.

¹⁵ "What distinguishes metaphor is not meaning but use" (Davidson 1978, 43). Davidson argues that "most metaphorical sentences are *patently false*" (ibid., 42, cf. 41).

Within the literature on metaphor, a distinction is made between metaphors which are obvious metaphors (“Juliet is the sun”) and metaphors which are “so tief in den Sprachgebrauch eingedrungen [, dass sie] nicht mehr als Übertragungen auffallen” (Ziche 2005, 123). Examples are metaphors for argumentation, such as “follows from” or “is grounded in.” Ricoeur has called this second category *hidden* or *worn-out* metaphors (1986, 285)—a different label, used by Ziche, is dead metaphors. Ricoeur calls this category of metaphors hidden, because it “is concealed in the figure of the concept” (ibid., 287). In other words, the metaphor presents itself to us as a concept because the secondary subject (distance taking + endorsement) is perceived as a conceptual substitute for the primary subject (practical relation of oneself to oneself).

An implication of a metaphor that is hidden in a concept is that we take the primary subject as the literal bearer of the figurative or metaphorical qualities. This danger is most imminent with relational determinations because of the necessity to visualize these with metaphors. In some cases, such as “A follows from B” or “A is grounded in B”, this may be innocuous. In other cases, it is more problematic. Take as an example the chasm between the phenomenal and the noumenal domain of which Kant speaks. This chasm might give rise to the idea that we need something to bridge the chasm connecting the two domains. But it might be more plausible to think of the phenomenal and the noumenal in non-spatial terms: they might be specific applications of the same faculty (rationality) and as such there is no chasm and no problem of connecting them—as Fichte proposed by taking action as the basic category in which theoretical and practical reason are linked from the start. Therefore it is important to be conscious of metaphors, so that one can reflect on the correct application of these metaphors. In extension, it is important to become aware of distance taking as metaphor and to reflect on its correct application.

The good news is that a hidden metaphor can be revived as metaphor. Ricoeur suggests that by placing a hidden metaphor in “a new act of discourse” can revive it. More elaborately, “Only revivifying the semantic aim of metaphorical utterance in this way [i.e. in a new act of discourse],” Ricoeur tells us, “recreates the conditions that will permit a confrontation that is itself enlivening between the modes of discourse fully recognized in their difference” (ibid., 259). In less technical terms, Ricoeur tells us that we need to bring the two sides of the metaphor—the primary and secondary subject—again in relation to each other *as* metaphor in

which the secondary subject metaphorically highlights certain aspects of the primary subject thereby providing conceptual clarity to the primary subject. We should refrain therewith from treating them as equivalent concepts. This will enable us to “think more,” i.e. to open up the creative potential of the metaphor, but to restrict its use in a conceptually plausible way at the same time.

I acknowledge that Ricoeur’s theory of metaphor is embedded in a much richer framework of meaning and knowledge, as his theory of metaphor is quintessential to his understanding of hermeneutics.¹⁶ I skip over this here, because I only wish to take up the idea of reviving a hidden metaphor by placing it in a new act of discourse. I turn now to this regarding the metaphor of distance taking.

Section 2.3 *Distance taking as metaphor: its application*

Luckily we have already retrieved the primary subject of the metaphor of distance taking in the guise of the practical relation of oneself to oneself. The task that remains is to revive the “semantic aim” of the metaphor of distance taking and to correct its use by placing it into a new act of discourse explicating what aspect of the practical self-relation it visualizes. That is the task of this section. I will do this by, first, pointing out what I take to be the correct application of the metaphor of distance taking: namely, distance taking visualizes how we are able to pause the motivational force of desires and other motivational states. Secondly, I argue that if its use is extended to the process of practical deliberation itself as well, there is the danger of falling into certain pitfalls as the metaphor of distance taking, in blinding us, causes us to fall in certain pitfalls that give the Unification Ideal its initial appeal.

The use of distance taking as a metaphor defined by the limits of its application

The image of a hydraulic system is popular in philosophy to visualize the interaction between desires. R. Jay Wallace describes this metaphor as follows: “The hydraulic conception pictures desires as vectors of force to which persons are subject, where

¹⁶ Ricoeur, in his *Interpretation Theory*, positions himself against the Romanticist tradition of hermeneutics (Dilthey and Schleiermacher, for example). The Romanticist hermeneutic tradition goes wrong, according to Ricoeur, in its psychologizing conception of hermeneutics. According to this conception, understanding a text means to search for the original meaning of the author *qua* intended meaning. So in a way, it is the author’s purpose in producing the text and not new insight and knowledge that we ought to seek. With this, and this seems to be Ricoeur’s most fundamental criticism, the Romanticist tradition posits an *end point* of the hermeneutic process (Ricoeur 1976, 22-23). For Ricoeur this is problematic as new meaning and knowledge can always be discovered; it is a perpetual process of meaning searching where metaphors are central, because metaphors have precisely this ability to disclose new insight and thereby new meaning in and knowledge of a subject matter.

the force of such desires in turn determines causally the action the persons perform” (1999, 630). I take this to be a convincing image insofar automatic processes within a person move her to action, as is the case, for example, in Hume’s theory of the passions. However, persons have the capacity to disengage from this hydraulic system enabling themselves to engage in practical deliberation. It is my contention that the image of distance taking is only at its place in visualizing this act of disengagement from the hydraulic system of desires. In taking distance, the motivational force of desires is paused opening up space for the activity of practical deliberation. I find it problematic to extend the use of distance taking to visualizing deliberation itself, as it seems that we *engage* with our desires in deliberation. Persons inquire into what exactly it is that they desire and what the different ways could be to satisfy it. The difference is that in deliberation we do not take our desires as motivational forces, but as normative suggestions (cf. Korsgaard 1996b, 96).¹⁷ The act of practical deliberation is to engage with desires as normative suggestions and not as motivational forces. As such, desires appear differently to us from a third-personal perspective of observation and a first-personal perspective of engagement. In order to engage with desires and thus not experience them as forces, we have to disengage from, take distance from, the hydraulic system of desires and at the distance engage with them as normative suggestions.¹⁸

That we engage with desires as normative suggestions in deliberation can be observed, for example, in a formal representation of the Frankfurtian theory of the will. Formally, first-order desires are depicted as ‘A wants X (not)’ and second-order desires as ‘A wants (not) to want X’. In this formal representation of the second-order desire, the engagement with the first-order desire is directly apparent as the first-order desire is *incorporated* within the evaluative second-order desire. Thus not only inquiring into a desire, but also evaluating a desire appears here as a form of *engagement* with the desire. Moreover, the second-order desire is an evaluation of the first, which thus takes the first-order desire as normative suggestions that can be evaluated. This also shows in how Richard Moran makes use of Frankfurtian

¹⁷ This suggestion can be found in Cheshire Calhoun’s treatment of depression in her text ‘Losing One’s Self’ (2008). In this text, she says that a depression is not so much a dam in a hydraulic system, but rather the disengagement of the will with the projects in one’s life. That is, depression makes a person to disengage with PD^{PO}.

¹⁸ I want to point out a different metaphor that might be appropriate for the pausing of the motivational force of desires. This metaphor is that persons have a power similar to a clutch: they can put the hydraulic system (itself a metaphor from the technical domain as well) into a free gear thereby creating the ability to *choose* the gear (the desire) that will become active.

language. According to Moran, a person has the capacity to have “attitudes toward [her] attitudes”: A person can appreciate her desire for a beer and she can hate her unanswerd love (2001, 60). Moran continues that practical deliberation is only successful if there is a “mutual responsiveness (between the attitude, and one’s response to it)” (ibid.).¹⁹ If a person appreciates her desire for a beer, the desire should be reinforced making it more attractive to satisfy. So a person’s evaluations do not take place “at a distance” from her desires and should not, as her evaluations should influence her desires and vice versa. It is my suggestion that this is possible because desires appear as normative suggestions with which a person can engage in a normative way; i.e. in a way that allows desires to be reason-responsive.²⁰

This image of mutual responsiveness not only elucidates how we engage with desires in evaluating them, it also elucidates how we can gain better a understanding of desires through engaging with them. Say a person endorses her desire for a beer. As she looks at the menu of the bar, she sees that they only offer two types of beer, Weizen and Kölsch. Being disappointed by this, she becomes aware that she actually wants a Belgian beer. This awareness may lead her to resign her endorsement of the desire for a beer.

To summarize, after taking distance, a desire appears not as a *doing* (motivational force) but as a *proposal for doing* (normative suggestion) and in deliberation a person engages with this proposal by exploring and evaluating it. Korsgaard confirms the first part of this image when she says that it “is from within the deliberative perspective that we understand our desires as providing suggestions which we may take or leave” (Korsgaard 1996b, 96). As a proposal, a person has the possibility to investigate the desire: What is it exactly that she desires? Does she want this? And if so, does she have good reasons for it? How does this desire relate to other desires that she has? A person engages with the desire by evaluating it and by inquiring into what exactly is desired, therewith improving her understanding of it.

¹⁹ I assume that a similar structure can be articulated for many authors in the debate.

²⁰ Of course, we sometimes find out that desires are resistant to our reasons. In such cases, desires can feature as motivational forces in our deliberations. For example, if they are so strong that engagement through deliberation does not have the desired response in the evaluated desire (our love does not disappear even after evaluating it silly). However, this only shows that we can take up desires as factual circumstances (motivational forces) up in deliberation, just as we can account for other circumstances in our practical deliberations as well by take them along in our calculations about what to do and try to counteract them. So the question is left open whether the desire as motivational force is influenced the moment a person returns to the spontaneity of action.

I conclude that distance taking visualizes the aspect of our practical relation of oneself to oneself in which we disengage from the hydraulic system of desires thereby pausing the motivational force of desires making them into normative suggestions. Interestingly, with the visualization of “mutual responsiveness,” we move away from spatial metaphors towards communicative ones. At this distance, we engage with our motivational states in which language such as “suggesting,” “declining,” and “engaging with” comes naturally. Korsgaard confirms this in a way when she says that a person in constituting “her own identity” is “quite literally interacting with” herself because constituting “your own agency is a matter of choosing only those reasons you can share with yourself” (2009, 202).

The over-extended use of the metaphor of distance taking: some pitfalls

I end this section by discussing the dangers involved in the over-extended use of the metaphor of distance taking. I will point towards three possible pitfalls, which give the Unification Ideal its initial appeal.

1) By using the metaphor of distance taking too extensively, it may appear as if we *break down* or come to see ourselves as “being in pieces.” Korsgaard writes, for example, that self-consciousness “transforms psychic unity from a natural state [as it is in animals] into something that has to be achieved” (ibid., 125). And Frankfurt says that we can create “a sort of division within our minds” and that we, unlike “Subhuman animals” who “cannot take themselves apart,” need to “put [our] minds back together” (2006, 4 & 13). Theorists defending a narrative thesis of practical identity argue that we need to make the otherwise disconnected life-events into a whole by narrative story telling (Davenport 2010, Schechtman 1996). It is clear how this leads to the idea of a Unification Ideal: the better a person can restore the unity or constitute herself into a whole again, the more she recreates the original position in which she was *before* taking distance towards herself.

However, in its restricted sense, the metaphor of distance taking only warrants a division between spontaneous action and practical deliberation; i.e. the movement of the mind that truly can be visualized as a movement of distance taking is when a person disengages from her capacity of spontaneous action. In order to deliberate, the spontaneity of action is paused by taking distance towards the desires as motivational force. The only thing to be restored here, then, is spontaneous action and for this we only need the idea that deliberation terminates

in choice or action. It does not follow that we “break down” in a way that we need to “put our minds back together” through deliberation guided by the Unification Ideal. Rather, it seems that in engaging with ourselves we become aware of parts that were already there to begin with. In other words, this awareness is the awareness of our inner reality, an aspect of our environment as explicated in **Section 1.7**, which we ideally turn into normative suggestions through the act of distance taking. Such a view would imply that we could inquire into and explore how these parts interact and work together, but need not imply that the aim of deliberation is unification.

2) As spatial metaphor, the image of distance taking invokes the question “where to” and the related question “at what place can we stop taking distance?” The practical self-relation is structured after the idea that we start out with desires, take distance from them, towards reasons and by another step of distance taking end up at the level of practical identities. Since we can continue to take distance an infinite regress threatens giving rise to the question at which place we can stop taking distance. The obvious answer seems to be that we can stop if we have found a normatively secure or neutral zone. This structure can be observed in Korsgaard’s *The Sources of Normativity* in which she indicates that all practical identities are contingent—and thus open for distance taking—except our need for a practical identity. This is the normatively secure ground from which to start deliberating. A similar structure is found in Frankfurt’s theory of the will in which higher-order desires can be stacked on top of each other until we encounter our *volitional necessities*—substantive aspects of the will from which we are practically incapable of distancing ourselves to. As I will show, for narrativists our coherent, unified life-story is the secure starting point by providing self-intelligibility (**Chapter 5**).

As distance taking provides us with the image that conflicts are solved by taking a step back, the Unification Ideal becomes more appealing as a threatening infinite regress needs to be prevented. Because while the fundamental level of normativity itself can be in conflict, the idea is that taking a step back does not bring us a more abstract level of deliberation, but rather provides us with an eagle eye perspective in which we can sort and prioritize this fundamental level. Once the fundamental level of normativity is without conflict, we are given confidence, or at least tranquility, regarding the correctness of the starting point of our deliberations and only then can come to a decision regarding what to do. However, if the metaphor of distance taking only visualizes the aspect of pausing our desires as

motivational force, then a different image appears. In engaging with desires, reasons, and identities we do not necessarily take distance from a desire, reason or identity, we move into a different perspective from which we evaluate it. That is to say, we place it within a network of other desires, reasons, and identities and search for how we can and should understand it and in what way it fits (or not fits). The metaphor that can be used for this might be the image of a mutual responsiveness in which conflicts can exist but are balanced by the person.

3) The metaphor of distance taking opens up the question of “Who am I *truly*?” in a problematic way. By structuring practical deliberation in terms of “distance taking,” we seem to go higher up a chain of desires, reasons, and practical identities where the higher states get more persistent and abstract. This gives them an air of being more “truly” an expression of who we are than mere fleeting desires or, for example, emotions. I take this to be a problematic structure. Moreover, such conceptualization invites us to think that there is a “deep” or “core” self behind fleeting desires. It seems that by taking more and more distance from yourself, you become able to find out what is *essentially* you; what belongs to the core of who you are. In this way, our practical identities are granted a status as starting points of our deliberations because they are seen as the most definitive of who we are.

However, if we do not think that the metaphor of distance taking applies here, we can see that it is not in every situation the case that the more persistent and abstract identities are more truly our own and thereby define our core self. For example, you could wake up with a sudden aversion against your job. And after a few weeks, you may become aware of that this aversion does not go away: you have lost any intrinsic motivation to continue with it. Here a sudden feeling or emotion becomes a reason to question your commitment to a practical identity. Or in trying something new, you may realize that you truly enjoy it. Your enjoyment becomes a reason to commit yourself to a particular identity. The metaphor of distance taking, then, might lead us into the pitfall of taking our practical identities as the sole grounds for practical deliberation. As I will suggest in **Chapter 6** however, although our identities provide us with evaluative standpoints for practical deliberation, they are not necessarily the starting points of it. Rather, our identities can be understood as poles of orientation within the normative domain. This means that an emotion felt one single morning may be as truly an expression of oneself as a practical identity to which one has already been committed for over ten years. I do not deny

the possibility of authentic self-expression, I deny only the idea that authentic self-expression always needs to come from what authors have called a “deep self” found at the abstract level of practical identities.

Section 2.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have argued that the metaphor of distance taking should be restricted to the aspect of the practical relation of oneself to oneself in which we pause the motivational force of desires. In this way, we create the possibility to understand the desire as normative suggestion to be evaluated and inquired into. In the evaluation of desires, and in inquiring into them, we place ourselves at a distance towards desires *as motivational forces*, but we engage with them *as normative suggestions*. For this engagement, metaphors from the communicative domain are naturally used. I further argued that an extended use of the metaphor of distance taking leads to three pitfalls which all three make the Unification Ideal attractive as an ideal to guide practical deliberation—exactly as done in the standard answer. The answer to the third research question is my contention that the extended use of the metaphor of distance taking is an important background condition that gives an initial appeal to the Unification Ideal. These reflections on the use of metaphors for the visualization of the practical self-relation will come back again in the concluding **Chapter 7**.

By critically discussing this extended use of the metaphor of distance taking, I have given some reason for doubting the Unification Ideal as a necessary ideal in practical deliberation. In the next three chapters, I scrutinize the reasons given for the Unification Ideal—as expounded in **Chapter 1**—by discussing three theories in which the Unification Ideal plays the role as ultimate guide for practical deliberation. In this way, I aim to answer the first research question: Is the Unification Ideal always the ideal to strive for in practical deliberation, or are there situations in which striving for unity is ineffective or even contra-productive as when the volitional disunity is constitutive of a person? I do so by breaking it down into three sub-questions by which I summarize the arguments in the subsequent three chapters: 1. What is the articulated ideal of unity? 2. Which grounds are given to aim for unification in deliberation? 3. Do these grounds hold up to closer scrutiny? I argue in each chapter that the Unification Ideal is at times ineffective or even counterproductive. A proposal for a different ideal of practical deliberation is

developed in **Chapter 6** for which a contribution is developed in each of the following chapters. This adds a fourth question: 4. What is the positive contribution of this chapter?

Chapter 3 Harry G. Frankfurt and the Unification Ideal

Harry G. Frankfurt, together with Ronald Dworkin (1970), has placed the idea that persons are distinguished by their “capacity for reflective self-evaluation” firm into the modern-day philosophical discourse (1988, 12). In his famous essay ‘Freedom of the will and the concept of a person’ (1988), Frankfurt argues, contra P. F. Strawson and others, that a person is not identified by having both psychological and material properties. This is also true of many animals and thus “does violence to our language” (ibid., 11). Rather, a person is identified by “the capacity for reflective self-evaluation that is manifested in the formation of second-order desires” (ibid., 12).

In this chapter, I give a depiction of Frankfurt’s theory of the hierarchical will and I show in what way it includes the Unification Ideal with regard to practical deliberation. I explicate two reasons Frankfurt gives for the Unification Ideal: unification is necessary because a person can only do one action at a time and a person can only be in a state of satisfaction with who she is if her will is unified (**Section 3.1**). I argue that Frankfurt’s reasons are not sufficient to support the Unification Ideal as a person can both know what to do through deliberation and be satisfied with who she is even if she is volitionally conflicted (**Section 3.2**). I call this state of satisfaction with who one is without being unified “practical orientation” and I explore what this amounts to (**Section 3.3**).

Section 3.1 *Frankfurt on wholeheartedness and the Unification Ideal*

In **Section 2.3**, I discussed succinctly a formal conception of Frankfurt’s theory of the hierarchical will. In this section, I explicate Frankfurt’s theory more extensively. I focus on care and wholeheartedness elucidating how Frankfurt’s idea of wholeheartedness includes the Unification Ideal. I end this section by explicating the reasons found in Frankfurt that speak in favor of the Unification Ideal.

Frankfurt’s theory of the will and the infinite regress problem

Frankfurt’s theory of the will is best explained by starting with the interplay between two types of desires that define his conception of the basic structure of the will: first-order desires that have actions and states of affairs as their object (“to party” and “to be rested,” respectively) and second-order desires that have first-order desires as their object. A person having the first-order desire “I want to party” can have the second-order desire “I want to want (this desire) to party”. Based on

these two basic types of desires, Frankfurt introduces a special category of second-order desires. These second-order desires do not merely have a first-order desire as object of evaluation, but include the want for this particular first-order desire to be effective in action (“I want to want to party and for the desire “I want to party” to *effectively move me to action*”). Frankfurt calls this category of desires volitions.

Volitions were initially Frankfurt’s answer to the problem of free will: he claimed that if an effective first-order desire is endorsed by a volition than the person acts out of free will. However, as Frankfurt himself pointed out after critique by, among others, Gary Watson (1975), “the model’s central notion of a hierarchy of desires” is not adequate at explaining “in what way an individual with second-order desires or volitions may be less wanton with respect to *them* than a wholly unreflective creature is with respect to its first-order desires” (1988, 165). This is the well-known infinite regress problem: if a second-order volition guarantees that a first-order desire is her “own,” does a person need a third-order state to guarantee that the volition is “her own,” and this *ad infinitum*?²¹

Frankfurt did see the potential threat early on and proposed that the regress could be stopped by “decisive identification” that resonates “throughout the potentially endless array of higher-orders” (ibid., 21). However, as Frankfurt left it unclear what “decisive identification” amounts to, his answer was found to be unsatisfactory. In the following three decades, Frankfurt introduced **1)** care, or volitional necessities, as the rock-bottom substance of a person’s will and **2)** wholeheartedness as the form of endorsement (or rejection) which can stop the regress (cf. Kalis & Schaubroeck 2014).²²

Frankfurt on care, wholeheartedness, & unity

1) Fortuitous for the investigations of this dissertation, Frankfurt’s concept of care is best introduced by explicating its function in practical deliberation and it is care’s role in deliberation that I am interested in. In his Tanner Lectures, Frankfurt points out that our “deliberations and our actions must be guided by procedures and standards in which it is appropriate for us to have mature confidence” (2006, 29).

²¹ See for a clear exposition of the infinite regress problem with regard to the hierarchical will conception, see (Bransen,1996).

²² In this section, I skip over the problem of how the will as hierarchy of desires (Frankfurt-1) and the will as a manifestation of what we care about (Frankfurt-2) can be thought coherently together. For a convincing treatment of this problem, see (Cuypers 2000).

We are in need of such an evaluative standard in order to “carry out a rational evaluation of [our] way of living” (2004, 24). Care can provide such an evaluative standard as care “is the creator of inherent or terminal value and of importance” in a person’s life and therefore “it is the ultimate ground of practical rationality” (ibid., 56). By caring about my dissertation, it has importance for how I give shape to my life as it guides me in the actions I undertake. Moreover, I can care about my dissertation although I recognize that it has no inherent value. To conclude, care, as creator of value and importance in a person’s life, “is neither affective nor cognitive: it’s volitional” (ibid., 41) and as such it constitutes “the configuration of the will” (ibid., 43). By shaping a person’s will, her cares provide the grounds for a person’s practical deliberation.

Frankfurt calls those cares, fundamental to a person’s will, *volitional necessities*. Volitional necessities define both the unthinkable and the necessary for a person (1988) as they “limit the possibilities that are open to [a person’s] will, that is, they determine what he cannot will and what he cannot help willing” (1999, 114). The paradigm example for Frankfurt is parental love: a parent cannot *not* will to care about and care for her children, and nothing can bring her to will otherwise. Thus, a person cannot *not* will to care about the objects of her volitional necessities. Ideally, then, a person’s volitional necessities also function as the fundamental evaluative standpoints of practical deliberation—they are the cares that define after all the shape of a person’s will. As I will point out later on however, Frankfurt does not think that volitional necessities necessarily occupy this role in deliberation (and as I will explicate may appear as insurmountable motivational forces instead).

One characteristic of cares is of especial importance for the discussion below. Cares, and thereby volitional necessities, are characterized by their persistency: the “notion of guidance, and hence the notion of caring, implies a degree of persistence” (1988, 84). In later work, Frankfurt specifies this with that a care is the “wilful persistence of a (specific) desire” (2004, 16). It follows from this exposition of cares that volitional necessities give a person “more or less stable motivational structures that shape his preferences and that guide and limit his conduct” (1999, 129). Compared to more fleeting desires that have a concrete action or state of affairs as object, volitional necessities are standing dispositions of caring which “can be almost anything—a life, a quality of experience, a person, a group, a moral ideal, a nonmoral ideal, a tradition, whatever” (2006, 40).

We see here that Frankfurt follows the structure of the standard answer that visualizes the practical relation of oneself to oneself by the metaphor of distance taking: first-order desires are evaluated in light of volitions and volitions in light of volitional necessities. If an action is grounded in a volitional necessity, then a person can have confidence in her practical conclusion, i.e. her choice for an action.

2) However, if a person's volitional necessities conflict, they seem to lose their guiding function for practical deliberation. For example, if a person both cares about starting a family and the pursuit of a career but is confronted with circumstances preventing her from expressing both, she might be guided in opposite directions causing her to not know what to do. In other words, the person is unable to create a viable action perspective for herself. The problem of this conflict "*within* his volitional complex", is that the person "is not merely in conflict with forces "outside" him; rather, he himself is divided."²³ As a result, the conflict "either tends to paralyze [the person's] will and to keep him from acting at all, or it tends to remove him from his will so that his will operates without his participation" (1988, 21). The problem with volitional disunity, then, is that it paralyzes a person. As explicated in **Chapter 1**, the standard answer holds that the confidence to make a decisive decision comes from the unity of a person's volitional make-up. Therefore, due to the conflict the person cannot have mature confidence in the conclusion of her deliberations.

According to Frankfurt, the cause of a person's paralysis is "the absence of wholeheartedness" (ibid., 165) and the solution is thereby, in one way, simple. The conflicted person needs to restore wholeheartedness as being "wholehearted means having a will that is undivided" and for the person to have "no ambivalence in his attitude toward himself" (2004, 95). Frankfurt combines here an ontological claim about the structure of the will and a psychological claim that this means that the person has no ambivalence in her attitude towards herself. This becomes even more explicit in that Frankfurt equates wholeheartedness with the psychological state "of the entire psychic system [...] constituted by the absence of any tendency or inclination to alter its condition" (1999, 104). Wholeheartedness is, as the opposite of the conflicted will, not only the volitional unity of the will (2004, 98) but also a state of the entire psychic system as one of contentment. The initial plausibility of this connection can be explicated, as it is intuitive that a person can judge that there

²³ See Frankfurt's paper 'Identification and Wholeheartedness' (1988) in which he distinguishes these two classes of conflict.

is a better state of her will to be in but, being wholehearted, she does not care about bringing this state about. However, as has been pointed out before with regard to identification and alienation (Schroeder & Arpaly 1999), here also the psychological state of being without a tendency to want to alter the condition of the will can occur apart from the ontological state of being wholehearted. I will argue for this later on in this chapter. To conclude, although Frankfurt says explicitly that wholeheartedness reflects “the organization of the will, not its temperature” (1999, 100) referring to the “totality of things that a person cares about—together with his ordering of how important to him they are” (2004, 23), in his elucidation he ties it up to a psychological counterpart to give plausibility to his idea of wholeheartedness but of which it seems possible that it can be realized *without* wholeheartedness.²⁴

Volitional necessities as practical identities

Now care, volitional necessity, and wholeheartedness are introduced, we can say a bit on how the conceptual framework Frankfurt defends relates to the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 1. Because it is not obvious that cares and volitional necessities have the same status in practical deliberation as practical identities despite the fact that they are both the foundational rock bottom. In the now presented considerations, I will first point out the overlaps, then the dissimilarities, and I conclude by pointing out why these might not be as bad as even a benign interpreter would think.

Like practical identities, volitional necessities guide a person in practical deliberation. A person’s care consists “in the fact that he *guides* himself by reference to it” (Frankfurt 1999, 110-111). Care provides an evaluative stance for lower-order desires. Moreover, Frankfurt explains that volitional necessities constitute a person’s personality (ibid., 99): for example, “Wholehearted love”, which are volitional necessities for Frankfurt, “expresses what we, as active individuals, cannot help being” (2006, 51) and it “profoundly shapes our personal identities and the ways in which we experience our lives” (ibid., 43; cf. 1999, 132 & 137). A person expresses her volitional necessities in the choice for the desires she acts upon. So far, so good.

However, there is an aspect to cares that is in tension with talk about “commitment” and deliberation on the level of practical identities, which both seem

²⁴ “Wholeheartedness is only a structural characteristic, after all, which has to do with volitional unity or integrity” (2004, 98).

to indicate a voluntaristic image of our commitments to our practical identities. Cares, for Frankfurt, are for the agent to be discovered, not to be created. This becomes most clear in that For Frankfurt our will “can only be what nature and life makes of us, and that is not so readily up to us”—our will has a reality of its own (ibid., 101). We “cannot help being” what we are as our volitional necessities are not under our direct volitional control (ibid., 114). In this way, it seems that reason is bound by our fundamental cares, our volitional necessities, and this is not the image sketched in **Chapter 1**. This has fundamentally to do with that I am interested in the role of cares in practical deliberation, not in their role in the constitution or shape of the will.

There are two reasons for which we need not accept this image. The first dives deeper into the status of cares and volitional necessities in Frankfurt’s theory. I discuss this in three steps. **I)** Although a person has no direct volitional control over her cares as they are given this does not mean that a person needs to *accept* them as evaluative stances. Frankfurt makes this clear in his response to Gary Watson’s ‘Volitional Necessities’ (2002, 147) who argues that Frankfurt’s conception of volitional necessity implies both an endorsement and a caring criteria of identification, which can however come apart since a person’s endorsement is up to her and her cares, as explained, are not. Frankfurt’s response to this is to argue that for him identification is neither. Rather, identification, must be understood as a form of *acceptance*, since “I may identify with desires of which I do not approve” (2002, 161).

II) This implies that a person can take up a different evaluative stances in practical deliberation than a specific volitional necessity: she “may resist the grip of a volitional necessity, or [...] may endeavor to free [her]self from it entirely” (ibid., 162). In this way, a person can attempt to change her volitional necessities via indirect methods (although Frankfurt is doubtful about its success). More importantly however, it makes clear that *deliberation* on the level of practical identities is indeed a possibility that is compatible with Frankfurt’s conceptual framework (despite his bleak estimations of its success). A person who, by her circumstances, is frustrated in expressing a volitional necessity—for example, in having an unanswered love—might take measures to let this love, her volitional necessity, disappear. She may try to make herself stop thinking about the other person and she may try to avoid the places where they could meet until the love

fades away. In other words, volitional necessities may appear as motivational forces that are to be assigned to a person's environment (her psychological and bodily reality; see **Section 1.7**).

III) This makes clear that cares have a double character in Frankfurt's conceptual framework. Cares, as part of the will, are motivational forces, which as volitional necessities are insurmountable to overcome. But they can also appear as evaluative stances for practical deliberation where a person is free to endorse or decline it as such. As Frankfurt remarks correctly, a person may nevertheless be bound by the volitional necessity as force. As motivational force, a person can take a volitional necessity into account in her practical deliberations, as it indicates in such instance a limit of which the price is too high to cross. Frankfurt does seem to imply this if he speaks about identification as acceptance (2002, 161) and when he speaks about reality constrains on the intentions that a person can form (1988, 174).

In extension of what has been argued for in **Chapter 2**, I take it to be important that these two roles under which volitional necessities can appear in deliberation must be clearly distinguished. It is a worry that Frankfurt does not do this clearly enough with how he speaks about volitional necessities. However, it does become clear in his framework as the reality of the will stands apart from the person's capacity to deliberate; in other words, a person does not need to take the shape of her will at face value. Even the fact that a person is guided by her volitional necessities in practical deliberation (just as in her actions; her cares drive her into a certain direction so to say), in practical deliberation a person can evaluate her volitional necessities as normative suggestions, as evaluative stances which she can but does not need to take up. The fact that Frankfurt at the same time says that volitional necessities are, even if negatively evaluated as suggestion, motivational forces a person cannot overcome, does not change the role of volitional necessities as normative suggestions in deliberation.

The second reason is a qualification of the conceptual framework sketched in **Chapter 1**. As the expounded theory on practical identities keeps silent on the *origin* of the descriptions under which we understand ourselves, this aspect of Frankfurt's understanding of volitional necessities is not contrary to the presented understanding of practical identities. It is allowed to be the case that a person finds that she is committed to a certain volitional necessity. As I will explicate in the next

chapter, this just means that she needs to embrace a certain contingency in her life (or decline it and try to alter it).

The reasons for Frankfurt's Unification Ideal

Frankfurt's answer to the problem of infinite regress is to suggest that the regress terminates in the "totality of things that a person cares about" *plus* his "ordering of how important to his they are" as this "effectively specifies his answer to the question of how to live" (ibid.). A person's cares plus her ordering of these cares provide her with a standard, a decision-making framework, for practical deliberation that secure mature confidence in the conclusion, in her choice for action. However, these cares need not just be ordered, they need to be ordered *wholeheartedly*, as Frankfurt holds that "the health of the will is to be unified and in this sense wholehearted" (1999, 100).

However, unification as wholeheartedness should not be understood as a strict requirement in Frankfurt. Frankfurt concedes that there "are circumstances in which it is only reasonable, no matter how uncomfortable it may be, for a person to be drawn in several directions at once." However, "while accepting ambivalence may sometimes be helpful or wise, it is never desirable as such or for its own sake" (ibid., 102)—it is a "disease of the will" (2004, 95). In circumstances in which you find "it impossible to overcome your uncertainty and your ambivalence" Frankfurt suggests to "be sure to hang on to your sense of humor" (ibid., 100). Therefore I conclude that unification is a normative ideal for Frankfurt.

What are the grounds on which Frankfurt proposes the Unification Ideal? In the exposition of Frankfurt's theory, two grounds have come up. First in the face of strong conflicts such as ambivalence, a person is paralyzed and does not know how to act. Without unity, that is, she loses her capacity to create a viable action perspective for herself. I will argue that a conflicted person can make use of different coping strategies to create an action perspective despite her volitional disunity (**Section 3.2**). Second, Frankfurt makes the (tacit) psychological assumption that a person wants to be in a state of satisfaction with herself which depends on the right, i.e. wholehearted, volitional make-up of her will. That is, she wants to be in a state without the tendency to alter the condition of her will. Frankfurt argues that wholeheartedness is a condition of this state of satisfaction with herself. I do not

contest Frankfurt psychological assumption, I do think however that unity, wholeheartedness, is not a precondition of this state (**Section 3.3**).

Section 3.2 *Ambivalence: forming an action perspective*

In order to clarify wholeheartedness, Frankfurt discusses ambivalence as its insurmountable antithesis.²⁵ Ambivalence is defined by a conflict between two volitional necessities that disrupts a person's deliberations because "movement in any direction is truncated and turned back. However a person starts out to decide or to think, he finds that he is getting in his own way" (1999, 99). In this section, I explain why I think that ambivalence, and conflicts internal to the will in general, do not need to be insurmountable. For this argument, I point out that the persistency of volitional necessities gives them a robustness allowing a person to give expression to her ambivalence in multiple actions undertaken over an extended period of time.

Ambivalence and the loss of an action perspective

Frankfurt defines ambivalence as the antithesis of wholeheartedness: "If ambivalence is a disease of the will, the health of the will is to be unified and in this sense wholehearted" (1999, 100). Wholeheartedness captures the unity of the will expressed in a feeling of satisfaction with oneself whereas ambivalence refers to volitional disunity that a person wants to escape. Frankfurt's suggestion is that the ambivalent person doesn't know how to act *and* cannot but be dissatisfied with herself. I take it that both claims do not follow and will argue for this, respectively in this and the next section.

For Frankfurt, the paradigm example of ambivalence is Agamemnon. Agamemnon is deeply ambivalent about sacrificing his daughter, a sacrifice to the Goddess Artemis. As a father, Agamemnon is unwilling to sacrifice his daughter, but as a commander he experiences it as necessary. Agamemnon is ambivalent, then, because he is confronted with an action that he perceives as both favorable and detrimental to his self, to who he is. In other words, wholeheartedness provides a person with an action perspective whereas ambivalence paralyzes her.

The "ambivalent person is simultaneously on both sides of the struggle within" herself (ibid., 138) which makes ambivalence not easily solved. Since the "will itself is divided," "it cannot be thoroughly or decisively defeated by either of the

²⁵ See Frankfurt's 'Identification and Wholeheartedness' (1988) and 'The Faintest Passion' (1999).

opposing forces” (ibid., 138). In other words, Frankfurt argues that the will, which provides a decision-making framework, cannot bring solace while the ambivalence is “wholly internal to a person’s will” (ibid., 99). Moreover, the conflict takes place on the will’s most fundamental level of volitional necessities, causing the person to be without a decisive judgment on which action to undertake: the “volitional division [of ambivalence] keeps him from settling upon or from tolerating any coherent affective or motivational identity. It means that he does not know what he really wants” (ibid., 98-99). The person is confronted with an impossible choice as picking either side amounts to self-betrayal as, according to Frankfurt, “the [ambivalent] person cannot avoid acting against” herself (ibid., 139ft). For Frankfurt, ambivalence is “a disease of the will” (ibid., 102).

Thomas Nys summarizes Frankfurt’s view on ambivalence and its problem succinctly: “Ambivalence is a state of not knowing what to [...] care about, but this is so *because* one” cares about something and doesn’t care about “the *very same thing at the very same time.*” As care “provides the necessary ground for orientation, for genuine action”, ambivalence causes “the precondition for agency” to crumble. One can restore the precondition of agency by making “oneself whole again by *giving up* on a certain part” of oneself (2013, 93-94). The ambivalent person, then, does not need to make up her mind or pull herself together, but rather needs to pull herself *apart* and *undo* her mind in order to gain an action perspective again. However, undoing oneself equates to doing the unthinkable as one need to give up on a volitional necessity (1999, 111)—an impossibility as one lacks a standard. In Frankfurt’s view, then, ambivalence “tends to paralyze [a person’s] will and to keep him from acting at all” (1988, 21).²⁶

Coping with ambivalence without unification

Wholeheartedness means to have a unified will and this is expressed in a feeling of satisfaction with oneself. Frankfurt understands ambivalence as the antithesis of wholeheartedness, because ambivalence makes a person unable to act simultaneously in accordance with all of her volitional necessities: opposing

²⁶ My analysis is in disagreement with both David Svolba’s (2011) and Jennifer S. Swindell’s (2010) interpretation of Frankfurtian ambivalence. They argue that ambivalence either takes place on the level of identification through second-order desires or on the level of prioritization through second-order volitions whereas I argue that ambivalence is to be located on the level of volitional necessities. Ambivalence, for Frankfurt, is not a question of identifying with a volition *or* prioritizing it, but rather of *giving up* a volitional necessity.

volitional necessities guide her into opposite directions. Frankfurt summarizes this in a slogan: “Unless a person is capable of a considerable degree of volitional unity, he cannot make coherent use of freedom” (1999, 102). However, here Frankfurt speaks of volitional necessities as motivational forces, and not as evaluative stances. If a person takes her volitional necessity up in practical deliberation, and thus perceives it as a (possible) evaluative stance, a different image appears of how a person can deal with ambivalence. The person can try to give expression to the ambivalence that defines her will either within one action or over the course of multiple actions, as I will explain. I start out however by arguing that acting against a volitional necessity does not need to be an act of self-betrayal—something Frankfurt seems to assume in his verdict of ambivalence.

I explained above that for Frankfurt “caring implies a degree of persistence” (1988, 84). Additionally, I stated Frankfurt’s view that volitional necessities have something abstract as their object, such as a life, a person, a nonmoral ideal, or a tradition. From both of these points, it follows that the care about the object of volitional necessities cannot be expressed in a single action. To care about another person or a political tradition *is* to express one’s care in multiple actions over an extended period of time. We can conclude, then, that on Frankfurt’s view actions are the (time-)local expressions of (time-)persisting volitional necessities.

I further claim that the persistency of volitional necessities gives them robustness, as they are deeply embedded within a person’s motivational, habitual, structures and are thus not easily shed (**Section 1.6**). What I mean with this is that a person does not need to act on a particular volitional necessity on every opportunity in order to be said to have the volitional necessity. A person who pursues a career may cancel an important meeting because her child is sick and the same person may skip a school performance of her child in order to solve a crisis situation at work. This says nothing regarding her commitments to the volitional necessities she does not act upon—and neither on their relative importance as I have pointed out (**Section 1.6**). Moreover, insofar this person truly cares about being an available parent, she even actively acts *against* a volitional necessity she has with going to the meeting. However, she may feel capable of doing so, because she knows that acting against her volitional necessity this one time does not mean that she has given up on being an available parent. Therefore, such an action does not need to involve an act

of self-betrayal.²⁷ This shows that the robustness of volitional necessities may place a role in a person's practical deliberations. I claim that a person can make use of this robustness in her deliberations to accommodate both sides of the ambivalence.

One view articulated in the literature to make sense of the robustness of one's volitional necessities and thereby to accommodate volitional conflict is, what I call, "narrative integration" (see Schramme 2014 & Schechtman 2014). One author defending this, Thomas Schramme, proposes that a person can assimilate her ambivalence into her life story by finding "clues in the story of his life accounting for this ambivalence" (2014, 38). Through the assimilation of "the very ambivalence [...] into his narrative self" "there seems to be no problem with [the person's] will" (ibid.). Imagine a person being ambivalent about the pursuit of her career as it conflicts with being a good parent. There are times, while working, in which she wishes she could spend more time with her child and there are times, while being at home with her child, when she feels she wants and needs to work. That is, her ambivalence makes her to have both positive and negative feelings with regard to her volitional necessity of the pursuit of a career feeling torn because of it.

Schramme suggests that this person could recount to herself the moments in which she felt at work she wanted to be at home and at home to be at work. In this way, ambivalence becomes "something that can be integrated into our lives" (ibid., 35) as it is given biographical coherence within the confines of the narrative that constitutes our lives (ibid., 39). This does not make the person stop being ambivalent, quite the contrary. What she is able to do is to take out the sting of her ambivalence by explaining her torn feeling. Moreover, the ambivalent person may even come to accept that she wants "to be ambivalent, because being wholehearted about that matter would," in her eyes, mean "being shallow about a more complicated story" (ibid., 38).²⁸

Being able to make one's ambivalence intelligible however does not mean that a person gains a concrete action perspective. That is, as the ambivalence still pulls a person into opposite directions with regard to concrete choice situation, the question "How to act?" remains. I propose two strategies of how a person can

²⁷ Christine M. Korsgaard makes a similar claim regarding practical identities: "The problem here does not come from the fragility of identity, but rather from its stability. It can take a few knocks, and we know it" (1996, 103).

²⁸ Of course, if a person is confronted with what I have called an "acute dilemma," such as Agamemnon, then integrating ambivalence is impossible as the choice for one side means to give up the other side of the conflict.

express her ambivalence within, respectively, one action and a series of actions. This shows that a person can come to an action perspective despite being ambivalent.

Hili Razinsky has proposed that a person can engage in “compromise action” (2015). A compromise action includes both poles of the ambivalence within a single action. As a consequence, the ambivalent person expresses both volitional necessities only partially. For example, the person, who has an important meeting at work on the same evening that her child has a school performance, may end up being ambivalent, as she desires to go to both. She may choose to express her ambivalence by undertaking a compromise action in which both desires are partially fulfilled (ibid., 86). For example, she may join both the meeting and the school performance for only an hour leaving her dissatisfied from the perspective of both her volitional necessities as she would have wished to cut short neither of them. So a person can undertake a compromise action in which she expresses two volitional necessities half-heartedly instead of wholeheartedly expressing one of them.

The second strategy recognizes the persistency and robustness of volitional necessities. The suggestion is that a person may express her ambivalence by acting on both sides of her conflicted will alternately. Logi Gunnarson gives an example describing the case of Brasco (2014).²⁹ Brasco is a FBI-agent who goes undercover with the New York mafia. He is undercover with the mafia for so long that he starts to share their values and beliefs. This causes Brasco to be ambivalent: as an undercover agent he stands for the values and beliefs of the FBI, as part of the mafia he stands for their values and beliefs. Since both sets of values are not reconcilable, Brasco feels that he has to choose. However, Gunnarson suggests that Brasco can also choose to (temporarily) create two separate narratives, one as FBI-agent and one as mobster, which he lives next to each other by, for example, expressing the mobster-ideal during the weekend in Berlin and the FBI-ideal during the week in Los Angeles. In this way, Brasco gives expression to his ambivalence in different actions over an extended period of time.

Section 3.3 *Practical orientation as being satisfied with who one is*

In the foregoing section, I have argued that the ambivalent person both can make her ambivalence intelligible to herself and has strategies available to create an action perspective for herself. It follows that the ambivalent person, *pace* Frankfurt,

²⁹ See also Lippit (2015), Marino (2011), Velleman (2006) for similar ideas on how ambivalence can be expressed over time.

neither needs to be paralyzed nor need to fail to know what to do even though she can only do one action at a time. Within her deliberations, a person can plan to express herself (and the conflict constitutive of who she is) over the course of multiple actions. However, ambivalence as the counterpart of wholeheartedness also means that the ambivalent person must be, essentially, dissatisfied with herself. As Frankfurt explicates, “while accepting ambivalence may sometimes be helpful or wise, it is never desirable” (ibid., 102). It is this psychological counterpart of the ontological structure of the will (unity as wholeheartedness leads to satisfaction with oneself; disunity as ambivalence leads to dissatisfaction with oneself) that I want to critique in this section.

I agree with Frankfurt that the feeling of satisfaction with oneself is defined by “a state constituted by the absence of any tendency or inclination to alter its condition” (1999, 104) and that this state is something worth striving for. However, I doubt that this state is conditional on the unity of a person’s will. What this state indicates is that the person is satisfied with who she is and that she can use the conception she has of her personality as a decision-making framework for practical deliberation. Jacqui Poltera has pointed out in relation to Frankfurt that a person might prefer her ambivalence to her desire to resolve it (2010, 296-297; cf. Marino 2011, 67) as a person can find herself “defined by ambivalence” and identified with “the conflicting features of his identity” (ibid., 298).

For example, a person growing up in an orthodox-religious environment discovers that she has a lesbian sexual orientation. She might turn to be genuinely conflicted within her will as, from her orthodox-religious background, she values her sexual orientation negatively, and within the social context from which she explores her orientation, she cannot make sense of her orthodox-religious background. However, as she understands both aspects as true commitment of hers, unable to reconcile both identities with each other, she is unwilling to give up either of her identities. The only option left to her is to stand for the conflict, define herself by it, and to try to give expression to the conflict in her actions.

What this example illustrates is that the ontological condition of wholeheartedness, unity, can come apart from the psychological state of being satisfied. Frankfurt has unjustifiably bound them together, as it is often the case that a person who is ambivalence does feel in distress and wants to overcome it. However, there is no inherent reason why the distress felt needs to be overcome by

establishing unity in her volitional make-up. On the psychological level, the distress can also disappear by accepting it. Just as Frankfurt indicates that a person identify with a volitional necessity with which she disagrees on the reflective level by accepting it, so this seems to be open with regard to ambivalence as well. The person may accept the ambivalence as part of her volitional make-up and thereby overcome the distress it causes her. It neither need to, as I have shown above, paralyze her in action. I conclude therefore that a person may judge her divided will as the best state of her will to be in and therefore she can be without an inclination to change her will even if she is volitionally conflicted—she can feel satisfied with who she is despite of being volitionally divided. This state, which is disconnected from the ontological wholeheartedness feature of the will, I call practical orientation. Practical orientation is obtained if a person knows who she wants to be, if she has a feeling for how she wants to express herself in her actions and is able to insert this into her deliberations about what to do. The true contrast of practical orientation is not being volitionally conflicted but being dissatisfied with whom one is—to be volitionally conflicted (a condition of the will) does not necessarily imply dissatisfaction (a state of the psyche of a person).

Section 3.4 *Summary*

I have argued that a person does not need to be wholehearted in order to know what to do. If the will of a person is ambivalent, or otherwise conflicted, she has ways to create an action perspective for herself from which she can choose an action to undertake. For example, she can express her ambivalence either in a compromise action or through a series of actions by alternating both sides of the conflict as ground for her action. I now will summarize the argument of this chapter by the four questions introduced in **Chapter 2**: 1. What is the articulated ideal of unity? 2. Which grounds are given to aim for unification in deliberation? 3. Do these grounds hold up to closer scrutiny? 4. What is the positive contribution of this chapter?

1) The ideal of unity articulated by Frankfurt is wholeheartedness that reflects “the organization of the will” (1999, 100) implying “having a will that is undivided” (2004, 95). This is expressed in a feeling of satisfaction with who one is, characterized by “the absence of any tendency or inclination to alter” the condition of one’s will (1999, 104). **2) & 3)** I have given two reasons for the alleged need to unify the will. The first reason has been that an ambivalent person cannot create a

viable action perspective for herself—she is paralyzed and does not know what to do. I argued in **Section 3.2** that a person has at least two ways in which she can create an action perspective in response to the ambivalence in her will. The second reason has been the psychological tendency towards being wholehearted. I take it that the argument of **Section 3.3** has shown that such a psychological tendency is not a ground for a person to unify her will if she finds that the conflict defines who she is. **4)** The contribution for the positive proposal developed later in this dissertation is the notion of practical orientation: practical orientation is the feeling of being satisfied with who one is expressed in the absence of a tendency to want to change one's (conflicted) will.

Chapter 4 Christine M. Korsgaard and the Unification Ideal

Korsgaard's philosophical theory is based on two core theses. The first, already defended in 'Personal identity and the unity of agency' (1996a), is that an agent establishes herself as the efficacious cause of the action if she unifies herself in acting—this holds for all agents, human and non-human. The second thesis is that human agents, i.e. persons, are in need of reasons. Persons, having the capacity to take reflective distance towards both motivational states and the standards by which they choose an action, need reasons to bridge this distance. Based on these two theses, Korsgaard develops her Kantian philosophical theory in which reasons stem from practical identities, normativity is grounded in the moral identity of humanity, and in which the faculty of reason is the source of unity.³⁰ In this chapter, I focus on Korsgaard's Unification Ideal and leave her claims about morality aside.³¹

Korsgaard indicates at different occasions that a person, in acting, needs to unify both her agential faculties (reason, appetite, spirit—the parts of her soul) and her particular principles of choice, her practical identities (**Section 4.2**). See, for example, the following remark: "The work of pulling ourselves back together [the unification of the soul] is also the work of pulling those [particular practical] identities into a single practical identity" (2009, 126). Korsgaard's central idea is that the unity of personality provides the stability to the person's agential faculties necessary for successful agency. In this chapter, I argue however that a tension exists between these two objects of unification: striving for the unity of one's personality may undermine the stability of one's agential faculties thereby undermining successful agency. This becomes clear by focusing on the origin of practical identities (**Section 4.3**). Subsequently, I discuss several ways Korsgaard proposes to deal with conflict within one's personality. I argue that Korsgaard's suggestions are insufficient to maintain the importance of the Unification Ideal on the level of a person's personality (**Section 4.4**). I start however with expounding the basics of Korsgaard's theory (**Section 4.1**).

³⁰ These claims come together, depending on which elaboration you follow, in the practical identity of humanity (1996b) or the metaphysical constitution of the person (2009).

³¹ It is right that Korsgaard is mainly interested in morality and its normative foundation: "what justifies the claims morality makes on us" (1996b, 9-10). However, her account deals with the sources of all normativity (of reasons; cf. Cohon 2000, 64) and this justifies the focus of this chapter.

Section 4.1 *Korsgaard's theory: agency, unity & practical identity*

According to Korsgaard, an action is “a movement attributable to an agent considered as an integrated whole” and not “merely to a part of an agent, or to some force working in her or on her” (2009, 45). In other words, actions are set aside from other movements by the fact that the agent herself is efficacious and autonomous through her action: in acting, the agent gives expression to herself (she is autonomous) by choosing the aim she is to pursue (she is efficacious).

Throughout her oeuvre, Korsgaard has introduced human agency by contrasting it with non-human agency (1996b, 2009, 2018). A non-human animal “lives in a world that is in a deep way her own world, a world that is *for* the animal” as (her perception of) the world “is organized around her interests” (2018, 151). The non-human animal’s world, that is, is teleological organized with “things that are *to-be-avoided, to-be-chased, to-be-investigated, to-be-eaten, to-be-fled, to-be-cared-for,*” etc. (ibid.; cf. 2009, 94; 1996b, 93). It is in this way that everything perceived by the animal “has its place in a purposive order determined by the instincts” of the animal (ibid.)—the animal’s desires are unified into a coherent whole by its instincts and, guided by these instincts, it is capable of choice. The basic role instincts play in an animal’s psychological functioning does not imply a lack of intelligence. An animal can learn to avoid specific objects, see a human as companion, or make use of a tool: “Intelligence so understood is not something contrary to instinct, but rather something that increases its range [...]” (ibid., 152).

In addition to the non-human animal, a person has the power of rationality fundamentally changing the psychological functioning of the human agent. Korsgaard understands rationality as “a normative power grounded in a certain form of self-consciousness” causing her to be “aware of the attitudes that motivate” her actions (ibid.). To illustrate this, a person may perceive a lion as dangerous and therefore as something to-be-avoided. However, her self-awareness causes her to be aware of how her feeling of danger motivates her to avoid the lion. This presents the person with the necessity, and chance, of choice: to flee or not to flee. In other words, rationality puts a person at a *reflective distance* towards her motivational attitudes giving the person the opportunity to question whether the perceived dangerousness of the lion is a reason to avoid the lion (a child is endangered by the lion) and whether the perceived danger itself is appropriate (the lion is a fake)—the motivational attitude (force) is taken as normative suggestion. As rational beings,

what a person does is influenced by the way she answers the evaluative question that arises at the reflective distance (ibid.). Rationality within Korsgaard's theory, then, is normative self-government meaning that what a person thinks she *ought* to do guides what she actually does.

This confronts the person, capable of normative self-government, with a problem. Now she not only must choose an action, she is in need of the norm or standard that guides her choice too. The proposal, developed by Korsgaard over the course of her oeuvre, is that "our actions are *our own*" as they are "expressions of ourselves" (ibid., 153). This is to say, by choosing which motive to act on, a person settles who she is. She constitutes her *practical identity*, "a description under which she finds her life worth living and her actions worth undertaking" (1996b, 249; cf. 1996b, 101; 2018, 151; 2009, 20). A person's practical identities become her principles of choice and they guide a person's deliberation by a person's commitment to express herself as a person with those identities: "Self-determination, then, requires identification with the principle of choice on which you act" (2009, 75).³²

An additional problem confronts a person: a person can also take distance from her practical identities. This causes her to be in need of a standard to choose practical identities too. In other words, a person is in need of a highest, and necessary, principle in which the activity of questioning the normativity of desires, reasons, and desires by repeated distance taking can come to a rest. For a non-human animal this is simple as its actions are ultimately aimed at its own survival: either of the individual subject it is (fight/flight; nourishing) or of the sort to which it belongs (procreation). An animal's instincts, its principles of choice, are therefore ultimately governed by its form, the principle of self-maintenance (ibid.; cf. 1996b, 149, 2009, 93). Yet, as persons can stand at a reflective distance towards all of their principles and thus can question the nature-given principle of self-maintenance as well, they are in need of a different grounding principle.

Korsgaard finds her most recent answer in the metaphysics of the agent: the principle that binds any and all persons is that, as an agent, the person needs to constitute *herself* as the efficacious and autonomous cause of her action. Only in this way is the action an expression of who she is and who she wants to be. The person

³² A critical reader of Korsgaard, Stephen Crowell, formulates it as follows: "By identifying with a practical identity," he explains, "I gain a reason" and the identity becomes "normative for me to the extent that I identify with" it (2007, 318).

ensures that she is the cause of her action if she constitutes herself as a unified whole *in* acting thereby constituting herself as the unified agent of the action. It follows that the principle of self-constitution is a person's ultimate principle and includes the Unification Ideal: "The work of practical deliberation is reunification, reconstitution: and the function of the principles that govern deliberation [...] is the unification of the self" (ibid., 126).³³

To summarize Korsgaard's argument from the perspective of necessity: a person is "*condemned* to choice and action" as she cannot but to choose and act (ibid., 1). Through self-consciousness, a person is aware of the grounds of her actions and is therefore in need of a reason either to endorse or to reject these grounds. Only through such endorsement or rejection, the person overcomes the reflective distance created by her awareness of the grounds for action (2008, 4). The reflective distance, however, accompanies her up the chain, as she is capable to question her higher-order principles of choice, i.e. her practical identities. This regress comes to an end in the fact that a person, necessarily so, has to constitute herself as a unified whole in order to be the efficacious and autonomous cause of her actions (2009). The principle that ultimately grounds the normativity of reasons is the principle of self-constitution including the Unification Ideal.

Section 4.2 *Two objects of unification: faculties of agency & principles of choice*

In order to evaluate Korsgaard's (reasons for the) Unification Ideal, we need to get a better grasp of why Korsgaard thinks unity is necessary and, furthermore, what exactly needs to be unified. In this section, I show that Korsgaard has two different objects of unification in mind. I argue that both are distinct and have their own logic of unification—they cannot be treated in the same way in terms of what their unification means for the acting person. This is important because it raises the question whether the unification of one is always compatible with the unification of the other. Furthermore, I explain that Korsgaard considers unity as necessary because it provides the stability for a person to stay in control of her actions.

³³ Another answer that Korsgaard has worked focuses on the practical necessity an agent is confronted with: she is always in need of reasons and therefore of *a* practical identity—this need itself is, according to Korsgaard, a practical identity, it's a person's humanity.

Two distinct objects of unification

The two objects of unification that Korsgaard introduces are a person's agential faculties (the parts of her soul; 2009, xii, 7, 19, 25-26, 72, 103, 125-126, 132, 133, 140, 152, 154, 157, 158, 160, 170, 175, 179, 181)³⁴ and a person's principles of choice (her practical identities; 2009, 7, 19, 21, 25, 41, 45, 126). The need to unify one's agential faculties springs from self-consciousness that brings about "the parts of the soul" (2009, 119) transforming "psychic unity from a natural state [as it is in animals] into something that has to be achieved, into a task and activity" (ibid., 125). These parts of the soul are appetite (the faculty that proposes an action), reason (the faculty that chooses an action), and spirit (the faculty that executes the action). Korsgaard's idea is that an action can only issue from a person if these parts work together: "Once we are self-conscious the soul has parts, and then before we can act it must be unified" (ibid., 126).

On the other hand, the principles of choice spring from the need to have reasons and our practical identities provide these reasons, as they "are the sources of our reasons." However, it is not enough that we *have* practical identities; that we just "decide which ones we want and conform to them" (ibid., 21). Here the need for unification arises as "we have many particular practical identities" which are "the "parts" from which our overall practical identity is constructed" (ibid., 199) and for our overall practical identity, our personality, to be guiding in deliberation "we face the task of uniting them [our practical identities] into a coherent whole" (ibid., 21).

Although both need to be unified according to Korsgaard, it may be clear that both are distinct objects with their own logic of unification. The parts of the soul are the precondition of agency whereas practical identities provide the necessary reasons for action. Without one of the parts of the soul, no action whatsoever can be issued: either by the lack of a proposal (appetite), by the lack of a choice (reason), or by the lack of the execution (spirit). A person cannot disavow a part of her soul as *all* parts are necessary to constitute together a person's agency and it is impossible for a person to obtain new parts of the soul, change their nature, or deny one part as being hers. Korsgaard claims therefore that "the parts of the soul must be unified—they *need* to be unified, like the people in a city—in order [for a person] to act" at all (ibid., 141).

³⁴ Compared to the conceptual schema proposed in **Chapter 1**, Korsgaard adds a complexity to the concept of a person: a person can be analyzed in parts, in the capacities of reason, volition, and affection, and these capacities need to be unified to speak of a person at all. I will not further scrutinize this and accept that a person needs to be whole, whatever the parts that it consist of.

Practical identities, on the other hand, are “standing sources of incentives, as well as principles in terms of which” a person accepts and rejects “proposed actions” (ibid., 22). This is to say that a person’s identities provide her with reasons for action. But just as reasons can be endorsed *or* rejected, so can a person identify with or disavow a particular practical identity that provides these reasons. In other words, practical identities “are contingent” and therefore “one or another of them may be shed” by rejecting it as a source of reasons (1996b, 120). Thus a person’s identities define the content of her personality and do so contingently: the person has a choice whether she still wants to (continue to) express an identity or not.

The above shows that both objects are distinct based on their logic of unification. Moreover, the moment of unification is distinct too. Since the unity of the soul enables the person to make coherent use of her capacity of agency and deliberation, the soul is unified (or fails to be) the moment a person engages in action and deliberation. This shows in the way Korsgaard speaks about successful action, which “by its very nature imposes unity on the soul. When you deliberate about what to do and then do it, what you are doing is organizing appetite, reason, and spirit into a unified system that yields an action that can be attributed to you as a person” (2009, 179). This organizing activity takes place by the principle a person uses for deliberation and action. Thus the unification of a person’s agential faculties happens with engaging in deliberation and action. An interpreter of Korsgaard, Paul Katsafanas, explains this: “the relationship between the parts of the agent’s soul is determined by the principle upon which the agents acts” and “certain principles will specify which parts are to have priority in the production of action. For example, the “democratic” principle gives appetite complete priority in determining action; the “timocratic” principle gives *one specific* appetite (honor) complete priority; and so on” (2013, 92). Thus the unity of the parts of the soul is a precondition of deliberation and action.

A person’s personality however is unified *in* or *through* practical deliberation. This task is executed by weighing the many different practical identities and the reasons they provide *in* deliberation making it impossible that their unity is a condition of deliberation itself. The reasons provided by one’s personality are to be assessed and weighted *in* deliberation (with action as its conclusion). Moreover, our practical identities are to be given expression to *in* our actions over a longer period of time (**Section 1.6**) whereas the unity of the soul is

established *with* acting, each single time the person undertakes the action. The difference is further emphasized by an additional reason Korsgaard has for the unification of one's practical identities: "the incentives that spring from these forms of identity are incentives to *act*, and on any given occasion, we can only do one thing" (2009, 126). The reason for the unification of a person's personality is that she can only do one action at a time and not because she would not be acting at all if she fails to unify them.

It can be concluded, then, that unification means something different regarding both objects. The unity of the parts of the soul is defined by the principle *by which* a person acts and deliberates; it is a precondition for (successful) action. The unity of a person's personality is established *in* or *through* deliberation and action; it is acquired through a process of endorsement and rejection based on reasons. Unification, harmonization, of our practical identities means to reject some, accept others, and reinterpret the meaning of an identity whereas unifying the parts of the soul means to make them cooperate together, to make them relate in the proper way so that the person constitutes herself as agent. The latter is a question of the functioning of agency, the former of dealing with evaluative conflicts.

As it is established that both objects are distinct, it can be asked what the relation between the two objects is. In Korsgaard's view both objects are unified in the same act: "The work of pulling ourselves back together [the unity of the soul] is also the work of pulling those identities into a single practical identity" (*ibid.*). This would make sense as a person can only choose to express one identity—she can only do one action at a time—and for the action to be hers she needs to unify her agential faculties. However, as I will point out in the course of the next sections, a person may need to accept conflict on the level of her personality in order to preserve the unity of her agential faculties. In order to set this up, I will first sketch what the unity of a person's agential faculties provides.

Unity provides the necessary diachronic stability for genuine commitment

Although Korsgaard is not explicit on the precise function of unity, it can be said that, on the most general level, unity provides the ability to have "*commitments*, where having commitments involves being capable of maintain diachronic stability"

(Katsafanas 2013, 94).³⁵ This connects to how an action can “unify and constitute its agent to a greater or lesser degree” depending on the principle that guides her deliberations (Korsgaard 2009, 163). The less a principle provides diachronic stability, the more defective the principle is as the agent is unable to stay in control of her action and thus follow through with her commitment.³⁶ The problem with the defective principles is that a person’s “capacity for self-government are propped by external circumstances, by the absence of conditions under which [she] would fall apart” (ibid., 177). A person’s diachronic stability depends on circumstances that are not under her control, threatening the action to become an expression of her circumstances instead of being an expression of the person herself. So without diachronic stability, a person is unable to maintain genuine commitments over time, as she fails to follow through with her commitments the moment her circumstances change.

Take the example of a person who follows the democratic principle (“I will do whatever I most strongly desire”). Such a person follows her strongest desires in that the desire, which presents itself as strongest at that moment, is acted upon. A person, studying for an exam the next day, becomes aware of a desire to go to a party of a friend that evening. Since she follows the democratic principle, she decides to go to the party, as this desire is stronger than studying deep into the night. However, having arrived at the party, she feels the fear of failing her exam and decides to go back home to study. We can imagine that this person continues all night with going back and forth between her study and the party depending on which desire is stronger. This causes her to end up the next day neither with a memory of a good party nor with the right preparation for the exam. She lost sight of *both* projects because she was incapable of efficacious and autonomous action: she did not genuinely commit herself to one action but made this dependable on the strength of her desires, on her circumstances.

What contributes further to the stability of a person’s commitment is that she takes her incentives, her desires, as potential reasons to endorse or reject. This may seem strange as Korsgaard upholds a voluntaristic picture of reasons, i.e. the person creates or makes her own reasons by endorsing specific practical identities. However, and firstly, insofar a person is committed to a specific description under

³⁵ Paul Katsafanas, an important interpreter of Korsgaard, says about unity: “Surprisingly, Korsgaard never provides an explicit definition of this crucial notion” (2013, 93).

³⁶ The focus of this chapter is not on good or bad action. For critical reflections on Korsgaard’s standard for good and bad action, see Katsafanas 2013, Enoch 2006/2011, Street 2008/2012.

which she values herself, she may overlook a (potential) reason as her epistemic faculties are fallible (see, for example, Korsgaard's example of the student who is required to take a logic course—he is wrong about his reasons; 1996b, 105-106).

Secondly, the danger of ignoring, or even repressing, potential reasons without taking a stance towards them may endanger the commitments a person has to her practical identities. This shows in the person following the oligarchic principle ("I follow the principle of self-prudence") whose "self-stinting prudence rules despotically over his appetitive part." This despotic rule causes the appetitive part to boil "with repressed and unhealthy desires" (2009, 166) as she does not allow other desires to present themselves as reasons-to-be-considered. The problem here is that it can happen (too) easily that "some outside force—perhaps simply a sufficient temptation—strengthen and enliven his unnecessary desires," which causes the oligarchic person to "lose control of himself" (ibid.). For a person to secure her autonomy and efficacy, she needs to perceive an inclination or desire as potential reason. Only in this way does she put herself at a reflective distance from the desire, pausing the motivational force, and thereby enabling herself to accept or reject it as normative suggestion; otherwise she is in danger of the desire stealing the control from her. In other words, through repression, reason cannot look after "the good of the whole" as the whole is hidden from sight and thereby excluded from the control that the person could exert (ibid., 170).

To conclude, commitments are made possible both by unity providing diachronic stability and by taking incentives as potential reasons. However, if we ask the question where practical identities come from, a tension can be observed between the unity of personality and the upkeep of commitments. Because forcing the unification of a person's personality may lead her to repress her desires, therewith blocking these desires to be seen as potential reasons making it (too) easy that "some outside force—perhaps simply a sufficient temptation—strengthen and enliven [her] unnecessary desires," which causes the person to lose control of herself (ibid., 166). Let us turn to this now.

Section 4.3 *The origin of practical identities & Korsgaard on solving volitional conflict*
Reasons stem from a person's practical identities. Desires arise in her and she creates reasons by asking whether this desire is an expression of a practical identity that she holds dear. In this way, our practical "identities are the source of our

reasons" (2009, 21). However, this leaves the question open what the origin of our practical identities is. According to Korsgaard, the answer to this is that most "of the ways in which we identify ourselves are contingent upon our particular circumstances, or relative to the social worlds in which we live" (1996b, 129): "we sure stumble into some of our deepest concerns, perhaps most obviously, the ties associated with family, ethnicity, and nationality, but also sometimes and to some extent our religions, friendships, and careers" (ibid., 241). Our identities, then, come from our social, political, historical, and, we can add, our bodily and psychological circumstances (ibid., 239). Korsgaard even goes so far to say that a person not accepting "the deep role of contingency in human life associated with this fact" shows "the mark of a kind of immaturity" (ibid.).

Bernard Williams (1996, 214-215) and Thomas Nagel (1996, 202-203) have criticized this contingency located at the origin of practical identities. They argue that this makes us passive with regard to the origin of our identities, problematically so. However, according to Korsgaard, a person can be active regarding the contingency by embracing it.³⁷ Despite that our "contingent practical identities are, to some extent, given to us [...] it is also clear that we enter into their construction" as "we adopt (or come to wholeheartedly inhabit) a conception of a practical identity" (1996b, 239). Korsgaard's suggestion is that a person's circumstances may provide her with identities, but the person herself has the role to make them into *practical* identities and thus make them relevant as evaluative stances for deliberation. She does so by endorsing or rejecting them as important for how she lives her life. "The answer is that accepting the role of nature in the construction of our values, and so accepting the element of arbitrariness and contingency that lies at their basis, does not commit us to accepting everything that nature provides, or to being unable to distinguish the sick from the healthy" (ibid., 253). However, a problem arises as it is unclear by what principle a person comes to choose an identity, especially in cases of conflict as the principle of unification does not determine which identity she has to choose.³⁸

³⁷ As Korsgaard says, "contingency itself is something that may either be actively embraced or passively endured, and this makes all the difference: the mature attitude is the one that actively embraces it, not the one that passively endures it" (1996b, 242).

³⁸ As I do not focus on the morality aspect of Korsgaard's theory, I skip over Korsgaard's claim that the principle of morality, a person's humanity, is a first arbiter. However, as Christopher Gowans points out, this leaves a person with the lack for a standard to choose among morality-compatible identities (2002).

Take for example the case in which an identity, which a person considers to take up, conflicts with one of her older identities (cf. Cohon 2000; Gowans 2002). Say, Romeo of the Montague family has fallen in love with Juliet of the Capulet family. Both identities are contingent in that the one is provided by his upbringing within the Montague family and the other by his biological and social circumstances that make him fall in love with Juliet. His identity as being from the Montague family conflicts with his new identity as lover of Juliet: how can he choose based on the principle of unification? The ideal he should strive for is unity, which he can obtain this in two ways:³⁹ either by giving up his identity as member of the Montague family or as lover of Juliet. What is going to shift the balance for either of these identities?

It needs to be remarked that Korsgaard does not address this question. She actually distances herself explicit from it. She tells, for example, that “which obligations we have and how to negotiate among them is a topic for another day” (1996b, 92). In *Self-Constitution* she acknowledges that we “need some method of balancing our various ends against one another when they cannot be practically combined” (2009, 52; cf. 57). She calls such method the “missing principle” indicating that she will stay silent on what such a principle might contain except for that “it seems rather obvious that a formal principle for balancing our various ends and reasons must be a principle for unifying our agency, since that is so exactly why we need it: so that we are not always tripping over ourselves when we pursue our various projects, so that our agency is not incoherent” (ibid. 58). It is clear, then, that the “missing principle” includes the aim of the unification of personality. I do not think this is correct: moreover, it seems to me that we run here into the limits of what Korsgaard’s ontological theory of agency can provide.

In order to investigate this, let us trace two possible solutions to deal with volitional disunity that can be found in Korsgaard’s texts. The first is a kind of radical choice that can be grounded in the existentialist aspect of Korsgaard’s theory. She acknowledges this aspect in an interview as shows in the following extensive quote:

Say that an existentialist believes that human beings are the creators of all meaning and value, and, while we are at it, in a way also the creators of ourselves. This is something I firmly believe is true, partly because I don’t think any other

³⁹ He could of course also choose to become a rebel by trying to transform his and Juliet’s family-values.

hypothesis makes any sense, and partly I don't think any other hypothesis does any philosophical work. What I mean is that even if certain things just have intrinsic value, or if God creates certain values, this can be nothing to us unless these values coincide in some way with what *we* value. Perhaps my allegiance to existentialism shows up most clearly in section 4.4.1- 4.4.2 of *Sources*, where I claim that if a person ceases to value himself then for him it is true that nothing has value. That is an existentialist bullet that I am prepared to bite. What frightens people about the existentialist hypothesis is the further conclusion that if we are the creators of meaning and value we can create them anyway we like, that *anything goes*. But I don't draw that conclusion: I don't think there is anything, including valuing and acting, that can be done anyway we like, since every activity has constitutive rules of its own. If all my arguments go through-a large assumption of course-we end up with Kantianism (González 2003, 786-87; cf. 1996b, 237-238).⁴⁰

As discussed above, this constitutive rule of self-constitution is the principle of self-constitution including the Unification Ideal. As pointed out, the problem is that the Unification Ideal has no determining force if two identities are in conflict with each other. However, in line with this existentialist thread in her thinking, Korsgaard could claim that the person has to make an *existential* choice: to go with one of the conflicting identities without a further ground. Although from a theoretical (ontological) perspective this option is certainly open, I doubt whether it is psychologically accurate: persons often do not *just* make an arbitrary choice for which we cannot give any further ground. Of course, in small decisions (called by Edna Ullmann-Margalit rather instances of "picking" than "choosing"; 2006, 157-158), we often do decide arbitrarily. But here we talk about decisions between life-defining projects, as in the case of Romeo. What we strive for in such situation is some (normative) foundation to base our decision upon. Moreover, the state of being in conflict, i.e. volitional disunity, itself already implies that "just" making the decision is dissatisfying, some ground is wished for. As I try to show in **Section 6.2**, it seems that even a person who is confronted with a radical choice, explores the two

⁴⁰ See as well the following passage from another interview: "Some people interpret Kant as saying that we confer value on everything else but ourselves; we just have intrinsic value. But in my view we also confer value on ourselves. We do this because we need reasons and we cannot have reasons unless we value ourselves. But of course I cannot say that that is a reason for conferring value on ourselves; that would be inconsistent. So my theory needs an existential moment when we bring value into the world, namely the moment when we decide to value ourselves" under a specific description (Schaubroeck 2008-2009/2009-2010, 53).

options through imaginative projections in which she thinks through choosing either side of the conflict.

A psychological more plausible approach to deal with conflicts can be found in the second solution that can be traced in Korsgaard's texts. This solution asks which identity that is constitutive of the volitional disunity is deeper and thereby has greater importance to the person: "Obligation is always unconditional, but it is only when it concerns really important matters that it is deep" (Korsgaard 1996b, 103). Korsgaard seems to suggest here that the obligation to a particular practical identity can be deeper than another. Romeo's love for Juliet can be experienced by him as deeper as his family-identity, thereby making him less ready and less capable of giving up his love for Juliet. This solution seems to get the psychology of dealing with conflicts right: those identities we feel more deeply connected to, we are often less willing to give up on. However, if we follow this solution we end up with a standard that is not under our direct volitional control. Whether a person embraces a practical identity is up to her in Korsgaard's theory, but how deep this identity defines who she is, seems to be a matter of contingency just as the origin of most of our identities—it is a matter of a person's psychological (and bodily) reality. The asymmetry with the origin of practical identities is that here we do not seem to have the ability to deny the *deepness* of a practical identity. If this is correct, the problem that arises with this contingency embedded in the deepness of an identity is that we are in danger of being unable to deny an identity as ours. Rachel Cohon illustrates this.

Persons who want to change their citizenship may "sometimes find that while they wish to become citizens of the United States, for example, they cannot bring themselves to renounce their original citizenship as U. S. law requires" (2000, 70). Or a person who has decided on a divorce may find herself unable to pull it through. As Cohon formulates this, the identity has "taken root" in such a way that it shows the person's life as valuable to her "quite apart from any volition of" hers. She may give her "heart to a person or a country, but rather discover that" she, or it, has it (ibid.). Although a person *can* question her identities, sometimes her psychological reality resists doing so—she finds giving up the identity *unthinkable* (cf. Frankfurt 1989, 177-190). In terms of **Section 1.7**, the person's environment, in the form of her psychological and bodily reality, resists giving up a certain identity.

Just as the origin of a person's practical identities is contingent, so can the

deepness of an identity be contingent as well. The problem however with the contingency regarding the deepness of a person's identities is that it becomes the existential choice, at the core of Korsgaard's theory, becomes more diffuse.

This relates to the idea that for Korsgaard, giving up on a deeply embedded identity may feel to be for all practical purposes dead or worse than dead" (1996b, 102). What Korsgaard makes explicit here is that there are costs bound up to giving up on an identity that is deeply ingrained in who one is—these costs can be so high that the person giving them up may experience it as being *worse* than being dead. In other words, the *reflective* rejection of an identity may *feel* as a failure to live up to the identity and such feelings indicate a certain cost of giving it up. Cohon's example can also be understood in these terms. Only when a person acts on the intention to give up her nationality, she notices that she has feelings inside that raise (unexpectedly) the costs of doing so—she learns that she *cares* about her nationality. This does not imply that she cannot follow through with her plan, but it can take a person by surprise. The identity appears here as motivational force.

A bit more nuanced, to become aware of that an identity is bound up with who one is, is not a conscious *decision*, a reflective endorsement or rejection, but it depends on its deepness. As this deepness is a psychological fact about oneself, it is often indicated by feelings such as losing yourself, shame, or the feeling that the self disintegrates (cf. Cohon 2000, 68) and not, necessarily, in line with a conscious endorsement or rejection of the identity. In light of this that the existential choice becomes more diffuse. Korsgaard presents as if this is a completely *free* choice or decision, but the limits a person encounters within herself may the psychological and practical costs too high for a choice that is theoretically and reflectively free. Autonomy might mean "commanding yourself to do what you think it would be a good idea to do", which in turn "depends on who you think you are" (Korsgaard 1996b, 107), but this does not mean, at least not from a psychological point of view, that who you *want* to be is always completely up to you, since it is limited by who you *can* be as well.⁴¹ In other words, you encounter constraints in yourself that

⁴¹ This might raise the question whether Korsgaard's account becomes a realist account, as Cohon argues (2000, 74-75ft). I, however, do not think this is the case. It is still possible for a person to deny a practical identity the states of being a source of reasons. However, psychologically speaking, this may be unhealthy as she may repress it. Here a standard of health may force, practically speaking, a person to embrace the contingency of the being she is. This is implied by Korsgaard herself: "We could, with the resources of a knowledge of human nature, rank different sets of values according to their tendency to promote human flourishing. [...] the point will be that some ways of thinking of our identity are healthier and better for us than others" (1996b, 117).

make the costs for choosing to express, or not express, a certain identity very high, if not insurmountable as Frankfurt has it (see **Chapter 3**).

Section 4.4 *Dealing with conflict & the Unification Ideal*

In the foregoing sections, I have shown how the unity of a person's agential faculties, the parts of her soul, provides the stability for genuine commitment and I argued that a person's personality has, from a psychological point of view, not unlimited plasticity—the costs of certain change due to the deepness of her identities make that there are limits to what a person is willing to change. In this section, I argue that the deepness of practical identities can have a destabilizing effect on the unity of a person's agential capacities if a conflicted person presses for the unification of her personality. I connect this both to the problem of repressing desires as well as to the idea, articulated by Korsgaard, that to fail “your own essential principles” means “failing to meet your deepest obligations” (ibid., 162).

How striving for unity of personality may undermine the unity of a person's soul

In order to show the importance of the Unification Ideal as part of the principle of self-constitution, it is important to see that Korsgaard presupposes a tight connection between the two levels on which practical deliberation takes place, just as Frankfurt does. This first shows in that for Korsgaard reflecting on what to do is to reflect on what practical identity one wants to commit oneself to. In other words, reflecting on what to do is to reflect on what identity one wants to give expression to in one's action. This makes that the success conditions of both levels of deliberation, choice of action and establishing practical orientation, collapse together. This shows in the following quote:

These conditions—the need to work at being unified and the need for practical deliberation—are brought about together. And this means that the function of deliberation is not merely to determine how you will act, but also to unify you. Or rather, to put the point more correctly, those are not two different things, for your movement will not be an action unless it is attributable to you—to you as a whole or a unified being—rather than merely to something in you. And the task of deliberation is to determine what you—you as a whole or unified being—are going to do. (2009, 125-126)

Moreover, Korsgaard holds that as we can only do one action at a time we have to unify our personality: “there is the raw necessity of eliminating conflict among your various motives” (1996a, 369) because you “are a unified person at any given time [as] you must act, and you have only one body with which to act” (ibid., 370). So we have to resolve conflicts between our various motivational states as “you in fact do one rather than another” action (ibid., 369) and this need travels directly to the level of the principles of choice, your practical identities. As stated, reflective distance requires you “to construct an identity for” yourself and you have “the need for identification with some unifying principle or way of choosing” because of the necessity of “unification at any given moment, or in the context of any given decision” as you are confronted with the “the necessity of making deliberative choices” (ibid., 371). In her more recent work, Korsgaard makes a similar point. She tells us that the task of practical deliberation is to “pull yourself together by making a choice. And in order to make that choice, [deliberation] needs a principle” (2009, 213). Because of this “necessity of making deliberative choices”, a person is confronted with “the need for identification with some unifying principle or way of choosing” (1996a, 371).⁴²

The unification of personality is the ideal for Korsgaard. This is further supported by inquiring into a passage in which Korsgaard seems to suggest that a person does not have to deal with conflict *per se*: “The work of pulling ourselves back together is also the work of pulling those identities into a single practical identity, choosing among them when we have to, deciding which is to have priority, harmonizing them when we can” (2009, 126). Korsgaard suggests here that a person has to harmonize her identities only when she can. However, the paragraph continues with what was pointed out just now: we can only do one action at a time and therefore we need to pull ourselves together. The incentives that spring from our practical identities “are incentives to act, and on any given occasion, we can only do one thing” and therefore, in hard cases in which you feel torn, “where you have to choose between two options, two courses of action, for both of which you experience some incentive,” you need to “Make up your mind, or even better, Pull

⁴² As the constitutive aim of action is to constitute the person as a unified agent, it may come as no surprise that Korsgaard often, in many different guises, refers to unity and unification. See, e.g., her *Self-constitution* (2009): a “single unified agent” (7, 25, 152, 179), “(re)unification” (126, 133, 134), “unity” (xii, 7, 19, 25-26, 41, 125-126, 132, 154, 157, 158, 160, 170, 175, 179, 181), and “being whole” (xii, 19, 21, 26, 45, 72, 103, 105, 126, 133, 140, 144, 157, 170, 175, 180, 213).

yourself together” (ibid.). The “when we have to” trumps the “when we can” if we experience volitional conflict regarding the choice of an action.

Korsgaard concludes in the same paragraph that the “work of practical deliberation is reunification, reconstitution: and the function of the principles that govern deliberation—the principles of practical reason—is the unification of the self” (ibid.). However, this pulling oneself together can be dangerous in the same way as the person who is being led by the oligarchic principle. Because if it is correct that a person’s identities come with a deepness that is also contingent, they may resist the unification of the self to the point that the costs of unification become too high for the person to bear, making it forced and thereby undermines the unity of one’s agential faculties. If two identities are deeply embedded within a person’s personality, then a person should entertain the possibility that the conflict is not detrimental to who she is, but rather constitutive.

I want to illustrate this possibility with the following example. Imagine a person who grows up in a religious family and feels at home in practices and traditions that belong to her religion. At the same time, she has a normal youth in terms of school and finds herself at school in secular environments. Assume now that this person has integrated, and reflectively endorses, the religious values of her upbringing. At a certain moment, she starts to notice that she is attracted to persons of the same sex—she discovers that she has a lesbian sexual orientation. However, such orientation, she is aware, is condemned by her religious beliefs to which she does not want to take distance. However, at her secular school, exploring feelings for persons of the same sex is perfectly normal and let’s suppose that she even starts to do so within this environment. This allows her to express both identities in different contexts that are only loosely connected and thus she finds herself able to express both identities despite that they conflict with each other. This does not mean that in expressing both identities, she does not feel torn. Most likely, she does, because both identities do not go together. At the same time, it is imaginable that she starts to think that the tension belongs to her. Especially after she realizes that the price of giving either identity is too high for her—she wants to give expression to both her religious beliefs and her sexual orientation. However, under the principle of self-constitution that includes the Unification Ideal, she is supposedly in danger of losing control of her actions.

It is my contention that the opposite is actually true. The moment she would attempt to unify her personality, in a forced way, she endangers the unity of her agential faculties in similar way as the person guided by the oligarchic principle. If she feels that both identities have such a deepness that it feels contrary to who she is to reject one, rejecting one becomes more like repressing one identity in favor of the other. It is not my claim that a denial of what feels as a deep part of herself is unimaginable. However, such denial may backfire as she is at risk of making herself blind to the inclinations expressive of the denied identity if they keep on existing as a force in her. She is in danger of making herself heteronomous regarding the denied side of the conflict. Ideally, a person would be aware of this therefore seeing that the costs of unification are simply too high. It is in light of this that to focus too strongly on unification of personality might cause the disintegration of the person's agential faculties. Here a quote by Paul Benson, made within a different debate, may be helpful: if "one is genuinely torn between competing commitments in such a way that to reconcile one's concerns would be to repress what one stands for and who one is" (Benson 1994, 667). Of course, to be aware of this is difficult, so it is in this light that I propose in Chapter 6 the exploration of such conflicts in which the person can find this out in a process instead of by a choice

J. David Velleman makes a similar point in his critical discussion of Harry G. Frankfurt's notion of identification. Velleman, in his article 'Identification and Identity', discusses Freud's case of the Rat Man. The Rat Man loves and hates his father, but is only identified with his love for his father—it is Freud's analysis, and Velleman follows him, that it is the repression of his hate that makes the Rat Man ill. Velleman diagnoses that "his effort to dissociate himself from one of his emotions, which is just what Frankfurt prescribes for cases of ambivalence" was what made the Rat Man ill (2006, 344). Velleman subsequently suggest that the Rat Man can better "accept *himself* as ambivalent toward his father" than "to separate competing desires by expelling one of them" (ibid., 345). David Carr suggests something similar, albeit from a different angle: "the concern of good psychoanalysis should be the moral one of helping 'patients' to progress from an unhealthy pathological or neurotic state of conflict to a rather more healthy or normal appreciation of conflict as an unavoidable aspect of the human condition" (2009, 45). A person who always aims at the ideal of unification might forego the fact that conflict is an unavoidable aspect of human life, of her life. As the deepness of a practical identity is not up to

the person herself, she might experience her reflective rejection of a practical identity as a failure to live up to it. In other words, a person may have bodily, emotive, or psychological responses to how she acts or decides to act. Such responses define, partially, the costs of overcoming the deepness of an identity.

A different solution? The exploration of the deepness of one's commitments

I want to end this chapter by explicating a way in which the volitionally divided person can deal with a conflict between two identities that are so deep that she does not want to resolve it, that she sees the conflict as constitutive of who she is. This suggestion, further explored and developed in **Chapter 6**, is that the person's active contribution may lie in how she let herself be shaped by the conflict in a process of exploration (cf. Hutto 2016). From a psychological point of view, it is plausible that interaction takes place between our received self-conceptions—the ideals we strive for to express in our actions—and how we emotively, psychologically, and physically respond to expressing those self-conceptions. I might want to aim for a career at a top law firm, but if this makes me physically and psychologically a wreck this might be an indication that such a career is not for me. At the same time, if I *really* want it, I can force myself to continue and ignore these signs—for example, because I know that such a period is necessary to go through while I rise the ladder.

As was alluded to above, we are opaque to ourselves. We do not always know whether a practical identity has nested itself deeply in us and this can cause unexpected responses to our actions—for example, by finding ourselves unable to give up our nationality. This means that we need to find out, explore, what is important and in which ways it is important to us. We can do so by trying to act in this or that way and by imagining acting in this or that way to experience how we feel about undertaking the action. As such, we can find out how deep the identities that constitute the conflict are settled within our personality and thus whether the costs of giving up on one side of the conflict is too high thereby deciding that the conflict is constitutive of who we are. Furthermore, if this is the case, we can explore how we feel comfortable giving expression to conflicts constitutive of who we are. Our emotive, psychological, and bodily responses can be interpreted as a feedback mechanism for this process.

That such a process of exploration can be a viable option shows, I think, in the following two ways. Take the fact that a person needs to express her

commitment to a specific identity. As it can happen, we can commit ourselves to an identity but observe after some time that we seem to fail to give expression to our commitment. Korsgaard describes the example of “being Charlotte’s friend” (1996a, 180). If the person being Charlotte’s friend never thinks of her, never walks along a shop window and thinks “Charlotte would like this” than it cannot be said she is truly committed to being Charlotte’s friend as “to have an end is to see the world in a certain way” (ibid.). It is therefore “only what you do in the future [that] will enable us to correctly attribute a resolution to you” (ibid.). This relates to what was pointed out in **Chapter 1**, you can only adopt a practical identity gradually as you commit yourself to a *future* in which you will act on it—you need to show it. Another way in which a person can explore her own identity was referred to above. Namely, a person can find out that she is incapable of giving up an identity—that she finds it unthinkable to give up her Dutch nationality despite her resolution to apply for USA citizenship (cf. Cohon 2000, 70). So my suggestion is that a person who finds that deep practical identities are conflicted can—before she accepts the conflict as constitutive of who she is or after she has accepted the conflict—actively contribute to the self-shaping conflict by exploring it.

Section 4.5 *Summary*

I will end this chapter by summarizing the argument along the four questions introduced at the end of **Chapter 2**: 1. What is the articulated ideal of unity? 2. Which grounds are given to aim for unification in deliberation? 3. Do these grounds hold up to closer scrutiny? 4. What is the positive contribution of this chapter? **1)** In this chapter, I have argued that Korsgaard formulates two ideals of unity regarding two different objects of unification. This is summarized nicely by Korsgaard herself: “For the way to make yourself into an agent, a person, is to make yourself into a particular person, with a practical identity of your own. And the way to make yourself into a particular person, who can interact well with herself and others, is to be consistent and unified and whole—to have integrity” (2009, 214). The first Unification Ideal regarding a person’s agential faculties, the parts of her soul, is unproblematic. The other Unification Ideal regarding her principles of choice, her personality, however, is problematic insofar a person’s commitments to practical identities are not fully under her own volitional control. **2)** Korsgaard argues that a person’s personality needs to be unified because a person can only do one action at a

time and needs to stay in control of her action for which unity is required. **3)** I have argued that the psychological reality a person encounters may make the price too high for her to give up either side of the conflict therewith making her to accept the disunity on the level of her personality in order to guarantee the unity of the parts of her soul—by accepting the disunity, she makes sure she doesn't repress a motivational attitude that may become otherwise uncontrollable. This defeats Korsgaard's reasons for the Unification Ideal. **4)** This discussion resulted in the positive contribution of this chapter: as a person is both opaque to herself and not in full volitional control of the content of her personality, she can explore what constitutes her personality and how she likes to deal with conflict in reciprocal interaction between her self-conceptions and how she responds to expressing these conceptions.

Chapter 5 Narrative Unification Ideal. The Unity of a life and Radical Change

In the foregoing two chapters, I discussed two positions that include the Unification Ideal that focus on synchronic unification: a person needs to be without volitional disunity at a single moment in time to know what to do and to be in control of her actions. I argued both that a person can bring in future actions into her practical deliberations so that she can express the conflict over multiple actions and that it can be detrimental to a person's control over her actions if she attempts to overcome it in a strained way—sometimes the best course of action is to accept the conflict as hers. In this chapter, the focus shifts to diachronic unification. This is the idea that a person does not need to strive for unification at a single moment, but over the course of her life.

The theory that expounds this idea is the narrative theory. The narrative theory is attractive in this context, because it does seem to capture the diachronic aspect of a person's life and personality naturally. More precise, the narrative theory captures in an intuitive way the form of a person's diachronic awareness of how her past shapes who she is and how her future-orientated motivational states frame her action perspective by placing a person's past, present, future in terms of narrativity. Moreover, narrativity captures the basic and "more structural stability" necessary for the "recognition of oneself as a persisting self" with longer-term projects and awareness of one's past shaping one's current experience (Schechtman 2016, 31).

In this chapter, I reconstruct the narrative thesis in light of practical deliberation. I start by the claim that in order to be self-intelligible, a person is bound by her autobiographical narrative in her practical deliberations. The suggestion is that the more intelligible an action is in light of a person's narrative, the better the action presents itself as a rational choice. Alasdair MacIntyre illustrates this when he asks, "In what does the unity of an individual life consist? The answer is that its unity is the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life. To ask 'What is the good for me?' is to ask how best I might live out that unity and bring it to completion" (2008 [1981], 218). MacIntyre's point is that the aim of practical deliberation is to complete the narrative unity that is embodied in a person's life.

Yet, going from narrative intelligibility to a standard of narrative rationality, which binds a person to her autobiographical narrative in deliberation, is a leap that needs to be justified. I will reconstruct how narrativists may take this leap first (**Section 5.3**). Subsequently, I will argue that narrative unity is not always the ideal

to guide a person's practical deliberations. The argument combines the role of the imagination in practical deliberation with transformative decisions and the choice for radical change (**Section 5.4**). However, I will start off by explicating a minimal definition of narrativity (**Section 5.1**) and by stating the pull of the narrative theory based on Marya Schechtman's account of it (**Section 5.2**).

Section 5.1 *A minimal notion of narrativity*

The plurality of different types of narrative encountered in literature is a good indication of the difficulty to give an overarching definition of the concept of narrativity. James Joyce's *Ulysses* is not to be compared to *Antigone* by Sophocles regarding narrative style and the narrative form of *Antigone* is not to be compared with the form found in *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green. This plurality of different types of narrative may be taken as reason for why, in philosophy, "there is no agreed definition or criterion for sharply identifying narratives" creating a lack of a shared understanding of the concepts of narrative and narrativity⁴³ (Hutto 2007, 1). However, I take it that a minimal necessary condition for the philosophical use of the notion of narrativity can and has to be explicated to prevent the account from becoming vacuous.

The minimal condition that I want to propose is based on significance relations of the events that make up the narrative. In order to fulfill this condition, there needs to be a kind of (narrative) connectedness between events in a person's life such that the connectedness provides a layer of intelligibility to these events. Such relations go further than mere causal relations (cf. Velleman 2003; 2009, Chapter 7). In other words, an autobiographical narrative provides the events that constitute a person's life with *significance*, or intelligibility, thereby shaping and coloring the practical outlook of the person (Goldie 2012a, 7 makes a similar point). I will demarcate this minimal condition by contrasting it to causality, as the report of causal relations is not a sufficient condition for narrativity.

A scientific report on the food gathering skills of ants does not possess narrativity, neither does a report on how certain elements of the periodic table interact with each other under certain circumstances. The mode of explanation of such causal reports does not establish the kind of meaning that gives the reported-

⁴³ On the relation of narrative and narrativity: I will use narrativity as a quality of "objects", because not all authors agree with the claim that an object possessing narrativity is itself, necessarily, a narrative (see, e.g., Køster 2017).

on events significance within a person's life. Compare this, for example, with a person who wishes to understand why she acts in a certain pathological way. She is not interested in the exact causal connection between her past experiences and her present behavior, this does not give her the kind of explanation that necessarily helps her. Rather, it is more important to her to be able to make her present pathological behavior intelligible in light of past experiences in such a way that she can change her behavior. In other words, the exact causal pathway from past experiences to present behavior is not what psychoanalysis is interested in *per se*. Rather, it is the meaning or significance of certain *remembered* events (memories) combined with the way they are remembered for present behavior. The way the past occurred cannot be changed, but the significance of this past for the present *can*. The suggestion is that this happens via narrativity.

What seems to be a necessary condition of narrativity, then, is that it enables a person to make sense of how time presents itself to her in her own experience: narrativity does not track how the events at t^2 follows causally from the events at t^1 —as chronicles and annals do—but a narrative establishes relations of significance *between* the events of a person's life giving intelligibility to her life and to her responses to specific events. For example, having made a silly remark yesterday explains why you may feel ashamed today; thinking of the date tonight explains the excitement you feel now.⁴⁴

How these relations of significance come into existence is a controversial topic. Peter Goldie, for example, argues that a narrative comes into existence through a process actively engaged in by a person that 'involves *shaping, organizing, and colouring* the raw material into a narrative structure' (ibid., 11). His idea is that a person tells a story from a certain perspective and it is by taking on this perspective meaning can be ascribed to the events that make up a person's life (cf. Bruner 1990). Yet, there are also authors who deny that it is necessary for a narrative to be actively constructed by a person (Schechtman 2007; Jongepier 2016). How this question is settled is not important for the purposes of this chapter. The focus is on future-orientated deliberation and thereby is the person's autobiographical narrative taken as input for this process of deliberation, however it has come into existence.

⁴⁴ Within the philosophical literature, a discussion exists on whether reporting on causality is part of the necessary conditions of narrativity (Velleman 2003)—i.e. whether the autobiographical narrative has to be true to causal relations.

Section 5.2 *The initial appeal of the narrative Unification Ideal*

The narrative thesis is based on two assumptions: **assumption I**) persons are beings aware of their past, present, and future and **assumption II**) persons, as agents, have the desire to be intelligible to themselves. Subsequently, it is argued that **claim III**) narrativity captures these two conditions in the best possible way. On the basis of this claim, the conclusion is drawn that **conclusion IV**) persons are bound in practical deliberation by an ideal of narrative unity. In this section, I explain by means of Schechtman's narrative theory how claim III is defended in light of assumptions I and II. In the next section, I will explain how conclusion IV—the claim which is under scrutiny in this chapter—allegedly follows from I-III.

One more note before I start: although Schechtman's *The Constitution of Selves* (1996) wasn't the first articulation of the narrative theory—see prominent philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre (2016; 2008 [1981]), Paul Ricoeur (1992), Charles Taylor (1989), and Daniel Dennett (1991)—I take Schechtman's writings as basis for articulating the appeal of the ideal of narrative unity as her articulation has become the main reference point for both contemporary defenders (e.g. Davenport 2012; Rudd 2007; 2012) and assailants of the narrative theory (e.g. Strawson 2004; 2007; Lamarque 2004; 2007; Christman 2004).

Imagine a person who undertakes the simple action of walking up to the door of a house. This person has a different experience if she walks up to her own house or that of a stranger and whether the house is newly bought or whether she has lived there already for many years (Schechtman 2007; 2011). This illustrates, according to Schechtman, how in each situation the person's autobiographical narrative colours her experience just as the different narratives of person's may colour the same action in different ways. Coming into a lecture hall, a professor may feel weary of having seen the hall a thousand times; a first-year student may feel excitement about the things she will come to learn; whereas the genitor, walking in at the end of the day, feels frustration of the mess she knows for sure the students have left behind (cf. Schechtman 2016).

The pull of narrative self-understanding lies precisely in this: a person's present experience *depends* on her past experiences and on her hopes and wishes for the future. Narrativity captures naturally and intuitively how past experience

and future-orientated hopes, etc. colour and give intelligibility to present experience. Moreover, it explains a person's (habitual) action-readiness in situations she is confronted with as the narrative-highlighted connections constitute a person's action perspective, i.e. those actions that she takes as possible. So it is the narrative self-conception "according to which we experience and organize" our lives that makes our life intelligible to ourselves (Schechtman 1996, 94). As Catriona Mackenzie and Jacqui Poltera formulate this, "a self-narrative is an organizing structure, the "lens," as Schechtman describes it, through which we interpret and make sense of this history and of our future possibilities" (2010, 49).

The narrative thesis can be formulated in terms of the practical relation of oneself to oneself as a narrative self-understanding that "involves the ability to simultaneously view particular first-person perspectives as one's own and experience distance from them" (Schechtman 2016, 32). Such self-understanding enables a person to accept her "present perspective as one among many interacting and changing perspectives" (ibid., 30) thereby generating "a meta-perspective, a point of view of the person as a whole" which enables the person to understand herself "as the persisting subject who sees things differently at different times" (ibid., 31). A person, being aware of her past, present, and future, becomes intelligible to herself as persisting subject through the narrative self-understanding she has of herself (see as well Schechtman 2012). This enables her to stand in a self-evaluative relation to herself, a practical relation of oneself to oneself, giving her the metaphorical glasses that structure her decision-making framework.

It has been noted (Schaubroeck & Kalis 2014) that the explanandum of the narrative theory is illusive. Is the narrative unity thesis meant to explain personhood, rationality, autonomy, or authenticity? For all these explanandi different standards of validity are in question. Although I will not be able, and neither plan, to solve this problem for the narrative unity thesis in this chapter, I wish to explicate that in the following an interpretation is given of how the narrative unity thesis can be understood as standard, as highest principle of a decision-making framework, for practical deliberation. On the reconstructed interpretation, the question becomes whether self-intelligibility, taken as the explanandum of the narrative thesis, in light of one's autobiographical narrative holds as such a standard or highest principle.

Section 5.3 *Narrative deliberation and the Unification Ideal*

In **Section 5.2**, I have shown how a person's awareness of her existence in time as having a past, present, and future is naturally captured in terms of narrativity as this gives intuitive intelligibility to the experiences, actions, and responses of the person. In this section, I show how it can be concluded from the intelligibility that narrativity gives to a person's life, her experiences and actions, that she is bound by the ideal of narrative unity in practical deliberation (conclusion IV). My reconstruction rests on J. David Velleman's thoughts on narrativity together with textual support from Alasdair MacIntyre and John J. Davenport. At the end of this section, I already engage critically with the reconstructed view based on the possibility to choose radical change. I will point out that choosing for radical change becomes, implausibly so, something unattractive or even irrational and this puts pressure on the striving for the ideal of narrative unity in practical deliberation.

The diachronic dimension of actions and practical identities

One thesis to which all narrative theorists ascribe is that human beings, persons, are *historical beings*. That is to say, persons have the ability to step back from the immediateness of the here and now and experience and reflect on a past and a future—i.e., their present self-understanding is informed by their past and their future. This raises the question what the best form for this self-understanding is and narrativists give an explication of this.

Narrativists claim that motivational states—from desires, extended plans to a person's practical identities—all have a diachronic dimension: they extend through time as they have a history and point towards a future. Moreover, as Velleman makes explicit, as the future is open to a person, she has to make up her mind about this future (2000, 23-24): by saying "I'll go to the supermarket in an hour", a person determines what will happen in her immediate future (2006, 211). In similar vein, MacIntyre points out that desires in adult human beings are not only future-directed as they point towards the desirable, the to-be-obtained, but also in that they point towards a *possible* future. A person can thereby ask herself whether it is better to act on a desire now as the change for satisfaction will disappear or to postpone acting on it as there will be a better chance in the future to satisfy it (2016, 3-5). To conclude, a person can, and has to, relate practically to her open future.

As desires, actions, and plans are defined by the diachronic dimension, narrativists argue that the standard for evaluation used in practical deliberation needs to make this diachronic dimension intelligible. Davenport makes this explicit in terms of practical identities: “the practical identity of a human being *is* a kind of narrative identity” as it captures the diachronic dimension of being a person who is aware of how her past and future bear on the present moment (2012, 39). Davenport continues pointing out that plans “provide a background within which practical deliberation takes place” thereby imposing “end-neutral rational requirements” for the coherence and consistency of practical identities (ibid., 43). In other words, “diachronic coherence” is “necessary for integrity” of a person’s personality (ibid., 15). Let us turn to why narrativists would argue this is the case.

Rational action, self-intelligibility & narrative unity as ideal

According to Velleman, a person’s self-understanding guides her deliberations as the person is psychologically wired to be self-intelligible (2006, 14). Imagine an athlete, aiming for participation in the Olympic Games, who gets a training module prescribed by her trainer. One of the aspects with which her motivation to train probably correlates is how much sense the module makes to her. The less intelligible the module is to her, the less intelligible her actions are to her and thus the less motivated she is. Moreover, the desire for self-intelligibility leads a person to want to be consistent with the self-descriptions she has of herself: “Humans have a tendency to behave in ways that cohere with their own conceptions of themselves” (ibid., 260; cf. ibid., 211). Understanding herself as shy makes, partly, the person to act shy; understanding herself as skilled, the person performs with confidence.⁴⁵ This illustrates the connection, argued for in **Chapter 1**, between a person’s practical identities and her self-expression (cf. Davenport 2012, 61-62).

Velleman goes from the psychological claim of self-intelligibility to the rational ideal of self-consistency. First, Velleman points out that for a person “consistent preferences make sense because they hang together like the episodes in a coherent story” (2000, 162). It follows from aiming for self-intelligibility (cf.

⁴⁵ This works the other way around as well. If I all of a sudden start to whistle a happy tune I wonder ‘why am I whistling?’ It is by becoming aware of this act that I may realize that I have fallen in love—this realization giving intelligibility back to the whistling. Which may make me to continue; or I might come across as silly to myself—that is to say that although the interactions between a person’s conscious and unconscious mental states are opaque, it is clear that a conscious thought, feeling, or realization is an object to which we can respond.

Velleman 2006, 5-6) that if “there was a more intelligible story for [the person] to enact, by choosing to do something else, there was a better rationale for doing that thing instead” (Velleman 2000, 29). If this is correct, and this is contested in this chapter, it supports the claim that the less a present action coheres with a person’s autobiographical narrative, the less rational it is to choose this action as it is less intelligible to the person herself to choose this action. Formulated positively, a person wants her actions to correspond to her life story to maintain “the internal coherence of the story itself” (2006, 216). Thus the standard for choice becomes the intelligibility of the action in light of a person’s autobiographical narrative, since the better a person’s future actions fit with her autobiographical narrative the better her actions are to be evaluated.⁴⁶

MacIntyre makes clear that a person’s autobiographical narrative is the standard for practical deliberation. According to MacIntyre, a person in whose life “alternative futures open up” and who fails at such moments “to draw upon the narrative of her or his life in relevant ways” by asking “‘How has my life gone so far?’ and ‘How must I act if it is to go well in the future?’”, such a person is “lacking in practical intelligence” (2016, 241). Davenport reflects this in subscribing to “Velleman’s and Bratman’s views” which have “practical unity as a constitutive aim” of action (2012, 44). According to Davenport, the unity that needs to be established in action is narrative unity: “the perspective from which we experience and choose as present agent includes the practical identity we have developed through our history *thus far*, which (if sufficient narrativational connections hold) is an *extension of the same* life-story we had at earlier points in time” (ibid., 33).

The ideal of narrative unification & one’s past as burden

Up to now, it has been established that narrativists suppose a strong connection between self-intelligibility and establishing narrative coherence in one’s life. They defend, that is, a narrative Unification Ideal in which deliberation is to be guided by the narrative coherence of relations of significance between one’s life events. This does not mean that a person cannot divert from her autobiographical narrative at

⁴⁶ See Velleman’s ‘Motivation by ideal’ (2006) in which he argues for the idea that a person can choose the *less* intelligible action if she is motivated by an ideal for which she wants to reach. It must be said thereby, Velleman does not necessarily subscribe to the view ascribed to him in this section as he allows for a different standard than narrative unity (intelligibility) to motivate action. I do not focus on this, because I’m interested in whether the standard of narrative unity internal to the narrative theory of self-intelligibility is sound.

all. However, it is an interesting question how much change is allowed if a person wants to uphold the narrative Unification Ideal. I will discuss two objections—**1)** the objection of no-change and **2)** the objection of radical change—to get the central claim of the narrative thesis of practical deliberation into sharper focus. I point out that the no-change objection fails because change is possible on the narrative view. However, the radical-change objection seems to have validity as radical change, implausibly so, is discouraged or even presented as irrational on the narrative view. The discussion of this objection will form the transition to the next section in which the narrative Unification Ideal is critically discussed in light of a person's imagination and the plausibility of choice for radical and transformative change.

1) Although a person is expected to strive for her actions to cohere with her life story, this does not imply that there is no room for change in the direction of her life. First of all, not every minor episode, like having breakfast, is part of a person's autobiographical narrative—a person may tell her story with broader strokes (Velleman 2000, 162)—which opens up the possibility to divert often enough from the habits that constitute one's daily life without a loss of self-intelligibility. Furthermore, the required internal coherence within a person's life (Velleman 2006, 216) includes “choosing among different available turns” to continue one's life story of which “none of which is privileged as the turn that the story must take in order to be true” (ibid., 218). This means that a person's autobiographical narrative leaves room to choose between several courses of action of which none is truly privileged over the others. Yet, the Unification Ideal is present in the background: Velleman, immediately afterwards, clarifies that the basis of the decision is “how best to continue the story” and thus to strive for the narrative Unification Ideal (ibid.). This raises the question how rational it is for a person to make life-changing, and thereby narrative-changing, choices.

2) Peter Goldie asks the same question by wondering whether it would be irrational to actively pursue radical change. He points out that in times of conflict and confusion, what is at stake is a person's conception of herself, her autobiographical narrative, making it impossible to bestow weights on possible courses of action *based on* this conception (2012a, 142-147). A person in a midlife or quarter-life crisis is unsure about her past choices that make up her autobiographical narrative precisely because it is her own narrative. The values she

has acted upon in the past is what she has come to question for her future.⁴⁷ Goldie articulates here what is misleading about the narrative thesis: at times in a person's life, it is contra-productive to the situation to strive for the ideal of narrative unity precisely because one's past life is at issue.

The point is that the life story of a person can make the future appear in, what a person comes to realize, *false light* and radical reorientation (radical change) may seem the only, and ideal, way to overcome this. In such situations, a person's past, her narrative, impedes the change the person has come to feel as necessary as it is the past that she wants to leave behind. Let me describe two examples. Imagine a person solely focused on her career getting into an accident, recovering from a life-threatening disease, or of who a close family member or friend gets terminally sick: her value-system might, quite suddenly and radically, change. Or, less dramatically or sudden, imagine a PhD-student, making 12-hour days in the lab, who notices the psychological and physical consequences. Her mind is strained and she lives with a constant cold that she represses with medicine. The smallest moment may give her, what she finds, clarity of mind thinking "What am I doing? I am ruining myself!" As a consequence, she may start to doubt what has driven her all her life, a search for knowledge and her ambition, requiring radical change of herself—to step out of the rat race and start to apply for an administrative job at the university, for example.

Central to these examples is that the person experiences a loss of confidence in the identities that bestowed value upon her life up to that moment. It is difficult to see why a person's autobiographical narrative should put in more weight in her deliberations than the insights and revelations she gained from the disruptive experience. In the next section, I will attempt to bring this point home by repeating it in context of a person's capacity for imagination. I will sketch, and critically discuss Catriona Mackenzie's view on how a person's imaginative projections, to be relevant for practical deliberation, are bound by narrative coherence.

Section 5.4 *Imagination and the possibility of radical change*

Stories and narratives are of the utmost importance if we imagine possible futures for ourselves. We imagine a future with children of our own and we become motivated to start our own family. We imagine how heavy the burden will be at the

⁴⁷ Bernard Williams makes a similar point when he asks why a person experiencing ambivalence in her personality should live her life "as a quest for narrative" and thus use the ideal of narrative unity as standard for solving the conflict (2007, 312).

beginning as well as how the felt love will change us fundamentally and we start to feel a bit scared too. Before a night of drinking in the city, we see how we will be robbed on our way home and we put pepper spray in our bag. We imagine how excelling at the upcoming job interview will propel our career and we are motivated to give our best—or we lose trust, for a moment, in our capacities, because of the hubris we feel by imagining just that. We imagine how we will lose the person we love most and we forget all the small annoyances and commit to enjoying our relationship every day.

As these examples of imaginative projection illustrate the importance of narratives for our deliberations about what to do and who we want to be, it is surprising that little “has been said about the role of imagining one’s future self in the construction of such [autobiographical] narratives” (Mackenzie 2008, 122). One exception to the rule is Mackenzie who has reflected on the function of persons’ imagination and its connection to the narrative (self-constituting) theory.⁴⁸ In this section, I discuss Mackenzie’s view on the relation between imagination, practical deliberation, and the narrative Unification Ideal. I question whether imaginative projections, which sketch a possible future (for us), need to be evaluated along the standard of a person’s life-story to be considered by the person as a possible future-*for-her*. I do so by discussing the choice for radical change and transformative decisions.

Mackenzie on narrativity and the imagination

Mackenzie points out that the imagination has an ambivalent role in practical deliberation. On the one hand it is helpful as it opens up possible, and different, futures for the person to consider. On the other hand, a person’s imaginings can mislead, misdirect, and deceive her by imagining a false story or they can carry the person away by their cogency. In what follows I reconstruct Mackenzie’s view along the following two questions: **1)** How is the imagination conducive to practical deliberation? **2)** How are a person’s imaginative projections to be kept in check?

⁴⁸ Another author who has spent much attention on the role of imagination in relation to narrative theory is Peter Goldie—for example in his *The Mess Inside* (2012a; cf. 2012b). I do not discuss Goldie as he does not defend the narrative thesis under scrutiny in this chapter. He holds that his narrative thesis about the “narrative sense of self is consistent, and even congenial to, the idea of radical change in what one deeply cares about” (ibid., 149). According to Goldie we do not need to be coherent with our autobiographical narrative (ibid., 123). Another interesting article in this context comes from Leslie A. Howe in which she investigates how imagination in play and pretense can enhance “the individual’s life-long project of self-constitution and self-narration” (2008, 580).

1) We can grasp the creative potential of the imagination and imaginative projections in terms of branching possibilities. This is the idea that the present branches out in multiple possibilities as it can develop in several possible directions (Bransen 2000; 2002). A person makes these multiple possibilities concrete through imaginative projections enabling herself to conceive of the choices before her. As Goldie formulates it, branching possibilities are the “narrative representations of possible ways in which events might come to pass” (2012a, 77). A person may “explore [the] possibilities for self-expression and self-creation” within a particular identity (Howe 2008, 578) and she may imagine having a completely different personality as “the point of view from which I imagine need not coincide with the point of view of my embodied subjectivity or my practical identity” (Mackenzie 2008, 124). A person can imagine expressing her parenthood in different ways to find out which she feels (or imagines to feel) good about and she can imagine where she would have been in life if she had studied chemistry.⁴⁹ Imaginative projections thus support practical deliberation by making the branching possibilities of the present explicit and concrete.

Next to this supportive role of the imagination for practical deliberation, imaginative projections have the power to incite an emotive and evaluative response in a person helping her to explore how she evaluates and feels about the imagined branching possibility (ibid., 127). Imagining getting a question at a job interview to which she is dumb-founded, a person feels horrified; imagining how she shouts at her boss and quit her job, a person is filled with joy; imagining doing a different job fills a person with fear and insecurity, but imagining staying on the chosen career path fills her with dread and a feeling of being caged. A person’s imaginative projections, that is, impact a person’s present by her bodily, emotive, and cognitive responses to what she imagines (cf. Wollheim 1984).

2) Imaginative projections, however, also provide “an opportunity for self-deception, self-indulgence, wishful thinking, and other failures of agency, leading us to make decisions that we later regret” (Mackenzie 2008, 123). It is therefore that a person needs to make herself weary of the limits of her imaginative projections. I’ll give two examples. First, a person may imagine a possible future that is not possible-*for-her*. A person without the athletic talent for developing the appropriate skills

⁴⁹ Important to notice here is the destructive aspect of the imaginative exercise. The imagination might change a person’s practical identity and her normative commitments by imagining herself otherwise (Mackenzie 2008, 131-132).

cannot imagine becoming an Olympic sportswoman (until E-sports become an Olympic discipline)—her own embodiment limits the plausibility of such imaginative projection. Second, a person can be taken along with her emotive or evaluative response regarding an imaginative projection. For example, if a person imagines the response of a colleague to a question to be blunt and with a nasty undertone, she might walk into her colleague's office already worked up and ask the question aggressively—"ready for war" and thus precisely causing the response which she imagined and feared.

It follows that a person cannot *just* trust her responses to her imaginative projections—she can be carried away by the cogency of the projections or by the shift in the standpoint she imagines from. Mackenzie suggests therefore that we are in need of a test for imaginative projections; an external standard that defines the border imaginative projections should not transgress on pain of becoming obstructive to a person's choices. Mackenzie proposes that the person's autobiographical narrative, her personality, consisting of the following four aspects can function as such standard: embodiment, autobiographical memory, cultural context, and a person's concrete practical identities (ibid., 133-137). For example, in checking the intelligibility of an imaginative projection in light of the projection being a course of action possible-for-her, a person should respect her practical identities of that moment. Not in the way that her identities limit her imaginative projections from the outset—i.e. that a person cannot imagine having *different* practical identities—but in the way that an imagined identity needs to fit with her current personality. Thus it can be said that those branching possibilities with a strong significance relation to one's current autobiographical narrative should be preferred, because they constitute a narrative with greater self-intelligibility for the person. The narrative Unification Ideal turns up again.

Imagination, choice in favor of radical change, and transformative decisions

In the rest of this section, I wish to focus on the normative claim that narrative unity is an ideal to strive for in the evaluation of the usefulness of imaginative projections for practical deliberation. I do not argue that narrative unity cannot be a sufficient condition: a person who chooses to uphold a high coherence with her (past) life story is, under most circumstances, intelligible to herself. Rather, I want to show that narrative unity is one of many standards for evaluating the use of imaginative

projections for practical deliberation as it is one of many ways to be self-intelligible. I explore two reasons for this: **1)** A person's life story is not the sole source for a person's projections implying that several standards are available for the evaluation of her imaginative projections as possible-for-her, as intelligible to the person. **2)** A person's life story may fail to be a standard, or even be obstructive as standard, in situations in which a person has imaginative projections about transformative decisions.

1) That different grounds—love, morality, expectations from one's social environment, the life (situation) of others close to you but also those encountered via digital and traditional media, and our life-history—can be used for imaginative projections is illustrated fairly easy.⁵⁰ An example is a person who stands at a crossroad in her life and where her past life does not (solely) inform her options. A high school student who needs to choose the subject to study at university might not only imagine herself studying those topics she has been good at during high school. She might also find inspiration in the (completely different) life she wants to live later on; in her parents' advice to choose something with which she can earn a living; in some new-found ideal of wisdom (philosophy) or of doing good (medicine); or she find inspiration for a certain kind of life or study in new digital media: youtubers or instagrammers she is following may inspire her to travel around the world or to become an influencer herself. It is not self-evident that for the high school student her past narrative is all-important in defining the borders of her imaginative projections and her choices.

It is not only that others may give a person inspiration, a person's concern for others and her imaginative projections about *their* lives can lie at the ground of her actions and the form of lives she imagines for herself as well. For example, a schoolteacher, teaching at a private school (with all its benefits), visits a public school in a neglected neighborhood through an exchange project. She finds out that there are many orphaned children in this neighborhood. She is so touched by this that she is willing to give up her luxurious life of teaching well-off children and travelling around the world during school holidays. She imagines making all the arrangements to adopt one of these children being aware of the personal sacrifices she has to make. At a certain moment, a friend of hers points out to her how difficult

⁵⁰ There is a stock of images and possible courses of action available in our social imaginary, but they are only accessible to a person insofar she can imagine the possible actions herself. Furthermore, a person can, with her imagination, vary on the available stock of possible actions.

this will be for her, how big a change this is, and how much she has to give up from her goals in life. In response, the schoolteacher reacts offended saying: “Imagine their lives! It is not about me, but about these children that deserve better and giving all this up is my way of contributing to that.” Her self-intelligibility does not derive from her past life, but from her concerns for others. In terms of practical identities, as she understands herself as a moral being, by encountering this different world in which children grow up she sees strong reasons to change her life radically

So in deliberation about what is possible-for-her, a person might be inspired or motivated not by her own (past) life, but by the lives of others and her concern for them. In such cases, it can seem inappropriate to the person to put the imaginative projection along the standard of her own autobiographical narrative. She precisely wants to jump over her own shadow. A person who always has been afraid to move away from the village she grew up in, might—having fallen in love during holiday travels—take her new-found love, her suddenly deeply held identity as lover, as source for her motivation to move abroad. This might be unintelligible from the perspective of her life story, but knowing how overwhelming love can be, one directly feels for her imaginative projection and decision to move abroad. As this means leaving behind family and friends, her career, and other activities she holds dear and as a new surrounding and new friends may change her fundamentally, she might even be aware of the huge break this causes within her autobiographical narrative. However, despite of the break with her past life, it still might be the most intelligible option to her. Her identity as lover gives the act of moving abroad intelligibility.⁵¹

The point is that if imaginative projections and decisions are based on sources and reasons that stem from her (new-found) identity as lover or her (new-inspired) interpretation of her identity as moral person these decisions can still be intelligible—even if such motivated decisions go against a person’s autobiographical narrative. And if these things make a person’s decision intelligible to herself, it is a small jump to the idea that they can be a standard for making her choice rational too—a standard to choose *against* what appears most intelligible according to her autobiographical narrative as this is unintelligible to her from the perspective of her love or of her moral principle.

⁵¹ Laura A. Paul (2014) has written a monograph on this kind of choices, calling them transformative choices or experiences.

This argument does not constitute a break with the expounded theory of practical identities (Chapter 1). Such a (new-found) love or moral principles strengthened by circumstances can be understood genuine expressions of a person's practical identity as a lover or moral being. As I stay neutral on where a person's commitment to a specific practical identity comes from, I only point out that it seems arbitrary to say that those identities, or commitments to identities, that stem from a person's life story are to be seen as more important by the person *because* they stem from her life story or are in harmony with it. A person can, if she wants, aspire to become a different and new person and therefore break radically with her autobiographical narrative up to that point.

2) As pointed out above, a person cannot always trust her emotional responses to what she imagines because of the possible self-deception involved. Moreover, psychological research shows that humans are not *that* good in imagining the consequences of their imagined choices: Relevant context is left out, because it is too much to process; only the perceived essential details of the sequence of happenings that follow the decision are imagined; and the imaginative episode is abbreviated in that it does not take as long as the actual unfolding of events (see for a great, short overview Gilbert & Wilson 2007).⁵² As a person's imaginative projections are often badly informed, they can lead a person into error by placing unfounded trust in her emotional response of this moment. This might not be the actual emotional response she will have if the events unfold as imagined.

This "ambivalent role of imaginative projections" intensifies in context of "transformative decisions" (Mackenzie 2008, 127) as the person is changed on the level of her personality, of her autobiographical narrative: transformative decisions, arising from conflicts at "the level of one's practical identity", can be described to be about "what kind of person one wants to be or thinks one should be" (ibid., 129). Faced with such transformative decisions it is easy to think that a person is even more in need of a standard that gives her a secure footing for evaluating the two imaginative projections in which she appears fundamentally different to herself. However, I contend that in certain situations the opposite is the case as a person's life story may be what stands in her way.⁵³

⁵² See Nanay (2016) for a summary of empirical research on decision-making and the imagination.

⁵³ See L.A. Paul's book *Transformative Experiences* (2014) for an account on the possible standards for choosing transformative experiences.

In **Section 5.4**, I have indicated that practical identities can be understood as narrative identities. Going along with this, we could say that a person's practical identities together constitute her autobiographical narrative. It follows from this in situations where a transformative decision is caused by a conflict internal to a person's practical identities that precisely her life-story—the unity of how she conceives of herself—is put into question. To ask here that she *first* constructs her autobiographical narrative to use it as a standard is asking too much of a person: it is precisely a conflict *in* her narrative, between her identities, that puts her in the situation where she needs to make a decision. In this way, we can come to accept that other standards are in play too: the love she feels or her belief regarding what the right thing to do is. A different example is a case in which the situation makes it impossible to continue with one's life as how one lived it. For example, it may be impossible for a person who loses her spouse and children in an accident and ends up herself disabled to express many of her defining identities as she loses the possibility to express these. The person is forced by her circumstances to (partially) reinvent herself (Goldie 2012b, 1069).

I acknowledge that there is a limit to radical change. But this lies in how often a person can undergo radical change than in how much change a person can bear. As Goldie points out: "The possibility of radical change in one's traits and values is clearly not a process that anyone can go through often, for it only arises when there is a deep re-evaluation of one's whole life, and of what one holds dear, and this simply cannot happen often: deep values cannot be cast off and new ones taken on as if one is changing one's mobile phone for a newer model" (ibid.). This limit to radical change does not undermine the argument developed here. For the argument to work it is enough to show that narrative discontinuity is at a particular moment an intelligible option for a person to choose. Moreover, the person in the example above is not only forced by her circumstances, but also by her need for self-intelligibility and self-understanding. If she would just go on, this would not make sense, it would be incomprehensible to her and therefore may appear as irrational.

To conclude this section, if a person only draws on her autobiographical narrative for the generation of possible courses of action, she is too restricted in her option-generation process. Since a person can take a more diverse view on her own identity, not only the narrative connections can be important. Moreover, a person does not need to be focused on herself in her imaginative projections at all: she can

be focused on other persons and beings as well such as the example of the schoolteacher shows. So a person can fall in love which changes her preferences fundamentally; a person can experience something to which she reacts with a moral urgency changing the course of life; and a person can think of another person's (subjective) experience, see how show could change something in the other person's life and feel the need to do so. In this section, I have expressed my doubts about whether all these options should always be measured against the external standard of a person's autobiographical narrative, her life story. These doubts are especially strong regarding choices involving radical and transformative change. I therefore conclude that striving for the unification of one's autobiographical narrative is not a necessary ideal to aim for in deliberation. Disruption of our autobiographical narrative becomes a real, valid, and sensible possibility—if we imagine it.

Section 5.5 *Summary*

I hope that the importance of imaginative projections has become obvious. Possibility starts with imagining possibility as possible. Only if a person imagines a possible future first can she conceive of choosing it. A person's action perspective is never just available: it needs to be conceived of and a person does so via imaginative projections. Reproaching yourself for not thinking of doing X by saying "Why didn't I think of that?" is an illustration of this. You actually state that you didn't consider undertaking a course of action because you didn't imagine it. Furthermore, the bodily, emotive, and cognitive reactions a person has towards her imaginative projections give her relevant information about how she might feel if her projections come about—although such information needs to be tested itself as I discuss in the next chapter.

This answers question **4)** regarding the positive contribution of this chapter. Let me as a conclusion answer the other three questions as well: **1)** What is the articulated ideal of unity? **2)** Which grounds are given to aim for unification in deliberation? **3)** Do these grounds hold up to closer scrutiny? The articulated ideal in this chapter is that of narrative unity. This ideal was grounded in the need of persons to be intelligible to themselves combined with that persons are aware of the fact that their past and future bear and color her present. Narrativists argue that narrativity makes the connectedness of past, future, and present best intelligible and

that a person, to be self-intelligible, best acts in line with her autobiographical narrative.

I have argued however that narrative unity is not a necessary ideal to guide a person in practical deliberation. This is first shown by the fact that radical change can be intelligible to a person herself if the imaginative and motivational source for this does not stem from her own life, but from love, morality, or the life of others. Moreover, sometimes the object of a person's doubt or trouble *is* her past life including the hopes and wishes of this past life—for example, if a person experiences an identity-crisis. It is in such moments that her own life story is put in doubt by herself and has become an object of unintelligibility to her. The argument developed in this chapter comes with one qualification: I take narrative thinking to be of the utmost importance to our lives—we relate our experiences, we explain our actions, and, more generally, we interact often by telling each other stories. However, I think this role of narrative thinking is rather retrospective in making our past intelligible than that it gives our future-orientated choice intelligibility *per se*. In the next chapter, I introduce the Exploration Ideal as a different ideal to guide a person in practical deliberation.

Chapter 6 The Exploration Ideal

In the foregoing chapters, I have argued that the Unification Ideal is not a necessary ideal to strive for. A person can obtain practical orientation and an action perspective, a perspective on what to do, despite volitional disunity. Furthermore, striving for the unification of one's personality may be detrimental to a person's agential capacities and it may stand in the way of radical or transformative change—change that sometimes is desirable over and above the unity of one's life. However, if a person, experiencing a volitional conflict, need not have unification as a guiding ideal, how can she create a viable action perspective for herself? That is, what is the ideal that can guide a person in deliberation if it is not unification?

In this chapter, I develop an answer to this question. This answer rests on the guiding power of an ideal of exploring who one wants to be and who one can be to get a realistic view of one's personality. The idea of this Exploration Ideal is that a person can find guidance in the belief that her actions do not need to rest on secure knowledge of her personality, since her actions itself can be paramount in producing this knowledge (**Section 6.2**). It will become clear that the Exploration Ideal has a wider application than merely under conditions of volitional disunity; for example, if the person is unsure what she wants or uncertain about who to be. Subsequently, I flesh out what it means to be led by the Exploration Ideal in deliberation by introducing the distinction between predisposed and curious deliberation (**Section 6.3**). I conclude this chapter by explicating the consequences of the presented view for the guiding role of practical identities in practical deliberation (**Section 6.4**). I will start, however, by explicating the answer to the research question “Is the Unification Ideal always the ideal to strive for in practical deliberation?” through a summary of the last three chapters (**Section 6.1**).

Section 6.1 *A summary: Is the Unification Ideal always an ideal to strive for?*

In **Chapter 1**, I presented the standard answer to the question of how practical identities successfully form a decision-making framework guiding practical deliberation under conditions of volitional disunity. I started out with the definition of practical identity. A practical identity is a self-description under which the person finds her actions to be worth undertaking; and because practical identities need to be expressed, they define the ideals a person wants to give expression to in her actions. However, conflict between a person's practical identities make that a person

is guided into opposite, or at least excluding, directions. It seems to follow that it is impossible for her to know what to do. The standard answer in the literature is to take this to be the case and to propose a simple solution: in order to overcome the disunity, a person needs to unify her personality, the set of her practical identities, into a harmonious whole by prioritizing her practical identities. In this way, a person creates a clear decision-making framework for herself.

Throughout the foregoing chapters, I have critically discussed several reasons that are given in support of the Unification Ideal. First, as I explained in **Chapter 1**, practical deliberation can take place on two different levels with both their own success condition. Deliberation on the level of action has the choice for an action as its success condition and deliberation on the level of practical identities practical orientation. I have argued in that both success conditions need not be simultaneously realized as deliberation on both levels can be separated (**Section 1.4**). This insight was made use of in **Chapter 3** and **4** by showing that both Frankfurt and Korsgaard do presuppose that both need to be realized together. Moreover, I have argued in **Chapter 3** that although a person can only do one action at a time, a person can give expression to her volitional disunity by placing, within her practical deliberations, the choice of what to do *now* in light of future actions. This is one way in which a person can accommodate and express her volitional disunity and, as I will show, to explore who she wants to be and who she can be.

In **Chapter 4**, I argued against the idea that a person needs to have a unified personality in order to stay in agential control of her action, to be the active cause of her action. What is more, I argued that striving for the unity of personality can undermine the stability of a person's commitments thereby undermining the unity of her agential faculties. From a psychological view, conflicting identities can be fundamental to a person such that unification may lead to the repression of the associated desires making them into uncontrollable (because unseen) forces. In **Chapter 5**, I argued that the ideal of narrative unification may stand in the way of desired radical change or a transformative decision as a person's past may be experienced by her as a burden to break with or as a weight withholding change she feels to be necessary. Moreover, even from the perspective of a person who wants to maximize her self-intelligibility, it is not evident that narrative unification is the ideal to strive for. A person may obtain self-intelligibility as well from identities not deeply embedded within her life-story but based on a newfound love or a newly

inspired interpretation of her moral identity based on imagining another person's point of view. In other words, a person may aspire to become a new or different person and to shape her personality such that it contrasts with who she was.

The option these authors do not seem to take serious enough is that a person might be *defined* by her volitional disunity and, because of this, might want to give expression to this disunity in her actions. However, this raises first the question how a person can come to the insight that her internal practical division should be part of her self-understanding and, second, how a person, defined by volitional disunity, can come to a concrete action perspective. The conflicted person is pulled in two, possibly opposite, directions and still needs to make a choice *which* side of the conflict she wants to express at the concrete occasion. So how can the conflicted person, despite her volitional disunity, attain a perspective on what to do and on who to be?

Here the positive contributions developed in the foregoing three chapters point us into a fruitful direction, the Exploration Ideal. The first hint for this comes from what it means to *lack* practical orientation—a person who lacks the feeling of satisfaction with herself. Such a person is in all likelihood motivated to continue the search for who she wants to be, to explore further how she can feel at home with herself (**Chapter 3**). With this I do not say that a person defined by volitional disunity cannot have this feeling of satisfaction. As I argued in **Chapter 3**, to be satisfied with who one is, is to be in “a state constituted by the absence of any tendency or inclination to alter its condition” (Frankfurt 1999, 104), which leaves it open whether a person's personality is unified or conflicted. To explore who one wants to be is especially important, as persons are opaque to themselves and can find limits to their self-expressions in being unable to bring themselves to do something. To find such limits, a person is condemned to the exploration of herself (**Chapter 4**). Lastly, by making the branching possibilities of her future concrete, a person forms imaginative projections. However, as she will have bodily, emotive, and cognitive responses to these projections, she is offered the chance to explore how she would value certain self-expressions before actually expressing herself in that way (**Chapter 5**). Together, then, these positive contributions point to an ideal that can guide practical deliberation: the Exploration Ideal.

Section 6.2 *Coping with disunity: introducing the Exploration Ideal*

Under the Exploration Ideal that I introduce in this section, a person does not strive for unity but for self-knowledge that can function as basis for her future decisions about what to do and who to be. It is in exploring herself that a person gets to know the limits of who she can(not) be; and in learning who she is, she can both achieve satisfaction with who she is and happiness with how she gives expression to herself. Yet as preamble, I first discuss a different solution already encountered in **Chapter 4**: radical choice.

Radical choice & self-exploration

In **Chapter 3**, some suggestions have been proposed to deal with volitional disunity. Harry G. Frankfurt, for example, suggests that if it is “impossible to overcome your uncertainty and your ambivalence” to “be sure to hang on to your sense of humor” (2004, 100). Thomas Schramme (2014) and Marya Schechtman (2014) suggest integrating volitional conflict within one’s autobiographical narrative. As we have seen, both suggestions are flawed because they only describe a way to accept volitional disunity, but do not offer a concrete route towards an action perspective: a person, in accepting her volitional disunity, may still be at a loss of knowing *how* to give expression to this disunity. This leads to the question what a person should do if two or more values point at different courses of action as valuable and where she is conflicted about the relative importance of both values.

One answer that philosophers have given is that of radical choice. Radical choice already came back in relation to the existentialist aspect in Korsgaard’s theory. Since a person’s practical identities stem from contingent sources (such as a person’s social setting, her natural environment, and her physical and psychological capabilities), a person needs to take action regarding her practical identities by taking a stance through either reflective endorsement or reflective rejection. However, the ultimate reasons for such reflective endorsement/rejection are difficult to locate and one option is that she has to take stance without further reasons; her choices become groundless.⁵⁴ That is, they are *radical* choices in which her choices themselves become the reason for acting the way she does and this is the existential moment in Korsgaard (radical choice is central to Sartre’s existential

⁵⁴ Even though Korsgaard suggests that we have a reason for adopting *a* concrete practical identity—namely, the practical identity of humanity—*which* (other) identities we have reason to adopt is underdetermined by the identity of humanity (see also Gowans 2002).

philosophy; 1956). I want to illustrate and critically discuss this position with an example offered by Susan Wolf.

Wolf describes “a woman whose son has committed a crime and who must decide whether to hide him from the police. He will suffer gravely should he be caught, but unless he is caught, another innocent man will be wrongly convicted for the crime and imprisoned” (2015, 41). The question is what this woman should do. Wolf reconstructs the conflict of the woman as one between doing the morally right thing by turning in her son or to do what she wants as a mother and protect her son. On the assumption that both courses of action are reasonable and intelligible to her, this woman can be understood as volitionally conflicted: she feels the pull of both courses of action based on two different identities, which (restricted to this situation) pull her in opposite directions. As both identities create a reasonable disagreement between the two courses of action, “we must acknowledge—and to some extent sympathize and understand—the possibility of conflict” this woman experiences (ibid., 4).

Wolf suggests that the problem the mother is confronted with “is a problem of radical choice” (ibid., 42). The woman must make a decision as to who she wants to be and how she wants to express herself. She has to commit herself to expressing one of both identities in this situation, as the choice is *self* defining. The mother’s situation is, just as Agamemnon’s, defined by an acute dilemma: she needs to make a choice at this moment and she cannot but either give up her child or not—although in the case of Agamemnon, the giving up is more radical as he has to sacrifice his daughter. It might seem, as Wolf suggests, that the only option left for the woman, is radical choice—a groundless choice. Yet, I want to claim that the person confronted with an acute dilemma has a form of exploration left open to her: through imaginative projections, the person can explore her options by the cogency her projections have. Although the woman does not know how she will actually feel about acting on either side of her dilemma, her bodily, emotive, and cognitive responses to her imaginative projections provide her with information relevant to her choice and in this way these inner responses can partially shape her action perspective. I take it that it is even plausible that imaginative projections together with their cogency form a basis that informs a person’s choice under the pressure of an acute dilemma. If this is right then this puts into question how radical a radical

choice actually needs to be (see Caspary 2006 who works out a similar point in the context of Dewey and Sartre).

A lot of conflicts situations however do not involve acute dilemmas. In other words, such conflicts can play out over the course of several situations (such as the Brasco-example in **Chapter 3**). This changes strongly how a person may deal with volitional disunity that does not involve an acute dilemma situation. Such a person has much more freedom to explore how she wants to deal with her volitional disunity. She not only has imaginative projections to explore how she *might* feel, but she can actually explore how she will feel over the course of multiple actions (or in a single compromise action). That is to say, this person can explore what her responses are to giving expression to the volitional disunity found in her personality. She can explore what it means for her to act on one side of the conflict at one occasion and on another what it means to act on the other side of the conflict. In doing so, she explores what it means to her to give expression to the conflict itself. To make the “what it means to her” more concrete: a person can explore what her bodily, psychological, and emotive responses are to the ways she gives expression to herself. She can let these responses, subsequently, inform her future action perspective: both in terms of she likes and dislikes, what she finds herself capable of doing and what she finds herself incapable of doing because the (emotional, psychological, or bodily) costs are or become too high for her (cf. **Chapter 4**). This is the first assumption about human nature on which the Exploration Ideal is based: a person can use her inner responses to her own advantage as they are indications of what she (dis)likes, what she values, what gives her joy, and what she hates or what brings her sadness. Such responses raise or lower the costs of (not) giving expression to a certain practical identity. If you feel good about acting helping another out, the costs of expressing your identity as helpful are lowered; if you are disgusted by vomit, the costs of expressing your identity as helpful are raised in situations in which the person in need of help is sick.

The second assumption is that persons are opaque to themselves, as they cannot always know in advance how they will respond to certain commitments and expressions. To be more precise, a person cannot always know in advance whether she is capable of the backward determination of her commitment to a practical identity *or* of a specific expression of her identity, as she might not know whether

she has the capacities, whether it makes her happy, or whether she likes it.⁵⁵ The assumption that persons are opaque to themselves does not extend to the actual commitment to practical identities: such commitments are based on the endorsement by the person herself. It can, however, be the case that a practical identity has settled deeply into the motivational structures of a person, making it difficult to her to take distance from it or to reject it.

The suggestion is that a person's opacity combined with her bodily, psychological, and emotive responses to her actions and imaginative projections, lead naturally to the idea that a person can be guided in her practical deliberations by the ideal of exploring who she wants to be and who she can be to get into view how she wants to give expression to her personality. In different words, as persons are opaque to how they respond to specific commitments and specific expressions of these commitments, the bodily, psychological, and emotive responses they have provide them with essential input for their deliberative processes: they inform a person about the costs (or gains) of (not) giving expression to a practical identity. Even if a person is not conflicted, but has committed herself to a course of action, her internal responses may give her feedback as well. For example, think of the person who cannot bring herself to give up her other nationality in the process of applying for the USA citizenship. Such responses may point a person into understanding with which expressions of her identity she is happy and how she is satisfied with who she is. In such situations, it can be helpful to understand oneself as being guided by the Exploration Ideal in practical deliberation. Let us turn to this.

Volitional disunity & the Exploration Ideal

My suggestion is that a person can explore her volitional disunity along two different lines: 1) she can explore whether the disunity is constitutive of who she is, and 2) she can explore in which way she feels satisfied, comfortable or at home with expressing her disunity if she endorses the disunity as part of who she is. In the rest of this section, I focus on the second assumption on which the Exploration Ideal is based: what it means to be opaque to oneself. In the next section, the focus will be on what it means to use one's bodily, psychological, and emotive responses in practical deliberation.

⁵⁵ Other circumstances such as her external social and natural circumstances that need to allow for the expression of the commitment to an identity are ignored here. This is not part of the Exploration Ideal as presented here because here it refers to a principle that guides a person's practical deliberation.

We are opaque to ourselves. Although we are self-conscious, this does not imply that we are in the possession of the Cartesian inner eye to see, infallibly so, what goes on in our minds. Rather, self-consciousness makes us aware that we have mental states, but our “knowledge of our own mental states and activities is no more certain than anything else” (Korsgaard 1996b, 92). Moreover, not only is our knowledge of ourselves fallible, we neither are always correct in our predictions of how we will respond to a certain commitment to a practical identity or the expression of the identity. The backward determination of an identity can be something regarding which we overestimate our own capacities and our own enthusiasm for or resistance against giving expression to this identity. I want to suggest that as self-determination can be fallible, we are led to explore, in our actions and through imaginative projections, who we want to be, who we can be, and how we are happy with giving expression to ourselves. I wish to point out two aspects of this exploration: first, we are not always certain about what exactly we want to pursue or want to express with an action and, second, we can fail to determine ourselves in the way we have committed ourselves to.

The first aspect, pointed out by Beate Roessler (2012), is that a person sometimes only finds out through her action what she actually wants to pursue. For example, if a person does not know whether she can be a person who stands up for the bullied, she can learn whether she is capable of this by acting on this description in the appropriate situation. Or if a person does not know whether she truly has a drive for practicing law, she can find out by doing an internship at a law firm. It is through a person’s actions that she can obtain new information regarding who she wants to be and who she can be. Mere reflection at a distance from herself does not seem to be enough in many situations. Specifically, it is through a person’s actions that she can learn whether she can feel satisfied with a particular commitment to a practical identity and whether she is happy with a particular action as expression of who she is and strives to be.

The second aspect is that through her (attempted) actions, a person can learn who she *can* be. This aspect has been discussed by Robert B. Pippin (2005): namely, that a person’s commitment to a practical identity shows in her resolve to express this commitment in her actions. For example, the person who understands herself as Charlotte’s friend, but never acts on it, does not express her identity and thereby is, effectively, not Charlotte’s friend. Or if a person wants to stand up for the bullied, but

in the relevant situation she cowers away, she becomes aware of her limits to be a person who stands up for the bullied. In other words, having a practical identity can mean to *fail* to express this identity, to fail to instantiate it in the world and it is in recognition of this that a person can explore who she is, who she wants to be, and who she can be. As Pippin says, the reality of a practical identity is not confirmed by “fidelity to an inner essence but is ultimately a matter of action, what we actually do, a matter of engagement in the world [...]” (ibid., 309). This means that a person needs to establish a productive interaction between her practical identities and the constraints that come back from her environment, in this discussion her psychological and biological reality specifically.

Under the Exploration Ideal, the information obtained in this way is not the end of the explorative process and neither should these responses take the place of practical identities as providing us with an evaluative stance. Just as desires, these inner responses can be understood as normative suggestions that can be evaluated based on her practical identities. As such, a person’s practical identities form the basis of evaluative states not only regarding her actions but regarding her bodily, psychological, and emotive responses as well. Noticing that I do not speak up for the bullied, I blame myself for not doing so, because I *want* to instantiate that description of myself in the world. In blaming, I provide myself with an evaluative stance from a practical identity I have committed myself to. Of course, I can also come to the conclusion that standing up for the bullied is not who I can be, and therefore I can decide to let go of my commitment. However, it is up to the person herself to continue her commitment—although, I suppose, psychological and physical limits such as a burnout or a depression are difficult to overcome or ignore.

Exploring who you are, want to be, and can be means to balance having commitments to practical identities and questioning them through a process of exploration. The aim of this balancing act is practical orientation: “a state constituted by the absence of any tendency or inclination to alter” our personality, the set of practical identities to which we are committed (Frankfurt 1999, 104). In the next section, I will illustrate this point further. For now a short summary suffices: a person guided by the Exploration Ideal has her own expectations, descriptions under which she understands herself. However, she takes her psychological, bodily, and emotive responses as serious input for her deliberative process. They indicate the costs (or gains) of (not) giving expression to a specific

practical identity. She can both anticipate this input through imaginative projections and, in moments of volitional disunity or uncertainty, she can anticipate *that* she will have such responses. She can evaluate her responses, again, against the self-descriptions to which she has committed herself: the ideals and hopes she has about who she is, wants to be, and can be.

Section 6.3 *Predisposed/curious practical deliberation*

A person does not constitute herself from scratch. Rather, she shapes herself based on the contingency of her life, which provides her with initial identities and the bodily, psychological, emotive responses she has to her own activities.⁵⁶ The Exploration Ideal is, I suggest, the ideal to make this contingency one's own. Not by affirming the contingency per se, as Korsgaard suggests, but by accepting having such responses (and thus more in line with Frankfurt). In this section, I aim to elaborate what deliberation under the Exploration Ideal amounts to by explicating the role and status of a person's bodily, psychological, and emotive responses in the construction of her personality and practical orientation. I do this by introducing the distinction between predisposed and curious practical deliberation based on the metaphor of the loving/arrogant eye articulated by Marilyn Frye. I finish this section, first, by describing an extensive example and, second, by discussing the relation of Exploration Ideal to the Unification Ideal.

Predisposed/curious practical deliberation

In her thought-provoking paper 'In and Out of Harm's Way: Arrogance and Love,' Marilyn Frye writes on the oppression of women by men (1983). One way in which, according to Frye, this oppression can be captured is by the metaphor of the arrogant eye. The arrogant eye is a metaphor for persons who view everything in the world, other persons included, "with reference to themselves and their own interests" such that they only give weight to how others can contribute to their, the arrogant viewer's, goals and aims (ibid., 67). Applied to an oppressive relation between husband and wife, the husband views his wife in terms of what she

⁵⁶ Daniel Hutto points out something similar but with an emphasis on his own narrative view (which I leave away here): from a psychological point of view, there are "always some features of individuals that are simply beyond anyone's capacity to alter" (2016, 24). At the same time, our practical identities, as images of ourselves, provide us "a window on our actual and possible doings" which supports us "to decide, for example, if our taking this or that action is something we want to" do in terms of "who we are" (ibid., 26). His self-shaping thesis is also based on the claim that our personalities have limited plasticity.

contributes to his projects: for *his* social status and career, it is important that *she* provides him children, raises them, does the household, is a good hostess if guests are invited, and becomes friends with the wives of his colleagues—especially, the wives of his superiors (the series *Mad Men* illustrates this imagery quite well).

Anything that diverges from his expectations is noticed as “something wrong with her” as his “norms of virtue and health are set according to the degree of congruence of the object of perception with” his interests (ibid., 69). The arrogant eye, then, means to come to another person with his own expectations creating thereby “in the space about him a sort of vacuum mold into which the other is sucked and held” (ibid.). In this way, he “coerces the objects of his perception into satisfying the conditions his perception imposes” (ibid., 67) even to the extent that the wife starts to *want* to conform to the husband’s expectations as this is the only way for her to obtain recognition. The arrogant eye is oppressive because the wife cannot live by the standards of her own health and happiness.

Frye proposes a different way of looking at the world and others with the metaphor of the loving eye. The loving eye is more conducive to the nature of the other person (ibid., 72-76). It is not selfless: if a person “has lost herself, has no interest, or ignores or denies her interests”, she “would seriously incapacitate herself as a perceiver” (ibid., 74). Rather, the loving eye is aware of the boundaries between herself and the other, she is aware of the fact that their interests are not (necessarily) the same, and that there is not a symbiotic relationship—things that the arrogant eye simply assumes. Rather, the loving eye “must look at the thing. [It] must look and listen and check and question” (ibid.), it “knows the independence of the other” (ibid., 75), and it “knows the complexity of the other as something which will forever present new things to be known” (ibid., 76). Susan Wolf formulates this idea of Frye as follows: a person attending to another lovingly “will include trying to understand “what makes him tick,” trying to see things from [the other’s] own point of view, in a way that makes sense of [the other’s] possibly different values and thoughts and reasons” (2015, 178).

Importantly, Frye points out that the loving eye not only “must look and listen and check and question” regarding the other, but also with regard to herself. The loving eye has “knowledge of the scope and boundary of the self,” of *her* self. She knows what her “interests, desires and loathings” are, what her “projects, hungers, fears and wishes” are and she knows “what is and what is not determined by these,”

as, for example, other people are not (1983, 75). This implies, then, that a person needs to know herself in order to be able to see with the loving eye. It is at this moment in Frye's proposal that I wish to introduce a complication.

Just as a person can see other persons with arrogant or loving eyes, so can she approach herself predisposed or openly. A person can approach her own mental life, that is, with preconceived notions of herself, imposing a dogmatic description to which her mental life needs to conform and disciplining that which does not—either by ignoring or by repressing her complex, opaque mental life. She does not allow for the need to understand and explore her own needs and desires.⁵⁷

I call the arrogant eye turned inwards “predisposed deliberation” and contrast it with “curious deliberation.” Predisposed deliberation is deliberation in which the person is predisposed about who she is and who she wants to be. She approaches her internal mental life as something that has to conform to her will, to specific, preconceived descriptions she has of herself. Take, for example, the person who follows the oligarchic principle as stated in **Chapter 4**. For this person, all desires need to conform to her “self-stinting prudence” and all desires that do not conform are repressed, causing her appetitive part to boil “with repressed and unhealthy desires” (Korsgaard 2009, 166). This person approaches herself, and the motivational states found within herself, predisposed about what is good and what is bad and therefore has the need to repress those states that do not fit. That is, she approaches herself with preconceived notions and is, in her deliberations, predisposed about what the outcome has to be. In other words, she is not open to who she *can* be.

In contrast, a person engaged in curious deliberation is open to the possibility that she might be mistaken about what she thinks she likes and thinks she is capable of doing. She is open to the possibility to be surprised by both what she might appreciate and may dislike. This is not to say that the person does not have commitments to practical identities that can be deep and therefore deeply constitutive of who she is and who she wants to be. However, even here the person engaged in curious deliberation is open to exploring feelings of dissatisfaction and

⁵⁷ In her article ‘Playfulness, “World”-Travelling, and Loving Perception’, María Lugones makes the same movement in terms of playfulness (1987; cf. Lugones 1990/1992). In being playful, we take “the uncertainty [in the activities we undertake] as an *openness to surprise*” (ibid., 16). It is with the attitude of playfulness that we “are not self-important, we are not fixed in particular constructions of ourselves, which is part of saying that we are *open to self-construction*. We may not have rules, and when we do have rules, *there are no rules that are to us sacred*” (ibid., 16). Lugones says that this is “just self-reflection” in which being playful means “openness to self-construction or reconstruction” (ibid., 17).

unhappiness that seem to relate to these deep commitments. She is open to being surprised by her emotive, bodily, and psychological responses and is inquisitive about their nature, especially if they diverge from what she expected, or wanted, them to be. In other words, the person does not repress but engages with her internal states.

Moreover, if a person does not know what she wants to do or who she wants to be, she can appoint a greater authority to her bodily, psychological, and emotive responses by allowing them to guide her, as they are normative suggestions too and thereby can offer new insight in who wants to be and can be. These bodily, psychological, and emotive responses are not to be understood as the ultimate arbiter however: just as a person's practical identities form the basis for evaluative states regarding desires and the possible courses of action they indicate, so do they form the basis for evaluative states regarding these inner responses. For example, a person can dislike her falling in love because she has already planned her career that is incompatible with a relationship.

So in an ideal situation, a person engaged in curious deliberation is aware that her preferences change over time and that her deep commitments are not exempted from this process. In other words, she is attentive to herself and what takes place in her internal life, she is aware that her internal life is, partially, independent of (preconceived) notions she has of herself and also, at times, unpredictable to her, that the complexity of her internal life "will forever present new things to be known" (Frye 1983, 76), and that she therefore "must look and listen and check and question" (ibid., 74). In other words, ideally a person is aware that the costs of (not) expressing an identity shift over time and that it is important for her to stay attentive to these shifting costs. To conclude, we may be committed to specific practical identities and to certain expressions of these identities, but we should not take them as inviolable. We need to be open to our embodiment, our psychology, and our emotions as they might provide us with relevant information by being in dissonance (or harmony) with the preconceived notions we have of ourselves.

Limits to the Exploration Ideal

The Exploration Ideal, then, can first be fully pursued if a person engages in curious deliberation in which the person is open to changing her commitments to practical

identities in light of the feedback she gets from her own body, psyche, and emotions. This feedback is not normatively absolute, but is to be evaluated in light of the evaluative stances that a person's practical identities provide. In order to clarify the idea of the Exploration Ideal further, let me point out some ways in which a person can fail to be guided by this ideal.

As I indicated above, to follow the Exploration Ideal means to engage in a balancing act between one's practical identity and one's bodily, emotive, and psychological responses.⁵⁸ A first way in which a person can fail to explore herself, then, is when she continues to force herself to go over the limits of her inner responses, making her physically and psychologically sick. Of course, at times we need to shift our limits by going over them. However, "ought" implies "can" and thus if a person wants to strive to express a certain ideal in her actions, she must be capable of doing so on the danger of falling into the trap of predisposed deliberation. Her inner responses in the form of inner resistance and blockades may be indications of this. It is not easy to determine, however, when it is the case that a person is "stubborn." Because what is the difference between someone who pushes herself very hard and someone who slips into predisposed deliberation? My suggestion is that a good indication for the difference is that a person engaged in curious deliberation does not *push* her limits, but *tries to push* her limits while being open to the possibility that it is something at which she may fail.

If a person engages in predisposed deliberation in which her practical identities are taken as unchanging truths to which her internal life needs to confirm, then the person fails to explore herself with the danger of repressing or ignoring needs and desires which are essential to obtaining practical orientation. In other words, a person engaged in predisposed deliberation may fail to obtain the satisfaction with who she is, because of being "stubborn" in her commitments to and expression of her practical identities. Without the necessary (explored) knowledge, it is unlikely that a person can give shape to a conception of her life with which she ends up being satisfied. This is not a necessary relation. Someone who comes to herself with preconceived notions may gain practical orientation because she does not encounter resistance in either her internal or external circumstances and someone who explores who she is may fail to obtain practical orientation.

⁵⁸ Which include one's desires and other motivational states as well. This is left out of the sketched proposal here to keep the focus on the inner responses and how these responses function, as they are the important, new addition.

Another failure in self-exploration is that the exploration of herself makes a person unable to *settle* on any commitments. She may see too many possibilities, her inner responses may be negative or positive regarding too many options, or she might lose herself in imaginative projections which all can cause her to lose confidence in her ability to commit to practical identities. Or a person might ascribe her inner responses too much authority, causing her to always doubt whether she is doing the right thing (as her inner responses undergo quick change, for example). That is, a person may, for different reasons, lack a certain kind of basic self-confidence to both engage with her inner states as well as to be flexible regarding her commitments *with* the ability to make commitments.

Mariana Ortega (2006) points out subtler failure in the context of the metaphor of the loving eye. She argues that someone may be aware of the complexity of the other, but nevertheless base her view of the other only on looking and listening, failing to check and to question as well. In context of curious deliberation, this would mean that a person is aware of her inner responses as indications of wellbeing or unhappiness, but takes them (directly) at face value. A person may observe an emotive and psychological response to working long hours, but she needs to check and question this response in terms of what it means for her. As pointed out above, the openness means that a person should not stay passive regarding her bodily, psychological, and emotive responses and thus should not take them at face value—she should inquire into them, try to understand them, and to evaluate them from the perspective of her practical identities.⁵⁹

An extensive description of an example

Let me illustrate the Exploration Ideal by describing an example extensively. Imagine Anne, around 30, who has studied chemistry and is now successfully pursuing a PhD in this domain. She pushes herself a lot, encouraged by her environment, and she spends many hours in the lab, giving up a lot in terms of her relationship, her hobbies and her family and friends. In the past, she loved to read

⁵⁹ My proposal goes into the direction of Marilyn Friedman's argument in her article 'Autonomy and the Split-Level Self.' In this article, Friedman proposes a bottom-up approach in which "a person's highest principles have been subjected to assessment in accord with her intermediate standards and her motivations" (1986, 32). Although the suggestion developed here looks more similar to the method of reflective equilibrium, it might be similar to what Friedman suggests as she argues that a person's highest principles are the standard for assessment of her lower-level motivations. Whether Friedman can uphold that this method is a genuine form of bottom-up reasoning might be questioned in light of Kolodny's argument against up-stream reasoning (Kolodny 2005). See, for a good overview of this debate, Hinchman (2013).

fantasy books and even to write stories herself. In an honest and reminiscent mood, she would tell you that she even dreamed of pursuing a writing career during her youth. She has wondered at times, especially during the hard times of her study, why she didn't pursue such a career. But she never took this option too serious. Lately, however, she wonders more and more whether all the time she invests in her PhD is really worth it. She is in the last phase in which she has to do the revisions of her paper, write her dissertation, and think of applying for postdoctoral research positions. That is to say, Anne feels physically and psychologically wearied out and doesn't enjoy what she is doing anymore. She is uncertain and conflicted about her commitment to becoming a scientist.

It is in this situation that she rediscovers her enthusiasm for reading and writing. Since she has to find a way to relax, she has picked up her old fantasy books and is gripped by the stories, and during the long days in the lab she comes up with ideas for writing her own book. She feels happy with this escape and notices her enthusiasm. These feelings make her wonder whether she actually wants to pursue a further career in science or whether she wants to go more into a writer/editor direction—within her field of study or even try to become the writer of her own fantasy book. As a way to explore this, Anne starts to imagine the different possible lives, she talks with her friends and family about it, she visits career events, searches the Internet, and goes to talks about being an editor. She has her eyes open for opportunities that she could pursue and for examples of others who have made (crazy) career switches. At the same time, Anne realizes that part of this longing for a different career is prompted by her long hours in the lab. She knows that this is inherent to finishing her PhD where everything comes together causing low energy levels bringing about negative thoughts. Furthermore, she realizes that the moment of hearing that her paper was accepted gave her huge satisfaction.

Say, now, that in a clear moment, Anne is overcome with the feeling that she truly wants to do postdoctoral research. She is not sure about what to do afterwards, but as she has put so much effort in her studies for 10 years now, she wants to know what she is truly capable of in chemistry—and furthermore, a postdoctoral position comes recommended for an job as editor, this could be advantageous as well. The next day however, Anne wonders whether her feeling was genuine (because of her fascination for chemistry or because she is intrinsically ambitious) or that her stubbornness makes her stick to the path she has chosen (she cannot let go of the

feeling that she has put too much into it or because she feels her ambition is inauthentic). Anne realizes that she is both opaque to herself and cannot predict how she will actually react to taking one course of action over the other. She cannot become 100% sure about her future—at least, not at this moment. So she comes up with a plan to explore what she wants: she will do a short internship at a journal in her field after her PhD, she will free up time in the evening to go to a writing course, and she will apply for postdoctoral positions to wait and see how she responds if a position is offered to her—is she enthusiastic about it or does she rather feel it as a burden? But of course, before this plan Anne was already exploring who she is and how to deal with the volitional disunity she experienced throughout the process all along.

I wish to make two things explicit in the context of this example. First of all, I do not wish to propose an intellectualistic or overly rationalistic account of what it means to be engaged in practical deliberation under the Exploration Ideal. That is why I point out that Anne, throughout the whole process of reflecting on whether she wants to stay in science, was already exploring who she is, who she wants to be, and who she can be. Actually, I take the mode of exploration to be the common mode we engage in in our daily lives. By talking with other people about our problems, by trying out (new) things, by combining projects of which we “know” that they do not fit together but try anyway (maybe to find out what we want more), etc. However, as there are moments in which we do forget to explore, in which we forget to be open to be surprised by ourselves, I nevertheless propose to call this Exploration Ideal: we can fail to explore ourselves and thus sometimes need the reminder to do so.

Second, the example might imply that in exploring, Anne still aims at unification of her personality. However, this is not an aspect that I would necessarily want to include. One possible way, in which the example could develop, is that Anne does not come to a clear conclusion of what she really likes. In fact, she may find out that she likes both to do research and to write within the fantasy genre, causing her to be dissatisfied as she cannot focus fully on both. Anne might choose, for example, to stay in science and write in her free moments—staying conflicted about what project she truly wants to pursue.

The Exploration Ideal and its compatibility with the standard answer

The Exploration Ideal is not in tension with the Unification Ideal per se—in two different ways. First, it is easy to imagine a person exploring her personality with the aim of unification—as Anne in the first part of the story seems to do. On this level however, the Exploration Ideal does not implied the Unification Ideal either. A person can explore who she is and how she can obtain satisfaction with herself without aiming at unification. The Exploration Ideal leaves room for a person to be “genuinely torn between competing commitments in such a way that to reconcile one’s concerns would be to repress what one stands for and who one is” (Benson 1994, 667). Instead of aiming for unification in deliberation and action, this person can aim for exploration: she can explore how to give expression to this conflict.

It might be thought that there is another, underlying explanation for why the unification ideal and the exploration Ideal are not truly in conflict with each other. They both have a different object of what is unified/explored and they are therefore neither analogue in structure nor truly alternatives of each other. The Unification Ideal can be said to have our practical identities, our personality, as object of unification. The Exploration Ideal, on the other hand, has our bodily, psychological, and emotive responses as object of exploration. In this way, both ideals are not truly alternatives. In one way, this is obviously the case. However, in another it is not.

In this dissertation, I have been interested in how our practical identities can form a clear decision-making framework for practical deliberation, deliberation about what to do. As explicated, the Unification Ideal states the conditions under which our personality establishes such a decision-making framework: namely, when it is unified and thus the task of deliberation is *first* to unify one’s personality *before* choosing an action. The Exploration Ideal, on the other hand, suggests that practical deliberation is not dependent on the unification of our personality, since we also have inner responses that give valuable input for deliberation. Since we are opaque, it is not always certain how we will respond to (not) acting on a certain practical identity. Based on this combined with the idea that in deliberation multiple actions can be taken into view, the Exploration Ideal suggests that also our personality defined by volitional disunity can constitute a clear decision-making framework. Thus insofar both ideals disagree on the form our personality needs to have to fulfill its role in practical deliberation both ideals do indeed seem to stand in opposition to each other and can thus be seen as alternatives.

Section 6.4 *Conclusion: guidance by practical identities in practical deliberation*

As a conclusion to this chapter, I will shortly sketch under what conditions practical identities can successfully guide practical deliberation: Does the guiding role of practical identities for practical deliberation change under the Exploration Ideal? The standard answer to the question of how practical identities can form a successful guide for practical deliberation is that they need to be prioritized into a coherent, unified personality. It is in this way that a person's practical identities can provide the required guidance regarding what to do. I have pointed out, however, that volitional disunity itself is not the true problem of the conflicted person. Rather, it is the lack of a (clear) action perspective. In order to create such an action perspective, my proposal has been that a person can explore her bodily, psychological, and emotive responses by expressing the practical identities she is committed to in her actions and imaginative projections.

This does not change the function of practical identities. Practical identities give orientation by providing the person with evaluative stances regarding courses of action, both those which she imagines and those which she actually undertakes. However, as persons are opaque to themselves, the orientation practical identities provide by themselves falls short. A person does not always know either whether she is capable of expressing, and thereby instantiating, a committed-to identity or whether she is satisfied with expressing the identity or expressing the identity in this particular way. Moreover, as in situations of volitional disunity or cases of uncertainty about what she wants, a person often does not know on which side of the conflict she stands or wants to stand. Here exploration seems to be the natural option: the exploration of particular expressions of a committed-to (or considered) practical identity gives the person information about how she would appreciate it in terms of her bodily, psychological, and emotive responses.

The important thing here is that a person can and will have evaluative stances regarding those responses provided by her practical identities. In other words, the self-description to which she is committed form ideals that guide her by providing evaluative responses to her desires, her (imagined) actions, and her inner responses. The Exploration Ideal, as discussed in this dissertation, is a way to come to an action perspective as persons, in the end, cannot but choose and act.

The Exploration Ideal may be understood as an aspect of the good life as well, although it is not discussed in this way in this chapter. It is in this connection that the question is left open of when a person is satisfied with who she is, who she wants to be, and with who she can be. That is to say, when she doesn't feel the need to change her commitments to the practical identities—even in light of opposing inner responses she might have. However, I do not take it is as a task of philosophy to define this state of practical orientation further than as a state of the complete psychic system in which no change is desired. Such a state can for one person be defined by having the health they desire, accepting other flaws, and for another a certain kind of social recognition or standard. Nonetheless, all those more specific standards can be rejected in deliberation. It is in this line that the Exploration Ideal fits: what gives a person practical orientation, and at what point she arrives at this state, is something a person needs to explore for herself.

Chapter 7 Concluding Remarks: Unity & Metaphors

In the foregoing chapter, I introduced the Exploration Ideal and its guiding power for practical deliberation based on two assumptions about human nature: 1) we are opaque to ourselves and 2) we have bodily, emotive, and psychological responses to what we (not) do and imagine (not) to do. The first assumption makes it necessary for us to approach ourselves, at least sometimes, as a thing unknown to our selves, as a thing we can have fallible knowledge about and thus as a thing to be explored. The second assumption helps us to explore ourselves: our bodily, emotive, and psychological responses inform us about what we (dis)like, what we value, what gives us joy, and what we hate or what brings us sadness. These responses can subsequently be evaluated on the basis of evaluative stances grounded in our practical identities.

In this concluding chapter, I wish to discuss two themes that are important to address in the context of this dissertation. First, I want to explore what kind of unity is presupposed, and not presupposed, by an account of practical identities and practical deliberation that lets go of the Unification Ideal as a necessary ideal. I will do so by discussing the psychopathology of dissociative identity disorder (DID) (**Section 7.1**). Second, I wish to come back to the discussion of **Chapter 2** and discuss the available metaphors to visualize the process of practical deliberation in which practical identities and the Exploration Ideal are central (**Section 7.2**). I close this chapter by summarizing the answers to the first two research questions posed in the introduction (**Section 7.3**).

Section 7.1 *Unity, accessibility & connectivity*

In this dissertation, I have argued that conflict, dissonance, and disunity do not need to undermine the formation of a viable decision-making framework and thereby do not need to be detrimental to the success of a person's practical deliberations on either level. However, this raises the questions whether a person can cope with *any* kind of conflict and how much conflict a person can handle. In other words, at which point can it be said that the personality of a person contains *too* much conflict, dissonance, and disunity for it to form a successful guide for deliberation? For example, can a person change her commitments in a fundamental way each year (see **Chapter 5**) and can it be said of a person suffering from dissociative identity disorder (DID) that she is still able to form a viable decision-making framework?

In anticipation, I do think that these two extreme cases are problematic for forming a viable decision-making framework. However, this does not mean that it is unity that is lacking. I will argue that the success of a person's personality to form a guide for deliberation is to be captured in terms of accessibility and connectivity of a person's evaluative states and (episodic) memory. As a consequence, no precise or definite threshold of the required unity can be given as this is dependent on the diachronic change and synchronic disunity under which a person still feels capable of engaging in practical deliberation; i.e. the conditions under which the specific individual can still fulfill the success conditions of practical orientation and the choice of an action (where both can be satisfied independent of each other). It seems to be a plausible assumption that for some people the psychological need to be unified over time and for the will to be in volitional harmony is greater than in others. As a last remark, it might be thought that the success of a person's personality to form a guide is dependent on whether a person reaches practical orientation or not. However, as I have argued in the foregoing chapter, the personality of a person does not need to be fully shaped in order to give guidance to a person: she can explore the commitments she has or experiences to have to practical identities in the actions she undertakes.

I have discussed the first two limits in the course of this dissertation. In **Chapter 5**, I argued that radical change in itself is not problematic to a person. However, if a person undergoes radical change too often, it does become problematic. An important reason for this is that to commit yourself to an identity is to commit yourself to the "backwards determination in the construction of" your identity as you need to "make progress towards being the sort of person you have (presumably) resolved to be" (Korsgaard 1996a, 181). So you need to express your commitment to an identity in multiple actions over an extended period of time in order to make it true of yourself. The concept of practical identity involves cares (Davenport, Frankfurt), commitments (Korsgaard), or projects that can only be understood as extended over time. Furthermore, as many practical identities include longer-term activities and projects—think of the pursuit of a career or being a parent—it is difficult to imagine a person's personality that changes radically every year. Such a person would not have any commitments at all and thus would lack a personality.

The second limit can be defined in light of the unity of a person's agential faculties, discussed in **Chapter 4**. In this chapter, I accepted Korsgaard's claim that a person needs to be understood as a unified whole in order to be the autonomous and efficacious cause of her action—no rogue desire or external source should determine what the person does. In other words, in order for the person to be in control of her action, she needs to be unified at the level of her agential faculties—appetite, reason, and spirit. Now it seems plausible that a person who upholds too many conflicting practical identities, may either find herself unable to satisfy these conflicting demands or may find herself paralyzed by the conflicting demands, unable to do anything at all. However, it differs per person when volitional disunity paralyzes her: for one person this might happen with two identities in conflict, another person might still be able to form an action perspective despite of several conflicting projects. What I think that goes wrong here, more precisely, is that a person finds herself unable to connect the conflicting projects and values with each other in deliberation or within one self-conception—this seems to be the intuition for the narrative integration solution for ambivalence is (discussed in **Chapter 3**). I explain this further by discussing the third limit.

The third limit I want to discuss is that a person needs to have minimum accessibility to her internal states to establish the required connectivity between these states. It is this connectivity that makes up an essential part of a person's practical deliberations. If we think back of Richard Moran's idea of mutual responsiveness discussed in **Chapter 2**, an evaluation of a desire, reason, or practical identity needs to have the accompanying effect. Furthermore, the resistance of a desire, for example, needs to have its effect on a person's deliberations of what to do as well. It is this interaction that has been further fleshed out in **Chapter 6** with the introduction of bodily, psychological, and emotive responses a person has to the actions she (imaginatively) undertakes. So a person can appreciate her desire for a Belgian beer, but the impossibility of its satisfaction may lead her to withdrawing her appreciation. Yet, in order to establish such mutual responsiveness, both the desire and the evaluation need to be accessible to the person. In this way, she can connect them to each other in her practical deliberations.

Moran explains the required connectivity in terms of first-personal access. He gives the example of a woman in psychotherapy, who comes to learn that she

feels anger at her dead parent, and who can do so in two ways: she can discover this of herself by the thoughts and feelings she observes in herself or she can do so by avowing her anger as her own (2001, 85). In terms of this dissertation, the difference can be stated in the following way: in the first case, the person, at a distance towards herself, observes the anger merely as a motivational force that is present within herself and that influences her (cognitive) behavior. In the second case, she comes to perceive the anger as a normative suggestion that she either can endorse (avow) or reject. It is only in this second way that her anger can become internal to her practical deliberations as *more* than an external force to take into calculation in her deliberations, just as social or natural obstacles would need to be reckoned with. It is this kind of access to the mental state that is required to connect the state *as normative state* to other normative and evaluative states. A discussion of DID may further clarify what I mean with accessibility and connectivity.

Especially under its old name of DID, multiple personality disorder, it may seem that DID is normalized on the proposed account of the role of practical identities in practical deliberation. If DID is understood as a person suffering from multiple, distinct personalities or a body containing multiple selves, the condition may be understood as a conflict between these personalities. And as, on the lines of this dissertation, conflict is not necessarily detrimental to a person's personality or her capacity to determine what to do, it may be suggested that DID, as an extreme form of conflict within a person's personality (or personalities), does not cause a person to suffer from it. Since this is counter-intuitive indeed, I will inquire succinctly into the condition of DID and argue that a lack of accessibility and connectivity (and not unity) is detrimental to the person's capacity to deliberate.

In the last century, the multiple selves interpretation of DID was a popular interpretation (Graham 1999, Rovane 1998, Hardcastle & Flanagan 1999). This interpretation suggests that there are multiple, distinct personalities or *alters* existent in one body that take turn in controlling the behavior, the movements of the body. However, psychological research has shown quite convincingly that this thesis is implausible as *alters* can better be understood as person-fragments (Kennett & Matthews 2003a). First of all, *alters* are often unidimensional and extremely underdeveloped (Kennett & Matthews 2002, 515) and the sharp division, or compartmentalization, restricts itself mainly to episodic memory. Semantic memory and non-declarative forms of memory seem to stay both intact and available to all

alters (ibid., 512). This means that if one *alter* learns new motor skills, new words or grammar structure, or even a complete new language, this is available to all other *alters*. Lastly, as Michelle Maiese points out, “the very *logic of dissociation* suggests that there is a single self in cases of DID” as the person suffering of DID must first register a thing before she can compartmentalize it in different *alters* by dissociation (2016a, 227).⁶⁰

Under an alternative interpretation of DID, the problem of the person suffering DID is to deal with memory gaps and with sudden changes in her evaluative outlook as she shifts to a different *alter*. It is my suggestion that this can be captured quite well in terms of practical deliberation, as the person’s capacity for practical deliberation seems to be deeply impaired by the dissociative process the person suffering from DID continuously goes through. This makes the person unable to make a commitment because by shifting into a different *alter* she either forgets her commitment or she evaluates her commitment differently as a different *alter* has a different evaluative outlook.

First, and most importantly, the person has no control over the shifts between *alters* causing her to be the puppet of her circumstances. More precise, the person can, at times, not access her mental and evaluative states that are important to keep commitments to her practical identities, since her (episodic) memories are inaccessible (a lack of accessibility). At other times she evaluates her reasons for her commitments differently without being able to relate her different evaluative outlooks to each other, even if the *alter* has access to the episodic memory stored in the *alter* who made the commitment (a lack of connectivity).

This discussion of DID does not imply that a person should ensure that these two conditions of accessibility and connectivity are in place regarding *all* her mental states. There might be experiences, emotions, and feelings of which it is better if a person does not relive them or access them and sometimes bodily, psychological, or emotive responses are not important enough to bring them into connection with other normative and evaluative states. Here again we do not encounter a sharp boundary between the amount of access and connectivity that guarantee the formation of a successful guide for practical deliberation. Because even if a person has some states which she cannot access and thereby cannot connect to other evaluative and normative states she has, she most likely will be able to maintain

⁶⁰ For a good overview of this discussion, see Maiese 2016a and Matthews 2003.

control of her actions. In other words, some irrational (non-self-intelligible) behavior does not undermine a person's commitments and control in a global way—too much does of which DID is an extreme case.

In this section, I have discussed whether the developed Exploration Ideal allows for an attitude of “anything goes” regarding conflict, dissonance, and volitional disunity in a person's personality. I have argued that two extreme forms of conflict can undermine a person's capacity for true commitment and her capacity of practical deliberation. However, a precise standard for how much disunity a person can handle, or can allow in her personality, cannot be given, as it is likely that this differs per person. This does not mean that other conditions for practical deliberation cannot be given. I have argued that accessibility and connectivity regarding evaluative and normative states is necessary as practical deliberation is a process of mutual responsiveness between these states and a person can only establish this mutual responsiveness, the connectivity, if she has access to these states by the movements of distance-taking and endorsement.

In light of the assumption that humans are opaque to themselves, the conditions of accessibility and connectivity may appear as contradictory. But being opaque and establishing accessibility and connectivity are actually related to each other through the Exploration Ideal. It is insofar that we are opaque to ourselves that we need to work on establishing accessibility and connectivity. It is by being guided by the Exploration Ideal that we can do so. It is in failing to explore oneself that one can fail to establish the required accessibility and connectivity required for successful practical deliberation, i.e. deliberation that leads to a viable action perspective. Without these two conditions, one is in danger that one's circumstances start to define one's actions because one's motivational states or inner responses may start to lead their own lives.

Section 7.2 *Metaphor: summary of the third research question & standing for something*

In **Chapter 2**, I argued that one explanatory reason for the attractiveness of the Unification Ideal is the metaphor of distance taking thereby answering the third research question “Why does the Unification Ideal has such an appeal to philosophers that it is introduced as the ideal to strive for in practical deliberation?” However, I pointed out that the use of this metaphor is over-extended: many authors

use it to visualize the process of practical deliberation in which a person takes (higher-order, more abstract) normative and evaluative states into view. In other words, repeated movements of distance taking are stacked on each other structuring the process of practical deliberation: each further stretch of reflection requires a further stretch of endorsement. However, as deliberation is more similar to thematizing a desire and to engaging with it (its meaning and motivational and normative force is explored) than to observe it at a distance, it seems implausible that practical deliberation takes place “at a distance” from our desires, reasons, and practical identities.

The suggestion in **Chapter 2** has been that the metaphor of distance taking is one of the last relics of a foregone image of what it means to know oneself: namely, that through observation we can get to know the core of who we are. Within this observation model of self-knowledge, it makes sense that objective observation is done at a distance, disengaged from one’s motivational and evaluative states and if it is found that the observation does not give clarity to move a further distance. This is the image the standard answer, including the Unification Ideal, works with. Contrary to this image, I have argued that the metaphor of distance taking helps to visualize only the aspect of the practical relation of oneself to oneself in which the motivational force of desires is paused so that desires can be taken up as normative suggestions (or as forces to be reckoned with, just as other social and bodily forces that can appear as obstacles to overcome). For visualizing the core of this relation—the ability to form (higher-order) evaluative attitudes towards our (lower-order) attitudes—different metaphors are required.

Already in **Chapter 2**, I pointed out that many of the metaphors that come to mind for the process of practical deliberation stem from the communicative domain: a desire suggests or proposes a course of action, the person can decline, accept, or endorse the proposal, we engage with normative suggestions through interacting with them, and ideally there is a mutual responsiveness between lower-order states and higher-order states.

The natural use of metaphors from the communicative domain for visualizing the process of practical deliberation, may invoke the question why the definition of practical identity used in this dissertation does not include social aspects, such as social recognition, directly in its definition. Unfortunately, I cannot treat this question in full by placing the definition worked with in this dissertation in

light of the definition shortly pointed at in **Section 1.8**. However, I do want to address two points. First, I do not wish to say that a person is isolated in her decisions about the commitments she makes. There are influences on many different levels by her social environment. The self-descriptions available to a person are in first instance provided by a person's social setting: the person learns the capacity within the social environment in which she grows up and the (first) stock of self-descriptions available to her come from this environment. Furthermore, in developing her own personality, she is in interaction with her social environment: her peers, her family, her friends, etc.

The second aspect I want to address, however, refers to how a person herself can break with her social environment too. Central to the concept of practical identity worked with in this dissertation is the idea that a person commits herself to the practical identities she has. To commit herself to a self-description, thereby making it into an ideal that provides a guide for practical deliberation, can stand apart from a person's social environment. That is to say, it is in the power of a person to break with the self-descriptions she grew up with. Say, for example, a person wants to commit herself to being a political activist in a dictatorship. She knows that this will offend her family and many of her friends and that she can expect pressure from them. She also knows that the regime itself won't accept it and many people in her society will not value or appreciate what she does. Despite all the social resistance to her activity, to the expression of her practical identity of being a political activist, she might still press on because of some moral or personal ideal. To refer to J. David Velleman (2006, Chapter 11; 2009, Chapter 9), this person is motivated neither by social recognition nor by what might make her actions most intelligible to herself and others but by an ideal that she has chosen to commit herself to or feels more strongly committed to.

To summarize the point in one sentence, if a person can imagine a practical identity as possible-for-her, she can choose to commit herself to giving expression to the identity. This may be an arduous and difficult process, even without guarantee that she will actually succeed to break free of her former self-descriptions, but that does not mean that she cannot try. The metaphor to capture this aspect of committing oneself to a practical identity (*vis-à-vis* one's social environment) has been proposed and discussed by Cheshire Calhoun (1995). Calhoun visualizes this moment of commitment with the metaphor of "standing for something." To stand for

something means for Calhoun to be at the same time aware of the fallibility of one's judgement but still to stand for one's best judgement *before* other persons (1995, 257). It is to "understand that one's own judgment matters because it is only within individual persons' deliberative viewpoints, including one's own, that what is worth our doing can be decided" (1995, 258). In other words, we do not only need to stand for our commitments, we need to "stand behind" them as well (1995, 260).⁶¹

These two metaphors of "standing for" and "standing behind" for the aspect of committing oneself to a practical identity, even in the face of social resistance, capture how the person stands apart from her social environment in making commitments and is connected to it by a practice of reason-giving. However, it is from her own deliberative perspective that these reasons need to make sense in order for her to change her commitment (which does not imply that the person has to be correct or right about her reasons). So despite the fact that Calhoun calls "standing for something" a social virtue (1995, 257), it is at the same time clear from her treatment that it is only in an awkward way so.

I hope that this short discussion of the metaphor of standing for something has brought to the fore an important aspect of the conception of practical identity as it is used in this dissertation: namely, that the power to commit oneself to or reject a practical identity lies with the individual herself (if she can imagine it). This discussion has not been meant to discuss or reject the intersubjective conception based on social recognition succinctly referred to in **Chapter 1**.

Section 7.3 *Summary: answers to the first two research questions*

I end this chapter with a summary of the answer to the first two research questions stated in the introduction, as the answer to the third research question has been summarized in the foregoing section. Let me state the two research questions:

1. Is the Unification Ideal always the ideal to strive for in practical deliberation, or are there situations in which striving for unity is ineffective or even contra-productive as when the volitional disunity is constitutive of a person?
2. How plausible is the Exploration Ideal, next to the Unification Ideal, as an ideal to strive for in practical deliberation?

⁶¹ Calhoun takes "standing for something" as a metaphor for and in interpretation of integrity. I take it that for the purposes of this dissertation, this difference is negligible and discussing it would distract from the point made.

The Unification Ideal

In **Chapters 3** through **5**, I have critically discussed the standard answer to the question of how practical identities can form a successful guide for practical deliberation. Central to the standard answer is the Unification Ideal: a person should strive for a unified prioritization of her practical identities as in this way she has a clear decision-making framework from which what to do directly follows. I have argued that this does not seem necessary as striving for unity might be ineffective if the conflict is constitutive of the person and even contra-productive as it might undermine the control an agent has over her actions. Moreover, I discussed the idea that a person can only undertake one action at a time, and the need for self-intelligibility that leads to a narrative understanding of the Unification Ideal.

I argued in **Chapter 1** that practical deliberation takes place on two levels with their own success condition: on the level of actions the success condition is the choice for an action and on the level of a person's practical identities it is practical orientation. A person can have imaginative projections about who she wants to be and how she wants to express herself without these projections having any repercussions for the question what she actually wants to do. Moreover, a person does not need to have a decided-on description of who she is, does not need to have obtained practical orientation, as she can use her actions to explore who she wants to be and who she can be through her actions. With regard to the idea that a person can only do one action at a time, I have argued that although a person might only be able to do one action at a time, this does not imply that she should confine her practical deliberations to this single moment. In practical deliberation, a person can consider multiple moments for action in her future. In this way, the possibility opens up for the person to express the volitional conflict over the course of multiple actions. Thirdly, I have pointed out that self-intelligibility does not need to depend on narrative unity. What is more, a person may experience her life-story as that what is standing in her way, as something that weighs her down. To have narrative unity as ideal may therefore be contra-productive for the person.

With this critical discussion of the standard answer and the reasons for the Unification Ideal, a volitionally divided person may encounter the problem that she does not know what to do. The insight that unification is not a necessary ideal to

strive for in practical deliberation does not provide a person with an alternative. So what should a person experiencing a conflict in her volitional make-up do?

The Exploration Ideal

In **Chapter 6**, I have proposed the Exploration Ideal as guide for practical deliberation under conditions of volitional disunity, doubt, or uncertainty. The idea of the Exploration Ideal rests on two assumptions about human nature. First, a person is opaque to herself in the sense that she cannot always predict how she will feel about a commitment or a certain expression of herself—even to the extent that she finds herself unable to do something she has committed herself to. Second, a person has bodily, psychological, and emotive responses to her actions and her imaginative projections that give her information on what she (dis)likes, what makes her (un)happy, with which self-expressions she feels good or bad, etc. It is based on these inner responses that a person can explore who she is, who she wants to be, and who she can be.

Importantly, a person can encounter borders to who she is in these inner responses. For example, a person who wants to naturalize within the USA has to give up her nationality, but she might find herself unable to do so. I argued that this response does not need to be taken at face value and can itself be investigated and evaluated with the evaluative stances provided by her practical identities. So if this person is truly decided on becoming an American, she might continue to push on *despite* the resistance she feels against giving up her current nationality. A person who pursues a career and notices that she is low on energy, cannot enjoy other activities anymore, and is solely focused on her work may take these as sign to change her mind about the pursuit of her career. Yet, she might take these inner responses as well as the hurdles she needs to overcome to reach for what she truly wants. How the inner responses are evaluated and what is done with them can only be decided on by the person herself by endorsing or rejecting a (committed to) practical identity (something also open to Frankfurt). The self-descriptions a person commits herself to function as her evaluative standpoint. As has been pointed out earlier in this chapter however, what is important is that the person can establish accessibility to and connectivity between her motivational states and her inner responses, so that they can be taken out of the realm of motivational forces and into the realm of normative suggestions.

Summary

We all know the experience of different demands on ourselves. As a parent, we want to be there for our children, and in pursuit of our career, we want to invest as much time as possible. If we are committed to both being a good parent and pursuing a career, it may be impossible to satisfy the demands stemming from both commitments. It is in such moments in which our, what I call, practical identities are conflicted that our will is in a state of volitional disunity. In this dissertation, I discuss how a person may best cope with volitional disunity.

I define practical identities in line with Christine M. Korsgaard as self-descriptions under which a person finds her life worth living and her actions worth undertaking; examples of such self-descriptions are being a parent, an employee, a hobbyist pianist, the friend of Charlotte, etc. Practical identities provide the person with ideals that form a decision-making framework for her deliberations about what to do. The standard analysis of volitional disunity, is that it causes a person to not know what to do as her identities, as guides, point her in conflicting, even opposite, directions. The solutions proposed in the literature always include, what I call, the Unification Ideal: a person has to prioritize her identities by deciding which is more important to her. By unifying her identities in this way, she constitutes who she is and wants to be thereby providing herself with a clear decision-making framework regarding the question of what to do.

In this dissertation however, I argue that a person does not need to overcome her volitional disunity through unification *per se*. In order to know what to do, a person could also *explore* the disunity that defines her will, which includes that she could accept the volitional disunity as hers. I base this Exploration Ideal on two assumptions about human nature: 1) we have inner responses to how we act and 2) we are opaque to ourselves. Since a person cannot always know in advance whether she will be happy with a commitment by turning her attention inwards, she can explore who she wants to be and who she can be through the bodily, psychological, and emotive responses she has to her actions. These responses, however, are not the ultimate authority. This authority stays with her practical identities in light of which she can evaluate these inner responses. Thus, a person exposed to volitional disunity should strive to explore this disunity, how she wants it to define her and whether it is constitutive of who she is (Exploration Ideal) instead of trying to overcome the disunity by striving for unification (Unification Ideal).

Samenvatting

Stel: je wilt als een betrokken ouder bij het schooloptreden van je kind aanwezig zijn, maar als verantwoordelijk docent wil je ook de schrijfp opdrachten van je studenten binnen de afgesproken termijn nagekeken hebben. Aangenomen dat je zowel een goede ouder als een goede docent wilt zijn, ervaar je een conflict. Als ouder vind je het waardevol bij het schooloptreden te zijn en als docent vind je het waardevol om de schrijfp opdrachten op tijd te hebben nagekeken. Dit creëert een situatie waarin je onmogelijk kunt voldoen aan de verwachtingen van wat ik "praktische identiteiten" noem. Als je nu niet weet welke identiteit voor jou belangrijker is dan heeft dat als mogelijk gevolg dat je niet weet wat je moet doen. In dit proefschrift bespreek ik hoe een persoon het beste met conflicten tussen praktische identiteiten om kan gaan.

Het concept praktische identiteit wordt, in navolging van Christine M. Korsgaard, als een zelfbeschrijving waarbij je je leven en je handelingen waardevol vindt, gedefinieerd. Zulke zelfbeschrijvingen geven je idealen. Deze idealen kunnen als leidraad dienen voor je praktische overwegingen met betrekking tot wat je wilt doen. Voorbeelden van zelfbeschrijvingen zijn: ouder, werknemer, hobby-pianist, de vriend van Charlotte, etc. Als je praktische identiteiten met elkaar in conflict zijn, dus tegenstrijdig als leidraad, dan is de suggestie vanuit de filosofische literatuur om het Ideaal van Eenwording te volgen. Dit betekent dat je een harmonische rangschikking moet maken van je identiteiten en daarbij moet bepalen welke identiteit het meest belangrijk voor je is. Omdat je identiteiten nu niet meer conflicteren vormen ze een heldere leidraad voor je overwegingen met betrekking tot wat je wilt doen: je kunt handelen naar de identiteit die jij het belangrijkste vindt.

Echter, in dit proefschrift beargumenteer ik dat je in de beschreven situatie niet per se het Ideaal van Eenwording hoeft te volgen. Je kunt ook verkennen hoe je met het conflict tussen de praktische identiteiten om wilt gaan door middel van je handelingen en je reacties op deze handelingen. Met dit proefschrift laat ik zien dat het niet nodig is om een precieze rangorde van je praktische identiteiten te bepalen *voordat* je kunt bepalen welke handeling je wilt uitvoeren. Deze rangorde kan verkend en ontdekt worden *door* te handelen en deze hoeft niet volledig harmonisch te zijn. Het kan zijn dat de conflicterende identiteiten even waardevol voor je zijn en dat je besluit in je handelingen uiting te geven aan het conflict.

Zusammenfassung

Wir alle haben die Erfahrung unterschiedlichen Ansprüchen an uns selbst ausgesetzt zu sein. Als Elternteil möchten wir für unsere Kinder da sein und in unserem Beruf möchten wir die Möglichkeit haben so viel Zeit wie nötig in unsere Karriere zu investieren. Wenn wir uns zu beidem verpflichten, sowohl für unsere Kinder, als auch für die Karriere so viel Zeit wie möglich aufzuwenden, wird es unmöglich sein, die Ansprüche beider Verpflichtungen zufriedenstellend zu erfüllen. Es passiert eben in solchen Momenten, wenn unsere, wie ich sie nenne, praktischen Identitäten in Konflikt miteinander stehen, dass unser Wille in einen Zustand von volitionaler Uneinigkeit gerät. In dieser Dissertation erörtere ich, wie eine Person am besten mit dem Zustand volitionaler Uneinigkeit umgehen kann.

Ich definiere praktische Identitäten, in Übereinstimmung mit Christine M. Korsgaard, als Beschreibung des Selbst in der eine Person ihr Leben lebenswert und ihre Handlungen als wertvoll erachtet; Beispiele solcher Beschreibungen des Selbst sind ein Elternteil, ein Arbeitnehmer, ein Hobby-Klavierspieler, ein Freund von Charlotte etc. Praktische Identitäten geben einer Person die Ideale, die ein Leitfaden für die Überlegung, was sie tun sollte, sind. Eine Person, deren praktische Identitäten miteinander in Konflikt stehen, hat mindestens zwei Entscheidungsmöglichkeiten, die sie in konfliktierende, sogar gegensätzliche Richtungen weisen. Im philosophischen Diskurs wird solch eine Person als handlungsunfähig dargestellt, da sie nicht weiß, was sie tun muss. Die Lösungen zu diesem Problem, welche in der Literatur vorgeschlagen werden, beinhalten immer, wie ich es bezeichne, das Vereinigungs-Ideal: eine Person muss ihre Identitäten priorisieren und somit entscheiden, welche wichtiger für sie ist. Durch die Vereinigung der Identitäten auf diese Weise, begründet sie wer sie ist, wer sie sein will und bietet sich somit selbst einen Leitfaden für die Frage was sie tun soll.

In dieser Dissertation lege ich dar, warum eine Person ihre volitionale Uneinigkeit nicht durch Vereinigung überwinden muss. Um zu wissen wie sie handeln soll, kann eine Person die Uneinigkeit, welche ihren Willen bestimmt, untersuchen und dabei die volitionale Uneinigkeit als Teil ihres Selbst akzeptieren. Ich basiere dieses Untersuchungs-Ideal auf zwei Annahmen über die menschliche Natur: 1) Wir bekommen innere Reaktionen darauf, wie wir handeln und 2) Wir sind für uns selbst nicht transparent. Da eine Person nicht immer wissen kann, ob sie mit einer Verpflichtung, welche sie eingeht glücklich sein wird, während sie

lediglich darüber reflektiert, kann sie durch ihre physischen, psychischen und emotionalen Reaktionen, welche sie auf ihre Handlungen erhält, untersuchen wer sie sein möchte und wer sie sein kann. Diese Reaktionen geben jedoch nicht die ultimativen Handlungsweisen vor und können noch aufgrund von ihren praktischen Identitäten evaluiert werden. Somit sollte eine Person, welche volitionaler Uneinigkeit ausgesetzt ist, danach streben diese Uneinigkeit zu untersuchen, um herauszufinden, wie sie sie definieren sollte und ob sie für sie bestimmend ist (Untersuchungs-Ideal) anstelle des Versuchs die Uneinigkeit durch Streben nach Vereinigung (Vereinigungs-Ideal) zu überwinden.

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