



Self-granularity  
in a metamodern era

an Interpersonal approach to the self and image

The thesis evolves a concept called self-granularity, which is a speculative mode of self-perception by diversifying, identifying the multiplicity of the selves. How can we expend self-conceptualisation and play around it with the upcoming of metamoderism?

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**Self-granularity in a Metamodern era**

**An interpersonal approach to the self and image.**

A bachelor thesis for the programme Moving Image

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced world, characterised by a continuous stream of new media, ideas, contradictory narratives, political ideologies, and a growing feeling of isolation. The media companies are driven by highly competitive need for captive attention. The attention economy hijacks our self-awareness.<sup>1</sup> Our engagement gives them a competitive edge for financial gain. Additionally with a decrease of religion in the west, in a post-truth society, an existential meaningless arises. "When a person can't find a deep sense of meaning, they distract themselves with pleasure" (Viktor E. Frankl). If there is a desire for filling an existential void, modern media will nourish that desire. "The extension of any one sense alters the way we think and act - the way we perceive the world. When these ratios change, men change." (McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message* 2008) As modern media (technologies) fragments attention, a distortion of self-reference occurs by hijacking self-awareness and broadening the frame of reference for comparison. Paradoxically increase egocentric thoughts. (Storr 2018)<sup>2</sup>

### Problem of the self.

My initial inquiry for the research began with the exploration of the statement "becoming who you are."<sup>3</sup> How do we ascertain our identity? Is it a static state or an ongoing process of continual evolution? Identity intrigues me because it governs our emotions, actions, and ultimately determines the way we live our lives.<sup>4</sup> When asked, "Who are you?" I often find it challenging to provide a clear answer. Am I my thoughts, experiences, behaviours, body or self-assigned labels? or is this all a social constructed theoretical framework to understand consciousness and to referee between other people from a subjective experience? Am I merely a representation, as if an image perceived differently between other people?

The widening of one's frame of reference by media leads to a fragmentation of self-awareness and personal truth, as the boundaries between one's own life and that of others blur and

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<sup>1</sup> which appears to be a product of late-stage capitalism that thrives on addiction psychology to keep us hooked.

<sup>2</sup> A false self or hyperreality self emerges out of comparison, or what psychoanalyst Carl Jung called persona's, the representation of the selves.

<sup>3</sup> what is the mantra of the Rudolf Steiner high-school I went too. I had a problem with this statement.

<sup>4</sup> The statement means that you must differentiate yourself from others to self-define.

dissolves. This phenomenon reflects in media, into a new episteme<sup>5</sup> called metamodernism, which is described as: “Ontologically, metamodernism oscillates between the modern and the postmodern. It oscillates between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naïveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity.” Vermeulen (2017)

Considering the emergence of metamodernism, many could potentially experience newfound freedom to reassess and realign the significance and emotions in our lives. As it is described as a "structure of feeling," metamodernism possibly be a revitalising framework for articulating the ambiguous uncertainty of Post- and Modernism discourses. (Freinacht 2017) The concept of the self could be revised under the metamodern perspective with an interpersonal vantage point towards self. As humans are intertextual creatures, we relate to one another, we have to let go of a singular self, because social context can shift the perception of self.

### **The Research Question of the Thesis**

How can one restructure the self by deconstructing and constructing personal narratives through representation, and perhaps expand or revise the concept of self?

### **Methodology & Outline**

The thesis is comprised out of a synthesis from various disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, writing practises, consequently, to create a reflective and theoretical analysis. First, I will explore how the flow of representation impacts the illusory self, drawing on Henri Bergson's philosophy of Matter and Memory, as well as Charles Cooley's theory of the looking glass self. Secondly, I'll analyse how media mediates memory and, consequently, our self-concept. I'll then explore how expressive writing can help us navigate and reconcile our past experiences. Rather than solely employing a theoretical analytical approach, I opted to explore my own vulnerability through experimentation with expressive writing, aligning with the writing approach of auto-theory. To wrap up, this exploration involves understanding how individuals perceive and construct their identities with varying levels of granularity, from broad and abstract to specific and detailed. By examining the novel concept of self-granularity, one can better comprehend how individuals navigate the complexities of

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<sup>5</sup> Episteme is from Foucault, Meta modernism is called multiple things, but is often described as a structure of feeling.



their multiple selves and the fluidity of identity over time. Additionally, we will explore how embracing self-granularity can offer insights into identity formation, self-perception, and interpersonal interactions. Through this analysis, I aim to shed light on the significance of self-granularity in addressing the ambiguity surrounding the plural self within contemporary discourse.

Limitations are encountered in this thesis regarding the themes of self, memory, and meta-modernism, primarily due to time constraints and the need for selective exploration, given the depth and breadth of these subjects.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the emergence of meta-modernism subjects it to ongoing discussion and definition

### **Urgency & Contribution**

Through this examination of the intersection of metamodernism and changing modes of representation of self-conceptualisation, I aim to contribute nuanced insights into the dynamic (re)construction of the self by proposing an interpersonal and pluralistic self-perception. In this research, narrative construction reflects modernist ideals of intentional self-authorship, where individuals creatively shape personal stories to craft a unified self. Conversely, narrative deconstruction aligns with postmodern sensibilities, involving critical examination, challenging assumptions, and exploring alternative interpretations that highlight the fragmented and contingent self. (Frienacht 2020)

## **CHAPTER 1 - SELF ILLUSION, IMAGE, MEMORY AND CULTURE**

### **Self-Illusion and Representations**

The self is an illusion, an accumulation of representations stored and acted upon memory. Experience of oneself belongs to both individual memory and collective recollection. Therefor the self is partly contextualised and externalised in all your acquaintances. (Hood 2012) Representations of who you are, are stored within your memory and of the people that know you. One could visualise the concept of self as a video that is made of a collection of

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<sup>6</sup> The philosophical aspects of the research are limited to Bergson and Deleuze to avoid dispersion of the subject. furthermore, the concept of self-granularity is speculative mode of self-perception and is not scientifically researched. Nevertheless, self-granularity might be not just a new inquiry point as a storytelling device for artists, writer and filmmakers but also a new way of looking and writing about yourself.

images sequenced to convey meaning toward oneself and your social circle. As the Kuleshov Effect, we sequence images to make sense of the world and ourselves.<sup>7</sup> As images are made of pixels (or film grain), identity is formed through habits, physical or mental.<sup>8</sup> Repetition and differentiation, structures and sets apart the self from the world. Are you the image, or the collective pixels? Are you defined by the sequential set of characteristics portrayed in images, shaping who you are, or are you the very flow of those images itself?<sup>9</sup> Are you the totality of behaviours and thoughts?

### Bergson's perspective on perception

In *Matter and Memory*, philosopher Henri Bergson argues and differentiates memory into pure memory and habitual, while asserting that all matter is created through the aggregation of images (representations). These influence pure perception<sup>10</sup>. Aggregating images of both habitual and pure memory establishes a dynamic feedback loop, effectively bridging the gap between the present and the past, allowing for the capturing and encompassing of both current events and past occurrences. Experiences from the past inform how ones perceives in the present therefor acts with a new a shuffling of representation. (Bergson 2012) “Habits formed by repeated actions are amassed in the body; these do not represent the past; they merely act it.” (Bergson 2012) Bergson's perspective on the repetition of behaviour through habits, creates a prediction loop of the known self: the self is the cerebral memories of habit enacted into the present. Bergson's theory on how representations impact memory, and memory impacts how present creating a meaningful making process (a flow of experience - consciousness) or (*la durée*) duration. Consciousness is a temporal process of representations creating a meaning making process by selecting and comparing images. Eventually leading to a self-concept synthesis or narration of the self, as images are sequenced into a video. The previous images inform the meaning of the next image.

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7 The Kuleshov Effect is a filmmaking technique where the juxtaposition of different shots creates a new meaning or emotion does not present in the individual shots themselves. It demonstrates the power of film editing in shaping audience perception and emotion through the sequence of images.

8 'We are what we repeatedly do.' Aristoteles

9 The metaphor for the self as a video made from images, images made from pixels, is to illustrate that the self might not be real, but something made up out of concepts and sequences. In other words, a social reality or illusion.

10 the present moment.

In her book *How Emotions Are Made* (2017) Lisa Barrett proposes the theory of constructed emotions, suggesting that our experiences are the result of predictions based on interception and environmental context. According to this theory, habitual images serve as hypotheses for each prediction, which are continuously tested in every moment. It's possible that the self is formed through the accumulation of these predictions, with emotions serving as instances of these simulations. In this view, the self could be seen as a constructed concept, shaped by how we perceive and interact with the world. The experience of self is framed by your own subjective vocabulary.<sup>11</sup>

#### Malleable & Confabulated memory, Metaphor for memory

Experimental psychologist and philosopher Bruce Hood, who specialises in cognitive neuroscience, writes in his book *The Self Illusion*: “Our identity is the sum of our memories, but it turns out that memories are fluid, modified by context and sometimes confabulated. This means we cannot trust them, and our sense of self is compromised. Note how this leaves us with a glaring paradox – without a sense of self, memories have no meaning, and yet the self is a product of our memories.” (Hood 2012) Each time we recall an experience, our memory of it is influenced by our present emotions.<sup>12</sup> However, the act of remembering is also an act of reintegration, as it integrates the experience into our self-concept to form a cohesive whole. Emotional memories often become ingrained in our cerebral self-narrative, altering our inner narrative of ourselves, unlike mundane or routine experiences such as taking out the trash. (Barret 2017)

“Perception is less objective in fact than in theory because it includes a share of memory.” (Bergson 2012) Thus, the effect of experience determines the depth to which someone imbues meaning into our perception. Simultaneously, perception filters out stimuli from the past, which in turn influences our emotional response in the present.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, others mediate the effect of our experiences, thus co-creating or co-writing the meaning of those

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11 Or in other words, the self is a territory of memory, habit and the social body. As the framing metaphor, the self is described and mapped out towards a sensemaking entity. As a map, informs us of a territory, the self is informed by social differentiation. The accuracy of the map of self is questionable.

12 For example, recalling a 'happy' memory when feeling down may suddenly evoke a melancholic feeling.

13 For example, past experiences can colour our perception of present situations. Someone with a history of trauma involving dogs may interpret the presence of a friendly dog as threatening due to their past experiences, affecting their emotional response in the present.

experiences.<sup>14</sup> We create and possess not only our individual memory of ourselves but also a collective memory of our identity. (Hood 2012) Also, media technologies serve as tools and metaphors for memory, fundamentally alter the way we perceive and experience it. (Van Dijck 2007) Technologies mediate the meaning of representation. However, instead of being confined to a small group, they have become globalized and digitized. The self is mediated by memory, which reciprocally influences self-narration. The conventional view of the self as solely shaped by internal thoughts is flawed. The meaning of our thoughts is influenced by cultural mediation.<sup>15</sup> McLuhan, says that media is an extension of culture (McLuhan 2008), and his extension is a broader range of representations. Real memories and confabulated memories of media technologies now create an ambiguity of what is the real you or a fabricated. How can one integrate our memories and distinguish between the confabulated memories by the effects of media technologies and our true memories?<sup>16</sup>

### Symbiosis of culture and the self

The self doesn't exist separated from others, many contextualise the self or selves within culture, without context of other people, we don't form a self. (Hood 2012). According to the sociology theory of the looking glass self, we form our self-identity by imagining how others perceive us through a process of prediction. Synthesised in the one-liner by sociologist Charles Horton Cooley: "You are not what you think you are, you are not what others think you are, but you are what you think others think you are". Therefore, the psyche is inherently interpersonal, suggesting that the self emerges from the interplay between representations and relationships with others.<sup>17</sup> Even the notion of the person, ego or individual is the historical

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14 For instance, Interactions with people who share their own experiences or opinions about dogs can also influence our perception of the friendly dog, contributing to the collective interpretation of our past experiences.

15 For example, by language, cultural habits, intertextuality, irony and social power structures.

16 'To recall the successive stages of learning by heart is to appeal to an independent memory. It may be urged that these two recollections, that of the reading and that of the lesson, differ only as the less from the more, and that the images successively developed by each repetition overlie each other, so that the lesson once learned is but the composite image in which all readings are blended. And I quite agree that each of the successive readings differs from the preceding mainly in the fact that the lesson is better known' (Bergson 2012)

17 The self-concept is shaped by predicting how others perceive us and assigning meaning to objects, events, and actions, influenced by both individual and cultural factors. To coexist within culture, individuals must differentiate between themselves and others, with the psychological accumulation of differences contributing to the formation of the self. The process of defining or situating the self is influenced both by individual actions and by interactions with others. Therefore shaping the territorial and contextual boundaries of the self.

outcome of the increasing organisation, or terrorisation, of life' - (Colebrook 2002)<sup>18</sup>.”  
Indeed, we only have a ‘world’ by thinking what is different from though, what *is not* me.  
and we only have a sense of ‘I’ or self, in being other than, or different from, the world.”  
(Colebrook 2002, 7).<sup>19</sup> Our interactions with others form a feedback loop: their expectations  
influence their behaviour towards us, which in turn shapes our self-perception and  
subsequently impacts our demeanour, thus reinforcing their beliefs.<sup>20</sup> We discard a part of  
ourselves to be part of the group because being ostracised means death to a child. (Storr  
2018) Hence, we now have learned who we are by (mal)adaptive behaviour, forming a wrong  
idea on who we are. Or in other words, have formed a roll we need to enact. (Eger  
2020)<sup>21</sup> Additionally, our natural inclination to imitate one another aids in the transmission of  
behaviour and information, blurring the distinction between 'you' and 'I.' Our brain's mirror  
neurons allow us to replicate behaviours, integrating aspects of others' actions into our own  
repertoire. (Hood 2012) Through this process of mimicry, many internalize and interpret the  
teachings embedded within cultural practices. Information carries cultural significance, as  
memetics strongly influences how we perceive and gather images, blurring the line between  
personal memories and the collective cultural memory. Images encapsulate our perception of  
the world around us and eventually affect our self-narration. We are part of the images in  
which we perceive the world and ourselves.<sup>22</sup> Culture and memory territories the inner  
experience, eventually leading ‘I’ to distinguish from the world. The continual change in  
representation illustrates the fluidity of the self, showcasing its inherent variability by change  
in sensemaking. The images we encounter, stick into memory, in which one judges the next

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18 Attaining genuine self-awareness necessitates navigating the intricate interplay between social influences, aligning internal narratives with real-life encounters, and discerning between imagined constructs and tangible realities.

19 the theory is a structuralist approach on representation, the self is represented by the difference between oneself and the world. The self doesn't only define itself but is defined by its territory (the known self) that is different from it's surrounding, including other people. Thus, we all define one another.

20 Described as the Pygmalion effect, one can argue that personality is not merely inherent but enacted, subsequently internalized to adapt to social interactions. (Maté 2022) For instance, our personality is evidently influenced by the imperative of adapting to social dynamics, an essential component for survival. one faces the dilemma of prioritising authenticity or attachment, balancing the fear of abandonment akin to childhood with the compromise of sacrificing authenticity, thereby risking the erosion of our self-concept with each concession. (Maté 2022)

21 For example, in internal family systems therapy by Richard C. Schwartz you explore how your family has rolls to create harmony within the household.

22 As a loopback mechanism, our consciousness operates through predictions. Each moment serves as a hypothesis to test whether our accumulated experiences stored in memory align with the reality we're currently experiencing.

representation<sup>23</sup> The images sequence determines self-narration. If our self is shaped by how we perceive ourselves through the eyes of others then, what is the impact on our autobiographical narrative we tell ourselves?

## **CHAPTER 2 - EXPRESSIVE WRITING AUTO THEORY & PLURAL SELF**

The synthesis of a self-concept is now not only within smaller social communities and cultures, but in a digitised and globalised, free of borders. Therefore, a flood of unfamiliar representations may overwhelm us, causing a confusion of our identity by comparison. The following chapter delves into examining and grasping the consequences of images that shape and determine our perception of self, ultimately influencing our self-image and attitude toward it. Subsequently, we explore and comprehend representation through writing in autotheory and plural self. A thorough understanding of the origins of self-narration cultivates a heightened sense of autonomy, thereby leading to a more authentic way of life because choice to change emerges. (Eger 2020)

### **Not all memories are created equal.**

Memories inform us about our identity, and form personality out of the necessary character traits we need to survive. Traumas infest into the psyche as fungi slowly invading the deepest part of our emotional wellbeing and believe systems. Trauma can be big or small, and suffering from adverse experiences is not quantitatively or measurable, therefore we cannot compare traumas. “Trauma is not what happens to you but what happens inside you” (Maté 2022, 34) Therefore trauma isn't necessarily defined by a stressful event, but rather by how we internalize and interpret the event. Trauma rearranges our mental representation, thus altering our frame of reference. (Bergson 2012) The overarching narrative of the psyche is served by core beliefs, derived from a culmination of experiences and their meanings as we described. As author and psychiatrist Gabor Maté describes the moment trauma meets the present moment; “as kind of a physio-emotional time warp, preventing me from inhabiting the

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23 Deconstructing the individual experience of the self, reveals the fluid memory and interpretation, challenging the notion of a fixed self. This fluidity extends to representations of the self, prompting a post-structuralist perspective that questions the reliability of self-concept formation. In navigating the changing of representations, a sense of postmodern scepticism arises, challenging the trustworthiness of the narratives we construct about ourselves. How could we distinguish stories of authenticity from actions for attachment? How can we deconstruct the sense-making of our inner narration? and perhaps shift into a truly authentic part of the self. What if these representations of self are limiting or even in-prisoning to our freedom to be and act? Are images and expected behaviour limiting? How can we become aware of the personal stories and the origin of the images? Do we tell a limited story about oneself? and it's influenced by media?

present moment, is one of the imprints of trauma.”<sup>24</sup> Maté differentiates between two types of traumas: Trauma and trauma. The latter refers to the small, daily adversities we encounter, such as a parent getting angry at a child or failing to provide an attuned experience. These seemingly minor events often go unnoticed or are dismissed.<sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup> Trauma doesn't solely affect individuals but also influences the collective.<sup>27</sup> “Death ends a life, not a relationship” Mitch Albom (1998)<sup>28</sup> Likewise, we pass along trans-generational trauma embedded into our DNA and behaviour, thus the experiences of your grandparents could have effect on yourself concept. (Maté 2022) However, not just trans-generational trauma acts up in our behaviour today but also the nurturing and loving we have given and received in our life.

### **Expressive Writing, back to the authentic self:**

Expressive writing is a protocol where you write about a painful or even traumatic experience for 15-30 minutes, 4 times separated over multiple days. For this thesis, I have chosen to write about perhaps my biggest adverse childhood memory.<sup>29</sup> In the experiment during idle times in my day, I started to notice insight into how my emotional world (which is derived from the past) influences my reactions and behaviours in the present. Instead of falling into a default reaction, I can now question and reframe my thoughts and feelings in each situation. Expressive Writing is as an apparatus to sequence the logical consequences of stressful events and to create a bridge between the past and the now. As if I'm editing a film, expressive writing enables to reframe stressful events with an intentional awareness, choice

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24 Gabor Maté, writes about past trauma meets the present moment. He comes home from a working trip and his wife does not pick him up. His reaction to his wife is with a growl, he writes, "What is happening to me? Is this response of a mature adult in his eighth decade? Only superficially.... Most of me is in the grips of the distant past, near the beginnings of my life. This kind of physio-emotional time warp, preventing me from inhabiting the present moment, is one of the imprints of trauma, an underlying theme for many people in this culture. In fact, it is so deeply "underlying" that many of us don't know it's there" (Maté 2022)

25 Psycho-analyst Carl Jung proposed the concept of the shadow side of our personality, where disowned parts of ourselves reside. When we suppress these aspects, they confine us, preventing us from living authentically.

26 Almost everyone has these smaller daily traumas out of childhood, which signifies the communal aspect of trauma.

27 For instance, if you have a traumatic experience involving dogs, you're more likely to pass on a negative attitude towards dogs to your children.

28 Tuesday with Morrie is about a sociology professor with a chronic illness (ALS), who gives his last lecture on life. I included the quote and book to illustrate the transgenerational transmitting of relationships. For example, your grandparents raised your parents, your parents raised you, you are a part of these accumulated relationships.

29 The autumn holiday 2010 the day that my mother got a heart attack, Me and brothers and two sisters were home, my mother didn't feel well, after refusing us to call a doctor, she decided to lay on bed. My sister later wanted to check up, but door was jammed, and she heard a monstrous noise. after an eternity, the ambulance came, the following two weeks we hoped she would survive, she didn't. In the writing experiment, I revise the memory including the consequences on my life, and current reactions.

to deviate from automatic reactions presents. ultimately, giving autonomy to choose, and say “that was then, this is now”. (Eger 2022) My frame of reference is the boundary of self-conceptualisation.<sup>30</sup> How could we expand self-conceptualising by using expressive writing to all the people and experiences that had an impact on the formation of the self?

### **Modes of self-conception: Auto-theory & redefining the self as Plural**

Engaging in thoughtful introspection through documenting stressful events can be complemented by adopting a pluralistic and auto-theory approach to self-reflection in writing. First, Auto-theory is a literary and theoretical genre that combines elements of autobiography, philosophy, and critical theory. In the auto-theory, the author engages with personal experiences and uses them as a lens to explore broader cultural, social, or philosophical concepts. (Laubender 2020) Second, the plural self refers to the idea that an individual's sense of self or identity can be multifaceted or composed of different aspects, sometimes referred to as "sub-selves" or "personas." Writing in the plural form enables us to consider multiple perspectives and externalize parts of our inner narration and snippets of memory. Instead of being confined to identification with a singular form of self (our known self), we can tap into different personas and play with them as a puppet-master.<sup>31</sup> The manner in which we narrate defines a particular realm of the self. Embracing a pluralistic self, expands our exploration between reality and fiction, offering a greater sense of depth and understanding of who one is or could be. A comprehensive understanding of the origins of self-narration cultivates a heightened sense of autonomy within oneself. "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." (Viktor Frankl 2008) As choice becomes evident, authenticity arises from the articulation of an attuned experience of feeling. Perhaps we must face and reframe adverse experiences through expressive writing to take charge of our self-narration.

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<sup>30</sup> I frequently encounter profound feelings of abandonment, leading to anxiety. This experience resonates with Gabor Maté's concept of a physiological time warp, which also immobilizes me in the present moment, but ones aware I can let go despite the resistance to act in my old ways.

<sup>31</sup> Personas are representations of rolls that we must fulfil or performed personalities. The concept comes from Carl Jung.



## CHAPTER 3 - SELF-GRANULARITY INTERPERSONAL APPROACH TO SELF & METAMODERNISM

In the previous chapters we have found that the self is somewhat an illusion, that most of our beliefs stem from emotional adverse experiences and how we frame them. The self may not exist as a single instance but rather as a continuous process of sequential image changes, akin to how a video is composed of frames. How then do we discern the origin of each image within the flow of identity's frames? Self-granularity, akin to emotional granularity, involves the recognition and differentiation of various facets of the self, often derived from interpersonal memories. Much like emotional granularity helps in pinpointing specific emotions, self-granularity enables the identification of distinct aspects of our identity shaped by diverse influences such as received praise, trauma, and cultural background. Consequently, our comprehension of identity becomes a nonlinear and non-hierarchical process, reflecting the interplay between personal and cultural memory. Moreover, self-granularity prompts us to recognize our inherent tendency to mimic and question whether the behaviours we adopt are truly reflective of our desires or merely a result of societal expectations. This process encourages introspection and a deeper understanding of our authentic selves amidst societal influences. Self-granularity entails acknowledging our inherent tendency to mimic behaviours and questioning whether these imitations truly reflect our authentic desires or are merely societal constructs imposed upon us. It shifts our perspective from a focus on individual selves to a unified understanding of being, recognizing that we are all interconnected and part of a larger whole. Just as we are composed of stardust, our minds operate ecologically, intertwined with one another. This concept emphasizes the pursuit of wholeness within the shared ecosystem of minds, transcending hierarchical notions of self to embrace interconnectedness. Self-granularity embodies rhizomatic thinking, advocating for an interpersonal approach to identity. By conceptualizing the self as plural, it suggests a process akin to proto-synthesis within our experiences by seeking opposing opinions and perspectives, demonstrating that consistency in narrative is not needed because stories fall apart anyway.<sup>32</sup>(Freinacht 2020) Self-granularity widens the perspective, situating the self within a complex web of interpersonal experiences, stimuli, and interpretations,

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<sup>32</sup> Instead of harshly judging our own beliefs, embracing self-granularity allows for detachment and acknowledgment that our internal narratives may be shaped by misguided influences such as media, memories, and external influences.

exploring the origins of our impressions, desires, inner dialogues, and memories.<sup>33</sup> This skill becomes increasingly crucial as we learn to pinpoint the origins of our ideas, memories, inner struggles, and aspirations, enabling us to discern whether they authentically reflect our values or are products of environmental conditioning.

### **Rhizome thinking, metamoderism, & autopoiesis**

Hanzi Freinacht, a historian, political philosopher, author, and sociologist, underscores proto-synthesis as a pivotal component of metamodernism, seeking to address the prevalent fragmentation and polarization in contemporary society. According to Freinacht, proto-synthesis cultivates dialogue, empathy, and collaboration among diverse groups and individuals. Similarly, the concept of self-granularity resonates with these principles by recognizing the subjective and arbitrary boundaries separating oneself from others, promoting the view of the self as both an individual and a collective entity simultaneously.<sup>34</sup> (Freinacht 2020)

Drawing on Deleuze's rhizomatic thinking, we can apply this concept to the act of writing the self pluralistic between fiction and imagination. This approach results in deterritorialising our previous conceptualisation of self. Rhizomatic thinking, in this context, challenges the linear and fixed identity, offering a more fluid and interconnected understanding that aligns with the metamodern pursuit of synthesis through continuous processes of deconstruction and reconstruction. (Colebrook 2002) Freinacht underscores in discussions on metamodernism the importance of the mantra "Reconstruction must follow deconstruction." This iterative process involves continuously breaking down and rebuilding the boundaries between one's own identity, the identities of others, and the interplay between fiction and reality.

To delve into the concept of autopoiesis, we turn to Maturana and Varela's influential theory of life, particularly within cognitive science. They propose that life is characterized by a distinct boundary or membrane, where living entities maintain internal relationships and sustain themselves through interactions with their environment. Autopoiesis, they argue,

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33 Self-granularity adopts a biosocial approach towards understanding the multiplicity of the self, attributing the reasons behind our behaviour to logical responses shaped by our upbringing and ongoing social environment. This includes acknowledging the traumas experienced by both us and those around us, recognizing the mutual impact of our interactions. We are influenced by the experiences of others, and in turn, they are shaped by life's challenges.

34 Within the psyche, contradiction between opposing desires, competing needs and multitude of perspectives causes cognitive dissonance, Proto-synthesis is counterintuitive method of self-acceptance restoring psyche to cognitive congruity.

arises from the unique responses of living organisms to their environment, imbuing meaning into their existence. (Colebrook 2002) Within the framework of self-granularity, autopoiesis embodies the process of self-definition and self-awareness. Here, autopoiesis signifies the ongoing and dynamic creation and maintenance of one's identity, reflecting a perpetual state of adaptation and growth. This self-regulating system is not isolated but emerges from a complex interplay of various factors, including personal experiences, cultural influences, social dynamics, and internal reflections, all contributing to the continuous construction of our identity. The autopoietic nature inherent in self-granularity emphasizes that understanding and defining oneself is not a static or predetermined state, but rather a dynamic and self-sustaining process. This perspective highlights the ongoing negotiation and integration of diverse influences that contribute to the construction and reconstruction of our identity.

Rather than merely simulating the self based on representations from early life, media technologies serve as a rhizomatic influx of representations. Through embracing rhizomatic thinking and intertwining nonlinear narratives of experiences, the present, and the stories of others, we dissolve the boundaries between our current self and our potential self. This process allows for the construction and deconstruction of the self by altering the mode of perception towards images, redefining the self less as an individual entity and more as a unified being coexisting alongside others. Metamodernism, as a structure of feeling, encapsulates the ambiguity of images in self-construction without relinquishing hope, oscillating between post-modernism and modernism. Embracing identity as myth further enriches this exploration. (Freinacht 2020)

## CONCLUSION

Initially, Henri Bergson's perspective on matter and memory, conceptualizing consciousness as an evolving continuum of representations that blend the present with the past, thereby rendering the experience of the self perpetually evolving. Neuroscience confirms that the self is simulated out of a prediction loop of the constructed images that are mediated by memory and other people. Furthermore, the looking glass self-theory, suggest that we 'see' ourselves through the eyes of the people in our life. Media technologies expand the avenues through which individuals perceive themselves, cultivating a rhizomatic complexity of images in the construction of self-concept. More images mean more comparison and more perspectives to

see yourself. Or in other words, more narratives about the self can be formed by increasingly diversity of representations. Secondly, through expressive writing, individuals can assert agency over their conscious self-awareness. Ones aware of what the self is or is not, it can choose to identify with something or not. In addition, we can express and explore the self as plural instead of singular, to expend the boundaries of the self. The shift from postmodernism to metamodernism can cultivate a curious compassion and playful self-observation. Paired with Auto-theory, the plural-self positioned within media could function as a mode of research. If we can become aware, of the origin of representation of an image, memory or identification label, we can play with what is possible.

Addressing the concept of self-granularity is increasingly imperative given the rapid polarization of politics, potentially exacerbated by the echo chambers of the internet where algorithms continually reinforce existing beliefs. Understanding self-granularity offers several critical advantages. Firstly, it promotes a shift away from egocentrism towards empathy and inclusivity, enabling individuals to consider and appreciate diverse perspectives. Secondly, it aids in deciphering the scripting of experiences, including traumatic ones, and understanding the ontology of self-narration.<sup>35</sup> Thirdly, it emphasizes that one's sense of self is co-authored by the people in their lives, highlighting the interconnectedness of personal identity. Additionally, it allows for the savouring of memories, enriching one's relationship with the past. Finally, it encourages a reduction in judgmental attitudes, cultivating a more nuanced and compassionate understanding of oneself and others. Self-granularity contextualizes the self within a web of interpersonal experiences, stimuli, and sense-making, exploring impressions, desires, inner narration, and memories. Practicing self-granularity resembles a form of meditation. It's crucial to pinpoint the origins of ideas, memories, and inner dialogues, allowing us to discern their authenticity. Considering all factors, it is essential to acknowledge that achieving self-granularity entails a process involving introspective work, psychoeducation, and developing a meta-cognition. Therefor Self-granularity is an education of the senses with an interpersonal approach to representations of the self within memory. Personalised persona's act as a cognitive diffusion by externalising behaviour, origin of thought and identification. For instance, if one recalls a memory involving a group of people, with self-granularity we can take the perspective of multiple

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<sup>35</sup> Detaching and recognize that our narratives may stem from external influences like media, memory, family- and cultural-conditioning.

people, embody everyone-one's perspective of the moment and craft stories with a rhizome multi-perspective. Thus, playing with the irony of malleable memories and empathising with the people we have experienced it. Or in other words, taking authority over the ambiguity and uncertainty of the experience of selves.

### **Final thoughts**

The central inquiry guiding this thesis revolves around the following research question: How can one restructure the self by deconstructing and constructing personal narratives through representation, and perhaps expand or revise the concept of self? The self can indeed be both constructed and deconstructed with images. This process serves as a methodology for creating meaning within oneself. In the exploration of identity, the self is not lost but found in its pluralism. Embracing this multiplicity allows us to leverage self-granularity as a self-organising and regulating system that is capable of being impressed by images and expresses itself by encapsulating interpersonal memories by embracing this multiplicity, we harness self-granularity as a self-organizing and regulating system. It is receptive to impressions from images and manifests itself through the encapsulation of interpersonal memories, externalizing and diversifying the selves. By doing so, when one navigates the complexity of identity and adopt a detached, curious compassion towards both the self and others. This leads to the creation of a selfless self-concept that is interpersonal rather than egocentric.

Lastly, I aim to encourage the development of the concept of self-granularity and its potential role in metamodernism. By incorporating self-granularity into journaling practices, artistic research, politics and screenwriting, the skill becomes invaluable for crafting fresh narratives and perspectives. This integration brings existential ramifications, transforming our view of the self from hierarchical to unified or decentralised. Consequently, rumination becomes a vibrant exploration of the personas within oneself, free from judgment. Let us play with the granularity of *our psyche!*

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