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*An evolving approach to the science of pleasure suggests that each of us contains multiple selves—all with different desires, and all fighting for control. If this is right, the pursuit of happiness becomes even trickier. Can one self bind another self if the two want different things? Are you always better off when a Good Self wins? And should outsiders, such as employers and policy makers, get into the fray?*

by Paul Bloom

# First Person Plural

**I**MAGINE A LONG, terrible dental procedure. You are rigid in the chair, hands clenched, soaked with sweat—and then the dentist leans over and says, “We’re done now. You can go home. But if you want, I’d be happy to top you off with a few minutes of mild pain.”

There is a good argument for saying “Yes. Please do.”

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Psychologist Paul Bloom reflects on happiness, desire, memory, and the chaotic community that lives inside every human mind.

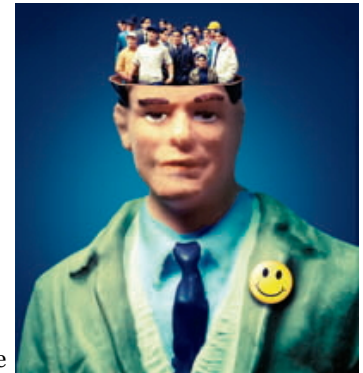
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The psychologist and recent Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman conducted a series of studies on the memory of painful events, such as colonoscopies. He discovered that when we think back on these events, we are influenced by the intensity of the endings, and so we have a more positive memory of an experience that ends with mild pain than of one that ends with extreme pain, even if the mild

pain is added to the same amount of extreme pain. At the moment the dentist makes his offer, you would, of course, want to say no—but later on, you would be better off if you had said yes, because your overall memory of the event wouldn’t be as unpleasant.

Such contradictions arise all the time. If you ask people which makes them happier, work or vacation, they will remind you that they work for money and spend the money on vacations. But if you give them a beeper that goes off at random times, and ask them to record their activity and mood each time they hear a beep, you’ll likely find that they are happier at work. Work is often engaging and social; vacations are often boring and stressful. Similarly, if you ask people about their greatest happiness in life, more than a third mention their children or grandchildren, but when they use a diary to record their happiness, it turns out that taking care of the kids is a downer—parenting ranks just a bit higher than housework, and falls below sex, socializing with friends, watching TV, praying, eating, and cooking.

The question “What makes people happy?” has been around forever, but there is a new approach to the science of pleasure, one that draws on recent work in psychology, philosophy, economics, neuroscience, and emerging fields such as neuroeconomics. This work has led to new ways—everything from beepers and diaries to brain scans—to explore the emotional value of different experiences, and has given us some surprising insights about the conditions that result in satisfaction.



But what's more exciting, I think, is the emergence of a different perspective on happiness itself. We used to think that the hard part of the question "How can I be happy?" had to do with nailing down the definition of *happy*. But it may have more to do with the definition of *I*. Many researchers now believe, to varying degrees, that each of us is a community of competing selves, with the happiness of one often causing the misery of another. This theory might explain certain puzzles of everyday life, such as why addictions and compulsions are so hard to shake off, and why we insist on spending so much of our lives in worlds—like TV shows and novels and virtual-reality experiences—that don't actually exist. And it provides a useful framework for thinking about the increasingly popular position that people would be better off if governments and businesses helped them inhibit certain gut feelings and emotional reactions.

**L**ike any organ, the brain consists of large parts (such as the hippocampus and the cortex) that are made up of small parts (such as "maps" in the visual cortex), which themselves are made up of smaller parts, until you get to neurons, billions of them, whose orchestrated firing is the stuff of thought. The neurons are made up of parts like axons and dendrites, which are made up of smaller parts like terminal buttons and receptor sites, which are made up of molecules, and so on.

This hierarchical structure makes possible the research programs of psychology and neuroscience. The idea is that interesting properties of the whole (intelligence, decision-making, emotions, moral sensibility) can be understood in terms of the interaction of components that themselves lack these properties. This is how computers work; there is every reason to believe that this is how we work, too.

But there is no consensus about the broader implications of this scientific approach. Some scholars argue that although the brain might contain neural subsystems, or modules, specialized for tasks like recognizing faces and understanding language, it also contains a part that constitutes a person, a self: the chief executive of all the subsystems. As the philosopher Jerry Fodor once put it, "If, in short, there is a community of computers living in my head, there had also better be somebody who is in charge; and, *by God, it had better be me.*"

More-radical scholars insist that an inherent clash exists between science and our long-held conceptions about consciousness and moral agency: if you accept that our brains are a myriad of smaller components, you must reject such notions as character, praise, blame, and free will. Perhaps the very notion that there are such things as *selves*—individuals who persist over time—needs to be rejected as well.

The view I'm interested in falls between these extremes. It is conservative in that it accepts that brains give rise to selves that last over time, plan for the future, and so on. But it is radical in that it gives up the idea that there is just one self per head. The idea is that instead, within each brain, different selves are continually popping in and out of existence. They have different desires, and they fight for control—bargaining with, deceiving, and plotting against one another.

The notion of different selves within a single person is not new. It can be found in Plato, and it was nicely articulated by the 18th-century Scottish philosopher David Hume, who wrote, "I cannot compare the soul more properly to any thing than to a republic or commonwealth, in which the several members are united by the reciprocal ties of government and subordination." Walt Whitman gave us a pithier version: "I am large, I contain multitudes."

The economist Thomas Schelling, another Nobel laureate, illustrates the concept with a simple story:

As a boy I saw a movie about Admiral Byrd's Antarctic expedition and was impressed that as a boy he had gone outdoors in shirtsleeves to toughen himself against the cold. I resolved to go to bed at night with one blanket too few. That decision to go to bed minus one blanket was made by a warm

boy; another boy awoke cold in the night, too cold to retrieve the blanket ... and resolving to restore it tomorrow. The next bedtime it was the warm boy again, dreaming of Antarctica, who got to make the decision, and he always did it again.

Examples abound in our own lives. Late at night, when deciding not to bother setting up the coffee machine for the next morning, I sometimes think of the man who will wake up as a different person, and wonder, *What did he ever do for me?* When I get up and there's no coffee ready, I curse the lazy bastard who shirked his duties the night before.

But anyone tempted by this theory has to admit just how wrong it feels, how poorly it fits with most of our experience. In the main, we do think of ourselves as singular individuals who persist over time. If I were to learn that I was going to be tortured tomorrow morning, my reaction would be terror, not sympathy for the poor guy who will be living in my body then. If I do something terrible now, I will later feel guilt and shame, not anger at some other person.

It could hardly be otherwise. Our brains have evolved to protect our bodies and guide them to reproduce, hence our minds must be sensitive to maintaining the needs of the continuing body—my children today will be my children tomorrow; if you wronged me yesterday, I should be wary of you today. Society and human relationships would be impossible without this form of continuity. Anyone who could convince himself that the person who will wake up in his bed tomorrow is *really* someone different would lack the capacity for sustained self-interest; he would feel no long-term guilt, love, shame, or pride.

The multiplicity of selves becomes more intuitive as the time span increases. Social psychologists have found certain differences in how we think of ourselves versus how we think of other people—for instance, we tend to attribute our own bad behavior to unfortunate circumstances, and the bad behavior of others to their nature. But these biases diminish when we think of *distant* past selves or *distant* future selves; we see such selves the way we see other people. Although it might be hard to think about the person who will occupy your body tomorrow morning as someone other than you, it is not hard at all to think that way about the person who will occupy your body 20 years from now. This may be one reason why many young people are indifferent about saving for retirement; they feel as if they would be giving up their money to an elderly stranger.

One can see a version of clashing multiple selves in the mental illness known as dissociative-identity disorder, which used to be called multiple-personality disorder. This is familiar to everyone from the dramatic scenes in movies in which an actor is one person, and then he or she contorts or coughs or shakes the head, and—boom!—another person comes into existence. (My own favorite is Edward Norton in *Primal Fear*, although—spoiler alert—he turns out in the end to be faking.)

Dissociative-identity disorder is controversial. It used to be rarely diagnosed, then the number of reported cases spiked dramatically in the 1980s, particularly in North America. The spike has many possible explanations: the disorder was first included as a specific category in the 1980 version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, just as an influential set of case studies of multiple personalities was published. And increased popular interest was fueled by the 1973 novel *Sybil* and its 1976 movie adaptation, which starred Sally Field as a woman with 16 different personalities.

Some psychologists believe that this spike was not the result of better diagnosis. Rather, they say it stemmed in part from therapists who inadvertently persuaded their patients to *create* these distinct selves, often through role-playing and hypnosis. Recent years have seen a backlash, and some people diagnosed with the disorder have sued their therapists. One woman got a settlement of more than \$2 million after alleging that her psychotherapist had used suggestive memory “recovery” techniques to convince her that she had more than 120 personalities, including children, angels, and a duck.

Regardless of the cause of the spike, considerable evidence, including recent brain-imaging studies, suggests that some

people really do shift from one self to another, and that the selves have different memories and personalities. In one study, women who had been diagnosed with dissociative-identity disorder and claimed to be capable of shifting at will from one self to another listened to recordings while in a PET scanner. When the recordings told of a woman's own traumatic experience, the parts of the brain corresponding to autobiographic memory became active—but only when she had shifted to the self who had endured that traumatic experience. If she was in another self, different parts of the brain became active and showed a pattern of neural activity corresponding to hearing about the experience of a stranger.

Many psychologists and philosophers have argued that the disorder should be understood as an extreme version of normal multiplicity. Take memory. One characteristic of dissociative-identity disorder is interpersonality amnesia—one self doesn't have access to the memories of the other selves. But memory is notoriously situation-dependent even for normal people—remembering something is easiest while you are in the same state in which you originally experienced it. Students do better when they are tested in the room in which they learned the material; someone who learned something while he was angry is better at remembering that information when he is angry again; the experience of one's drunken self is more accessible to the drunk self than to the sober self. What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.

Personality also changes according to situation; even the most thuggish teenager is not the same around his buddies as he is when having tea with Grandma. Our normal situation dependence is most evident when it comes to bad behavior. In the 1920s, Yale psychologists tested more than 10,000 children, giving them a battery of aptitude tests and putting them in morally dicey situations, such as having an opportunity to cheat on a test. They found a striking lack of consistency. A child's propensity to cheat at sports, for instance, had little to do with whether he or she would lie to a teacher.

More-recent experiments with adults find that subtle cues can have a surprising effect on our actions. Good smells, such as fresh bread, make people kinder and more likely to help a stranger; bad smells, like farts (the experimenters used fart spray from a novelty store), make people more judgmental. If you ask people to unscramble sentences, they tend to be more polite, minutes later, if the sentences contain positive words like *honor* rather than negative words like *bluntly*. These findings are in line with a set of classic experiments conducted by Stanley Milgram in the 1960s—too unethical to do now—showing that normal people could be induced to give electric shocks to a stranger if they were told to do so by someone they believed was an authoritative scientist. All of these studies support the view that each of us contains many selves—some violent, some submissive, some thoughtful—and that different selves can be brought to the fore by different situations.

**T**he population of a single head is not fixed; we can add more selves. In fact, the capacity to spawn multiple selves is central to pleasure. After all, the most common leisure activity is not sex, eating, drinking, drug use, socializing, sports, or being with the ones we love. It is, by a long shot, participating in experiences we know are not real—reading novels, watching movies and TV, daydreaming, and so forth.

Enjoying fiction requires a shift in selfhood. You give up your own identity and try on the identities of other people, adopting their perspectives so as to share their experiences. This allows us to enjoy fictional events that would shock and sadden us in real life. When Tony Soprano kills someone, you respond differently than you would to a real murder; you accept and adopt some of the moral premises of the Soprano universe. You become, if just for a moment, Tony Soprano.

Some imaginative pleasures involve the creation of alternative selves. Sometimes we interact with these selves as if they were other people. This might sound terrible, and it can be, as when schizophrenics hear voices that seem to come from outside themselves. But the usual version is harmless. In children, we describe these alternative selves as imaginary friends. The psychologist Marjorie Taylor, who has studied this phenomenon more than anyone, points out three things. First, contrary to some stereotypes, children who have imaginary friends are not losers, loners, or borderline psychotics. If anything, they

are slightly more socially adept than other children. Second, the children are in no way deluded: Taylor has rarely met a child who wasn't fully aware that the character lived only in his or her own imagination. And third, the imaginary friends are genuinely different selves. They often have different desires, interests, and needs from the child's; they can be unruly, and can frustrate the child. The writer Adam Gopnik wrote about his young daughter's imaginary companion, Charlie Ravioli, a hip New Yorker whose defining quality was that he was always too busy to play with her.

Long-term imaginary companions are unusual in adults, but they do exist—Taylor finds that many authors who write books with recurring characters claim, fairly convincingly, that these characters have wills of their own and have some say in their fate. But it is not unusual to purposefully create another person in your head to interact with on a short-term basis. Much of daydreaming involves conjuring up people, sometimes as mere physical props (as when daydreaming about sports or sex), but usually as social beings. All of us from time to time hold conversations with people who are not actually there.

Sometimes we get pleasure from sampling alternative selves. Again, you can see the phenomenon in young children, who get a kick out of temporarily adopting the identity of a soldier or a lion. Adults get the same sort of kick; exploring alternative identities seems to be what the Internet was invented for. The sociologist Sherry Turkle has found that people commonly create avatars so as to explore their options in a relatively safe environment. She describes how one 16-year-old girl with an abusive father tried out multiple characters online—a 16-year-old boy, a stronger, more assertive girl—to try to work out what to do in the real world. But often the shift in identity is purely for pleasure. A man can have an alternate identity as a woman; a heterosexual can explore homosexuality; a shy person can try being the life of the party.

Online alternative worlds such as World of Warcraft and Second Life are growing in popularity, and some people now spend more time online than in the real world. One psychologist I know asked a research assistant to try out one of these worlds and report on what it is like and how people behave there. The young woman never came back—she preferred the virtual life to the real one.

**L**ife would be swell if all the selves inhabiting a single mind worked as a team, pulling together for a common goal. But they clash, and sometimes this gives rise to what we call addictions and compulsions. This is not the traditional view of human frailty. The human condition has long been seen as a battle of good versus evil, reason versus emotion, will versus appetite, superego versus id. The iconic image, from a million movies and cartoons, is of a person with an angel over one shoulder and the devil over the other.

The alternative view keeps the angel and the devil, but casts aside the person in between. The competing selves are not over your shoulder, but inside your head: the angel and the devil, the self who wants to be slim and the one who wants to eat the cake, all exist within one person. Drawing on the research of the psychiatrist George Ainslie, we can make sense of the interaction of these selves by plotting their relative strengths over time, starting with one (the cake eater) being weaker than the other (the dieter). For most of the day, the dieter hums along at his regular power (a 5 on a scale of 1 to 10, say), motivated by the long-term goal of weight loss, and is stronger than the cake eater (a 2). Your consciousness tracks whichever self is winning, so *you* are deciding not to eat the cake. But as you get closer and closer to the cake, the power of the cake eater rises (3 ... 4 ...), the lines cross, the cake eater takes over (6), and that becomes the conscious *you*; at this point, you decide to eat the cake. It's as if a baton is passed from one self to another.

Sometimes one self can predict that it will later be dominated by another self, and it can act to block the crossing—an act known as self-binding, which Thomas Schelling and the philosopher Jon Elster have explored in detail. Self-binding means that the dominant self schemes against the person it might potentially become—the 5 acts to keep the 2 from becoming a 6.

Ulysses wanted to hear the song of the sirens, but he knew it would compel him to walk off the boat and into the sea. So he had his sailors tie him to the mast. Dieters buy food in small portions so they won't overeat later on; smokers trying to quit tell their friends never to give them cigarettes, no matter how much they may later beg. In her book on gluttony, Francine Prose tells of women who phone hotels where they are going to stay to demand a room with an empty minibar. An alarm clock now for sale rolls away as it sounds the alarm; to shut it off, you have to get up out of bed and find the damn thing.

You might also triumph over your future self by feeding it incomplete or incorrect information. If you're afraid of panicking in a certain situation, you might deny yourself relevant knowledge—you don't look down when you're on the tightrope; you don't check your stocks if you're afraid you'll sell at the first sign of a downturn. Chronically late? Set your watch ahead. Prone to jealousy? Avoid conversations with your spouse about which of your friends is the sexiest.

Working with the psychologists Frank Keil, of Yale University, and Katherine Choe, now at Goucher College, I recently studied young children's understanding of self-binding, by showing them short movies of people engaged in self-binding and other behaviors and asking them to explain what was going on. The children, aged 4 to 7, easily grasped that someone might put a video game on a high shelf so that another person couldn't get it. But self-binding confused them: they were mystified when people put away the game so that they themselves couldn't get hold of it.

But even though young children don't understand self-binding, they are capable of doing it. In a classic study from the 1970s, psychologists offered children a marshmallow and told them they could either have it right away, or get more if they waited for a few minutes. As you would expect, waiting proved difficult (and performance on this task is a good predictor, much later on, of such things as SAT scores and drug problems), but some children managed it by self-binding—averting their eyes or covering the marshmallow so as to subvert their temptation-prone self for the greater pleasure of the long-term self.

Even pigeons can self-bind. Ainslie conducted an experiment in which he placed pigeons in front of a glowing red key. If they pecked it immediately, they got a small reward right away, but if they waited until the key went dark, they got a larger one. They almost always went for the quick reward—really, it's hard for a pigeon to restrain itself. But there was a wrinkle: the key glowed green for several seconds before turning red. Pecking the key while it was green would prevent it from turning red and providing the option of the small, quick reward. Some of the pigeons learned to use the green key to help themselves hold out for the big reward, just as a person might put temptation out of reach.

For adult humans, though, the problem is that the self you are trying to bind has resources of its own. Fighting your Bad Self is serious business; whole sections of bookstores are devoted to it. We bribe and threaten and cajole, just as if we were dealing with an addicted friend. Vague commitments like "I promise to drink only on special occasions" often fail, because the Bad Self can weasel out of them, rationalizing that it's *always* a special occasion. Bright-line rules like "I will never play video games again" are also vulnerable, because the Bad Self can argue that these are unreasonable—and, worse, once you slip, it can argue that the plan is unworkable. For every argument made by the dieting self—"This diet is really working" or "I really need to lose weight"—the cake eater can respond with another—"This will never work" or "I'm too vain" or "You only live once." Your long-term self reads voraciously about the benefits of regular exercise and healthy eating; the cake eater prefers articles showing that obesity isn't really such a problem. It's not that the flesh is weak; sometimes the flesh is pretty damn smart.

**I**t used to be simpler. According to the traditional view, a single, long-term-planning self—a *you*—battles against passions, compulsions, impulses, and addictions. We have no problem choosing, as individuals or as a society, who should win, because only one interest is at stake—one person is at war with his or her desires. And while knowing the right thing to do can be terribly difficult, the decision is still based on the rational thoughts of a rational being.

Seeing things this way means we are often mistaken about what makes us happy. Consider again what happens when we have children. Pretty much no matter how you test it, children make us less happy. The evidence isn't just from diary studies; surveys of marital satisfaction show that couples tend to start off happy, get less happy when they have kids, and become happy again only once the kids leave the house. As the psychologist Daniel Gilbert puts it, "Despite what we read in the popular press, the only known symptom of 'empty-nest syndrome' is increased smiling." So why do people believe that children give them so much pleasure? Gilbert sees it as an illusion, a failure of affective forecasting. Society's needs are served when people believe that having children is a good thing, so we are deluged with images and stories about how wonderful kids are. We think they make us happy, though they actually don't.

The theory of multiple selves offers a different perspective. If struggles over happiness involve clashes between distinct internal selves, we can no longer be so sure that our conflicting judgments over time reflect irrationality or error. There is no inconsistency between someone's anxiously hiking through the Amazon wishing she were home in a warm bath and, weeks later, feeling good about being the sort of adventurous soul who goes into the rain forest. In an important sense, the person in the Amazon is not the same person as the one back home safely recalling the experience, just as the person who honestly believes that his children are the great joy in his life might not be the same person who finds them terribly annoying when he's actually with them.

Even if each of us is a community, all the members shouldn't get equal say. Some members are best thought of as small-minded children—and we don't give 6-year-olds the right to vote. Just as in society, the adults within us have the right—indeed, the obligation—to rein in the children. In fact, talk of "children" versus "adults" within an individual isn't only a metaphor; one reason to favor the longer-term self is that it really is older and more experienced. We typically spend more of our lives not wanting to snort coke, smoke, or overeat than we spend wanting to do these things; this means that the long-term self has more time to reflect. It is less selfish; it talks to other people, reads books, and so on. And it tries to control the short-term selves. It joins Alcoholics Anonymous, buys the runaway clock, and sees the therapist. As Jon Elster observes, the long-term, sober self is a truer self, because it tries to bind the short-term, drunk self. The long-term, sober self is the adult.

Governments and businesses, recognizing these tendencies, have started offering self-binding schemes. Thousands of compulsive gamblers in Missouri have chosen to sign contracts stating that if they ever enter a casino, anything they win will be confiscated by the state, and they could be arrested. Some of my colleagues at Yale have developed an online service whereby you set a goal and agree to put up a certain amount of money to try to ensure that you meet it. If you succeed, you pay nothing; if you fail, the money is given to charity—or, in a clever twist, to an organization you oppose. A liberal trying to lose a pound a week, for instance, can punish herself for missing her goal by having \$100 donated to the George W. Bush Presidential Library.

The natural extension of this type of self-binding is what the economist Richard Thaler and the legal scholar Cass Sunstein describe as "libertarian paternalism"—a movement to engineer situations so that people retain their choices (the libertarian part), but in such a way that these choices are biased to favor people's better selves (the paternalism part). For instance, many people fail to save enough money for the future; they find it too confusing or onerous to choose a retirement plan. Thaler and Sunstein suggest that the default be switched so that employees would automatically be enrolled in a savings plan, and would have to take action to opt out. A second example concerns the process of organ donation. When asked, most Americans say that they would wish to donate their organs if they were to become brain-dead from an accident—but only about half actually have their driver's license marked for donation, or carry an organ-donor card. Thaler and Sunstein have discussed a different idea: people could easily opt out of being a donor, but if they do nothing, they are assumed to consent.

Such proposals are not merely academic musings; they are starting to influence law and policy, and might do so increasingly in the future. Both Thaler and Sunstein act as advisers to politicians and policy makers, most notably Barack Obama.

So what's not to like? There is a real appeal to anything that makes self-binding easier. As I write this article, I'm using a program that disables my network connections for a selected amount of time and does not allow me to switch them back on, thereby forcing me to actually write instead of checking my e-mail or reading blogs. A harsher (and more expensive) method, advised by the author of a self-help book, is to remove your Internet cable and FedEx it to yourself—guaranteeing a day without online distractions. One can also chemically boost the long-term self through drugs such as Adderall, which improves concentration and focus. The journalist Joshua Foer describes how it enabled him to write for hour-long chunks, far longer than he was usually capable of: “The part of my brain that makes me curious about whether I have new e-mails in my inbox apparently shut down.”

It's more controversial, of course, when someone else does the binding. I wouldn't be very happy if my department chair forced me to take Adderall, or if the government fined me for being overweight and not trying to slim down (as Alabama is planning to do to some state employees). But some “other-binding” already exists—think of the mandatory waiting periods for getting a divorce or buying a gun. You are not prevented from eventually taking these actions, but you are forced to think them over, giving the contemplative self the chance to override the impulsive self. And since governments and businesses are constantly asking people to make choices (about precisely such things as whether to be an organ donor), they inevitably have to provide a default option. If decisions have to be made, why not structure them to be in individuals' and society's best interests?

The main problem with all of this is that the long-term self is not always right. Sometimes the short-term self should not be bound. Of course, most addictions are well worth getting rid of. When a mother becomes addicted to cocaine, the pleasure from the drug seems to hijack the neural system that would otherwise be devoted to bonding with her baby. It obviously makes sense here to bind the drug user, the short-term self. On the other hand, from a neural and psychological standpoint, a mother's love for her baby can also be seen as an addiction. But here binding would be strange and immoral; this addiction is a good one. Someone who becomes morbidly obese needs to do more self-binding, but an obsessive dieter might need to do less. We think one way about someone who gives up Internet porn to spend time building houses for the poor, and another way entirely about someone who successfully thwarts his short-term desire to play with his children so that he can devote more energy to making his second million. The long-term, contemplative self should not always win.

This is particularly true when it comes to morality. Many cruel acts are perpetrated by people who can't or don't control their short-term impulses or who act in certain ways—such as getting drunk—that lead to a dampening of the contemplative self. But evil acts are also committed by smart people who adopt carefully thought-out belief systems that allow them to ignore their more morally astute gut feelings. Many slave owners were rational men who used their intelligence to defend slavery, arguing that the institution was in the best interests of those who were enslaved, and that it was grounded in scripture: Africans were the descendants of Ham, condemned by God to be “servants unto servants.” Terrorist acts such as suicide bombings are not typically carried out in an emotional frenzy; they are the consequences of deeply held belief systems and long-term deliberative planning. One of the grimmest examples of rationality gone bad can be found in the psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton's discussion of Nazi doctors. These men acted purposefully for years to distance themselves from their emotions, creating what Lifton describes as an “Auschwitz self” that enabled them to prevent any normal, unschooled human kindness from interfering with their jobs.

I wouldn't want to live next door to someone whose behavior was dominated by his short-term selves, and I wouldn't want to be such a person, either. But there is also something wrong with people who go too far in the other direction. We benefit,



intellectually and personally, from the interplay between different selves, from the balance between long-term contemplation and short-term impulse. We should be wary about tipping the scales too far. The community of selves shouldn't be a democracy, but it shouldn't be a dictatorship, either.

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