

## WHAT DOES MATTER

## 95. LIBERATION FROM THE SELF

THE truth is very different from what we are inclined to believe. Even if we are not aware of this, most of us are Non-Reductionists. If we considered my imagined cases, we would be strongly inclined to believe that our continued existence is a deep further fact, distinct from physical and psychological continuity, and a fact that must be all-or-nothing. This belief is not true.

Is the truth depressing? Some may find it so. But I find it liberating, and consoling. When I believed that my existence was a such a further fact, I seemed imprisoned in myself. My life seemed like a glass tunnel, through which I was moving faster every year, and at the end of which there was darkness. When I changed my view, the walls of my glass tunnel disappeared. I now live in the open air. There is still a difference between my life and the lives of other people. But the difference is less. Other people are closer. I am less concerned about the rest of my own life, and more concerned about the lives of others.

When I believed the Non-Reductionist View, I also cared more about my inevitable death. After my death, there will no one living who will be me. I can now redescribe this fact. Though there will later be many experiences, none of these experiences will be connected to my present experiences by chains of such direct connections as those involved in experience-memory, or in the carrying out of an earlier intention. Some of these future experiences may be related to my present experiences in less direct ways. There will later be some memories about my life. And there may later be thoughts that are influenced by mine, or things done as the result of my advice. My death will break the more direct relations between my present experiences and future experiences, but it will not break various other relations. This is all there is to the fact that there will be no one living who will be me. Now that I have seen this, my death seems to me less bad.

Instead of saying, 'I shall be dead', I should say, 'There will be no future experiences that will be related, in certain ways, to these present experiences'. Because it reminds me what this fact involves, this redescription makes this fact less depressing. Suppose next that I must undergo some ordeal. Instead of saying, 'The person suffering will be me', I

should say, 'There will be suffering that will be related, in certain ways, to these present experiences'. Once again, the redescribed fact seems to me less bad.

I can increase these effects by vividly imagining that I am about to undergo one of the operations I have described. I imagine that I am in a central case in the Combined Spectrum, where it is an empty question whether I am about to die. It is very hard to believe that this question could be empty. When I review the arguments for this belief, and convince myself, this for a while stuns my natural concern for my future. When my actual future will be grim—as it would be if I shall be tortured, or shall face a firing squad at dawn—it will be good that I have this way of briefly stunning my concern.

After Hume thought hard about his arguments, he was thrown into 'the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness'.<sup>54</sup> The cure was to dine and play backgammon with his friends. Hume's arguments supported total scepticism. This is why they brought darkness and utter loneliness. The arguments for Reductionism have on me the opposite effect. Thinking hard about these arguments removes the glass wall between me and others. And, as I have said, I care less about my death. This is merely the fact that, after a certain time, none of the experiences that will occur will be related, in certain ways, to my present experiences. Can this matter all that much?

#### 96. THE CONTINUITY OF THE BODY

Because it affects my emotions in these ways, I am glad that the Reductionist View is true. This is simply a report of psychological effects. The effects on others may be different.

There are several other questions still to be discussed. And in discussing these I can do more than report facts about my reactions. The answers to these questions partly depend on the force of certain arguments. I shall first discuss what, as Reductionists, we ought to claim to be what matters. I shall then ask how, if we have changed our view about the nature of personal identity, we ought to change our beliefs about rationality, and about morality.

As the case of My Division shows, personal identity is not what matters. It is merely true that, in most cases, personal identity coincides with what matters. What does matter *in the way in which* personal identity is, mistakenly, thought to matter? What is it rational to care about, in our concern about our own future?

This question can be restated. Assume, for simplicity, that it could be rational to be concerned only about one's own self-interest. Suppose that I am an Egoist, and that I could be related in one of several ways to some

resulting person. What is the relation that would justify egoistic concern about this resulting person? If the rest of this person's life will be well worth living, in what way should I want to be related to this person? If the rest of his life will be much worse than nothing, in what way should I want *not* to be related to this person? In short, what is the relation that, for an Egoist, should fundamentally matter? This relation will also be what, for *all* of us, should fundamentally matter, in our concern for our own future. But since we may be concerned about the fate of the resulting person, *whatever* his relation is to us, it is clearest to ask what, for an Egoist, should matter.

Here are the simplest answers:

- (1) Physical continuity,
- (2) Relation R with its normal cause,
- (3) R with any reliable cause,
- (4) R with any cause.

R is psychological connectedness and/or continuity, with the right kind of cause. If we decide that R is what matters, we must then consider the relative importance of connectedness and continuity. It might be suggested that what matters is *both* R *and* physical continuity. But this is the same as answer (2), since physical continuity is part of R's normal cause.

Can we defend (1), the claim that only physical continuity matters? Can we claim that, if I shall be physically continuous with some resulting person, this is what matters, even if I shall not be R-related to this person?

Reconsider Williams's example, where the surgeon totally destroys any distinctive kind of psychological continuity. Suppose that this surgeon is about to operate on me, in a painless way, and that the resulting person will have a life that is much worse than nothing. If I was an Egoist, I might regard this prospect as being no worse than a painless death, since I do not care what will happen to the resulting person. I might instead regard this prospect as much worse than death, because I am egoistically concerned about this person's appalling future. Which should my attitude be?

I should be egoistically concerned about this person's future if I could justifiably believe that this person will be *me*, rather than being *someone else* who is merely physically continuous with me. But, as I have argued, this belief is not justified. Williams's example is at the far end of the Psychological Spectrum. Both in the central cases in this Spectrum, and at the far end, there is not a real difference between the resulting person's being me, and his being someone else. These are not two different possibilities, one of which must be true. In Williams's example, the full facts are these. The resulting person will be physically but not psychologically continuous with me. We could call this person me, or call him someone else. On the extended criterion of identity that I prefer, we would call him

someone else. But neither of these descriptions could be a factual mistake. Both are descriptions of the same fact. If we give one of these descriptions in order to imply some view about what matters, our description might be a bad description. It might imply an indefensible view about what matters. But we must decide what matters *before* choosing our description.

Suppose that I accept these claims. And I accept the Reductionist View. Should I be egoistically concerned about the future of this person? Should I be concerned, though I know that the physical continuity cannot cause it to be true, as a further fact, that this person will be me? In deciding what matters, I must here set aside all thoughts about my identity. The question about identity is, here, empty. I must ask whether, *in itself*, physical continuity justifies egoistic concern.

I believe that the answer must be No. As I argued, those who believe in the Physical Criterion cannot plausibly require the continuity of the whole body. It cannot matter whether I receive some transplanted organ, if this organ functions just as well. All that could be claimed to matter is that enough of my brain continues to exist.

Why should the brain be singled out in this way? The answer must be: 'Because the brain is the carrier of psychological continuity, or Relation R'. If this is why the brain is singled out, the continuity of the brain would not matter when it was *not* the carrier of Relation R. The continuity of the brain would here be no more important than the continuity of any other part of the body. And the continuity of these other parts does not matter at all. It would not matter if these other parts were replaced with sufficiently similar duplicates. We should claim the same about the brain. The continuity of the brain matters if it is the cause of the holding of Relation R. If R will *not* hold, the continuity of the brain would have no significance for the person whose brain it originally was. It would not justify egoistic concern. And it would not matter if the brain was replaced with an exact duplicate.<sup>55</sup>

Reductionists cannot plausibly claim that only physical continuity matters. They can at most claim that this continuity is part of what matters. They can at most defend (2), the claim that Relation R would not matter if it did not have its normal cause, part of which is physical continuity.

I believe that (2) is also indefensible. I believe that physical continuity is the least important element in a person's continued existence. What we value, in ourselves and others, is not the continued existence of the same particular brains and bodies. What we value are the various relations between ourselves and others, whom and what we love, our ambitions, achievements, commitments, emotions, memories, and several other psychological features. Some of us would also want ourselves or others to have bodies that are very similar to our present bodies. But this is not wanting the same particular body to continue to exist. I believe that, if there will later be some person who will be R-related to me as I am now, it matters very little whether this person has my present brain and body. I believe that

what fundamentally matters is Relation R, even if it does not have its normal cause.

If some person will be R-related to me, this person's body should also be sufficiently like my present body to allow full psychological connectedness. This would not be true, for example, if this body was of the opposite sex. And for a few people, such as some of those who are very beautiful, there should also be exact physical similarity. These claims about this similarity I shall in future omit.

Whether we accept my view may affect our beliefs and attitudes about our own lives. But the question is clearest in the imagined case of Teletransportation. On my view, my relation to my Replica contains what fundamentally matters. This relation is at worst nearly as good as ordinary survival. Judged from the stand-point of the Non-Reductionist View, ordinary survival is, on my view, little better than being destroyed and having a Replica. It would therefore be irrational to pay much more for a conventional space-ship journey.

Many people would be afraid of Teletransportation. I admit that, at some level, I might be afraid. But, as I have argued, such fear cannot be rational. Since I know exactly what will happen, I cannot fear that the worse of two outcomes will be what happens.

My relation to my Replica is R without its normal cause. The abnormality of the cause seems to me trivial. Reconsider the artificial eyes which would restore sight to those who have gone blind. Suppose that these eyes would give to these people visual sensations just like those involved in normal sight, and that these sensations would provide true beliefs about what can be seen. This would surely be as good as normal sight. It would not be plausible to reject these eyes because they were not the normal cause of human sight. There would be some grounds for disliking artificial eyes, since they would make one's appearance disturbing to others. But there is no analogue to this in Teletransportation. My Replica, though he is artificially produced, will be just like me in every way. He will have a normal brain and body.

Perhaps we should not call my Replica me, because this would violate the requirements I discussed in Section 91. If we make this decision, the case is like My Division. It is a case where there is a best answer to an empty question. In the case of My Division, it is best to say that neither resulting person will be me. But this does not imply that I should regard division as like death. We are not deciding which of several outcomes will be what happens. We are merely choosing one of several descriptions of a single outcome. Since this is so, our choice of one description is irrelevant to the question of how I should regard this outcome.

The same is true in the case in which I shall be Teletransported. My attitude to this outcome should not be affected by our decision whether to call my Replica me. I know the full facts even if we have not yet made this decision. If we do decide not to call my Replica me, the fact

(a) that my Replica will not be me

would just consist in the fact

(b) that there will not be physical continuity,

and

(c) that, because this is so, R will not have its normal cause.

Since (a) would just consist in (b) and (c), I should ignore (a). My attitude should depend on the importance of facts (b) and (c). These facts are all there is to my Replica's not being me.

When we see that this last claim is true, we cannot rationally, I believe, claim that (c) matters much. It cannot matter much that the cause is abnormal. It is the *effect* which matters. And this effect, the holding of Relation R, is in itself the same. It is true that, if this effect has the abnormal cause, we can describe the effect in a different way. We can say that, though my Replica is psychologically continuous with me, he will not be me. But this is not a further difference in what happens, beyond the difference in the cause. If I decide not to press the button, and to pay much more for a conventional space-ship journey, I must admit that this is merely because I do not like the thought of an abnormal method of causation. It cannot be rational to care much about the abnormality of this cause.

Similar remarks apply to the continued existence of one's present brain and body. It may be rational to want the body of my Replica to be like my present body. But this is a desire for a certain kind of body, not a desire for the same particular body. Why should I want it to be true that *this* brain and body gets to Mars? Once again, the natural fear is that only this ensures that *I* shall get to Mars. But this again assumes that whether or not I get to Mars is, here, a real question. And we have been forced to conclude that it is an empty question. Even if this question has a best answer, we could know exactly what will happen before deciding what this answer is. Since this is so, can I rationally care a great deal whether or not this person's brain and body will be my present brain and body? I believe that, while it may not be irrational to care a little, to care a great deal would be irrational.

Why would it not be irrational to care a little? This could be like one's wish to keep the same wedding ring, rather than a new ring that is exactly similar. We understand the sentimental wish to keep the very ring that was involved in the wedding ceremony. In the same way, it may not be irrational to have a mild preference that the person on Mars have my present brain and body.

There remains one question. If there will be some person who will be R-related to me, would it matter if this relation did not have a reliable cause?

There is an obvious reason for preferring, in advance, that the cause will be reliable. Suppose that Teletransportation worked perfectly in a few cases,

but in most cases was a complete failure. In a few cases, the person on Mars would be a perfect Replica of me. But in most cases he would be totally unlike me. If these were the facts, it would clearly be rational to pay the larger fare of a space-ship journey. But this is irrelevant. We should ask, 'In the few cases, where my Replica will be fully R-related to me, would it matter that R did not have a reliable cause?'

I believe that the answer must again be No. Suppose that there is an unreliable treatment for some disease. In most cases the treatment achieves nothing. But in a few cases it completely cures this disease. In these few cases, only the effect matters. The effect is just as good, even though its cause was unreliable. We should claim the same about Relation R. I conclude that, of the answers I described, we should accept (4). In our concern about our own future, *what fundamentally matters is relation R, with any cause.*

#### 97. THE BRANCH-LINE CASE

Teletransportation would, I have argued, be about as good as ordinary survival. Another challenge to this claim comes from the Branch-Line Case. Suppose that the New Scanner has not destroyed my brain and body, but has damaged my heart. I am here on Earth, and expect to die within a few days. Using the Intercom, I see and talk to my Replica on Mars. He assures me that he will continue my life where I leave off.

What should my attitude here be? I am about to die. Does my relation to *this* Replica contain what matters? He is fully psychologically continuous, not with me as I am now, but with me as I was this morning, when I pressed the green button. Is this relation about as good as survival?

It may be hard to believe that it is. But it is also hard to believe that it can matter much whether my life briefly overlaps with the life of my Replica.

It may help to consider

*The Sleeping Pill.* Certain actual sleeping pills cause *retrograde* amnesia. It can be true that, if I take such a pill, I shall remain awake for an hour, but after my night's sleep I shall have no memories of the second half of this hour.

I have in fact taken such pills, and found out what the results are like. Suppose that I took such a pill nearly an hour ago. The person who wakes up in my bed tomorrow will not be psychologically continuous with me as I am now. He will be psychologically continuous with me as I was half an hour ago. I am now on a *psychological branch-line*, which will end soon when I fall asleep. During this half-hour, I am psychologically continuous with myself in the past. But I am not now psychologically continuous with myself in the future. I shall never later remember what I do or think or feel during this half-hour. This means that, in some respects, my relation to myself

tomorrow is like a relation to another person.

Suppose, for instance, that I have been worrying about some practical question. I now see the solution. Since it is clear what I should do, I form a firm intention. In the rest of my life, it would be enough to form this intention. But, when I am on this psychological branch-line, this is not enough. I shall not later remember what I have now decided, and I shall not wake up with the intention that I have now formed. I must therefore communicate with myself tomorrow as if I was communicating with someone else. I must write myself a letter, describing my decision, and my new intention. I must then place this letter where I am bound to notice it tomorrow.

I do not in fact have any memories of making such a decision, and writing such a letter. But I did once find such a letter underneath my razor.

This case is in one way like the Branch-Line Case. And it would be just like a variant of this case, in which though I live for a few days after leaving the cubicle, my Replica would not be created until after I have died. But, in the case that we are considering, my life overlaps with that of my Replica. We talk on the Intercom. There is no analogue to this in the case of the Sleeping Pill.

The analogue can be found in my imagined Physics Exam. In this case I divide my mind for ten minutes. In both of my streams of consciousness, I know that I am now having thoughts and sensations in my other stream. But in each stream I am unaware of my thoughts and sensations in my other stream. My relation to myself in my other stream is again like my relation to another person. I would have to communicate in a public way. I might in one stream write a letter to myself in my other stream. With one hand I would then place this letter in my other hand.

This is like my situation in the Branch-Line Case. I can imagine having a divided mind. Since this is so, I need not assume that my Replica on Mars is someone else. Here on Earth, I am not aware of what my Replica on Mars is now thinking. This is like the fact that, in each of my two streams of my consciousness in the Physics Exam, I am not aware of what, in my other stream, I am now thinking. I can believe that I do now have another other stream of consciousness, of which, in this stream, I am now unaware. And, if it helps, I can take this view about my Replica. I can say that I now have two streams of consciousness, one here on Earth, and another on Mars. This description cannot be a factual mistake. When I talk to my Replica on Mars, this is merely like the communication in the Physics Exam between myself in my two streams.

The actual case of the Sleeping Pill provides a close analogy to one of the special features of the Branch-Line Case: the fact that I am on a psychological branch-line. The imagined Physics Exam provides a close analogy to the other special feature: that my life overlaps with that of my

Replica. When we consider these analogies, this seems enough to defend the claim that, when I am on the Branch-Line, my relation to my Replica contains almost everything that matters. It may be slightly inconvenient that my Replica will be psychologically continuous, not with me as I am now, but with me as I was this morning when I pressed the green button. But these relations are substantially the same. It makes little difference that my life briefly overlaps with that of my Replica.

If the overlap was large, this *would* make a difference. Suppose that I am about to die, but shall have a surviving Replica. When this Replica started to exist forty years ago, he was psychologically continuous with me as I was then. And he has since lived his own life for forty years. I would agree that my relation to *this* Replica, though better than ordinary death, is not nearly as good as ordinary survival. But this relation would be about as good if my Replica is psychologically continuous with me as I was ten minutes or ten seconds ago. As Nozick argues, overlaps as brief as this cannot be rationally thought to have much significance.<sup>56</sup>

Though my two analogies seem enough to defend this claim, I admit that this is one of the cases where my view is hardest to believe. *Before* I press the green button, I can more easily believe that my relation to my Replica contains what fundamentally matters in ordinary survival. I can look forward down the Main Line where there are forty years of life ahead. *After* I have pressed the green button, and have talked to my Replica, I cannot in the same way look forward down the Main Line. My concern for the future needs to be redirected. I must try to direct this concern backwards up the Branch Line beyond the point of division, and then forward down the Main Line. This psychological manoeuvre would be difficult. But this is not surprising. And, since it is not surprising, this difficulty does not provide a sufficient argument against what I and Nozick claim about this case.

#### 98. SERIES-PERSONS

I have denied that personal identity is what matters. On my view, what fundamentally matters, in our concern about our own future, is the holding of Relation R, with any cause. This would be what matters even when it does not coincide with personal identity.

On Nagel's view, what I am essentially is my brain. And what fundamentally matters is the continued existence of this brain. I believe that I answer Nagel's arguments in Appendix K. But this belief may be false. It is therefore worth explaining how Nagel's view and a revised form of mine could both be true.

Suppose that Nagel's view is true. What fundamentally matters, for me, is the continued existence of my brain. Since on Nagel's view I am essentially my brain, I cannot decide to take a different view about myself. But I can do something else.

Nagel describes the concept of a *series-person*. While a person is, on

Nagel's view, essentially a particular embodied brain, a series-person is essentially an R-related series of embodied brains. We cannot now solve the problem that our bodies age, and decay. Nagel imagines a community in which technology provides a solution. In this community, everyone over the age of 30 enters a Scanning Replicator once in every year. This machine destroys a person's brain and body, and produces a Replica who is R-related to this person, and who has a body that is exactly similar except that it has not aged or decayed. Nagel claims that, for the series-persons in this community, it would not be irrational to use this Scanning Replicator. On their criterion of identity, each of these series-persons would continue to exist, moving to a new brain and body every year. Each series-person would always have a brain and body that have the youth, appearance, and vigour of his brain and body when he was 30.

These series-persons might have fatal accidents. I therefore add the detail that, as a precaution, each has a blueprint made every day. With this addition, these series-persons are potentially immortal, and could have eternal youth. On most theories that are now accepted, the Universe will either expand indefinitely, or collapse back in a reversal of the Big Bang. Most physicists assume that, on either alternative, all forms of life will become impossible. If this were not true, these series-persons could live for ever.<sup>57</sup>

Assume that I accept Nagel's view. I am essentially my brain, and what fundamentally matters, in my concern for my future, is the continued existence of this brain. If I accept this view, I would have been reluctantly driven to this conclusion. I much preferred my old view. Though I cannot change my view about what I am, I can do the following. You are now reading sentences that I typed in November 1982. This sentence tells you that, in the rest of this book, *pronouns are used to refer to series-persons*. If Nagel's view is false, this may not change what pronouns mean. Every person may be a series-person. This would be so on the extended criterion of identity that I prefer: Relation R with any cause. This is also the criterion of identity of series-persons.

If Nagel's view is true, the rest of this book uses pronouns in a new sense. They refer, not to persons, but to series-persons. Thus the words 'I' and 'me' do not refer to the person, Derek Parfit. They refer to the series-person whose present brain and body is also Derek Parfit's brain and body. Since the words 'I' and 'me' are used in this new sense, their old sense is expressed with the words 'Old-I' and 'old-me'. Similar remarks apply to the other pronouns.

On Nagel's view, what is the relation between old-me and me the series-person? It may help to remember a mythical being: a phoenix. On the criterion of the identity of birds, a bird ceases to exist if it is burnt to ashes. If a phoenix existed, it would not be a bird, but a series-person. If a phoenix

birds, or a *series-bird*. A phoenix would at any time have the body of a particular bird. But when this bird is burnt to ashes, only the bird ceases to exist. The phoenix comes to life again in the body of a new bird, rising from the ashes. Like a particular series-person, a particular phoenix would thus have a series of different bodies.

No phoenix has ever existed. But there are many series-persons. These sentences are being typed by a series-person, me. They are also being typed by a person: old-me. This person is named Derek Parfit. I the series-person hereby name myself *Phoenix Parfit*. Since my present body is also Derek Parfit's body, both of us are typing these sentences. And both of us are having the very same thoughts and experiences. But though we are now related in this extremely intimate way, *if* Nagel's view is true, we are two different individuals. The difference between us is this. On Nagel's view, if Old-I was Teletransported, this would kill old-me, the person. But it would not kill me, the series-person. This difference is enough to make old-me and me different individuals. This is shown by the case in which we melt a bronze statue. Though this statue is composed of this piece of bronze, they are not the same thing. If we melt this metal, the statue ceases to exist, but the piece of bronze continues to exist.

You may doubt whether I, this series-person, really do exist. You may believe that beings cannot be caused to exist merely by the invention of a new concept. This is true. I was not caused to exist either by Nagel's invention of the concept of a series-person, or by the typing of the sentences above that may have given new meanings to 'I' and 'me'. Given what is meant by the concept 'series-person', I the series-person started to exist when Old-I the person started to exist. And it is very probable that both will cease to exist at the same time. This is very probable because it is most unlikely that, within the life-time of Old-I, Teletransportation will become possible.

Languages develop. When we invent a new concept, we may find that it applies to parts of reality. The concept of a phoenix applies to nothing. But the concept of a series-person applies just as often as the concept of a person. Whether or not Nagel's view is true, there now exist several billion series-persons. If Nagel's view is true, for every person who exists, there is a series-person who exists, and who is *very* closely related to this person. Given this extremely close relation, the distinction between these individuals is hardly ever worth drawing. It is worth drawing only at this point in my discussion about what matters. I am supposing that Nagel's view is true. I am supposing that what fundamentally matters for old-me is the continued existence of my present brain. Even if we believe this, we can still believe that the continued existence of our present brains is *not* what matters. We can claim that what matters is Relation R. This is what matters *for us, the series-persons*.

With some new concept we can sometimes give a better description of

reality. This was true of the concepts of an atom, and a molecule. This kind of improvement is straightforward. If Nagel's view is true, the concept of a series-person also makes possible a better description of reality. But this improvement is not so straightforward. The concept of a series-person does not merely enable the same beings to give a better description of reality. It enables *different* beings both to proclaim their existence and to give this better description.

Nagel mentions a third concept, that of a *day-person*. Such a person's existence necessarily involves an uninterrupted stream of consciousness. For day-persons, sleep is death. When we consider this concept we again find that it applies to reality. At any time there are as many day-persons living as there are conscious persons living. But during a whole year the number of day-persons who have lived will greatly exceed the number of persons living.

The concept of a day-person is worse than the concept of a person. This is because what matters is not the uninterruptedness of a stream of consciousness. What matters is Relation R. Though it applies to reality, the concept of a day-person picks out parts of reality with unimportant boundaries. We believe, plausibly, that it does not matter if there are interruptions in a stream of consciousness. This does not matter because these interruptions do not destroy psychological continuity.

If Nagel's view is true, what matters to a person is the continued existence of a particular brain. But if we ask what is important about ourselves, and our lives, and our relations with each other, the continued existence of particular brains does not seem to be what matters. Rather, as I have claimed, what is more important is Relation R, psychological connectedness and/or continuity, with any cause. If this is so, and Nagel's view is true, the concept of a person is worse than the concept of a series-person, and worse in a similar way. On Nagel's view, what matters for a person is the continued existence of his present brain. What matters for a series-person is Relation R, with any cause. The concept of a series-person is better, because it appeals to what is more important.

A person cannot deny that he is a person. And, if Nagel's view is true, a person cannot turn himself into a series-person. But a series-person can start to speak through the mouth that both share. This series-person can proclaim his existence, give himself a name, and claim that all the pronouns that he writes or utters will refer to series-persons. All other series-persons could do the same. All future human lives would then be lived by beings who regard themselves as series-persons. These lives would also be lived by persons. But persons would now have a subordinate role, since they would seldom refer to old-themselves.

If Nagel's view is not true, the events that I have just described may make no difference. Our beliefs about the criterion of identity may fail to cover a few actual cases, such as those of people with divided hemispheres. And these beliefs clearly fail to cover many imaginary cases. Since people are not

eparately existing entities, distinct from their brains and bodies and their experiences, questions about personal identity are, in these imaginary cases, empty. In these cases we can *give* answers to these questions, thereby extending our beliefs about the criterion of personal identity. As I have argued, the best extension would make this criterion the non-branching holding of Relation R, with any cause. On this criterion, persons *are* series-persons. The distinction drawn above disappears.

If Nagel's view is true, I cannot make these claims. On his view, each person is essentially his brain, and what fundamentally matters, for each person, is the continued existence of this brain. If this is so, persons are not series-persons. The events that I described above *would* make a difference. If all series-persons proclaimed their existence, and began to use pronouns to refer to themselves, this would be an improvement. Every series-person is very closely related to a particular person. It would be better if, in each such pair, the series-person took the leading role. The concept of a series-person picks out parts of reality in a less arbitrary way. We the series-persons can deny that what matters is, for us, the continued existence of our brains. We can claim that, as I have argued, what fundamentally matters is Relation R, with any cause.

#### 99. AM I A TOKEN OR A TYPE?

Williams considers a case in which a person would have many co-existing Replicas. And he suggests a new description of this kind of case. He describes the concept of a *person-type*. Suppose there is some particular person, Mary Smith. And suppose that the Scanning Replicator produces many Replicas of Mary Smith, as she is at a particular time. These Replicas will all be Mary Smiths. They will be different *tokens*, or instances, of the same person-type. If such a case occurred, there would be several questions about what matters. Assume that the case involves the old Scanner, which destroys Mary Smith's original brain and body. Before she presses the green button, what should Mary Smith believe about her relation to her future Replicas? Is what matters that her present brain continues to exist? Or will it be about as good if there will later be living tokens of her type?

This is the question about what ought to matter to the original Mary Smith. Williams does not discuss this question. But he writes intriguingly about another question:

Since we are not supposing that the token-persons, once printed off from the prototype, have intercommunicating experiences . . . they will be divergently affected by different experiences, and will tend to get increasingly dissimilar. Looked at as copies of the prototype, they will become copies which are increasingly blurred or written over; looked at in their own right, they will become increasingly individual personalities. This might be welcomed. For someone who loved one of these token-persons might well love her not because she was a Mary Smith, but despite the fact that she was a Mary Smith. . . The more the *Mary Smiths* diverged, the more

secure the hold the lover might feel he had on what particularly he loved.

If someone loved a token person just as a Mary Smith, then it might well be unclear that the token-person was really what he loved. What he loves is *Mary Smith*, and that is to love the type-person. We can see dimly what this would be like. It would be like loving a work of art in some reproducible medium. One might start comparing, as it were, performances of the type; and wanting to be near the person one loved would be like wanting very much to hear some performance, even an indifferent one, of *Figaro*—just as one will go to the scratch provincial performance of *Figaro* rather than hear no *Figaro* at all, so one would see the very run-down Mary Smith who was in the locality, rather than see no Mary Smith at all.

Much of what we call loving a person would begin to crack under this, and reflection on it may encourage us not to undervalue the deeply body-based situation we actually have. While in the present situation of things to love a person is not exactly the same as to love a body, perhaps to say that they are basically the same is more grotesquely misleading than it is a deep metaphysical error; and if it does not sound very high-minded, the alternatives that so briskly grow out of suspending the present situation do not sound too spiritual, either.<sup>58</sup>

Is loving a person basically the same as loving that person's body? Williams admits that this claim is 'grotesquely misleading'; but he suggests that it is better than any alternative. And he warns us not to undervalue 'the deeply body-based situation that we actually have'. A different situation, where persons would have many co-existing Replicas, would threaten much of what we value.

I believe that we should accept this last claim. But we should not claim that loving a person is basically the same as loving that person's body. There *is* a better alternative. And another distinction should be drawn.

Williams may have reasoned as follows. Unless what I love is a particular body, I cannot love an individual. Suppose that I love the original Mary Smith. A machine destroys her brain and body, and produces a Replica. If my love for Mary Smith is transferred to her Replica, this suggests that what I love is not an individual but a person-type. And if we consider what such love involves, what we find is disturbing.

I agree that such love would be very different, and disturbing. But I reject the reasoning just given.

We should consider *two* kinds of imaginary case. One is the community that Nagel imagined. In this community, though there is replication, Relation R never takes a branching form. After she is 30, Mary Smith uses the youth-preserving Replicator once a year, as do many other individuals. If such machines existed, it would be *possible* to produce several co-existing Replicas of a single individual. But we can suppose that, in this imagined community, the individuals decide not to bring about this possibility. For the kinds of reason that I described in Section 90, and that Williams better expresses, these individuals believe that division is not quite as good as ordinary survival.

Suppose that I am a person who has moved into this different community. I fall in love with Mary Smith. How should I react after she has first used the Replicator? I believe both that I would and that I *ought* to love her Replica. This is not the 'ought' of morality. On the best conception of the best kind of love, I ought to love this individual. She is fully psychologically continuous with the Mary Smith I loved, and she has an exactly similar body. If I do not love Mary Smith's Replica, this could only be for one of several bad reasons.

One reason might be that I believe the Non-Reductionist View. I believe that personal identity is a deep further fact, which would not be produced by Replication. I do not love Mary Smith's Replica, because I believe that, in this deep way, she is not Mary Smith. This reaction is unjustified, since there is no such further fact.

Suppose next that I accept the Reductionist View. But I believe that replication is nearly as bad as ordinary death. When Mary Smith presses the green button, my reaction is grief. Perhaps I can later come to love Mary Smith's Replica. But given my belief about the badness of what happened to Mary Smith, my love cannot be simply transferred, without grief.

As I have argued, this reaction is also unjustified. On the true Reductionist View, we should regard replication as being about as good as ordinary survival. Since Mary Smith chose to be replicated, we can assume that this is her view. On this view my love should be transferred to her Replica. Moreover, in this imagined community, the individuals are, and believe themselves to be, series-persons. Since this is so, Mary Smith's Replica *is* Mary Smith.

If my love is not transferred, there could be two further explanations. Williams suggests that loving a person is, basically, loving a particular body. But this kind of love, or lust, is at most extremely uncommon. What is more common is a purely physical or sexual obsession with a person's body, an obsession that is not concerned with the psychology of this person. But this is *not* love of a particular body. As Quinton writes, in the case of such obsessions, 'no particular human body is required, only one of a more or less precisely demarcated kind'.<sup>59</sup> Suppose that I was physically obsessed with Mary Smith's body. This obsession would transfer to Mary Smith's Replica. This would be like a case in which the body with which I am obsessed is that of an identical twin. If this person dies, my obsession could be transferred to the body of the other twin.

Ordinary love could not be so transferred. Such love is concerned with the psychology of the person loved, and with this person's continuously changing mental life. And loving someone is a process, not a fixed state. Mutual love involves a shared history. This is why, if I have loved Mary Smith for many months or years, her place cannot be simply taken by her identical twin. Things are quite different with her Replica. If I have loved Mary Smith for months or years, her Replica will have full quasi-memories of our shared history.

I have claimed that, if I do not love Mary Smith's Replica, it is unlikely that the explanation is that I loved her particular body. It is doubtful that anyone has such love, or lust. The remaining explanation is that my love has ceased for no reason. No reason is a bad reason. Love can cease like this, but only an inferior kind of love.

I have discussed Nagel's imagined alternative to the actual world. In this alternative, people are often replicated, but there are never two co-existing Replicas of one person. Relation R never takes a branching form. I claim that, in this world, love for a person should transfer directly to this person's Replica. This love should transfer because this person's relation to this Replica contains what fundamentally matters in ordinary survival.

Williams suggests that, in a world with replication, we should distinguish person-types and tokens of these types. But in the world just described, where Relation R always takes a one-one form, this would not be a useful distinction. We would misdescribe what happens if we call each new Replica another token of a person-type. This description ignores what is of most importance, the psychological continuity, and the development of a life. We can better describe what happens in either of two ways.

If Nagel's view is false, our criterion of personal identity could be extended to be the non-branching holding of Relation R. Each individual in Nagel's imagined community would then be a person. These people would move to new bodies once a year. Since it would be Mary Smith who would have these new bodies, love for Mary Smith should be directly transferred. Though people would often change bodies, love for particular people would be quite unthreatened.

If Nagel's view is true, the individuals in this community are not persons. They are, and believe themselves to be, series-persons. The series-person Mary Smith moves to a new body every year. As before, there would be no threat to the kind of love we value. If I love a series-person, I would not be loving a person-type. I would be loving a particular individual, who has a continuous history.

Consider next the other alternative to the actual world: the one that Williams imagined. In this world there are many co-existing Replicas of a single person. Williams's proposed distinction would here be useful. Consider fifty Replicas of Greta Garbo as she was at the age of 30. These would be well-described as different tokens of one person-type. As Williams claims, if the object of love is the person-type, this is very different from ordinary love. This would not be the kind of love which gives great importance to a shared history.

If I lived in such a world, and I was one of a set of Replicas, I might regard myself as a token of a type. Might I instead regard myself as *the type*? This would be a radical change. In one sense of the word 'type', if I

was a person-type, I could not possibly cease to exist. Even if there are not now tokens of my person-type, there would still be this person-type. A person-type would survive even the destruction of the Universe. This is because, in this sense, a type is an abstract entity, like a number. We could not possibly regard ourselves as abstract entities.

On any sense of 'type' there would be a great difference between ordinary love and love of a person-type. The latter kind of love cannot be mutual. I may love some person-type, but this person-type cannot love me. A type cannot love any more than the number nine can love. I cannot be loved by the English Rose, or the New American Woman. What might be true is that love for me is one of the features of some person-type. All of the many tokens of this type would then love me.

If this was true, there might be mutual love between me and one of these token-persons. There might even be mutual love between me and two or three of these persons. But, as Williams claims, this love would lead me away from loving the person-type. I would be led away because of the increasing importance of shared histories.

Return now to Williams's main claims. He suggests that, though it is misleading, there is a profound truth in the claim that loving a person is loving a particular body. And he suggests that if the object of our love was not a particular body, we would be loving a person-type. Such love would be very different from ordinary love, and would be disturbing. It would threaten much of what we value.

I accept this last claim, but I deny the others. Following Quinton, I doubt that anyone loves a particular body. A purely physical obsession is an obsession with a kind of body, or a body-type. As such, it would have the disturbing features of love of a person-type. On the death of one identical twin, this obsession could be transferred, without any grief, to the other twin's body.

I have also denied that, if the object of our love is not a particular body, we must love a person-type. This is best seen in Nagel's imagined alternative to the actual world, in which people are often replicated, but only in a one-one form. In this world Relation R traces lines through many different bodies, but it never takes a branching form. I claim that, in such a world, ordinary love would survive unchanged. If Nagel's view is false, the people in this society would move to new bodies every year, but they would still be particular people. If Nagel's view is true, it would be series-people who would move to new bodies. But love would still be love of a particular individual. A series-person is an individual.

If these claims are correct, I can again keep the view that I have defended. What matters is not the continued existence of a particular body, but Relation R with any cause.

## 100. PARTIAL SURVIVAL

Before considering actual lives, I shall glance at a last flurry of imaginary cases. One is the opposite of division: fusion. Identity is logically one-one, and all-or-nothing. Just as division shows that what matters in survival need not take a one-one form, fusion shows that it can have degrees.

I was discussing artificial fusion when I discussed the central cases in the Combined Spectrum. In these cases, the resulting person would be psychologically connected, and to about the same degree, both to me and to someone else.

We can imagine a world in which fusion was a natural process. Two people come together. While they are unconscious, their two bodies grow into one. One person then wakes up.

This one person could quasi-remember living both of the lives of the two original people. No quasi-memories need be lost. But some things must be lost. Any two people who fuse together would have different characteristics, different desires, and different intentions. How could these be combined?

The answers might be these. Some of these features will be compatible. These would coexist in the one resulting person. Some will be incompatible. These, if of equal strength, would cancel out, and, if of different strengths, the stronger would become weaker. These effects might be as predictable as the laws governing dominant and recessive genes.

Here are some examples. I admire Palladio, and intend to visit Venice. I am about to fuse with someone who admires Giotto, and intends to visit Padua. The one resulting person will have both tastes and both intentions. Since Padua is close to Venice, both can be easily fulfilled. Suppose next that I love Wagner, and always vote for a Socialist. The other person hates Wagner, and always votes for a Conservative. The one resulting person will be a tone-deaf floating voter.

Like division, fusion does not fit the logic of identity. The one resulting person cannot be claimed to be the same person as each of the original two people. The best description is that the resulting person would be neither of these people. But, as the case of division shows, this description does not imply that these people should regard fusion as equivalent to death.

What should their attitude be? If we were about to undergo a fusion of this kind, some of us might regard this as equivalent to death. And this is less absurd than regarding division as equivalent to death. When I divide, the two resulting people will be exactly like me. When I fuse, the one resulting person will not be wholly similar. This makes it easier to think, when faced with fusion, 'I shall not survive', thus continuing to regard survival as being all-or-nothing.

As I have argued, there is no fact involved which is all-or-nothing. The two kinds of connectedness, physical and psychological, could hold to any degree. How should I regard a case in which these relations do hold to reduced degrees?

It might be said: 'Suppose that, between me and some resulting person, there would be about half the ordinary amount of these two relations. This would be about half as good as ordinary survival. If there would be nine-tenths of these ordinary amounts, this would be about nine-tenths as good.'

This view is too crude. In judging the value to me of a particular case of fusion, we must know how close my relation is to the resulting person. We must also know whether this person will have features that I regard as good or bad. The view just described mistakenly ignores this second question.

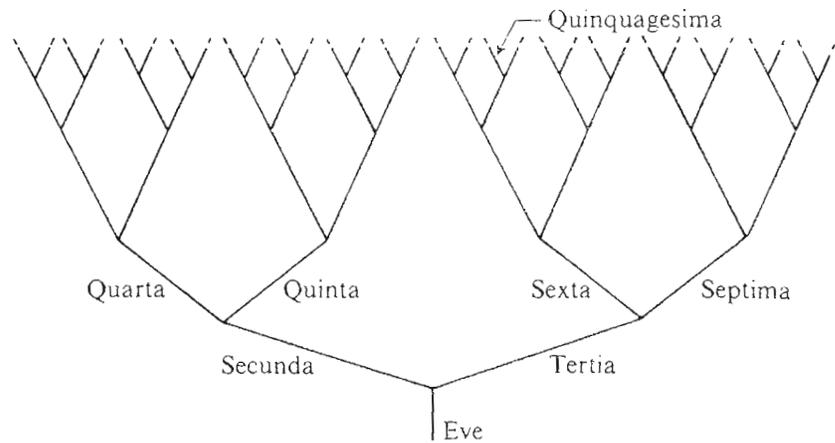
I suggest the following view. The value to me of my relation to a resulting person depends both (1) on my degree of connectedness to this person, and (2) on the value, in my view, of this person's physical and psychological features. Suppose that hypnosis causes me to lose five unwanted features: my untidiness, laziness, fear of flying, nicotine addiction, and all my memories of my wretched life. There is here much less than full psychological connectedness, but this is more than outweighed by the removal of bad features.

Few of us think ourselves perfect. Most of us would welcome several changes in our physical and mental features. If the changes were improvements, we would welcome the partial reduction of both kinds of connectedness. I should avoid fusion if it would predictably involve subtracting features that I value, and adding features that I find repugnant. Suppose that there are only two things that give my life meaning: my struggle for Socialism, and the qualities I find in Wagner. If this is so, I should dread fusion with a Wagner-hating Conservative. Since the resulting person would be a tone-deaf floating voter, my relation to him may be nearly as bad as death. But another case of fusion, while involving as much change, I might regard as better than ordinary survival. I might regard these changes as all improvements. They might all be either adding a feature that I welcome, or removing a feature that I regret. Fusions, like marriages, could be either great successes, or disasters.

Consider next some more imaginary people. These are just like us except for their method of reproduction. Like amoebae, these people reproduce by a process of natural division. The lives of these people may be shown as in the diagram below.

The lines on this diagram represent the spatio-temporal paths that would be traced by the bodies of these people. I call each single line, between two points of division, a *branch*. And the whole structure is the *Tree*. Each branch corresponds to what is thought of as the life of one person. The first person is *Eve*. The next two are *Secunda* and *Tertia*. The fiftieth person down the Tree is *Quinquagesima*.

At the start of their lives, *Secunda* and *Tertia* are fully psychologically connected to *Eve*, as she was just before she divided. As I have argued, *Eve*'s relation to each of these two people is about as good as ordinary



survival. The same claims apply to every other division in the history of this community.

What should we claim about Eve's relation to people who are further down the Tree, such as Quinquagesima?

Eve is psychologically continuous with Quinquagesima. There will be between the two continuous chains of overlapping direct psychological connections. Thus Eve has some quasi-intentions that are carried out by Tertia, who in turn has some quasi-intentions that are carried out by Sexta, and so on down to Quinquagesima. And Quinquagesima can quasi-remember most of the life of her immediate predecessor, who can quasi-remember most of the life of her immediate predecessor, and so on back to Eve.

Though Quinquagesima is psychologically continuous with Eve, there may be between the two no distinctive psychological connectedness. Connectedness requires direct connections. If these people are in other ways like us, Eve cannot be strongly connected to every person in the indefinitely long Tree. With the passage of time, quasi-memories will weaken, and then fade away. Quasi-ambitions, once fulfilled, will be replaced by others. Quasi-characteristics will gradually change. Because of such facts, if some person is further down the Tree, there will be fewer direct connections between this person and Eve. If this person is sufficiently remote, there may be between the two *no* direct and distinctive psychological connections. Assume that this is true of Eve and Quinquagesima.

I write *distinctive* because there would be some kinds of direct connection. Quinquagesima would inherit from Eve many factual memories, such as the fact that she and others reproduce by division. And she would inherit many general abilities, such as how to speak, or swim. But she would not inherit any of the psychological features that distinguish Eve from the other people in this community.

Between Eve and Quinquagesima there is psychological continuity, but

there is no distinctive psychological connectedness. The case raises the question that I mentioned earlier. What is the relative importance of these two relations?

I believe that both relations matter. Others may believe that one matters more than the other. I know of no argument for such a belief. I shall assume that neither relation matters more than the other. This is not the assumption that their importance is exactly equal. To a question like this there could not be an exact answer.

Because it will be important later, I shall consider a different view. On this view, connectedness does not matter. Only continuity matters. If there will later be some person who will be psychologically continuous with me as I am now, it would not matter at all if, between me now and this person, there would be no direct psychological connections.

As I have said, some reductions in connectedness might be welcome, or be improvements. But we cannot defensibly claim that it would not matter if there was no psychological connectedness. Consider first the importance of memory. If our lives have been worth living, most of us value highly our ability to remember many of our past experiences. Suppose I know that I am about to lose all of my present memories of past experiences. This loss of all these memories would not destroy continuity of memory. This continuity is provided by overlapping chains of many memories over each day. Suppose that I know that, two days from now, my only experience-memories will be of experiences that I shall have tomorrow. On the view just stated, since there will be continuity of memory, this is all that matters. It should not matter to me that, two days from now, I shall have lost all of my memories of my past life. Most of us would strongly disagree. Losing all direct memories of our past lives would be something that we would deeply regret.

Consider next the continuity of our desires and intentions. Suppose that I now love certain other people. I could cease to love all these people without any break in psychological continuity. But I would greatly regret these changes. Suppose that I also strongly want to achieve certain aims. Given that I have these strong desires, I would regret their replacement by other desires. I must care more *now* about the achievement of what I *now* care about. Since I care more about the fulfilment of these present desires, I would regret losing these desires, and acquiring new ones. More generally, I want my life to have certain kinds of overall unity. I do not want it to be very episodic, with continual fluctuations in my desires and concerns. Such fluctuations are compatible with full psychological continuity, but they would reduce psychological connectedness. This is another way in which I would regret such a reduction. And most of us would regret these kinds of change.

Consider finally continuity of character. There will be such continuity if our character changes in a natural way. But most of us value some aspects of our character. We will want these *not* to change. Here again, we want

connectedness, not mere continuity.

I have described three ways in which most of us would reject the view that psychological connectedness does not matter. And, if we reject this view for these kinds of reason, these are good reasons. These remarks seem enough to refute this view. We can agree that connectedness is not all that matters. Psychological continuity also matters. But we should reject the view that only continuity matters.

#### 101. SUCCESSIVE SELVES

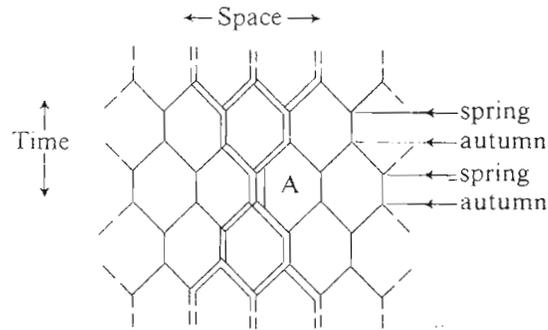
I imagined people who are just like us, except that they reproduce by natural division. I shall now suggest how these people could describe their interrelations. Each person is a self. Eve can think of any person, anywhere in the Tree, as *one of her descendant selves*. This phrase implies future-directed psychological continuity. Unlike Eve, Tertia has descendant selves only in the right half of the Tree. To imply past-directed continuity, these people can use the phrase *an ancestral self*. Quinquagesima's ancestral selves are all of the people on the single line that connects her to Eve.

Since psychological continuity is a transitive relation, in either direction in time, *being an ancestral self of*, and *being a descendant self of*, are also transitive. But psychological continuity is not a transitive relation, if we allow it to take both directions in a single argument. Quarta and Septima are both psychologically continuous with Eve. It does not follow, and is false, that they are psychologically continuous with each other.

I shall next suggest how these people could describe the different degrees of psychological connectedness. We could give to the phrases *my past self* and *my future self* a new meaning. In their ordinary use, these phrases refer to myself in the past or future. On our new use, these phrases refer, not to myself, but to those other people whose relation to me is psychological connectedness. Thus the phrase 'one of my past selves' implies that there is some degree of connectedness. To imply the different degrees there is the following series: 'my closest past self', 'one of my closer past selves', 'one of my more distant past selves', 'hardly one of my past selves (I can quasi-remember only a few of her experiences)', and, finally, 'not one of my past selves, merely an ancestral self'. This is the past-directed series of phrases that could be used by Quinquagesima. Eve could use a similar future-directed series.

This way of talking would clearly suit my imagined people. It would enable them to describe more precisely the interrelations that hold between them. This way of talking also provides a new and plausible description of the imagined case where I divide. Though I do not survive My Division, the two resulting people are two of my future selves. And they are as close to me as I am to myself tomorrow. Similarly, they can each refer to me as an equally close past self. (They can share a past self without being the same self as each other.)

Consider next another kind of imaginary people. These reproduce by fusion as well as by division. And they do this often. They fuse every autumn and divide every spring. Their relations are as shown below.



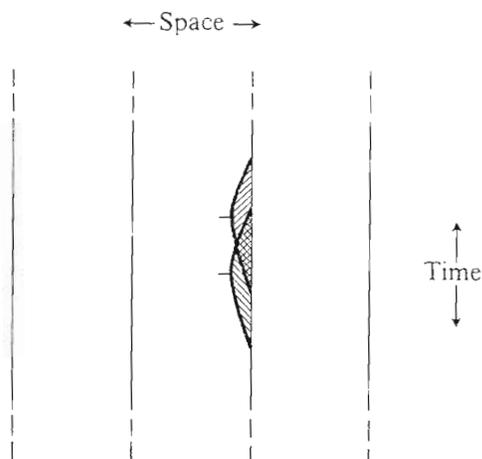
A is the person whose life is represented by the three-lined branch. The two-lined tree represents those lives that are psychologically continuous with A's. Each person has his own two-lined tree, which overlaps but is different from the trees of others.

For these imagined people, the phrases 'an ancestral self' and 'a descendant self' would cover too much to be of much use. There could be pairs of dates such that everyone who ever lived before the first date was an ancestral self of everyone who will ever live after the second date. And, since the life of each person lasts for only half a year, the word 'I' would cover too little to do all of the work which it does for us. Much of this work would have to be done, for these people, by talk about past and future selves.

There is a flaw in this proposed way of talking. The phrase 'a past self of' implies psychological connectedness. And the variants of this phrase can be used to imply the varying degrees of psychological connectedness. But what distinguishes successive selves is not a reduced degree of connectedness. The selves are distinguished by the fusions and divisions. We therefore cannot use these phrases to imply reduced connectedness within a single life.

This flaw would not concern the imagined people I have just described. They divide and unite so frequently, and their lives are in consequence so short, that within a single life psychological connectedness would always hold to a very high degree.

Consider, finally, another kind of imaginary people. Once again, these people differ from us only in their method of reproduction. These people do *not* reproduce. In their world there is neither sexual reproduction, nor division and fusion. There are a number of everlasting bodies, which gradually change in appearance. And direct and distinctive psychological connections hold, as before, only over limited periods of time, such as five hundred years. This is shown in the diagram below.



The two shadings represent the degrees of psychological connectedness to their two central points.

These people could not use the way of thinking that I have proposed. Since there is no branching of psychological continuity, they would have to regard themselves as immortal. In one sense, this is what they are. But they ought to draw another distinction.

These people would have one reason for thinking of themselves as immortal. The parts of each 'line' are all psychologically continuous. But only between parts that are close to each other are there direct and distinctive psychological connections. This gives these people a reason for not thinking of each 'line' as corresponding to a single, undifferentiated life. If they did, they would have no way of implying these direct psychological connections. When such a person says, for example, 'I spent a period exploring the Himalayas', his hearers would not be entitled to assume that the speaker has any memories of this period, or that his character then and now are in any way similar, or that he is now carrying out any of the plans or intentions which he then had. Because the word 'I' would carry none of these implications, it would not have for these immortal people the usefulness which it has for us.

To give these people a better way of talking, I revise my earlier proposal. The distinction between successive selves can be made by reference, not to the branching of psychological continuity, but to the degrees of psychological connectedness. Since this connectedness is a matter of degree, the drawing of these distinctions can be left to the choice of the speaker, and be allowed to vary from context to context.

Since these distinctions are now drawn within a single life, we have returned much closer to the ordinary use of the phrases 'my past self' and 'my future self'. On my proposed way of talking, we use 'I', and the other pronouns, to refer only to the parts of our lives to which, when speaking, we have the strongest psychological connections. When the connections have

been markedly reduced—when there has been a significant change of character, or style of life, or of beliefs and ideals—we might say, ‘It was not *I* who did that, but an earlier self’. We could then describe in what ways, and to what degree, we are related to this past self.

This way of talking would not only suit these imagined immortal people. It is often useful and natural in our own lives. Here are some examples from two very different writers:

We are incapable, while we are in love, of acting as fit predecessors of the next persons who, when we are in love no longer, we shall presently have become . . .<sup>61</sup>

Our dread of a future in which we must forego the sight of faces, the sound of voices, that we love, friends from whom we derive today our keenest joys, this dread, far from being dissipated, is intensified if to the grief of such a privation we reflect that there will be added what seems to us now in anticipation an even more cruel grief: not to feel it as a grief at all—to remain indifferent: for if that should occur, our self would then have changed. It would be in a real sense the death of ourself, a death followed, it is true, by a resurrection, but in a different self, the life, the love of which are beyond the reach of those elements of the existing self that are doomed to die. . .<sup>62</sup>

It is not because other people are dead that our affection for them grows faint, it is because we ourself are dying. Albertine had no cause to rebuke her friend. The man who was usurping his name had merely inherited it. . . My new self, while it grew up in the shadow of the old, had often heard the other speak of Albertine; through that other self. . . It thought that it knew her, it found her attractive. . . But this was merely an affection at second hand.<sup>63</sup>

Nadya had written in her letter: ‘When you return. . .’ But that was the whole horror: that there would be no *return*. . . A new, unfamiliar person would walk in bearing the name of her husband, and she would see that the man, her beloved, for whom she had shut herself up to wait for fourteen years, no longer existed. . .<sup>64</sup>

Innokenty felt sorry for her and agreed to come. . . He felt sorry, not for the wife he lived with and yet did not live with these days, but for the blond girl with the curls hanging down to her shoulders, the girl he had known in the tenth grade. . .<sup>65</sup>

As these passages suggest, the object of some of our emotions may not be another person timelessly considered, but another person during a period in this person’s life. Here is what I believe to be a common example. It may be clear to some couple that they love each other. But if they ask whether they are still *in love with* each other, they may find this question perplexing. It may still seem to them that they are in love, yet their behaviour towards each other, and their feelings in each other’s presence, may seem not to bear this out. If they distinguished between successive selves, their perplexity might be resolved. They might see that they love each other, and are in love with each other’s earlier self.

Talk about successive selves can easily be misunderstood, or taken too

literally. It should be compared with the way in which we subdivide a nation's history. We call this the history of successive nations, such as Anglo-Saxon, Medieval, and Tudor England.<sup>66</sup>

There is another defect in this way of talking. It is suited only for cases where there is some sharp discontinuity, marking the boundary between two selves. But there may be reduced degrees of psychological connectedness without any such discontinuities. Though it is less rigid than the language of identity, talk about successive selves cannot be used to express such smooth reductions in degrees of connectedness. In such cases we must talk directly about the degrees of connectedness.

I shall now turn from imaginary cases to actual lives. I shall claim that, if we change our view about the nature of personal identity, this may alter our beliefs both about what is rational, and about what is morally right or wrong.