

Our Survival

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Reductionists about personal identity contend that there is nothing more to our survival than a series of causally related experiences and/or bodily continuities. Our belief in a separately existing self or subject of experiences is held to be unjustified, and we are recommended to reduce the conception of our own identity over time by jettisoning this belief. The particular form of reductionism that places the true view of our identity in a series of causally related experiences is usually known as *psychological reductionism* or *the psychological continuity approach*ⁱ. The version that gives prominence to the continuity of the body or human being, at least as it has been developed in recent years, is known as *animalism* or *the biological approach*ⁱⁱ.

I shall concentrate on psychological reductionism because, of these two views, it seems to me the more intuitively appealing. But I shall also consider the animalist alternative, arguing that my main line of attack against psychological reductionism can be adapted against it. Both positions are mistaken in supposing that we have insufficient reason for believing in a separately existing subject of experiences. This conclusion is defended in the first section. In the second, I maintain that certain additional grounds that have been offered for accepting a reductionist position fail to do so. And, in the third, I examine a general objection to the conception of a subject of experiences that has been defended in the first two sections.

I

According to the psychological reductionist, our continued existence is not necessarily endangered by the sudden, irreparable, destruction of the body, including the brain. Suppose that by a reliable process called 'teletransportation', an exact printed record is first taken of your body's composition, immediately prior to the body's total destruction, and then electronically beamed to Mars, where a replica body is created from

completely new material. On the psychological reductionist's view, you survive in this replica body. Or, rather, his view is that the justified content to the belief in our continued existence is preserved in teletransportation. For, according to the psychological reductionist, the belief in our survival, *insofar as it is defensible*, just consists in a succession of experiences, linked together by the causal relations necessary for the retention of memories, personality traits and intentions. The conviction, which the reductionist acknowledges that we do actually have, that our continued existence essentially resides in the persistence of a self or subject of experiences, understood as a continuant that is *separable from*, and so not reducible to, a mere succession of causally related experiences (and/or bodily continuities), is dismissed as unwarranted in fact. We are neither justified in our belief in such a subject nor right to think that the satisfaction of this belief is crucial for survival. As the psychological reductionist sees it, what is crucial for our survival is the continuation of our mental life: in particular, the retention of memories of our past life, the opportunity to continue with our emotional ties, and the chance to fulfil our deepest ambitions. On the true view, he alleges, our continued existence consists in the occurrence of a series of interrelated mental events.

Despite the ingenuity that the psychological reductionist has shown in defending his position, I shall argue that he is committed to accepting a view of our survival that is a version of the very theory which he seeks to overthrow.

The claim that our survival is essentially constituted by a persisting subject of experiences, understood as an existent that is separable both from any connected series of psychological states and from the physical continuity provided by numerically the same body (or mere brain), is rejected by the reductionist on the ground that, while we have no evidence in its favour, we have much evidence against it. In particular, there is now good evidence that our experiences are wholly dependent for their existence on a proper functioning physical entity, the brain. From which he concludes that although we – including the reductionist himself – are naturally inclined to hold that our continued existence essentially resides in the persistence of a separately existing subject of experiences (shown, for instance, by our reaction to certain

puzzle cases), it cannot reasonably be affirmed that our survival does consist in, or is dependent upon, a Cartesian-style immaterial substance.

The psychological reductionist also regards the continued existence of numerically the same body (or mere brain) as unnecessary for our survival. He thinks that when we consider what really matters to us in our concern to survive, we realize that it is the continuation of our *mental* life. Admittedly, if this mental life is to be capable of full expression, it will require not only a qualitatively identical – or, at least, a functionally equivalent – brain but a gross human body, and a body that is sufficiently similar to our present one. But provided these physical conditions are met and they are appropriately causally related to the present physical continuities, we shall have everything that is really necessary for survival.

The force of the contention that bodily continuity is not necessary for our life to be preserved can best be appreciated by conceiving a situation where there is a succession of experiences that are linked together by the causal relations necessary for the retention of memories, personality traits and intentions – where there is, in other words, *psychological continuity* – without physical continuity. Teletransportation precisely fits this bill, since it is a duplicating process which wholly destroys bodily, including brain, continuity without destroying psychological continuity. For my part, I think that this thought experiment does convincingly show that the result of the teletransportation process is the continuation, or as good as the continuation, on Mars of the life that had earlier begun on Earthⁱⁱⁱ. Hence, bodily continuity cannot be what really matters for the preservation of our life. And since psychological continuity is not destroyed in the process, the psychological reductionist *further* contends that it is this latter continuity, psychological continuity, which is of crucial importance to our survival.

Rather than claiming that the psychological reductionist has gone too far in rejecting the requirement of bodily, or mere brain, continuity, I maintain that he ought also to reject psychological continuity as important for our survival. Once it is admitted that a thought experiment involving teletransportation can play a legitimate part in determining what the belief in our continued existence can reasonably be held to consist in (by showing that

bodily continuity is not required), it ought to be admitted that another thought experiment, which makes use of a closely analogous duplication process, can also be employed in this endeavour. The latter thought experiment, I shall argue, shows that our identity over time is to be distinguished not only from bodily continuity but *equally* from any given series of mental events and, hence, from psychological continuity. Far from personal identity just consisting in, or being reducible to, a single series of causally connected mental events, the psychological reductionist should acknowledge that the true view of personal identity requires us to *distinguish* between the identity of persons and the identity of their lives. Only individual lives can plausibly be thought of as consisting in a series of mental events, suitably causally related.

Why do I think that the conceivability of a duplication process, in essence the same as teletransportation, ought to convince the psychological reductionist that the true view of personal identity requires a distinction between persons and their lives? My grounds stem from this. Although it would nowadays be widely accepted that persons are born with a *tabula rasa* with respect to ideas, we do think of ourselves as coming into the world with a specific fundamental nature in respect of cognitive, conative and affective capacities (presumably inherited, in some determinate way, from our parents). How a given person's life develops depends, we hold, on the interaction between two factors: on the one hand, the person's specific fundamental nature and, on the other, the particular sense experiences that the person has during that life (together with the type of gross body in which that specific fundamental nature is exercised).

In order to see how these considerations bear on the nature of personal identity, think of the relationship between a musical work and its performances. A given musical work, e.g. a particular piano duet, may have, when played, many different interpretations. Even so, each performance of the duet is an instantiation of the same set of instructions, viz. as these are printed in the copies of the score by which the pair of performers internalize those instructions. And each performance may be said to give life to the music – or to bring the music to life – with its interpretation depending upon the interaction between the music and its pair of performers (together with the

type of instruments used, e.g. whether original or modern). In this case, we already speak quite naturally of two or more performances of the same piece of music. An essential condition for enabling us to do so is the existence of a reliable method for encoding musical sounds in a notational form, viz. in a form that permits multiple performances.

Now suppose that by a reliable process resembling teletransportation – let us call it ‘telereproduction’ – there is started up, following the ending of a person’s life on Earth, a wholly new life on Mars by means of the same set of instructions as originally, i.e. from birth, made possible the life of the person formerly on Earth. So although a complete body, including brain, scan is taken at birth and an electronic record retained, bodily death takes place at some time in the person’s adult life. Consequently, with telereproduction, when the adult body of the person living on Earth has ceased irreparably to function, the duplicating machine is employed to send the electronic record of his complete body at birth to another machine on Mars, which constructs a replica body of that person, as it existed at birth. Here, it seems to me, we can legitimately say that, following the ending of the life of a given person (on Earth), telereproduction has begun another life of that same person (on Mars). Hence, like teletransportation, telereproduction can duplicate a body (including its brain); but it duplicates the body as it was at the start of a person’s life, i.e. at birth. When it does so, the process can be seen as giving us an example of the same person living different – and, hence, multiple – lives. In the particular case in hand, one person can be seen as having two lives: there would first be a life on Earth and, then, a life on Mars^{iv}.

In speaking here of two lives of the same person, we would mean something along the following lines: that the same fundamental nature or set of human capacities (encoded in a token human brain) which was responsible, in conjunction with a certain series of sense experiences, for giving a life to a particular person on Earth is now responsible, through its being encoded in another token human brain and in conjunction with a different series of sense experiences, for giving another life to that same person, viz. on Mars. Analogously, when we talk of two performances of the same piece of music, e.g. the same piano duet, we mean something like this: that the same set of

musical instructions (internalized, via copies of the score, by the given pair of performers) which is responsible, in conjunction with a certain interpretation, for producing a performance of the particular duet is also responsible, through its being internalized by another pair of performers and in conjunction with a different interpretation, for producing another performance of that same duet. (Of course, neither the pair of performers nor the interpretations have to be different on any two occasions. But this cannot be an important dissimilarity, because both could be different on any two occasions).

Put briefly, what I am suggesting is this. The psychological reductionist imagines a reliable process, teletransportation, which destroys and replicates a person's body during his life. He employs this thought experiment in order to convince us that since we would, at least on reflection, acknowledge that the person in question has survived the teletransportation process, continuing on Mars the life that he began on Earth, it follows that our identity does not require the continued existence of numerically the same body (or mere brain). He concludes that the identity of a person is reducible to, or just consists in, a series of causally related experiences. By parity of reason, I imagine a reliable process, telereproduction, which, when a person's body has ceased to function, replicates that body as it existed at birth (thereby encoding in a new token brain those capacities that give to a person what I have called his 'fundamental nature'). I claim that this latter thought experiment shows that the same person can have different lives, as we are already convinced that the same piece of music can have different performances. The upshot is that since the psychological reductionist acknowledges that he is himself naturally inclined to believe that a person's identity essentially resides in a separately existing subject of experiences, he should distinguish our continued existence as persons, not only from physical but psychological continuity. In supposing that personal identity, or what is important about personal identity, just consists in the existence of a non-branching series of causally related experiences, he has confused a criterion for the identity of a person's life with the criterion for the identity of a person.

It may be objected that what the telereproduction thought experiment

reveals is only that we *could* admit a distinction between persons and their lives (just as, once we had grasped how a reliable musical notation might be set up, it became *possible* for us to make a distinction between pieces of music and their performances). But, the objection continues, what needs to be established is that the psychological reductionist should recognize that it is *more* reasonable to admit this distinction than to go over to his own reductive position.

It is true that the psychological reductionist is not forced to renounce his position on the basis of the telereproduction thought experiment alone. But it is equally true that the *teletransportation* thought experiment fails, by itself, to demonstrate the comparative insignificance of bodily continuity. It is only if we are prepared to accept that what really matters for the continuance of a person's life is the retention of his mental states and capacities (his memories, emotional ties, intentions and so on) that we ought to recognize that a person's life can be preserved as a result of the teletransportation process – since that process shows us that a person's memories, emotions, intentions etc. can survive the destruction of his original body. Similarly, I am claiming that it is because the psychological reductionist himself accepts that we naturally think that the continued existence of a person centrally depends on the persistence of a separately existing subject of experiences that he ought to recognize that we should distinguish between persons and their lives as a result of the telereproduction process – since that process shows us that there can be a persisting subject despite the destruction of the series of experiences constituting a person's original life.

But, it may be replied, although the reductionist agrees that we do normally think of our identity over time as distinct both from bodily continuity and any given series of connected experiences, has he not also produced good reason for *rejecting* our belief? He has not. While he has argued – in my view correctly – that we should reject the existence of a *Cartesian*-style mind or substance, his argument has not demonstrated that our fundamental belief in a separately existing subject of experiences should be rejected. It has only shown that a particular theoretical description of our belief in such a subject is unwarranted, viz. the Cartesian description (in which capacities like

language and reasoning are said not only to be realized in, but actually to operate from, an immaterial substance).

We have, then, the following situation with regard to psychological reductionism. First, the telereproduction thought experiment reveals that, given the way that we think of personal identity, we could admit a distinction between persons and their lives which parallels the distinction that we already make between musical works and their performances. This distinction leaves room for the possibility of one person having many lives. Second, the distinction *preserves* what is agreed to be central to our natural belief in a person's identity over time (namely, that it resides in a persisting entity, understood as a continuant that is separable both from physical and psychological continuities). Third, the reductionist has rejected this central part of our belief without justification (he has only justified the rejection of a Cartesian-style immaterial substance).

Together these considerations do, I submit, show that it would be more reasonable for the psychological reductionist to acknowledge that our existence as persons should be distinguished from the existence of our lives, rather than to adopt his own reduced conception of our survival. Of two rival theories of personal identity, if one preserves what is accepted as central to our present belief, while the other rejects it without justification then, unless countervailing argument can be given, it is more reasonable to maintain the first theory than to adopt the second. That the first theory allows for the possibility of a person living more than one life, while the second rules this out is not an argument against the first theory – far from it, as I shall argue in the following sections.

By employing the teletransportation thought experiment in his endeavour to convince us that personal identity does not require bodily continuity, the psychological reductionist obscures the fact that this identity is not reducible to psychological continuity. He obscures the fact because, in teletransportation, duplication occurs *during* the life of a person. But given the psychological reductionist accepts that, in seeking to determine what the content of our belief in personal identity should reasonably consist in, it is legitimate to imagine the operation of a reliable duplication process during a

person's life, he should also accept that it is legitimate to engage in such a thought experiment at the very *start* of a person's life, as with telereproduction. When we do so, the distinction between personal identity and any particular series of experiences (as well as any particular physical continuities) is no longer obscured. For, in the case of the telereproduction thought experiment, I have argued that the existence of a reliable duplication process ought to convince the psychological reductionist that the relationship between persons and their lives should be seen as importantly analogous to the relationship which we already acknowledge between musical works and their performances. And, having once recognized the distinction between persons and their lives, it would be a mistake to regard a person's identity as in some way reducible to a series of experiences and/or the continuities of a token body (or mere brain). It would be a mistake because the survival of a person cannot then be said to be identical with, or just to consist in, those phenomena that go to constitute a particular life, any more than the survival of a piece of music can be said to be identical with, or just to consist in, those phenomena that go to constitute a particular performance. A person, rather, can survive the termination of a life as a piece of music can survive the ending of a performance. The survival of a piece of music depends upon the existence of a score – or other record of the music's structure – which is appropriately causally related to that work's creation (so making possible, in conjunction with a set of players, a performance of that particular work). Similarly, the survival of a person depends upon the existence of a record of a fundamental nature which is appropriately causally related to that person's conception (so making possible, in conjunction with a set of sense experiences, a life of that particular person).

‘What a Reductionist denies is that the subject of experiences is a *separately existing entity*, distinct from a brain and body, and a series of physical and mental events’^v.

This is the central reductionist claim. My argument has been that a thought experiment, parallel to the one that the psychological reductionist himself employs in seeking to convince us that the true view of personal identity should not be tied to a given brain or body, ought in consistency to

convince him that the central reductionist claim is almost entirely the reverse of the truth.

Plainly, those reductionists who advocate animalism have not been persuaded by the teletransportation thought experiment into giving up their version of the bodily continuity condition. For them, our belief in survival, insofar as it is justified, does require the continued existence of the same human being or organism (which, under certain circumstances, merely requires the continued existence of the whole brain, and, possibly, of the brain stem alone). It is only if we follow the psychological reductionist in allowing that teletransportation shows that bodily continuity is unnecessary for our survival that we need to argue that, by parity of reasoning, telereproduction shows that psychological continuity is also unnecessary. At the same time, I think it is clear that, by appealing directly to telereproduction, we can show the animalist that the continued existence of the same (biological) human being is not necessary for a justified belief in our survival. After all, both types of reductionist typically acknowledge that we have a strong tendency to believe that we are separately existing subjects of experience^{vi}. It is this acknowledgment that is the significant point, not the willingness to accept that teletransportation is a means of continuing our present life in distant places. For the force of the telereproduction thought experiment is that it highlights not only the distinction between ourselves and our lives (a distinction which, assuming the animalist accepts the distinction between musical works and their performances, is not one that he can simply refuse to concede), but the consequent possibility of *preserving* the belief in our separate existence in the face of both versions of reductionism.

And, in fact, if we consider what is perhaps the animalist's strongest argument against psychological reductionism, we shall find that it is in no way inconsistent with the distinction that I have been emphasizing between ourselves and our lives. The animalist criticizes the psychological reductionist on the ground that we do not think that e.g. a loved one has ceased to exist *merely* because all mentality has ceased (however much we may then think of our loved one's life – reduced now to the life of a human vegetable – as no longer possessing any intrinsic value). But this criticism, even if it is successful

against psychological reductionism – by allegedly showing that our existence is not dependent on psychological continuity – has no force against the belief in a separately existing self or subject of experiences. It has no force, because it is consistent to hold *both* that a human being's life has lost its intrinsic value when all mentality has ended *and* that the subject of experiences can neither have ceased thereby to exist nor be identified with the continuously functioning human being (now a human vegetable). While the animalist can insist that the persistence of a given human being is dependent on the continued functioning of a particular biological organism and not on psychological continuity, this insistence is compatible with holding that the subject of experiences is a separate entity whose continued existence is not determined by the persistence conditions of a human being. No doubt, a human being's life loses its intrinsic value with the destruction of all mentality (since the *experiential* life of that human being has ceased); but the subject of those experiences has not ceased to exist, nor will it when the given human being ceases to exist with the termination of biological functioning. *Our* survival depends on the continued existence of that self or subject of experiences; it does not depend on the continued existence of any given human being (qua biological organism) or on any series of experiences.

Similar considerations apply to the case where we think of a human being as growing into a healthy adult from an embryo or foetus. Although there is here a continuously existing human being, there is no psychological continuity between the two stages – there are no signs of consciousness in an embryo or ten-week old foetus. Consequently, the animalist contends, the psychological reductionist has implausibly to deny that we can think of *ourselves* as already having begun a life in the embryo. But whatever difficulties there may be for the psychological reductionist here, they do not apply to our distinction between the self or subject and its series of experiences. For in supposing ourselves to have started up a life in a relatively early stage of foetal development, we are taking it that our fundamental nature is already to be found there encoded, albeit in – as we might say – an embryonic state. If we had no such belief, we could not think of ourselves as already having begun a life in that condition. Accordingly, there is no inconsistency in maintaining

both that we begin a life as an embryo or at a relatively early foetal stage *and* that the continued existence of the self or subject of experiences is to be identified neither with the persistence of any given human being (qua biological organism) nor with any causally connected series of experiences which may occur during that human being's life.

In sum, whether we consider a human being at the start of its life or near its end (and after mentality has ceased), the difficulties, or apparent difficulties, that arise for the psychological reductionist's account – understood as an account of what is required for our continued existence – do not arise for the alternative account being offered here.

I conclude that neither the psychological reductionist's nor the animalist's conception of what our survival must really consist in is satisfactory. Our survival does not reside in a causally connected series of experiences or in the persistence of a human organism, but in a significant *further* fact, viz. in a self or subject that is genuinely separate from both.

II

Given the distinction that has been argued for in the first section between persons (or selves) and their lives, we may now briefly consider cases where the same person has two or more lives running concurrently. The psychological reductionist maintains that examples which involve what is frequently referred to as the 'division' of a person provide additional grounds for rejecting the belief that a person should be regarded as essentially a separate existent from a series of experiences and/or bodily continuities. He holds that unless we go over to a reductionist conception of a person, these examples of 'division' must involve us in absurdities or contradictions. The question is whether these, or analogous, absurdities must be generated once our distinction between persons and their lives is admitted. If not, we will have been provided with no countervailing reason for revising the conclusion that we should reject the reductionist's central theoretical claim.

It may be thought that if two (or more) concurrent lives of the same person are admitted, it is surely obvious that we are going to find ourselves involved in parallel absurdities to those that the psychological reductionist has

so spectacularly uncovered with his own examples of a person ‘dividing’. For instance, shall we not immediately be landed in the contradiction of having to say that the same person is living in two places at the same time? If it is contradictory to say that the same person can be in two places at the same time – which, on our present concept of a person, it is – then, surely, it is equally absurd to say that one and the same person is living at two places at the same time. But there is no genuine absurdity here because, given our distinction between a person and his lives, this will only be a way of saying that two lives of the same person are occurring at different places at the same time. (As we sometimes say that the same piece of music can be heard at two places at the same time, when what is more circuitously meant is that two performances of the same piece can be heard at different places at the same time).

Even the notorious brain splitting example – more strictly, *cerebrum* splitting example – need not produce a contradiction. Let us grant as conceivable that, by separating a given person’s two cerebral hemispheres and placing each half in a different functioning but cerebrum-less human body, there could be two synchronic lives, both of which can be traced back to a single set of experiences of that given person (sustained by the two cerebral hemispheres combined). We are not thereby forced into the contradictory situation of having to admit that two different lives of the person are the same life. Here, too, a musical analogy can help to explain why.

Consider certain performances of a given choral work. These begin with two singers to each part; later, and uncharacteristically for performances of this work, the singers of each part spatially separate, e.g. by the singers, at a suitable interval in the music, filing apart in two columns, with both sets of singers finishing their performance in different locations. Under these circumstances, there seem to be two conceivable ways of interpreting what has happened. On the one hand, it might be said that, as the work has here been realized, what began as a single partial performance (jointly sustained by two singers per part) ended with two partial performances (each sustained by one singer per part). On this way of putting matters, we could say of two auditors, each of whom then listened to a full performance of the work, that

while they both listened to the same partial performance sustained by two singers per part, it would not follow that they both listened to the same *full* performance, i.e. if they did not both listen to the same partial performance sustained by one singer per part. On the other hand, it might be said that although such an interpretation is not self-contradictory, it is unreasonable to hold that there was, even at the outset of the singing, a partial single performance of the work. Rather, it will be said that, given the sequel, it would be preferable to admit that there were really two concurrent performances of the same work all along; it was simply that this was not obvious until the separation of the two rows of singers. (So, on this latter interpretation, my original description of what happened was mistaken: at no time were two singers jointly sustaining each part).

Analogously, with a case in which separation of a given person's two cerebral hemispheres leads to two synchronic lives, each of which is traceable back to a single set of experiences jointly sustained by the two hemispheres. On the one hand, it might be said that, as the person has here been realized, what began as a single partial life (jointly sustained by the two cerebral hemispheres) ended with two partial lives (each sustained by a single hemisphere). On this way of putting matters, we could say of two onlookers, each of whom then witnessed a full life of the person, that while they both witnessed the same partial life sustained by the two cerebral hemispheres, it would not follow that they both witnessed the same *full* life, i.e. if they did not both witness the same partial life sustained by one cerebral hemisphere. On the other hand, it might be said that although such an interpretation is not self-contradictory, it is unreasonable to hold that there was, even at the outset of the experiences, a single partial life. Rather, it will be said that, given the sequel, it would be preferable to admit that there were really two concurrent lives of the same person all along; it was simply that this was not obvious until the separation of the two cerebral hemispheres. (So, on this latter interpretation, my original description of what happened was mistaken: at no time were the two cerebral hemispheres jointly sustaining a single set of experiences).

Whatever the relative merits of these alternative descriptions, neither

appears to me to be absurd or self-contradictory. The cerebrum splitting example, then, does not expose a logical incoherence in our distinction between persons and their lives.

Equally, no incoherence need be generated in the case where teletransportation leads to several concurrent lives of the same person. Say that teletransporting a given person, as he appears in a life on Earth, were to result in two concurrent lives, one on Mars and the other on Venus. We could deal with such cases along the lines of the first of the two possible ways that I suggested for the cerebrum splitting example. That is, we could take it that what began as a single partial life of a person (on Earth) has ended in two partial lives of the same person (one on Mars and the other on Venus). Consequently, it would not follow that because a pair of onlookers each witnessed a full life of the given person, incorporating the partial life on Earth, they both witnessed the *same* full life. It would not follow because they may have witnessed different partial lives of the given person after teletransportation. And if they did, one of the onlookers would have witnessed the full life which ended on Mars and the other would have witnessed the full life which ended on Venus. Nonetheless, both full lives would have been those of one and the same person.

III

Finally, I turn to a more general criticism of my argument: 'By distinguishing, in the way that you have, selves or subjects from their lives, you are suggesting that we consider ourselves to be *abstract entities*. We could not possibly think of ourselves in this way'. If the implication is that the distinction, as I have drawn it, between ourselves and our lives is a dehumanising or restricting one, then it seems to me the very opposite of the truth. After all, in making the distinction between a piece of music and its performances, we do not thereby have a less complete or vital appreciation of the music than if we had concentrated on one performance alone, treating that as identical with the work. Rather, in comparing and contrasting different performances of a given piece of music, we grasp much more about the music than we could have appreciated from any single performance. Similarly, within a given life, it should be possible for

each of us to come to a much fuller and deeper understanding of ourselves from the knowledge of how, in earlier lives, we have acted. Hence, in distinguishing between selves and their possible lives, I am certainly not treating each of us as lacking the capacity, when realized in a particular life, for actively determining how that life will be led. On the contrary, with the greatly increased *self*-knowledge, which can be acquired from a study of our earlier lives, each of us should be in a far better position to enrich our present life as well as those others.

Agreed, any object, whether natural or manmade, *can* be seen as an instance of a type. However, particular mountains and chairs (for instance) are not thought of as *directing* their own histories, and certainly not in significant ways. A particular mountain may be weathered by natural forces: when this occurs, we do not suppose that it can be seen as responsible for directing the outcome, even if that outcome should turn out to be of some consequence. On the other hand, where an existent's development can be seen both as significant and as primarily self-directed then the kind of distinction that I have drawn between persons and their lives is appropriate. For, here, a subject's fundamental nature can fruitfully be seen as *transcending* the circumstances of its present appearance in the sense that, under other circumstances, the subject (whose fundamental nature it is) can be held responsible for further important and/or interestingly different outcomes. (Musical works are, of course, manmade. But, as a result of the *artist's* creativity, each is conceived to possess a nature which is, to a considerable extent, responsible for how that work is performed).

We can now bring into sharper relief an important feature of this defence of a separately existing self or subject. By distinguishing between the self and the way its lives develop, we can conceive of the subject as possessing greater scope for regulating its future actions than is allowed for in traditional compatibilist accounts of freedom. This is so because, by coming to appreciate the structure of its own fundamental nature (from studying its past lives), the subject can come self-consciously to influence the way this fundamental nature is manifested in its present and future lives. Once the subject's fundamental nature has been created, nothing in the temporal world

can affect *it* (it is a timeless entity) yet, on the basis of a knowledge of how this nature has manifested itself in past lives, the subject can have additional responsibility for the development of its present and future lives. Of course, the way the subject directs any of these lives is still causally determined. However, it will be causally determined, not only by the circumstances in which the subject then finds itself and by its own fundamental nature, but by the subject's appreciation of *how* this nature has been manifested in earlier lives, under similar and different circumstances. A careful study of these earlier lives will provide the subject with a decisive opportunity for directing its present life in more fulfilling and worthwhile ways than would otherwise be the case. I take it that this gives to the subject a degree of self-determination over its own actions that we nowadays lack, but regard as highly desirable (as is shown in such familiar expressions as 'If only I had my life over again, knowing what I now do about myself').

But, it may be said, this response to the criticism that I am turning each of us into an abstract entity crucially depends on the belief that we each come to sense experience with a different fundamental nature. Perhaps we do not; perhaps the differences in our innate cognitive, conative and affective capacities are not, in general, significant. It is nurture (early sense experience), not nature that accounts for all, or virtually all, of the main variations in the lives of different subjects. In our present state of knowledge, I take it that this claim must be admitted as possible, even if it is not very plausible. But I do not think that, if this possibility actually obtains, it vitiates the point of my response. I have been urging that we conceive of ourselves as each possessing a distinct mix of abilities and dispositions that we bring to sense experience and which defines us as individual selves. In a given life, our fundamental nature interacts, for better or worse, with our sense experiences (thereby giving rise to our particular objectives in that life); and its realization may be seriously impaired in old age or by disease. It is because we have this conception of ourselves that partially accounts, I suggest, for the reluctance of those who, while rejecting a Cartesian-style immaterial substance, are yet unwilling to accept that our identity is reducible to, or just consists in, a series of causally connected experiences and/or bodily continuities.

If the belief that each of us comes to sense experience with a different fundamental nature is mistaken, then the idea that we ought to distinguish between ourselves and our lives should, indeed, be given up. We would be left with the psychological reductionist series of causally connected mental events as all that importantly individuates us. But is this sufficient to count as the true view of our identity? Or would we then have thrown out so much that we think of as definitive of ourselves, that we should more properly conceive of reductionism not as giving us the justified kernel of the concept of our identity but as expressing scepticism about that concept's application? It is difficult to see how our concept can be thought to apply if no series of causally related mental events can be seen as emerging from some *specific* nature that significantly helps to shape what is valuable in our lives. If there is nothing importantly distinct from that series of mental events, so that we can think that, under other circumstances, the subject of those events could live another life which is recognizably an expression of that *individual* subject (and not merely an expression of practically *any* human subject), then what is central to our belief in the self does seem to me to have no application. In which case, while reductionism may well have given us all that we can justifiably extract from the concept of our identity, it would be that theory which could more properly be said to be treating the self or subject as an abstract entity. All human lives would be, in effect, the lives of the same subject, whose fundamental nature we all share. *I* – understood as an individual subject of experiences, distinguishable from others – would not, in reality, exist and so could not be bringing anything that is original or unique to any life that is thought of as mine; and, of course, a parallel point goes for everyone else, including those who make the deepest impression upon us.

On the not unreasonable assumption, however, that we do each possess distinguishable fundamental natures and, hence, that the concept of our identity really does have application, we should not throw out our central belief that the subject of experiences is a separately existing entity. To do so would be unjustifiably to deny that each of us is something over and above any particular body and/or series of interrelated mental events. The conceivability of physical replication has not only shown us how we could

genuinely survive any given life, it has also shown us how we could gain a profounder grasp of what, for each of us, our existence does truly consist in.

ⁱ Two of its leading exponents are Sydney Shoemaker and Derek Parfit. See particularly S. Shoemaker 'Personal Identity: A Materialist Account', in S. Shoemaker and R. Swinburne *Personal Identity*, Blackwell: 1984, and *The First Person Perspective and Other Essays*, Cambridge University Press: 1996; D. Parfit 'Personal Identity', *Philosophical Review* Vol. 80 (1971), *Reasons and Persons* (Part III), Oxford University: 1984, and 'The Unimportance of Identity' in *Identity*, Henry Harris (ed.), Oxford University Press: 1995.

ⁱⁱ See especially W. R. Carter 'How to Change Your Mind', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 19 (1989); Paul Snowdon 'Persons, Animals, and Ourselves', in *The Person and the Human Mind*, C. Gill (ed.), Oxford University Press: 1990; Eric Olson *The Human Animal: Personal Identity without Psychology*, Oxford University Press: 1997, and 'An Argument for Animalism', in *Personal Identity*, R. Martin and J. Barresi (eds), Blackwell: 2003.

ⁱⁱⁱ For ease of exposition, I am at present only considering cases where, over a given period, replication makes possible a *single* or *non-branching* series of causally related experiences. Examples where two or more such series exist synchronically will be taken up in the next section.

^{iv} It might be claimed that this cannot be a correct inference since, if it were, we would *already* speak of twins, not as different persons but as the manifestation of two lives of the same person. But the production of genuinely *identical* (monozygotic) twins – and, hence, twins capable of sharing the same fundamental nature – is not only a comparative rarity, more importantly, it is also (from our point of view) very much a hit and miss affair. We do not now possess a reliable method of encoding a fundamental nature and, from it, producing a replica; nor is this something that, so far as I am aware, has been previously suggested as a thought experiment. In this respect, the situation may be compared with musical performances before we conceived of the possibility of a reliable method of encoding musical sounds. One can imagine that players did occasionally manage closely to reproduce an earlier performance, so that in such cases we could talk of identical, or near identical, performances. But without some plausible conception of a reliable means of replicating such phenomena, there would be no sufficient reason for thinking of these performances as instances of one and the same piece of music. (Indeed, unlike the analogous case of persons, it is not clear that we would already have the idea of a piece of music as itself possessing some intrinsic nature which is expressed in a performance). However, once we have conceived of a reliable method of encoding, and thereby of reproducing, musical sounds, we can justifiably distinguish between a musical work and *its* possible performances. Similarly with persons, it is the conception of a reliable means of replication, together with the already existing idea of ourselves as each possessing a fundamental nature, that makes it both natural and justifiable to distinguish between persons and their possible lives. Moreover, the biological generation of genuinely identical twins yields two qualitatively identical bodies existing *at the same time*. This makes it more difficult now to appreciate that, if we did possess a reliable method for encoding a fundamental nature and synchronically replicating the body from birth, we would think of there being two lives of the same person, rather than two different persons existing at the same time. For at present, where two identical bodies are found to exist at the same time, we think of them as necessarily different persons; whereas, when such bodies are found to exist at different times, we are quite ready to entertain the possibility that they are identifications of one and the same person. But once we have realized that a reliable replicating process can exist for the production of qualitatively identical bodies at *different* times (as with my current example of telereproduction), and that this enables us justifiably to think of the same person having multiple lives, it becomes easier to appreciate that

what is happening in a reliable case of *synchronic* replication is the production of two lives of the same person, not the reliable production of two different persons.

^v See Parfit *Reasons and Persons*, p. 223 (italics original).

^{vi} If there are any animalists who do deny it, my argument can be seen as urging their *adoption* of the belief in a separately existing self or subject of experiences. For animalists certainly agree with psychological reductionists concerning what is *valuable* about our survival; and, as I shall maintain in section III, this value will be *enriched* if the belief in a separately existing self is retained (or adopted).