

PERSONAL IDENTITY AND PRACTICAL CONCERNS

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ABSTRACT: Many philosophers have taken there to be an important relation between personal identity and several of our practical concerns (among them moral responsibility, compensation, and self-concern). I articulate four natural methodological assumptions made by those wanting to construct a theory of the relation between identity and practical concerns, and I point out powerful objections to each assumption, objections constituting serious methodological obstacles to the overall project. I then attempt to offer replies to each general objection in a way that leaves the project intact, albeit significantly changed. Perhaps the most important change stems from the recognition that the practical concerns motivating investigation into personal identity turn out to be not univocal, as is typically thought, such that each of the different practical concerns may actually be related to personal identity in very different ways.

1. Motivating Questions and Guiding Assumptions

People are typically drawn into exploration of the metaphysics of personal identity in one of two ways. On the one hand, they might be interested in the identity of objects generally, and then come to explore the identity of persons specifically, as just another species of object. On the other hand, they might be drawn to the metaphysics of personal identity because of its presumed relation to significant prudential and ethical practices and concerns. In this paper, I will focus exclusively on this latter route, and my intention will be to clear its path of several powerful methodological obstacles.

The practices and concerns at issue are referenced in one or more of the following *motivating questions*: (1) What justifies my anticipation of the experiences of the person who will be seated here, in this my office chair, say, tomorrow morning? (2) What justifies my special concern for the person who will be seated here, in this my office chair, say, tomorrow morning (a

concern specifically for the person who is *myself*, and one that seems different in kind from my concern for other people)?¹ (3) Am I justified in anticipating an afterlife, that is, is it possible for me to survive the death of my body, to exist in heaven, say, post-mortem (and what does survival consist in generally)? (4) What justifies someone's being legitimately held morally responsible only for *her own* actions? (5) What justifies someone's being legitimately compensated only for sacrifices *she herself* has undergone? (6) What justifies maximizing intrapersonally but not interpersonally (as many of us think)? (7) What justifies (and is the appropriate target and range of) various of my sentiments, for example, embarrassment, pride, and regret? (8) What are the justificatory conditions for third-person reidentification and its associated sentiments, for example, why is my happiness at seeing a certain person walk into my house after work appropriate? (9) What are the justificatory conditions for first-person reidentification, for example, why is it appropriate that when I look at certain photos on my mother's coffee table I feel nostalgic?²

In each case, the general form of an answer looks to be fairly straightforward: (1) I am justified in such anticipation because that person will be *me* (so it seems); (2) I am justified in such special concern because, again, that person will be me (so it seems); (3) survival consists in identity, and so I will be justified in anticipating postmortem survival only if it is possible for there to exist some person in heaven, say, who is identical to the earth-me, and not just some replica of me (so it seems); (4) moral responsibility conceptually requires personal identity, as

¹ The questions of anticipation and concern are rarely distinguished, most often run together as the psychological attitudes tracking survival (or something just as good as survival). See, for example, Schechtman 1996, p. 14, n. 16. As we will see, however, it is important to treat them separately, for the relations underlying and justifying anticipation, if any, may be quite different from the relations underlying and justifying special concern.

² Schechtman (1996, pp. 2, 14-15) begins her discussion as well by talking about the practical concerns that motivate inquiry into the metaphysics of personal identity, but she identifies only four such issues: (1) moral responsibility, (2) special self-interested concern, (3) compensation, and (4) survival. Her list is obviously incomplete, however, and while her focus on just these four features does provide the motivation for her to make the move to the 'characterization' criterion of personal identity I discuss under the heading of the second methodological problem, it also results in her improperly ignoring the ongoing importance of reidentification criteria of personal identity generally.

does (5) compensation (so it seems); (6) intrapersonal maximization involves only one person, whereas interpersonal maximization involves more than one person, so there is a disanalogy, based on the nonidentity of different people, between the intrapersonal and interpersonal cases that provides a legitimate blockade to the move from maximizing in one arena to maximizing in the other (so it seems); (7) I can be embarrassed, proud, and regretful only for my own actions (so it seems); (8) my happiness at seeing the person who walks in the door at 6 p.m. is appropriate only insofar as she is the same person I married, and she is also the same person who walked out of the door at 8:00 a.m. (so it seems); and (9) my nostalgia for that boy in the photo is appropriate only insofar as he was me (so it seems).

What looks to be called for by the motivating questions, then, is a pretty straightforward methodology: come up with the correct metaphysical criterion of personal identity, and then see what it implies for our practices. This method thus allows that there might be revisions in our practices depending on *which* criterion of personal identity turns out to be correct, although it holds fixed the view that our concerns and practices will depend on *some* criterion of identity or other. So if a physical criterion of identity were correct, it would be the case that my special anticipation and concern, for example, would justifiably track my physical continuers, whereas on a psychological criterion, those patterns of concern would justifiably track my psychological continuers.

To be more explicit, there are four *guiding assumptions* built into this approach: (1) the practices and concerns referenced in our motivating questions do indeed have a rational grounding; (2) this grounding comes from, or makes essential reference to, a metaphysical account of personal identity; (3) the relevant metaphysical account will consist in a reidentification criterion, that is, it will answer the question, ‘What makes X at t2 identical to Y at t1?’; and (4) given assumptions (1)-(3), whatever turns out to be the correct account of personal identity will fix our practices and concerns accordingly. Unfortunately, matters are not nearly so simple as this. In what follows, I will discuss challenges to each one of these guiding

assumptions, methodological roadblocks to the development of a theory of the relation between personal identity and our practical concerns. My hope is to show that each of these methodological challenges can be answered in a way that keeps the general project alive (albeit not without some serious compromises). I will discuss these challenges in reverse order. By the end I hope to have shown (a) how one might defend a certain sort of methodological approach to the investigation of personal identity, and (b) the new ways in which one will have to proceed in order to develop a plausible theory of the relation between identity and our practical concerns. While I will not develop that theory here, I hope that my ground-clearing work will at least make it, when it is attempted, a far less daunting task.

2. Methodological Problem #1: Relevance

If we begin with the thought that it is actually the identity relation *simpliciter* that underlies and justifies our person-related practices and concerns, it turns out that there are some possible criteria of personal identity that will fail to engage very well, if at all, with our motivating questions in the way we expect or want. For instance, suppose the correct criterion of personal identity turned out to be what Parfit calls a Featureless Cartesian View, according to which my identity were preserved by an immaterial substance, akin to a Cartesian ego, but without necessarily being attached to any particular psychology.³ I would be, in other words, a bare nonphysical ego, only contingently attached to the psychology I currently have. On this view, there could be no evidence whatsoever for my continuing persistence; I might, after all, be replaced by a numerically distinct ego at any point, but there would yet be no identifiable difference whatsoever – to me or to anyone else – between the new person and me. On this view, it becomes extraordinarily difficult to see why I should anticipate, or be specially concerned for, the person who has my bare ego in the future. After all, if that ego has no necessary attachment to any particular psychology or physiology, there is no reason to think that the person with my

³ See Parfit 1984, p. 228.

ego in the future will be either psychologically or physically continuous with me in any respect. So why should I anticipate or care about what happens to that bare ego? And similar worries go for the other practices and concerns in our network: why, for example, should the persistence of some bare ego justify moral responsibility or compensation, given that the carrier of that ego may have no recollection of his past deeds, or bear no psychological or physical connection whatsoever to the relevant past or future target of moral concern.⁴

Alternatively, and more controversially, it is not so clear that *physical* connections are relevant either. Suppose that the correct metaphysical theory of personal identity turns out to be ‘animalism’ (a.k.a. the Biological Criterion) – according to which X at t1 is identical to Y at t2 just in case X and Y are (stages of) the same biological animal – a view which implies that *I* used to be a fetus or that *I* might eventually be a human vegetable.⁵ If this were the right theory of identity, it would not be obvious how it would help us very much, if at all, with several of our motivating questions. For example, this criterion does not initially seem associated in the right way with moral responsibility or compensation for it to provide a helpful account of the practices surrounding them. After all, *I* may be identical to both a fetus and a human vegetable, on this view, but surely neither is eligible for assessments of responsibility, nor could my future vegetative self, say, be compensated for any sacrifices *I* may undergo. In addition, it makes very little sense for me to anticipate the experiences of that human vegetable, given that that individual will fail to have any experiences at all. Finally, suppose God whisks people to heaven the moment before their deaths (and replaces them on earth with exact duplicates), then preserves the original persons in heaven forever just as they were right before their earthly

⁴ This is a matter I discuss in more detail in Shoemaker 2002a, esp. pp. 146-9.

⁵ For the best contemporary articulation of the view, see Olson 1997. For a recent vigorous defence of the view, see DeGrazia 2005. Incidentally, Olson’s is a paradigm case of someone taking the first entrée into the metaphysics of personal identity I mentioned at the outset, namely, moving from the identity of objects to the identity of persons as one kind of object.

deaths.⁶ If I were in a vegetative state right before death when God whisked me away, I would certainly survive the ‘death’ of my body, if animalism were true, but that sort of survival would fail miserably to capture what I want or expect from the possibility of immortality, nor would it provide me with much, if any, reason for self-concern.

All of this may simply be too quick, however. In the case of moral responsibility, for instance, while it is obvious that some sort of psychological continuity is necessary for moral responsibility (between the person who performed the action and the person being held responsible for it), it is equally obvious that psychological continuity in persons as they are now constituted also depends on continuity of their biological life. And while it is true enough that my later vegetative self would not be eligible for moral responsibility, neither was my earliest *psychological* self, so it is not as if a psychological view of identity would have it any better on this score than a biological view (DeGrazia 2005, pp. 60-61). Similar remarks may go for anticipation: even if the possibility of anticipation requires some psychological continuity relation between anticipator and anticipatee, that continuity itself depends on continuity of biological life. Furthermore, while we might agree that I cannot anticipate the experiences of any individual that *has* no experiences, this fact does not give us a reason to favour psychology over biology. After all, if I am identical with my deeply sleeping, non-experiencing self (which any plausible *psychological* criterion of personal identity will have to explain), why could I not be identical with my future permanently ‘sleeping’, non-experiencing vegetable self?⁷ Finally, why could I not have a special concern for that vegetable self? While he may not have any experiences, he could still be the object of what would surely seem a rational sort of concern.

These are not terribly compelling replies, however. For one thing, while we might be able to agree that personal identity is a necessary condition for the practical concerns of moral

⁶ A possibility outlined in van Inwagen 1998.

⁷ I am grateful to Diane Jeske for pointing out this possible rejoinder.

responsibility, anticipation, and self-concern – in which case, given our current physical construction, biological continuity is indeed necessary for psychological continuity – we might also plausibly think that what we want from a criterion of identity is a *sufficient* condition for those concerns. In other words, we might think that my identity with some future person is what, in and of itself, renders it sensible for me to care about him, for me to anticipate his experiences (when he has them), and for him to be eligible for moral responsibility for my actions.⁸ But it does not seem to make sense to say that my future biological continuer is eligible for moral responsibility for my actions *solely in virtue* of his being my biological continuer. Furthermore, it does not seem to make sense for me to anticipate the experiences of, or have the relevant special sort of concern for, my biological continuer solely in virtue of his being that continuer. While these practical concerns may ultimately depend on biological continuity, such continuity nevertheless does not seem to constitute the *relevant* basis for them.

What does seem to constitute the relevant basis to properly address our motivating questions is psychological continuity. Indeed, this is a point that is more or less conceded by some of the main advocates of the Biological Criterion. As Olson puts it, '[T]he relations of practical concern that typically go along with our identity through time are closely connected with psychological continuity' (Olson 1997, p. 70). And David DeGrazia concurs:

The biological view is a theory of human identity, of our persistence conditions. As such, it is a metaphysical and conceptual theory. Strictly speaking, then, it is not responsible for tracking all of the concerns we tend to associate with identity. (DeGrazia 2005, p. 63)

⁸ This would certainly not be sufficient to render these attitudes rationally *required*, however. Instead, identity would merely serve to render those attitudes rationally permissible.

But if we are actually motivated to find an account of identity that *does* track such concerns, then what we want is in tension with guiding assumption (4), the claim that our practices and concerns are to be fixed by *whatever* criterion of personal identity turns out to be true. As a result, if either of the Featureless Cartesian or Biological views are true, we will be faced with a real problem: either (a) we maintain that our practices and concerns are still grounded in identity, in which case whether or not certain psychological relations are central to the correct criterion of identity is practically irrelevant, or (b) we insist that our concerns and practices still have their most relevant grounding in some sort of psychological relation, in which case the metaphysical truth about identity may be irrelevant to our motivating questions.

If we take option (a) (and so stick with guiding assumption (4) as it now stands), our enterprise itself loses its footing. In other words, if we allow that our practical concerns might be altogether divorced from psychological continuity (or at best might be only contingently related), then many of the questions that motivated our inquiry in the first place become unintelligible. For example, the question of anticipation makes no sense unless we assume that both the anticipator and the anticipatee are experiencers, creatures with a certain sort of psychology. How, then, could I (and *why* should I) anticipate the experiences of someone who may not even have any experiences (given the possible truth of the Biological Criterion)? In addition, my special egoistic concern for the welfare of certain future selves is premised on their having the capacity for welfare in the first place, something brainless fetuses, human vegetables, and featureless Cartesian egos, in and of themselves, do not seem to have. And these puzzles extend to several of the other motivating questions: eligibility for moral responsibility surely depends on being a psychological creature, pride and embarrassment – at least with respect to past actions – are sensibly triggered only by consideration of the actions of psychological creatures, and both forms of reidentification target psychological creatures. Abandoning psychological factors as necessary to our motivating questions would deny their coherence and point as questions, which itself would deny the coherence and point of many of the *practices* from which those questions are

derived. On the contrary, however, I take it to be obvious that there is a point and intelligibility to our motivating questions and practices. Those who agree will thus take option (b).⁹

If we do insist on maintaining the connection between our practical concerns and psychological relations, though, what do we do with possible criteria of personal identity like animalism and the Featureless Cartesian view? We have three options. First, we might try to deny the truth of both views on purely metaphysical grounds. But while this might be possible with animalism (perhaps through a vigorous defence of four-dimensionalism, which denies that persons are ‘wholly present’ in the way many animalists assume), it does not seem possible with the Featureless Cartesian view, insofar as there just is no way to demonstrate the non-existence of its immaterial, psychologically featureless substances – either evidentially or logically – nor is there a way to show that they do not constitute the essential nature of persons. At the very least, taking this option would shift a very difficult burden onto our shoulders. Second, then, we might still hold on to the connection between identity and psychological relations by *stipulating* that connection as a condition on eligible theories of identity in the first place. Third, and relatedly, we might allow that the true metaphysical criterion of personal identity may not necessarily require the desired psychological component, and then as a result focus entirely on a different type of metaphysical identity (or unity) *with respect to our practical concerns*.¹⁰

These last two are intriguing and promising options. The true criterion of personal identity might be lost or ignored here, but that may actually be a red herring. After all, our motivating questions look to be focused on entities with a developed and persisting psychology, entities who are doers, anticipators, carers, and the like, and what this suggests is that our questions may really be about the ongoing identity of *agents*, and not necessarily about *personal*

⁹ Although in the next section I will note a significant way in which animalism might come back into the picture.

¹⁰ I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising the possibility of this last option. In addition, DeGrazia (2005, Chs. 2-3) *might* be interpreted as making just this move, insofar as he embraces both animalism *and* narrative identity, at different times and to different ends, in his account of the relation between identity and bioethics.

identity as it has been taken to be.¹¹ What this should also remind us of is that, when our questions motivate us into metaphysical investigation, we are not after the best freestanding metaphysical theory on which a justification of our practical concerns is to rest, nor are we after a freestanding theory of our practical concerns that will then serve to constrain our theories of personal identity. Instead, we are looking for a theory of the *relation* between identity and our practical concerns, an account of how best to bring certain metaphysical considerations about identity to bear on our concerns and commitments, *and vice versa*. And what we have just seen is one way in which this new methodological approach might proceed. We start with certain practical questions, which spur us to list several possible metaphysical criteria of identity, some of which then reveal tensions in our practical presuppositions, ultimately leading us to set them aside in favour of a more narrowly tailored list of contenders. Of course, to proceed in this way, we also need to revisit and revise the fourth of our guiding assumptions: instead of viewing our practices and concerns as dependent on whatever criterion of personal identity is correct, we can maintain instead that they depend on whatever criterion of the identity of *agents* is correct, that is, we can restrict our investigation to metaphysical approaches to identity in which psychological relations play a central role. But again, matters are not nearly so simple.

3. Methodological Problem #2: Extremism

The problem here begins when we consider the famous fission thought experiment, where each one of my (functional duplicate) brain hemispheres is transplanted into the empty cranium of my identical triplet brothers, producing two people who are fully psychologically continuous with me.¹² What happens to me in this case? Since I cannot survive as both people (two does not equal one), and since there is no non-arbitrary reason for why I would survive as

¹¹ Consider once again Olson (1997, Ch. 2), who maintains that the issue of personal identity is really about the identity of *individuals* (animals) who are persons only during certain stretches of their lives. We will, however, revisit this claim when animalism resurfaces in the next section.

¹² See Parfit's 'My Division', as well as a discussion of the important conditions leading up to it, in Parfit 1984, pp. 253-5.

one and not the other (my relation to both is exactly similar), I do not survive fission.¹³ But insofar as my intrinsic relation to each brother contains everything that matters to me in ordinary survival, the fact that my *identity* has not been preserved must not matter very much, if at all. Identity is a one-one relation. In other words, regardless of what identity consists in (e.g. mental continuity, physical continuity, or something else), it must obtain uniquely between X at t1 and Y at t2 in order for X to be identical to Y. The fission case thus prizes apart identity from psychological continuity. If identity consists in psychological continuity obtaining uniquely between temporally separated persons (or person-stages), then when psychological continuity obtains one-many, as it does in the fission case, identity itself cannot obtain. But so what? If everything but uniqueness obtains between me and each of the fission products, and virtually everything of importance in ordinary survival has been preserved, then the loss of uniqueness (and thus identity) cannot be (very) important.¹⁴ Instead, what matters about ordinary survival must be psychological continuity. And if this is what matters in ordinary survival, it must also be what matters for our practices and patterns of concern generally.

Notice, however, that we have made two distinct moves here. First, we have divorced identity from psychological continuity in light of the fission case. Second, we have assigned custody of our practical concerns to psychological continuity, not identity. Neither move may yet be warranted, however. With regard to the first move, there is another option in the fission case, namely, to adopt a four-dimensionalist ontology and then claim that, roughly, tracing their trajectories across space-time reveals two persons who, prior to the fission, had completely

¹³ This is the much more succinct (and slightly altered) reasoning about the case presented in Parfit 2001, p. 42.

¹⁴ Given the very real possibility of all sorts of *practical* problems, of course – who goes home to my wife, who gets access to my bank account, etc. – we need to specify the challenge here very carefully. Stipulate, then, that the prospects of each fission product are just as good as my prospects would have been without fission. With that stipulation, it seems clear that what happens to me in fission is just as good as in ordinary survival. For clarification of the conditions of the case, see Parfit 1986, p. 863. For a specification of practical problems with fission in the absence of the stipulation, see Wolf 1986, esp. pp. 714-16.

overlapping spatial parts.¹⁵ I will not go into the details here (and there are several variations of four-dimensionalism that may be applicable), only because such moves are invariably motivated in the first place by a desire to preserve the marriage between identity and psychological continuity for the sake of our practical concerns. That is, maintaining that there were two persons in existence all along (or, more precisely, that there were the temporal parts of two persons who wholly overlapped pre-fission but whose space-time trajectories separated post-fission) allows the four-dimensionalist to preserve the assumed relationship between our practical concerns and a psychological criterion of identity.¹⁶ But it is precisely this assumption that comes under attack in the second move, so it seems the four-dimensionalist is just launching a preemptive strike in anticipation of that attack. Our focus, then, should be on what that attack consists in.

Parfit (1984, p. 307ff) labels its source ‘The Extreme Claim’, and it is actually an objection first offered against Locke’s view of personal identity by both Butler (1736) and Reid (1785). The argument – what I will call the *Extremism Argument* – goes as follows:

1. The only relation that can ground the practices and patterns of concern articulated in our motivating questions is the (personal) identity relation.
 2. Psychological continuity is not (and could not constitute) the (personal) identity relation.
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3. Thus, psychological continuity cannot ground the practices and patterns of concern articulated in our motivating questions.¹⁷

¹⁵ See, for example, Lewis 1976; Lewis 1983; Noonan 1989, pp. 109-13, 237-9; and Sider 2001, pp. 144ff.

¹⁶ See, for example, Sider 2001, pp. 200-204.

¹⁷ This is a slight variation on both Parfit’s construal of the extreme claim as well as Schechtman’s. For the former, see Parfit 1984, Ch. 14; for the latter, see Schechtman 1996, Ch. 3.

The thinking behind the argument seems rather natural: the only thing that could ground my anticipation of some future pain experience, say, or my special concern for such an experiencer, is if that future pain-experiencer will be *me*; such anticipation or concern seems ungrounded if the experiencer will merely be my psychological continuant, someone with memories of my life and so forth. Or as Swinburne puts it, ‘in itself surely such [psychological] continuity has no value’ (Swinburne 1973-1974, p. 276). And this sort of thought seems to hold across the board with regard to our motivating questions: compensation and moral responsibility, to take just two examples, seem to require that the person receiving a later benefit or punishment for some earlier person’s burdens or crimes be identical to that earlier person, and not (just) the inheritor of that person’s psychology.

The hope we had after discussing the first methodological problem was that psychological continuity could somehow constitute a viable criterion of identity. The Extremism Argument undercuts this hope, however, and one might argue for the crucial second premise in one of two ways. First, psychological continuity fails to meet certain logical restrictions of identity: when it is part of the psychological *criterion* of identity, it must be coupled with a no-branching clause, and that is because on its own it could conceivably hold one-many, so it could not (on its own) meet the ‘one-one’ condition of the identity relation. Second, and more deeply, psychological continuity is a relation between events (or bundles of events) that are simply not themselves identical; for example, my memory of some experience just is not identical to that experience. What psychological continuity can do, according to defenders of psychological criteria, is serve to *unite* two person stages, or time slices, which themselves are not identical, as distinct parts *of* the same person, but then psychological continuity is a unity relation, not an identity relation. And if psychological continuity cannot deliver actual *identity*, it cannot ground our practical concerns.

There are three possible replies to the Extremism Argument: (a) we might accept the conclusion, which would force us to deny our newly-minted response to the first methodological

problem, namely that our practices and concerns seem to depend on facts about psychological continuity; (b) we might deny the first premise, which would force us to deny the initially plausible guiding assumption (2), namely, that personal identity grounds the relevant practices and concerns; or (c) we might deny the second premise, which would force us to deny one of two foundational assumptions about the nature of the personal identity relation itself: (i) it holds one-one; and (ii) it is indeed an *identity* relation (rather than a unity relation, say).

I should note first that, while this problem may seem to be a substantive difficulty in the personal identity debate, it is actually still methodological, a problem about determining the best method for constructing a theory of the *relation* between personal identity and practical concerns. What the Extremism Argument produces, after all, is a three-way tension, between two guiding assumptions regarding our practical concerns and at least one foundational assumption about the nature of the identity relation generally. There are, then, a number of methodological questions to address. In the face of such tension, which assumptions carry more weight? Which, if any, are expendable? Does one or the other side of the relation always constrain the other, or will there be times in the process when each side will have to concede to the other? And if the latter, what are the criteria for determining when that is the case and which side must concede? In what follows, I try to map out the options and offer a few suggestions for proceeding.

First, could we accept the conclusion (response (a)), admitting that psychological continuity does not ground our practices and concerns? This would be to reinstitute the original version of guiding assumption (4), which renders explicit the methodological stance that our motivating questions depend on, and so presuppose, the identity relation – no matter what it consists in – and that our project is thus to find the relation between that relation (and that relation only) and our practical concerns, such that where identity is absent, so too is the rational grounding for our practical concerns. And such a view might seem to follow from our discussion of the first methodological problem: our best hope of answering the motivating questions, it seemed, was to focus solely on criteria of identity that consist in facts about psychological

continuity. But if it turns out that facts about psychological continuity *cannot* constitute a coherent criterion of identity (in light of the possibility of fission, say, along with other worries), then perhaps we have to abandon the hope that we can answer our motivating questions altogether. In other words, the first two guiding assumptions of our enterprise are that our practices and concerns *are* rationally grounded, and they are grounded in some way by metaphysical considerations about personal identity. But what the Extremism Argument forces on us is the distinct possibility that, if our practices and concerns are not grounded relative to the metaphysics of personal *identity* itself, then they are not grounded *at all*. Of course, the implications of this view would be terribly revisionary: no one could ever be justifiably held morally responsible, no one could ever be justifiably compensated for burdens undergone in the past, anticipating the experiences of some future person would be without rational grounds, as would special concern, and so forth. This option has some deeply counterintuitive implications, then.¹⁸

Let us turn then to response (c.i). Denying the one-one nature of personal identity is unpromising for two general reasons. First, the identity relation clearly holds only one-one in all of its other applications. It would thus be arbitrary and implausible to hold that it could hold one-many just for persons (or agents). Further, it cannot just be the possibility of *fission* that motivates a change in the nature of the identity relation either, for consideration of fission in amoebae produces no such motivation. The second general reason it would be unpromising to deny identity's one-one nature is that doing so would commit us to a chain reaction of denials of *other* aspects of both the identity relation and other conceptual commitments we currently take for granted. Suppose, after all, that we allow that identity holds one-many in the fission case, such that both of the fission products are identical to me. Another necessary feature of identity (so we think) is transitivity, which means both products would have to be identical to each other,

¹⁸ I will return to explore an independent argument for this possibility in the final section, however.

that is, *they would both be one and the same person*. Of course, describing it this way – they would *both* (two) have to be *the same person* (one) – perhaps begs the question, but how else are we to describe it, given our other conceptual commitments about persons and how to count them? So if we deny identity’s one-one nature, we either have to abandon identity’s transitive nature as well (which would be arbitrary and implausible for the same reasons as above) or we have to abandon our conceptual commitments regarding the counting and boundaries of persons.¹⁹ Either way, we produce significant negative consequences.

What of response (c.ii), then, denying the second premise of the Extremism Argument by asserting that personal identity is really about something other than identity, perhaps being about unity instead? If we are to take our language on the matter seriously, this is just false: identity is not unity. Nevertheless, one might say that, while the various person-stages unified by psychological continuity are not identical to one another, they are still stages of one and the same person, someone *self*-identical throughout his life, so it turns out that the facts of personal (self-) identity can consist in facts about the unity relations for a person’s various distinct temporal parts.²⁰ Unfortunately, one may not be able to respond this way in the context of the Extremism Argument without equivocation, for it is not at all clear that this is the sense of ‘identity’ being invoked in the first premise. After all, it seems that what grounds my anticipation of the experiences of the person who will be sitting here tomorrow morning is that *he* will be *me*, not that that he and I will be different *stages* in the life of one person. Furthermore, I am not a stage; I am a person!²¹

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the problems for our concept of a person resulting from the thought that both products of fission are me, see Parfit 1984, pp. 256-8.

²⁰ See also Noonan 1989, p. 143, and Schechtman 1996, pp. 56-7.

²¹ For other objections to this sort of reply to the Extremism Argument, see Schechtman 1996, pp. 55-66.

There is, though, a way to accommodate these objections by taking an alternative angle on response (c.ii).²² Suppose that we were to clone a tree and then plant several of the clones side by side. It would make sense for us to say of the individuals in the grouping that, while each is a different tree, they are all *the same plant*. Similarly, then, we might say of the products of fission that, while each survivor is a different human being – a different human animal – they are both *the same person*. This would be to deny that ‘person’ must necessarily be deployed as a sortal concept, and it might also allow animalism back into the mix. In other words, we could allow that the phrase ‘personal identity relation’ is ambiguous: it could refer to the relation(s) rendering X at t1 *the same individual as* Y at t2, but it also could refer to the relation(s) rendering X at t1 *psychologically continuous with* Y at t2. Consequently, then, it might be true that, under the first interpretation, the products of fission are different individuals – different animals – from the fission precursor (on the Biological Criterion), but it might also be true that, under the second interpretation, the products of fission are still one and the same person – insofar as they are both psychological continuants of – the fission precursor. The second premise of the Extremism Argument would thus be false under this second interpretation, and if this were also the interpretation of ‘personal identity relation’ referred to in the first premise (so as to avoid equivocation), then a psychological continuity criterion of personal identity could still serve to ground the practices and patterns of concern articulated in our motivating questions.

Note the difference between this move and the previous attempts to deny the second premise. They presupposed a univocal understanding of the personal identity relation, and it was thought that *that* relation had to hold one-one, and it also was not about unity. What we are now exploring, though, is the possibility that the phrase is open to multiple interpretations, perhaps one that is ‘purely’ metaphysical, such that the restrictions of ordinary metaphysical (and

²² I am grateful to an anonymous referee for this suggestion.

mathematical) identity apply, and then perhaps one that is 'subjective', say, such that these restrictions do not necessarily apply.²³ Is this a plausible move, then?

As it turns out, one of my primary recommendations will be to urge this kind of pluralistic approach to the general issue of persons and practices, but such a move is not so terribly plausible in the particular case of fission, primarily because it does not yield the sort of answer that is very amenable to our motivating questions. What we were after, remember, in setting aside animalism and the Featureless Cartesian View, was an account of the identity of *agents*, for this is the sort of identity that was most relevant to our motivating questions. But what is patently clear in the case of fission is that the survivors are *two* agents, so even if we were to adopt a 'subjective' sense of identity in which only one *person* survived, we would have lost a way to account for our ordinary patterns of concern and practices that would instead track the distinct agents produced by fission. For example, if, post-fission, one agent were to do something immoral, we would want to blame him and not the other fission product. But if it is the identity of *persons*, in the subjective sense sketched above, that grounds attributions of responsibility, then we would also be warranted, if not rationally obligated, to blame *both* fission products, insofar as both agents would constitute the same person. This could not be right, however. Appealing to the possible ambiguity of 'personal identity relation', then, will not yet help us avoid the second premise of the Extremism Argument.

What, then, about option (b), denying the first premise of the Extremism Argument by holding that identity is not what grounds our practical concerns? This is the option Parfit has put most famously as 'identity is not what matters.'²⁴ The main problem comes from what seem to us to be both the conceptual and the practical requirements of our motivating questions.

²³ This distinction may track the distinction Parfit ran early on (but later abandoned) between 'identity in its logic' and 'identity in its nature'. See Parfit 1973, pp. 137-69, esp. pp. 137-40.

²⁴ See, for example, Parfit 1984, p. 255.

Schechtman, for example, has all her other motivating questions resting on the possibility of correct anticipation, which presupposes identity:

In order to believe *I* will survive, I must believe that I can correctly anticipate future experiences; self-interested concern requires that I expect to feel the experiences about which I am concerned; compensation requires that I be able to reasonably expect to experience the compensatory rewards; and for moral responsibility to make sense, when I take an action I must expect that I will be the one who experiences its consequences. (Schechtman 1996, pp. 62-63)

How can we say, then, that identity is unimportant to these practical concerns if it is, ultimately, *conceptually* presupposed by them?

One plausible response to this worry, though (and a favourite of mine in the past), is to counsel that we *switch* the justification for our patterns of concern to psychological continuity. In other words, rather than accepting the startlingly depressing conclusion of the Extremism Argument that our practices and concerns are ungrounded, which actually requires that we abandon *all* of our guiding assumptions, we might simply hold fast as our fundamental guiding principle that they *are* grounded, seemingly by facts about psychology (in light of our response to the first methodological problem), and in the process abandon – or simply revise – just two of our guiding assumptions: (2) that they are grounded in virtue of some criterion of personal identity; and (3) the relevant grounding criterion is a reidentification criterion (of personal identity). Indeed, it is hard to believe that our practices here are ungrounded full stop, that no attributions of moral responsibility are appropriate, that no one deserves compensation, that it is no more legitimate for me to have special concern for my future self than for a stranger, and so forth. What seems far more plausible (and inviting) is that we were just wrong about their grounding source. Making this switch thus allows us to maintain the rational grounding of our

practices while also allowing for the possibility of revisions of those practices, when psychological continuity detours from where identity would have gone. This is the Moderate Claim.²⁵

But can psychological continuity really fill the shoes of identity when it comes to our practical concerns? It actually has a significant worry to overcome, for psychological causal dependence and/or similarity between person-stages (which is all psychological continuity essentially amounts to) seems as if it cannot generate anything like the reasons I take myself to have in anticipating some future experience. For example, when I anticipate being held morally responsible for some action I am thinking about performing, I do not merely envision that someone who has just been causally influenced by me, or that someone who is just a lot like me, will be blamed. Instead, when I consider and *reconsider* performing some action that could hurt someone, I do so, at least in part, because *I* will be the one blamed. Revising our reasons for anticipation in such cases renders them too weak for the practice, it seems: if it will *not* be me that gets blamed, it is difficult to make sense of how I could be morally responsible for my current action at all (and thus why I should refrain).

There are, therefore, drawbacks to denying either of the premises of the Extremism Argument, pushing us into a methodological quandary. It seemed that the only hope we had to provide a metaphysical grounding for our practices that preserved our guiding assumptions was by means of a psychological continuity-based theory of personal identity, but now we find that there is no such theory that can do so. None of our choices in response is terribly palatable: first, we might abandon the psychological continuity approach altogether, which effectively eliminates our chances of guaranteeing ourselves a criterion of identity relevant to our motivating questions; second, we might abandon the thought that identity is what matters, clinging instead to psychological continuity, in which case we give up (or at least revise) two of our guiding

²⁵ Parfit (1984, p. 311) introduced the term. It is also a move my past self repeatedly embraced, labeling the resulting view 'Moderate Reductionism'. See, for example, Shoemaker 1999 and 2002b.

assumptions and also seem to take on an implausible account of reasons for self-interested action; third, we might abandon our practices as ungrounded, which renders senseless what seems a perfectly sensible inquiry by undermining *all* of our guiding assumptions.

Schechtman, however, offers another option: we might abandon only our third guiding assumption. The reason she suggests that we cannot get a coherent criterion of identity to address our motivating questions is that we have restricted what counts as a contender to *reidentification* criteria, that is, criteria of identity attempting to answer the question, ‘What makes X at t1 the same person as Y at t2?’ There is an alternative type of personal identity criterion, however, one Schechtman says answers to the *characterization* question: ‘What makes some action, feature, or psychological trait that of a given person?’ (Schechtman 1996, p. 73). If we think of the question of personal identity along these lines, we can allegedly address all of our motivating questions in a satisfactory way, and Schechtman tries to show how by discussion of what she calls the constitution of selves.

The substantive content of this view is not relevant for our purposes. What is relevant is the possibility of a different sort of criterion of personal identity altogether, one that will address our motivating questions while preserving the desired reference to agents and psychology, a methodological godsend. The question is whether or not this alternative truly offers the type of answer we are looking for. Now there is some reason to believe that Schechtman may be onto something important. Consider moral responsibility. When we ask about the legitimacy of holding X responsible for the action (A) of Y, it may seem at first as if we are looking to find out (a) if X and Y are identical persons, and (b) what it is that makes them identical. But Schechtman suggests that this is too indirect: instead of seeing whether or not X is identical to the person to whom A is attributed, what we really want to know is just whether or not A is *properly attributable to X* – whether or not A was one of X’s actions – and what it is that makes that the case. This would thus resurrect the strong link we were allegedly looking for between identity and responsibility (and perhaps our theory of the relation between identity and practical concerns

generally): one is responsible only for *one's own* actions (Schechtman 1996, pp. 90-1). And there is surely something right about this.

But what this result calls for, if anything, is for us to be far clearer than we have been about just what we *are* looking for in our motivating questions. Are we indeed looking for what constitutes the relation between persons and actions (and traits), or are we looking for what constitutes the relation between persons (or person-stages)? As it turns out, some of our motivating questions are about the former, whereas some are still about the latter. Let us grant, for example, that a characterization criterion is most appropriate for the question of moral responsibility. It also seems initially quite appropriate for compensation: what is relevant to justifying the distribution of some benefit to X compensating for some past burden is whether or not that was X's burden, so the right question to ask of some putative compensee is not 'Are you identical to the person who underwent that burden in the past?' but rather 'Was that past burden *yours*?' In addition, it seems most appropriate for our questions about the range of our sentiments: embarrassment, pride, and regret are all targeted to some past actions or traits, and what seems to justify them is the degree of 'mineness' attached to the various targets.²⁶

Schechtman further maintains, however, that a characterization criterion is what is called for by both the question of self-concern and the question of survival generally, but here we might be less inclined to agree. According to her, self-concern is, for one thing, a concern about the *character* of any future states we will have: will they be pleasurable or painful, for instance? In addition, for me to be self-concerned is for me to be concerned about the fulfilment of *my* desires and goals, and the degree of my self-concern ought to correspond to the degree to which the relevant desires and goals are attributable to me (Schechtman 1996, p. 85). With respect to survival, she maintains that what we want is an account of *psychological* survival, of course, and

²⁶ The question of the appropriate range of our sentiments is not included as one of Schechtman's motivating questions, however.

the degree to which this obtains is determined by the degree to which various actions and psychological traits are one's own (Schechtman 1996, pp. 86-9).

Is this what we have in mind with our questions about self-concern and survival, however? Not quite. Consider first self-concern. The key to the issue of self-concern, at least with respect to its status as an identity-related motivating question, is that it refers, at least in part, to a puzzle about asymmetry we want addressed, namely, why am I justified in having a special concern for myself (both now and in the future) that is seemingly distinct in kind *from my concern for other people*?²⁷ The emphasis here is on the nonidentity between me and other people (and so in this way the question is related to our motivating question (6), on the disanalogy between intrapersonal and interpersonal maximization). The question thus assumes that I have a special sort of concern for some future *person* I expect to be *me* – for example, the person who will be seated here in my office chair tomorrow morning, as opposed to the person who will be seated in my neighbor's office chair tomorrow – and so if it is indeed the fact of identity that justifies that special concern, and the fact of nonidentity that explains (and perhaps justifies) a *lack* of special concern, it is obviously the identity of *persons* (or person-stages) that matters here. In other words, the target of my special concern is a person, not some person's traits: I have a nonderivative concern for the welfare of the person I expect to be, and any concern I have for the character of some of my future states is merely parasitic on that more direct and general concern. In other words, I care about the various pleasures, pains, and desire-satisfactions I will undergo in the future only insofar as it affects the well-being of that person for whom I have special concern. After all, the welfare of some person is not wholly captured by the nature of psychological states attributable to him, as the example of the secretly cuckolded

²⁷ Susan Wolf actually thinks the emphasis of self-concern with respect to personal identity is not on this asymmetry, but is rather on the question, 'Why care especially about the *person* that is oneself, as opposed to some other psychophysical entity of which one's present consciousness is a part?' (Wolf 1986, p. 706). This is rather puzzling, though, given that the asymmetry worry is just as much a question of personal identity – in this case *non*-identity – as is the persons-vs.-psychophysical-entities worry. At any rate, *either* emphasis makes my point here, namely, that these are questions presupposing the reidentification sense of identity, not the characterization sense.

but blissfully ignorant husband suggests. Thus, the question of my future-oriented special concern is less about whether or not some future psychological traits or actions will be mine than it is about whether or not some future psychological entity will be *me*. But this question then appeals to the reidentification sense of personal identity.

As for survival generally, it is also not clear that Schechtman's is the proper interpretation. As formulated at the beginning as our third motivating question, the question is about the possibility of survival in the afterlife. Here I simply want to know whether or not it is possible for me to be alive after the death of my body: can I make it from 'here' to 'there'? This way of putting it again suggests that what is called for is a criterion of identity in the reidentification sense – and so this way of putting it would distinguish it from our first motivating question, about the justification for *anticipation* – but here we must tread carefully. After all, it may be that what I am indeed curious about is just whether or not it makes sense for me to *anticipate* the afterlife, in which case I might be said simply to be wondering if it makes sense for me to expect any future experiences after my physical death to be *mine*, and this seems to be a form of the characterization sense of identity. And when we move to the question of survival generally, the same ambiguity remains. Suppose I am terribly ill and so wonder if I will survive the night. It may be, on the one hand, that I am wondering if I will still be alive in the morning, wondering if there will be somebody waking up in the morning who is me – this is the reidentification sense of the question. On the other hand, it may be that I am wondering whether or not it makes sense for me to expect any future experiences in the morning to be mine – this is the characterization sense of the question. Or perhaps this is a false dichotomy; perhaps I am wondering about *both* senses of the question.

At any rate, even if we grant to Schechtman that the general question of survival is really a characterization question, there are certainly other of our motivating questions that fall squarely into the reidentification camp. To take the two most obvious examples, questions (8) and (9) are explicitly about reidentification, the former being about the third-person form, the latter being

about the first-person form. So, for example, when I consider why my smiling warmly at the person who greets me in the evening is rationally warranted, I am (in part, anyway) considering whether this is the same person I kissed goodbye in the morning. I am thus not asking about whether the traits or actions of this person are *attributable* to her in any sense. Further, when I point to the picture of a child on my mother's coffee table and exclaim, 'I had forgotten how cute I was!' I am obviously identifying – recognizing – some past person as me, but this is clearly about identifying the person I am with the person I was, not about identifying some past actions or traits as mine, and I may then wonder what it is that justifies such an exclamation.²⁸

What this suggests, of course, is that the practical concerns tapped into by our motivating questions are not univocal, for some of them seem to call for a characterization criterion while others seem to call for a reidentification criterion. And this fact in turn suggests a way to resolve our second methodological problem. Whereas our original guiding assumption (3) was that the relevant grounding criterion of identity was going to be a reidentification criterion, we can now revise that assumption as follows: *the relevant grounding criterion of personal identity is either a reidentification or a characterization criterion, depending on the specific motivating question asked*. Now this move fragments the inquiry slightly, but it does so in a way that is, I think, beneficial to the overall enterprise. For one thing, it turns out to have been false or quite misleading to have thought that all of our person-related practices and concerns were unified, such that one particular type of (psychological) criterion of identity would adequately address them all. Our new view is simply more accurate, reflecting the disunity of the motivating questions. We are moved to explore the metaphysics of personal identity for sometimes very different reasons, and our mistake was in thinking that, because our questions all pointed us in

²⁸ There are worries as well about the general adequacy of the characterization criterion. For example, it is very unclear what it would or could say with respect to the standard identity puzzles, e.g., fission, fusion, and branch-line teletransportation. (On the question of fission, see e.g. Reid 1997). I set these aside here, though, given that they are substantive worries about a specific characterization criterion of personal identity, rather than the more formal worries about methodology I have been emphasizing.

the direction of personal identity, they had to be unified in calling for the same *type* of criterion of personal identity.

In addition, admitting this sort of disunity among the set of practical concerns opens up new and interesting avenues of research. First, we need to know more about the various practices and concerns: what in fact are we asking for in each individual case? For example, what precisely *is* self-concern, and what exactly do we want in asking for its justification? In addition, what is the nature of anticipation, and what would its justification involve? And so forth. Second, we want to know which type of criterion seems called for by each practical concern, reidentification or characterization? As the very brief inquiry above reveals, there is real work to be done here, all as preface to any actual theorizing about identity and its practical importance.

There are more radical conclusions that may follow, however. For once we have allowed this sort of pluralism with respect to the two general *types* of criteria – reidentification and characterization – available to address our motivating questions, there is no reason for us not to be open as well to allowing pluralism with respect to the specific *criteria* of identity available to address those motivating questions. In other words, in the first section we focused on the practical concerns surrounding moral responsibility, backwards-looking emotional patterns, and future-oriented anticipation, among others, and these foci yielded the conclusion that our real target was agents, so we came to restrict our attention to psychological criteria of personal identity. But admitting pluralism among these concerns may force us to backtrack a bit. For while it seems clear that moral responsibility is grounded on some sort of psychological criterion (likely of the characterization sort), *compensation* may not (always) be. Consider a case in which I am compensated for the damage done by a doctor during my botched birth, or even for the negligence of my mother during her pregnancy with me. If compensation presupposes personal identity, then the best (perhaps only) way to account for these sorts of cases would be with a non-psychological criterion. The most obvious candidate would be some form of *animalism*, for this at least allows me (the compensee) to be the same individual as that damaged infant or fetus.

So once we recognize the enterprise to be fragmented at the reidentification or characterization stage, we should also recognize that it might very well be fragmented also at the more particular criteria stage. But for the reasons stated above, this conclusion should be welcome (or at least not feared).

Of course, admitting that not all our person-related practices and concerns are grounded by a characterization criterion returns us to the Extremism trilemma, at least with respect to those motivating questions whose practices and concerns seem to depend on psychological continuity reidentification criteria: either we abandon these criteria of identity (effectively admitting the irrelevance of any leftover criteria for our agency-dependent motivating questions), we abandon any rational grounding for these practices and concerns, or we switch said grounding, along with the conditions of reidentification generally, to psychological continuity, forcing us to revise our second and third guiding assumptions, along with our ordinary account of reasons for action. Clearly if we want to keep the general project alive, the third horn of the trilemma must be grasped. As I have discussed, this move is not without problems, but they are not project-undermining problems, as are the first two. They are also problems I believe are resolvable.²⁹ Nevertheless, there may still be legitimate independent reasons to grasp the second horn, and I will discuss them in the final section.

In the meantime, it will be helpful to retrace the dialectic of this lengthy section. We began under the assumption that we could find the proper relation between identity and what we thought was a univocal set of practical concerns by looking for a psychological criterion of identity – in the sense of reidentification – that would provide a rational grounding for them. The fission case, however, raised and drove home the importance of the Extremism Argument, according to which our practical concerns are grounded only by genuine personal identity, and insofar as no version of a psychological continuity criterion provides that, our practical concerns,

²⁹ See, for example, Shoemaker 1999.

on the assumptions under which we started, are ungrounded. There were several possible replies to this argument, but the one calling for the least amount of revision to our guiding assumptions was to revise the third one to allow for the possibility that it is the characterization sense of identity that best addresses at least some of our motivating questions, and that our motivating questions themselves (as well as the practical concerns providing their impetus) fail to constitute a wholly unified set (at least with respect to this issue). While some of our practical concerns look to be grounded in characterization criteria to be sure, others still look to be grounded in reidentification criteria. Furthermore, some of these concerns may not even be grounded in psychological criteria (of either general sort) at all. What all of this means is that finding *the* relation between personal identity and our practices and concerns may be a fool's errand; instead, there may be many such relations, depending on which practice or concern is in question.

What this adjustment does, though, is at least maintain the possibility that, regardless of which type of identity criterion is at issue – reidentification or characterization – metaphysical grounding for our practices and concerns may still be within reach. The Extremism Argument does not have to undermine that most basic aspect of the enterprise, then; all we have to do to avoid its depressing conclusion is to expand the scope of what counts as a relevant type of identity criterion. But once we do that, we have resurrected the hoped-for project of constructing a theory of the relation(s) between personal identity and our practices and concerns. But yet again, matters are not quite so simple.

4. Methodological Problem #3: Minimalism

Mark Johnston, in a series of rich and important articles, has vigorously defended the view he calls 'minimalism,' according to which the metaphysics of personal identity are actually irrelevant (in virtue of being either epiphenomenal or redundant) to the justification of our

person-related practices and concerns.³⁰ On this view, certain facts of personal identity – facts to which we might *think* we are committed in our practices – actually play only a minimal role in those practices. So, for example, people might indeed, with some philosophical prompting, view the facts about persons as facts involving Cartesian egos, so that when it turns out that there are no such facts, they might be inclined to believe that revision of their person-related practices is justified. But if it turns out that those practices are justified for *other* – non-metaphysical – reasons, then the loss of the Cartesian ego fact may imply no revisions whatsoever to our practices. They may be on firm ground independently of any metaphysical facts.

To make this case, Johnston has to argue for the independent reasonableness of our practical concerns, and this obviously involves two steps: (1) showing the *reasonableness* of our practical concerns, and (2) showing how they are reasonable *independently* of the metaphysics of identity. He starts, then, by considering the nature of self-concern (Johnston 1997, pp. 156-8). It is part of a wider pattern of *self-referential* concern, a special non-derivative concern I have for a network of people to whom I bear a certain relation: I care about the present and future well-being of the persons who are *my* friends, *my* family, and, in the case of self-concern, *my* self. I care about these various people for their own sakes, and indeed, I would need a good reason for *failing* to care about them (Johnston 1997, pp. 156-158).

This suggests that these self-referential concerns are the default patterns of concern in our lives, and they have a kind of coherentist justification:

The concerns that are justified are those which will continue to stand the test of informed criticism. Concerns that are natural and fundamental have a certain kind of defeasible presumption in favour of their reasonableness; they cannot all be thrown into doubt at once, for then criticism would have no place from which to

³⁰ See Johnston 1987, 1989, 1992, and 1997. There have been others who have argued in a similar vein, however, including Wolf (1986) and Unger (1990).

start. ... What can be said by way of justifying such self-referential concerns is that they are utterly natural concerns, and that, so far at least, informed criticism has failed to discredit them. The defeasible presumption in their favour is so far undefeated. (Johnston 1997, pp. 158-9)

Now our second guiding assumption was explicitly that our person-related concerns are rationally grounded by the metaphysics of personal identity, but given the default reasonableness of those concerns, why think that metaphysics is even *relevant* to such grounding? Instead, all I need to be reasonable in my concern for my friends, family, and future selves is to *have* friends, family, and future selves.³¹

This is at least a challenge to the claim that our practical concerns are not *independently* reasonable, but Johnston provides what he calls the Argument from Above, coupled with a powerful argument against our assumed Argument from Below, to drive home the point. Johnston's position is fairly straightforward: even if some fact F consists entirely in facts G and H, then even if G and H have no practical significance, F still might. To apply this to the case at hand, then, if the facts of personal identity simply consist in more particular facts about psychological continuity, say, but the facts about psychological continuity do not have any non-derivative value with respect to self-concern (after all, why should I care particularly about some person in the future who will just be psychologically *similar* to me?), the facts of personal identity may still have non-derivative value with respect to self-concern: it may still reasonably

³¹ It is actually ambiguous just what Johnston means to be saying about the justification for self-referential concerns. On the one hand, he calls them 'basic', which suggests they are either not justified at all, or they are somehow *self*-justified (which would be rather mysterious). On the other hand, he maintains that they are justified in virtue of being coherent with other natural concerns and in having survived critical reflection. If the former, why think natural concerns are unjustified? We may have a natural concern – an awe – at the grandeur of the universe, and insofar as we attribute agency willy-nilly, we may attribute agency, and thus transfer our awe, to the universe itself (or to the 'designer' of the universe). But surely such natural emotional patterns are unjustified if there is no such agent. If the latter, and these concerns are justified in virtue of their coherence and survival of critical reflection, then they are certainly subject to being overturned in light of other considerations. And why could such considerations not be metaphysical?

matter to me that some future person will be me, even if his being me consists entirely in the fact that he is psychologically continuous with me, and that latter fact has no non-derivative importance (Johnston 1997, p. 167; Parfit 2001, pp. 29-32).

While this view may seem initially rather puzzling, it becomes more plausible once we think of the kind of reductionism about personal identity that is assumed by both parties here as being of the ontological constitution variety, such that what it means for some fact to consist entirely in some other facts is that the former fact is about some object {O} that is wholly *constituted* by some set of objects {P1, P2, P3, ..., Pn} referred to by the latter facts, and all this really boils down to is that {O} is not some separately existing entity, capable of existing independently of {P1-Pn}. So consider the famous statue/lump case. The statue is wholly constituted by the lump of clay, such that facts about the statue consist entirely in facts about the lump. Nevertheless, Johnston seems to be suggesting, even if facts about the survival of the lump have no non-derivative importance, facts about the survival of the statue *could have* such importance (in which case facts about the lump will at least have derivative importance). And even if persons – or to use the term Johnston favours, ‘human beings’ – are wholly constituted by bodies, brains, and mental events, and even if the facts of personal identity across time consist entirely in facts about the relations between bodies, brains, and mental events, nevertheless facts about the *identity* of some future person may have non-derivative importance, regardless of whether or not the more particular facts in which that fact consists have no such importance. To put it succinctly, I may be justified in caring about my future self (and other of my self-referential care-targets), regardless of the importance of the metaphysical facts in which the fact of my identity with him consists.

If the Argument from Above is correct, my self-concern may indeed be independently reasonable, in which case our guiding assumption (2) is false. But as it stands it is merely a new competitor with our assumed Argument from Below, according to which if fact F consists entirely in facts G and H, then F can at most be derivatively important, important only in virtue

of G's and H's importance. If, on the other hand, G and H are not non-derivatively important, neither can F be. Thus, if I do not care that some future person will be psychologically and physically continuous with me, I *should not* care that that future person will be me (if the fact that he will be me consists entirely in the fact that he will be my psychological and physical descendant) (Parfit 2001, p. 31; Johnston 1997, p. 167). Nevertheless, Johnston argues that the Argument from Below, far from being in a standoff with the Argument from Above, is deeply flawed. First, it yields the reductio of nihilism: given that *all* the facts of the world consist, ultimately, in facts about microphysical particles, and given that we do not have non-derivative concerns for those particles, then all values based on them should not matter either, which is absurd. Second, it commits the fallacy of composition: just because the parts of which some fact consists have no non-derivative value, that does not mean the thing they consist in has no such value.

Parfit offers an intriguing (albeit problematic) reply to this last argument, but I will not here rehearse the specific details of his exchange with Johnston.³² Instead, I want to focus on what is required of us methodologically if Johnston is right. Suppose, then, that our self-concern is reasonable independently of the metaphysics of personal identity. This may seem as if it constitutes an effective denial of our guiding assumption (2) – that the rational grounding for our practices is metaphysical – but that would be too hasty a conclusion, for Johnston's case is specifically targeted to our patterns of *self-concern*, not to the fuller set of person-related practices and concerns we have articulated in our motivating questions. What, then, about the justification for other practices and concerns like anticipation, moral responsibility, compensation, various past-directed sentiments, and so on? Minimalism is supposed to be a general view about the relation of metaphysics to 'our practices' (Johnston 1997, p. 149), and

³² See Parfit 2001, pp. 29-33. I have discussed my take on the exchange, as well as why I think Parfit's reply is problematic, on the ethics blog PEA Soup, which provoked a variety of fruitful and helpful comments from others on the thread. See http://peasoup.typepad.com/peasoup/david_shoemakers_posts/index.html for the entire discussion.

Johnston is more specifically concerned to show that '[i]n the particular case of personal identity, minimalism implies that any metaphysical view of persons which we might have is either epiphenomenal or a redundant basis for our practice of making judgements about personal identity and organizing our practical concerns around this relation' (Johnston 1997, p. 150). But because he discusses only how minimalism treats the case of self-concern, it remains entirely unclear whether and how minimalism is supposed to undermine the possibility of metaphysics playing a role in the variety of other person-related practices and concerns we have discussed.

For instance, while Johnston illustrates minimalism by showing how it undermines the point of libertarian metaphysics with respect to moral responsibility (Johnston 1997, pp. 154-5), it was the *person-related* aspects of moral responsibility that intrigued us here, that is, how it seems to be a necessary condition of justified responsibility that the blame- or praiseworthy person be identical to the person who performed the action for which praise or blame is due. Focusing on our actual practices of responsibility-attribution, as Johnston does, and showing how they are reasonable independently of certain metaphysical considerations regarding agent-causation, say, fails to undermine the motivation for exploring this more basic element of responsibility, for our practices themselves still seem to presuppose reidentification of the responsible agent, regardless of whether or not the reidentified target is an agent-causer or a thoroughly deterministic vessel.

Further, while self-concern may indeed be part of a larger network of self-referential concern, justified independently of metaphysical considerations, is there reason to think any of our other motivating concerns and practices are of this sort? While some of them may be like this (e.g. self-referential sentiments like embarrassment, pride, and regret), many others simply lack the self-referential character of concern, for example the aforementioned responsibility, as well as compensation, third-person reidentification, general survival, and the intra-/interpersonal disanalogy. And while the issues of anticipation are often run together with those of self-concern,

much more would need to be said before we should allow that they are both subject to the same sort of deflationary treatment. But this remark deserves fuller explanation.

Anticipation, as I have been thinking of it, is a matter of having certain beliefs or expectations about what it will feel like to undergo a certain set of expected experiences. It thus includes both doxastic and phenomenological components. Now put in this way, anticipation does not necessarily make reference to personal identity. Nevertheless, our natural assumption is that it does, especially when we think in terms of its rational grounding: surely, we think, I am justified in anticipating the experiences of the person who will be sitting at my desk tomorrow morning only if that person will be me (indeed, this is how it was put as the initial ‘answer’ to our first motivating question). At the very least, we think, anticipation is a person-related enterprise: I can anticipate the experiences of only persons, of course, but more importantly, these must be persons to whom I am specially, perhaps uniquely, related. And here is where it seems as if the metaphysics may be relevant: if identity does not ground anticipation, then what other relation could do the trick?

Nevertheless, it is also here where a Johnstonian might interject that anticipation of *my own* experiences is, quite simply, reasonable independently of the metaphysics. Surely, for instance, it is reasonable to anticipate future experiences I expect to be my own, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine that this practice could or would be undermined, or in any other way affected, by metaphysical considerations about identity. Indeed, good reasons *not* to anticipate one’s own expected experiences are relatively rare – these will likely be prudential considerations against doing so in order to preserve one’s psychological health or morale in the face of some expected torture or otherwise horrifying pain – but these reasons have nothing whatsoever to do with the metaphysics of identity.

Notice, though, that this way of replying does not rule out that anticipation of *other* people’s experiences is unreasonable, and further that, while the justification for it could be basic as well, there may still be an important role for the metaphysics to play *aside from justification*.

Now there are two important points here, and they both warrant careful explanation. Consider the first. The case for self-concern, for Johnston, rests on the fact that I am justified in having concern for myself insofar as it is just one part of a larger network of self-referential concerns, and this network is both basic and coherent. But could there not also be a larger network of self-referential *anticipations*, a network that is also basic and coherent? On this possibility I would of course be justified in anticipating my own (expected) experiences, but I could also be justified in anticipating the experiences of *my* friends, *my* loved ones, and *my* family. Here, then, anticipation of my own experiences would just be one form of the more general type of self-referential anticipation, reasonable insofar as it is basic and coherent.

Now this may strike some as crazy. Yes, we can agree that if I find out a loved one will undergo some suffering, I will be distressed, perhaps even more distressed than I would be if I found out *I* would undergo the suffering. But, as Parfit himself puts it, '[T]his concern has a different quality. I do not *anticipate* the pain that will be felt by someone I love' (Parfit 1984, p. 312). Nevertheless, the fact that my concern for my loved one will have a different quality than my concern for myself implies nothing whatsoever about the presence or lack of anticipation in either case. Suppose, though, we just think that it is a descriptive truth that anticipation is lacking in the interpersonal case. Why would this be? I am surely able to have certain beliefs or expectations about what it will feel like for another person to undergo some experience. And if the phenomenological component of my expectation is not as rich and robust as it turns out to be for the person who will actually undergo that experience, or if my expectation of what it will feel like is never actually experienced by me, or if the set of experiences I believe will occur do not in fact ever occur, why think that what I am engaged in is not anticipation, especially given that these are precisely the sorts of the things that can happen when I anticipate *my own* experiences?

Of course, some may think that anticipation conceptually requires identity. In that case, we might call my expectations about the experiences of another person *quasi-anticipation*, or,

perhaps more accurate to our current linguistic practice, *empathy*, or empathic anticipation. So when I have certain expectations about what my own experiences will feel like, we call it anticipation, and when I have certain expectations about what your experiences will feel like, we call it empathy. At any rate, if this latter sort of (quasi-)anticipation is possible – and surely it is! – we may still wind up agreeing with Johnston that it would be justified independently of the metaphysics of identity. Nevertheless – and this is the second important point here – we may now rightly wonder, aside from the question of justification, *what renders such empathic anticipation possible?* And here metaphysical considerations may still be quite relevant. For it might turn out that what in fact makes it possible for me to engage in regular anticipation of my future self's experiences is that certain direct psychological connections obtain between us, the overlapping strands of which constitute psychological continuity, which has been our leading contender for a metaphysical criterion of agentive identity. And this critical metaphysical relation – psychological connectedness – may in fact obtain interpersonally.³³ If so, it could very well be the metaphysical relation rendering empathic anticipation possible.

This move would then also provide a way to respond directly to Johnston's minimalism with respect to self-concern. For while self-concern may indeed be justified independently of metaphysics in virtue of its place in our more general practices of self-referential concern, metaphysics may still play a crucial role in rendering those practices possible in the first place. Indeed, it might be solely in virtue of my psychological connectedness and/or continuity with someone – including my future self, of course – that I am able both to anticipate and to have special concern for him or her in the first place (the degree of concern perhaps determined by the degree to which we are related). Metaphysics, on this picture, then, would not play a *revisionary* role with respect to our practices, that is, it would not be the case that the metaphysical picture would fix what they ought rationally to consist in. Nevertheless, metaphysics could still play a

³³ For different versions of this sort of idea, see Brink 1997, Jeske 1993, and Shoemaker 2000.

revelatory role with respect to our practices, revealing heretofore-unrecognized connections between our attitudes towards ourselves and our attitudes towards others. Let me explain.

To start, suppose we agree with Johnston that metaphysics does not play a foundational justificatory role with respect to any of our practices, despite the fact that he has at most shown this to be the case only with respect to self-concern. Now if the metaphysics did have such a foundational role, we could potentially be rationally obligated to radically revise our practices, so granting Johnston that it does not play such a role eliminates that particular revisionary threat. Nevertheless, even if he is right, there is nothing preventing us from finding that various metaphysical relations provide the *possibility* for the coherentist framework Johnston advocates. Thus, it could very well be the case that the network of self-referential concerns I have – which is independently reasonable, say – is still made possible by my outward-shooting strands of psychological connectedness. Similarly for anticipation, as described above. But once we see how these metaphysical relations make self-referential concern and self-referential anticipation possible, both in their self-directedness and other-directedness, we may also come to recognize that (a) other of our practices and concerns are made possible by certain metaphysical relations, and (b) the interpersonal nature of those relations may then *reveal* to us how certain heretofore puzzling or unexplained features of our practices may also be included under the general coherentist framework, that is, the metaphysical relations may reveal to us how to extend the coherentist justification in surprising and fruitful ways.

Consider just one example. It is almost platitudinous that compensation presupposes personal identity, that is, I cannot be compensated by benefits to someone else. Nevertheless, as Parfit and others admit, ‘Our burdens can, in a sense, be compensated by benefits to those we love’ (Parfit 1984, p. 337). How can we explain this exception, then? The above analysis suggests that we might first come to see our ordinary practices of compensation as being made possible by psychological continuity; that is, for a benefit to count as compensation to me in ordinary cases, I must be psychologically continuous with the person who underwent some past

burden. But if this is right, and one person may be psychologically continuous with a limited range of others (based on the degrees of psychological connectedness, say, that obtain between them), then these metaphysical considerations may now have revealed an explanation for why I can be compensated by benefits to a certain limited range of other people: my nearest and dearest – the people to whom benefits count as compensation to me – are just those to whom I am closely psychologically connected.³⁴

Now this specific explanation may be quite wrongheaded, but again, it is not my goal here to spell out the substantive details of any particular theory of the relation between identity and our practices; rather, I merely hope to point to it as just one illustration of the methodological move I have been recommending in response to minimalism, a move which can keep alive the general project of theorizing about the relation between identity and our practices. Note also that the reason this move is compatible with the general project – specifically with respect to our second guiding assumption – is that what counts as the rational ‘grounding’ of some practice is actually ambiguous. It may, as we have until now construed it, be taken to refer to justification. But it may also, as we have just seen, be taken to refer to what provides sufficient conditions, in our case a metaphysical set of conditions rendering the practices in question possible. And this is an interpretation that has, unfortunately, not been explored in the literature, overlooked in favour of the single-minded pursuit of justification. But it has great revelatory potential, I suspect, and is surely worthy of at least some attention.

So it seems as if the general enterprise can remain intact: our practices and concerns can have rational grounding, in the sense just discussed, in metaphysical considerations of personal identity, even if minimalism is true. Nevertheless, there remains one last wrinkle.

³⁴ I attempt a move like this in Shoemaker 2002b. For a somewhat similar move, see Jeske 1993.

5. Methodological Problem #4: Non-Rational Concerns

Our first guiding assumption was that our person-related practices and concerns are indeed rationally grounded. We have just expanded our understanding of what may count as rational grounding, but even so, there is still a potential problem with this most basic assumption of the enterprise: why think that rational grounding, metaphysical or otherwise, has any relevance at all to these practices and concerns?

Despite its being a foundational assumption by all the authors we have discussed, there may indeed be good reasons to reject it. One way to do so, of course, would be to resurrect the Extremism Argument. Another, though, would be via consideration of our person-related concerns, focusing on the nature of the most powerful of these, namely, love. Love, rather notoriously, seems to operate independently of, even against, rational considerations. A mother's love for her son is, we say, unconditional: her love obtains (or should obtain) no matter what. Here, metaphysical considerations strike us as – beyond irrelevant – obtuse. And the same goes for romantic love: the love one may feel for someone else often survives rejection, rebuke, and even abuse, obtaining against – or, perhaps more accurately, despite – one's rational will. And if rational grounding is off the table where the love of others is concerned, surely it is even farther off the table where love of self is concerned.

There is a related worry about our person-related *practices*. Take, for instance, the practice of responsibility. As Peter Strawson has argued, our practice of holding responsible – expressing the reactive attitudes constitutive of responsibility, in Strawson's terms – is not something for which rational justification could play any role:

[As to] a question about the rational justification of ordinary inter-personal attitudes in general [the attitudes from which responsibility-attributions derive], ... I shall reply, first, that such a question could seem real only to one who had utterly failed to grasp the purport of ... the fact of our natural human commitment

to ordinary inter-personal attitudes. This commitment is part of the general framework of human life, not something that can come up for review

(Strawson 1962, pp. 82-83)

While Strawson is here concerned explicitly with what it would be rational to do if the thesis of determinism were true, his thought clearly seems to carry over to the similar question of what it would be rational to do if certain metaphysical theses of personal identity were true. His answer in both cases would likely be the same: asking the question about rational justification in either case fails to take seriously the deeply natural commitment we have to the practices as they stand. Indeed, constructed as we are, we simply do not have ‘a choice in this matter’ (Strawson 1962, p. 83). The question of rational grounding thus seems utterly irrelevant.

(Note that this view of our practices is importantly different from the minimalist approach taken up by Johnston. On Johnston’s view, our person-related practices and concerns, while basic, are nevertheless ‘reasonable’ given a ‘broadly coherentist view of justification’, and so are justified insofar as they ‘continue to stand the test of informed criticism’ (Johnston 1997, p. 158).³⁵ On the Strawsonian view, however, the question of justification at all (at least with respect to the practice as a whole) is just a mistake. These are practices and concerns operating beyond the scope of, or at least in a different realm from, the demands of rationality altogether.)

There is, then, a serious worry here about both our practices and our concerns: if they are not downright irrational, they are at least *non-rational*, so it is simply pointless to expect a grounding relation – either a justification or a rendering-possible – between them and the metaphysics of personal identity. We can think of this as the Wittgensteinian strain in the Strawsonian account: our person-related practices and concerns belong to a ‘system’, a way of

³⁵ Although a few lines later, Johnston says ‘it would be a mistake to attempt a direct and conclusive justification of our basic self-referential concerns’, he can only mean by this some kind of positive, foundationalist justification, one providing reasons from outside (or below) the circle of coherentist justification he explicitly affirms.

seeing, being in, and interacting with the world that is bounded by groundless framework principles, a structure from *within* which we carry out certain investigations, in particular investigations into the nature of personal identity.³⁶ So my special concern for myself is, say, a given, a natural assumption of our form of life that provides grounds for the constraints on the metaphysics of identity we have discussed but that is itself ‘groundless’, without rational justification.³⁷

Despite the initial plausibility of this objection to our first guiding assumption, however, there are a number of possible replies. Start with our concerns. While certainly some of our concerns are non-rational, there remain many that we explicitly take to be subject to norms of rationality. So yes, while it may be pointless to launch rational criticisms about the existence or degree of one’s love for one’s child, say, or the fact that someone ‘fell’ in love, there nevertheless seem to be other instances in which similar sorts of concerns are indeed subject to such rational assessment. Loving, or caring about, only the members of one’s own race, say, is likely irrational, as might be caring about some projects (e.g. the well-worn case of the person who cares about counting the blades of grass on his lawn). More typical are cases in which the *degree* to which someone is concerned for something is subject to rational appraisal, and here is where it looks as if self-concern is directly relevant. After all, one might care about oneself too much or even not enough. So too, it might be thought, one could care too much about the person that is *oneself*, as opposed to the person to whom one will be related by psychological connectedness, say (e.g. ‘Why are you saving money for your retirement when that retirement-age self will probably be some reactionary codger who will not value anything you currently value?’).

³⁶ See, for example, Wittgenstein 1969, and Malcolm 1997.

³⁷ See Malcolm 1997, pp. 396-397.

Turn now to our practices. It might be possible to maintain that, while some of our practices are resistant to rational grounding of some sorts, they are nevertheless open to grounding of other sorts. So, for example, while the practice of holding responsible is not grounded with respect to *determinism*, it could still be grounded with respect to personal identity. It may be true, in other words, that the expression of our reactive attitudes is something to which we have a deep human commitment that would be unaffected in light of the theoretical truth of determinism (or indeterminism, for that matter), but it may very well be false that our reactive attitudes are always unaffected by metaphysical considerations about the nature of the identity of their targets. For surely a primary reason to suspend one's reactive attitudes towards someone for some crime is that *he* just did not do it! There would have to be some sort of mistake – likely a mistake of rationality – if one were to express one's reactive attitudes to people utterly unrelated to the original performers of the praise- or blame-worthy action. So too, it might be thought, one could mistakenly be expressing one's reactive attitudes towards the persons identical with the original agents, rather than those who are merely psychologically continuous with them (e.g. the Statute of Limitations might be said to track the latter relation instead of the former).

Nevertheless, in each of these replies what looks to be rationally grounded are *individual manifestations* of the concern or practice, and not the concern or practice *itself*. But the Wittgensteinian point is perfectly compatible with the possibility of rational justification, say, within the boundaries of some system (according to the rules of that system); instead, it is the system itself that is groundless, beyond justification. So unless we have reason to believe that our concerns and practices are *themselves* rationally criticisable or revisable, we have yet to gainsay this methodological threat to the general project.

However, there may be a way to do so. Consider first the practice of responsibility. Strawson claims that expression of the reactive attitudes (even if the expression is just silently to oneself) is a natural, almost primal, human practice, central to our way of life. But as Gary Watson and Lawrence Stern have both pointed out, if negative retributive reactive attitudes like

resentment are constitutive of holding responsible, then holding responsible ‘is at odds with one historically important ideal of love’ (Watson 2004, p. 257).³⁸ Highly admirable men like Gandhi and King clearly held their oppressors responsible without expressing the attitudes quite often corrosive of interpersonal relationships. And their examples may provide us with good reasons to do the same. But if holding one another responsible can float free of the expression of reactive attitudes, for perfectly good reasons, then the latter does not constitute the kind of ‘system’ that is beyond the reach of rational grounding.

Similarly, then, it could be possible for the practice, the ‘system’, of holding responsible via the expression of reactive attitudes to float free from personal identity for good reasons as well. For example, there seem to be many cases in which reactive attitudes indistinct from those deployed in everyday cases of moral responsibility are deployed to those other than those identical with the original agent (or where there just *is* no original agent), where we think no mistake of rationality has occurred. For example, we may express reactive attitudes to parents for the actions of their children, romantic partners for the actions of others (‘That is something *you* would do!’), higher-up government officials for the actions of their subordinates, and even people for what we imagine they *might* do (but have not done). In these sorts of cases, where there is at least an original agent, that agent may not be altogether unrelated to the person held responsible, but he is also not identical to that person. This may lead us, then, to explore rational grounding for the practice as a whole in relations other than identity. And here thoughts about the fission case, for example, may be quite relevant, for we might think it reveals that our reactive attitudes are grounded in psychological continuity rather than identity.³⁹

³⁸ See also Stern 1974.

³⁹ Johnston would presumably disagree, maintaining instead that the fission case might give us reason to *extend* our practice of responsibility to those with whom we are merely psychological continuous *in this particularly exotic case* but not in others. Nevertheless, Johnston holds that our practice of responsibility *is* rationally grounded, so he would not disagree with the more general methodological point being made here.

Similar moves may apply to the practices surrounding compensation as well. We might initially think, for instance, that we have a deep human commitment to not making uncompensated sacrifices, where compensation presupposes personal identity. But examples of people making uncompensated sacrifices abound, and insofar as we think these are done for good reasons, the ‘system’ of our commitment to only compensated sacrifices may turn out to be rationally grounded – rationally criticisable and revisable – after all. But once we have come this far, it is an easy step to seeing that its grounding – its justification or its being rendered possible – may be a matter of the metaphysics of identity, and so may depend for its details on our metaphysical picture. For instance, what makes compensation possible, we might say, is that the sacrificer and the beneficiary are related, not necessarily by the identity relation, but instead by, again, something like psychological continuity (where such continuity may obtain across simultaneously-existing persons).⁴⁰

Let us return, then, to our person-related concerns. Here the ‘system’ of such concern, especially that of self-concern, may seem harder to rest on rational grounds. After all, concern for myself, for the person who will be me in the future, seems among the most natural and powerful commitments we have. Nevertheless, Buddhists seem to belie this claim, for they deny the rationality of self-concern, *and they typically do so for metaphysical reasons*.⁴¹ If, after all, the self is an illusion, then it is *concern* for this non-existent entity that is irrational, not vice versa.⁴² Of course, it may seem as if this theoretical conclusion is still going to be practically moot, given that it is just a built-in precondition of our form of life that we have self-concern, but there are certainly *successful* Buddhists – including those who have been ‘converted’ from ‘our’ form of life – who constitute powerful counterexamples to this assumed truth. In addition, there

⁴⁰ Again, see Jeske 1993, Brink 1997, and Shoemaker 2000.

⁴¹ See, for example, Siderits 2003.

⁴² See, for example, Martin 1998.

are, presumably, successful Stoics, converted to a no-self-concern view on metaphysical grounds as well. These are cases that illustrate, just like the Gandhi and King cases in the realm of moral responsibility, how an allegedly inescapable and non-rational form of life can turn out to be not so inescapable and non-rational after all.

Ultimately, then, there seem to be decent counterexamples to the ‘no rational grounds’ thesis for significant cases of our person-related practices and concerns. This fact alone provides a plausible reply to the fourth methodological worry, at least for the cases just discussed. It remains, though, a legitimate question whether or not the rest of our practices and concerns are subject to the same treatment. My hunch is that, if self-concern and our practices of responsibility and compensation are not necessarily non-rational ‘systems’, and these are as central to our form of life as they are, then the remaining practices and concerns, insofar as they are not quite as central, are unlikely to be non-rational as well. But this is just a hunch, and there may yet be cases of either practices or concerns that defy this treatment.

But this point returns us yet again to perhaps the most important theme running throughout our discussion. It was an unspoken assumption *about* our guiding assumptions at the beginning that they all referred to a unified body of person-related practices and concerns, at least where metaphysical grounding was concerned, such that each would be subject to the same treatment – being rationally grounded by whatever the correct criterion of personal identity turned out to be – as all the others. But as suggested before, and as should be even more obvious by now, this more general assumption is highly suspect. Why should we think that anticipation should receive the same sort of metaphysical grounding as third-person reidentification, or that the same grounding should apply to our various backwards-looking sentiments (embarrassment, pride, and so forth) as to our approach to the intra-/inter-personal disanalogy, our concern for self, or our practices of moral responsibility? Our motivating questions at the beginning were of course loosely grouped insofar as they were all *person*-related, but it now seems far too quick to go from there to the thought that they should remain grouped together throughout each of the

responses given here to the methodological worries. After all, some might properly get off the boat at different stages. For instance, some of the practices and/or concerns may not presuppose a psychological criterion, or a criterion of agency, at all: third-person reidentification may be almost entirely a matter of body reidentification, and compensation may be about benefits and burdens to human animals, not persons. Or, as explicitly discussed in response to Methodological Problem #2, while some practices or concerns seem to call for a characterization criterion of personal identity, others still call for a reidentification criterion. Or perhaps while some of our practices or concerns are justified by metaphysical considerations, others are not. Or, finally, with respect to Methodological Problem #3, various of our practices or concerns may have different forms of metaphysical grounding, such that while some are justified by considerations of personal identity, others are simply rendered possible by considerations of personal identity. Thus while the motivating questions about our practices and concerns may be unified upon their *entrance* into the enterprise – in virtue of their role as impetus to investigation into the metaphysics of personal identity – they may not be at all unified upon their exit.

6. Conclusion

As we have seen, there are important problems with the methodology suggested by our motivating questions at each stage of the game. What I have tried to show, however, is that there are also fairly compelling responses to each of these problems, such that the general methodological approach outlined at the beginning – moving from normative concerns to personal identity and then back again – remains a plausible path of investigation. That is, if we are interested in a theory of the *relation* between personal identity and our person-related practices and concerns (as opposed to a theory of personal identity *simpliciter*, say), there may still be one to find, despite some powerful arguments to the contrary. However, it is important to point out that the enterprise does not remain untouched in the face of these challenges; rather, several concessions may be required, including admission, perhaps, of (a) the irrelevance of certain powerful and popular criteria of personal identity for (at least some of) our practices and

concerns, (b) the ultimate disunity of these practices and concerns (such that multiple types of theories of the relation between them and the metaphysics may be called for), and/or (c) the possibility of different types of rational grounding – justification and rendering-possible – where justification may actually be off the table altogether for some practices and concerns.

These are not minor concessions, and having to make them may undermine the very point of the enterprise for some. But if we still want a theory of the relation(s) between identity and our practical concerns, there may still be one (or more!) to find. And while we may have to alter our expectations of what such a theory can do for us, part of the point of the investigation now will be to discover just what the nature and extent of those alterations should be. In so doing, we also open up the investigation to include a number of heretofore ignored or downplayed questions, and here I will just mention four. First, what is the precise nature of each of our motivating questions? For example, what is self-concern, exactly, and what is it we are asking for when we inquire about its relation to personal identity? Second, what is the nature of the relation *between* our motivating questions? For example, what does anticipation have to do with self-concern (if anything), or what does responsibility have to do with compensation (if anything)? Third, what precisely would be necessary to answer each of our specific motivating questions? For example, would only psychological criteria be sufficient? At what point, if any, might biological criteria be necessary? Which is called for, reidentification or characterization criteria? Are we looking for rational justification or something else? And so forth. Finally, what effect, if any, should (or would) revisionary or otherwise surprising metaphysical conclusions have on these practices or concerns? In other words, to what extent do our practices or concerns get a normative payoff from the metaphysical? These are still very important questions, and they may themselves provide a reason to preserve the general methodological approach. And while it has not been my aim to answer any of these questions here, I hope at least to have cleared the

ground of the sort of obstacles that may have been blocking us from *beginning* our quest to answer them properly.⁴³

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