

Personal Identity and What Matters¹

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ABSTRACT: There are two general views about the nature of what matters, i.e. about the metaphysical ground of prudential concern, the ground of the concern we have for our own future welfare. On the one hand, the identity-is-what-matters view tells us that prudential concern is grounded on one's continuing identity over time; I am concerned with my own future welfare because it is *my own* future welfare. On the other hand, the identity-is-not-what-matters view tells us that prudential concern is not grounded on such continuing identity; rather, it is grounded on some continuity-relation, which only coincides with identity. In this paper, I explore a primary motivation for the latter view—viz., Parfit's fission case—and show that there are interesting ways to resist it.

KEYWORDS: Fission case – identity-is-not-what-matters – identity-is-what-matters – Parfit.

1. Two views about what matters

Suppose a dentist tells you that someone will suffer a terrible toothache tomorrow. For most of us, this prospect would be terrifying, not for anything else, but simply because there is pain involved. Some of us may reason that whenever there is the prospect of a terrible pain (to whomever it may chance upon), it is always rational for us to abhor it. But suppose the

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dentist tells you that *you* and not someone else will suffer a fate tomorrow. I suppose that, for many of us, this latter case would be doubly terrifying, not only because of the pain involved, but more importantly, because of the thought that it will be *my* or *your* very own pain. Our commonsense intuitions about these two cases invite an interesting philosophical question about the metaphysical grounding of what matters or of prudential concern, i.e., the concern one has for his or her own future welfare.

There are two general views about the question about what matters: the identity-is-what-matters view and the identity-is-not-what-matters view.² The former view is our commonsense intuition about what matters. It tells us that prudential concern is grounded on one's continuing identity over time. Thus, I am hard at work now because I know that I will later enjoy the benefits of these present labors. In the same way that you are preparing tenaciously for an exam tomorrow because you will be the very same person who will take that exam.

On the other hand, the identity-is-not-what-matters view tells us that the prudential concern is not grounded on one's continuing identity over time; rather, it is grounded on some continuity relation that only coincides with identity. On this view, prudential concern is formulated in terms of the continuity of some beliefs, desires, and intentions over time. Thus, my concern for my own future welfare is nothing more than my desire or intention that some of my cherished hopes and dreams will be fulfilled at a later time. My concern is not that *I* experience the fulfillment of my hopes, but that some future person, who is physically and/or psychologically continuous with me, experiences them.

In this paper, I aim to do two main things. In section 2, I explore a primary philosophical motivation for the identity-is-not-what-matters view due to Derek Parfit. This motivation is premised on the possibility of fission. In section 3, I show five ways of resisting the fission case. I argue that at least some of these ways could show that the fission case is not a suitable motivation for the identity-is-not-what-matters view.

² The labels, "identity-is-what-matters view" and "identity-is-not-what-matters view", follow Parfit's nomenclature. See Parfit (1971; 1984).

2. Fission and the identity-is-not-what-matters view

Parfit construes the question about what matters in terms of the importance we attach to our own survival. To motivate this, consider the following case:

Suppose that I will undergo a dangerous surgical procedure. I am surely concerned whether I will survive this. But the question now is: what am I really concerned about when I think about my own survival? Am I concerned whether some future person shares my beliefs, desires, and intentions before the surgery? Or am I concerned whether the person who will survive the surgery is still me? If one goes for the first case, then that leads to the identity-is-not-what-matters view. If one goes for the second, then that leads to the identity-is-what-matters view.

Parfit presents the following argument for the identity-is-not-what-matters view:

1. Identity is a one-one relation.
2. Survival matters.
3. What matters in survival is the obtaining of the relation of psychological connections between psychological states (or what he calls the R-relation).
4. The R-relation need not be a one-one relation.
5. Therefore, identity is not what matters for survival – (cf. Lewis 1976, 19)

As it stands, the argument seems valid. Given that the premises are all true, the conclusion would surely follow. But as we all know the validity of an argument, especially of a philosophical argument, is not sufficient for the acceptance of the truth of its conclusion. More needs to be said about the truth of the premises.

Premise (1) highlights what we already know about the identity relation. As such, it is something that we could take for granted. Premise (2) just reiterates our concern for our own future welfare (or our own future survival). It matters to us whether we will survive some event. And we are concerned for our own future welfare. Again, premise (2) seems a pretty reasonable assumption.

The crucial turn in the argument is found in premises (3) and (4). At the outset, it seems that, given premise (3), the argument already begs the question, since, as it is stated, premise (3) is just the identity-is-not-what-matters view. Premise (4) fares no better than premise (3). To say that the R-relation is not a one-one relation depends on whether the connections between various psychological states do not exhibit a one-one relation. That is, premise (4) claims that the connection between psychological states could be a one-many relation or else a many-one relation. But the truth of this claim relies on the truth of premise (3). But since premise (3) just states the conclusion of the argument, then premise (4) just seems to be an ungrounded assumption (cf. Oaklander 1987).

To answer this circularity objection, Parfit motivates premises (3) and (4) via the fission thought experiment.³ The fission case proceeds as follows:

Suppose that my whole body develops cancer. The surgeons cannot save my body, but they could save my brain. They remove my brain and transplanted each hemisphere into two brainless bodies, each of which was cloned from my original DNA before the surgery. The operation was a success. After some time, two people wake up – call them Lefty and Righty. Both are psychologically continuous and/or connected with me – they both share my memories, intentions, hopes, desires, and beliefs. Both are also physically continuous with me – they each have half my original brain. Suppose further that the existence of one is unknown to the other. That is, suppose that after the operation Lefty just went on to live his own life independent of Righty. Lefty went to Boracay and opted for a recluse life (which is one of my long-time dreams); while Righty went on to do philosophy all his life (which is also one of my long-time dreams). But now the question is: did I survive? And if so, did I survive as the person in Boracay living a recluse's life, or did I survive as the person doing philosophy?

Parfit claims that if we hold the identity-is-what-matters view, then we have to say that I did not survive the operation; we should regard the prospect of my fission as being nearly bad as death. That is, after the operation

³ Parfit has used other imaginary cases to motivate these premises, e.g. the Branch-Line Case and the Teletransportation Case. Both make a vivid portrayal of why identity should not what matter to us. See Parfit (1984, 199-201); see also Garrett (1998, 16-17) for other versions of these cases.

no one identical to me exists. Both Lefty and Righty are not identical to me. As such, I did not survive; I have ceased to be. But he thinks that we should not see the matter this way.

Furthermore, Parfit thinks that the prospect of fission is just as good as ordinary survival. Though Lefty and Righty are not identical to me, my relation to each of them contains all that matters to survival. The projects I aimed to pursue, the beliefs I once held, and my desires and intentions prior to the operation are all fulfilled and preserved by my two descendants. And since this is so, there is nothing else that needs to be accounted for my survival.

The fission case, thus, motivates Parfit's argument for the identity-is-not-what-matters view. Since all that matters to us, all that we are really concerned about, is the fulfillment and preservation of our psychological states at a future time, it follows then that premise (3) is true. Furthermore, since the connection between psychological states is not necessarily a one-one relation, as evidenced by the case of Lefty and Righty, then premise (4) will be true as well. From this it follows that identity is not what really matters to us.⁴

3. Resisting the fission case

We have seen Parfit's fission case and how it motivates the argument for the identity-is-not-what-matters view. In this section, I show five ways of resisting Parfit's case.⁵ I argue that at least some of these ways could show that the identity-is-not-what-matters view is unmotivated.⁶

⁴ For Parfit, this implies that we should not really attach a special metaphysical status to our own prudential concern. Since prudential concern is not really grounded on our continuing identity, but only in the R-relation which only coincides with identity, it should follow that prudential concern is just the same as the concern we have for other people's welfare. He argues that from this it follows that we have to change our views about rationality and morality. The former implies that the self-interest theory is wrong; while the latter implies that any ethical theory grounded on the self-interest theory is wrong as well.

⁵ Some aspects of the subsequent discussions come from Garrett (1998, 59-64).

⁶ Contra Parfit, showing that the fission case could be resisted does not necessarily imply the acceptance of the self-interest theory of rationality or even the ethical theories

3.1. *I survive as both Lefty and Righty*

One way of resisting the fission case is to claim that after fission, I survive as both Lefty and Righty. There are two ways of cashing out this idea. Each way, however, offends commonsense. The first way is to claim that after fission, I survive because I am identical to both Lefty and Righty. The second is to claim that Lefty and Righty are not identical to me, but they are sub-personal constituents of me. That is, I am just the product of both Lefty and Righty.

I find the claim that I am identical to both Lefty and Righty implausible. After fission, Lefty and Righty are two distinct people. Though they are qualitatively similar – i.e., they both share the same physical and psychological characteristics – they are still two numerically distinct people. If Lefty were to get happily married sometime after fission and Righty were to remain a frustrated bachelor, then, according to this view, I would both be a happily married man and a frustrated bachelor all at the same time.

On the other hand, to claim that Lefty and Righty are personal constituents of me is to claim that prior and after my fission, I have two separate consciousnesses. Thus, prior to my fission if Lefty thinks that Trump will be ousted from the presidency and Righty thinks otherwise, then I would have two contradictory beliefs about the matter.

Now, this is not detrimental for the claim that I have two sub-personal constituents, since we could have two conflicting beliefs about some matters. I could believe that I see a dog, but I could surely believe that what I see is not a dog. But the claim pushes us to consider that we could hold contradictory beliefs at the same time. At some particular time, I believe that some dog is there and not there. And this is something that we could not countenance.

What we do accept is that we could change our beliefs after some time. And in such a case we do not have two contradictory beliefs at the same time. It could be that at one time I believe that a dog is there, but upon closer inspection I change my belief since now I believe that it is not a dog. To change a belief involves the passage of time. And this shows that we

which are implied by it. These are two distinct worries. The question about whether prudential concern is derivative is a different sort of question from whether I should only be concerned for my own welfare.

could only hold contradictory beliefs because we could change our minds. What we could not accept is that some person holds two contradictory beliefs at the same time. As it stands, the claim that I survive as both Lefty and Righty does not hold water.

3.2. *The case has been misdescribed*

A second way of resisting the fission case, and a popular one at that, is to claim that the case has been misdescribed. There are many defenders of this view and each defender presents a different version of this (see for example Lewis 1976; Sider 2001; Robinson 1985; and Perry 1972). In the literature, this view is referred to as the multiple occupancy theory.⁷

Defenders of the multiple occupancy theory claim that there is no real tension between the identity-is-what-matters view and the identity-is-not-what-matters view. For example, David Lewis, an ardent defender of the theory, claims that

[t]he opposition between what matters and identity is false. We can agree with Parfit that what matters in questions of personal identity is mental continuity or connectedness (R-relation), and that this might be one-many or many-one... At the same time we can consistently agree with commonsense that what matters in questions of personal identity – even in problem cases – is identity. (Lewis 1976, 19)

But how does this claim cash out? One way is to show that prior fission Lefty and Righty already exist. Two numerically distinct persons just happen to exist in the same body. But after fission these two persons divide and each lives out his own life.⁸

One motivation for the multiple occupancy theory is to consider that there are two relations involved when we talk about personal identity and what matters: the relation of psychological continuity and/or connectedness (R-relation) and the relation of continuing identity (I-relation). These

⁷ The label was coined by Robinson; see Robinson (1985).

⁸ The multiple occupancy theory is different from the view that we have considered above, viz. I survive as both Lefty and Righty. According to the latter view, Lefty and Righty constitute me. But in the former theory, Lefty and Righty just coincide in one particular body. That is, *I* do not exist; only Lefty and Righty do.

two have different relata. When we say that what matters is the R-relation, we are saying that a relation among momentary person-stages is what matters. And when we say that what matters is the I-relation, we are saying that the identity among continuant persons with stages at various times is what matters (cf. Lewis 1976, 20-21). Formally,

(R-relation)

For all persons P, P2 matters to P1 iff P1's current stage is R-related to P2's stage.

(I-relation)

For all continuant persons C, C2 matters for C1 iff for all person-stages S, S1, S2, S3... Sn are elements of C1 and are also elements of C2.

Let us try to picture this in terms of your life story. This story has a beginning part, a middle part, and an ending part. The beginning part relates to the middle as the middle relates to the end. Thus, the beginning part refers to your birth, the middle refers to your adulthood, and the end refers to your death. For there to be a story, there should be a sequence of events. Your birth came first, then adulthood, and finally your death. But this should not just be a purely ordinal relation. Some events in the beginning part should be intimately related to the middle as middle to the end. This intimate relation is the R-relation. Now your life story is composed of these R-related parts. The aggregate of these parts is your life. Though we could set them apart, these parts essentially compose your story. This aggregate is the I-relation.

The R-relation and the I-relation have different relata. Though this is the case, they are still extensionally consistent with one another. A person is just a maximal set of I-interrelated aggregate of person-stages. Every person-stage is I-related to every other person-stage in the aggregate. That is, each stage in my life story is essentially part of my life story. No other person-stage outside the aggregate could ever be part of it. Since my person-stages are R-related with one another, it follows that the I-relation is just the R-relation when considered extensionally. My person-stages are my stages because they are R-related with one another and since they are R-related with one another and they belong to me, it follows that I am the same continuant person who has those stages.

So how does this bears to what matters? The original Parfit argument gives us a tension between the identity relation and the R-relation. Defenders of the multiple occupancy theory arrest this tension by claiming that identity is nothing really but an aggregate relation between R-related person-stages. As such, we could consistently hold both the identity-is-what-matters view and the identity-is-not-what-matters view.

Furthermore, this implies that the fission case has been misdescribed. To say that Lefty and Righty are not identical to me is true because I am not even present in the case. Only two continuant persons are present, Lefty and Righty. Both the person-stages of Lefty and Righty overlap to one single body before fission. But after fission they continue on to live each of their lives.

Moreover, Lefty and Righty are concerned with each of their own future welfares. This means that the continuant, Lefty, is concerned whether some future person-stage is still psychologically continuous with his present person-stage in the same way that Righty is also concerned about his future person-stage. Defenders of the theory see that there is no need to account for what matters to me because I am not even part of the case; i.e., I do not even exist in the fission case.

There are several objections which could be raised against this view. One has something to do with the assumed ontology of the multiple occupancy theory; another is that the view seems self-defeating.⁹

One objection against the multiple occupancy theory is that it presupposes a four-dimensionalist ontology. Four-dimensionalism is the view that aside from spatial parts, ordinary objects (people included) also have temporal parts.¹⁰ Persons are extended in time as well in space. The Me five minutes ago is a part of Me just like my forefinger is also a part of me. The talk of person-stages and continuant persons presupposes this

⁹ There are other objections to the multiple occupancy theory. One is about the semantics of first-person judgments: if the theory is correct, then prior fission, my first-person judgments will be ambiguous between the judgments of Lefty and Righty; see Garrett (1998). Another objection has something to do with counting: if the theory is correct, then prior fission, we should count two people in one body; see Lewis (1976) and Sider (2001).

¹⁰ For a clear discussion of this view see Sider (2001).

kind of ontology. A person-stage is a temporal part of a particular continuant person. Thus, the aggregate of person-stages just is a continuant person.

There are ways to resist this kind of ontology. One argument for four-dimensionalism hinges on the analogy between space and time. It is claimed that whatever may be said about space could also be said about time. Thus, since there are objects in space, it follows that there are objects in time as well. Since objects in space have spatial parts, it follows that objects in time have temporal parts as well. But there is a certain disanalogy between space and time. We could say that one and the same thing cannot be in two different places at one and the same time. But we cannot say that one and the same thing can be at two different times in one and the same place (cf. Chisholm 1976, 140). As such, it would seem that not everything we could say of space could also be said of time.

Defenders of the multiple occupancy theory could reply that we could have the same theory without presupposing the four-dimensionalist ontology (cf. Markosian 2010). Such a theory could be put in terms of a three-dimensionalist ontology where persons are not composed of person-stages, but are wholly present at different times. On this view, Lefty and Righty are both wholly present in the same space at the same time prior fission.

But this again is hard to understand. How can two numerically different persons exist in the same place at the same time? A three-dimensionalist version of the multiple occupancy theory is just as unintelligible as the idea that two qualitatively similar tables occupy the same place at the same time.

Another objection against the multiple occupancy theory is that its main claim seems self-defeating. The theory cannot consistently hold the common sense view that identity is what matters without distorting our ordinary conception of personal identity. Recall that the main aim of the theory is to reconcile the identity-is-what-matters view and the identity-is-not-what-matters view. Defenders of the theory claim that my identity is just the aggregate of my person-stages and what matters to me is just the continuity of this aggregate. But surely this is not how we understand what matters in one's continuing identity. Common sense tells us that what matters is whether I will be the very same person who will experience some future event, and not whether some future person-stage is related to one of my

person-stages (cf. Parfit 1976 and Sider 2001). As such, the main aim of the multiple occupancy theory is left unsatisfied.

3.3. *I am neither Lefty nor Righty*

A third way of resisting the fission case is to claim that I would not survive it. None of the fission products will be me. Parfit welcomes this consequence. Neither Lefty nor Righty is identical to me. But since what matters is already contained in this description, he claims that personal identity is not what matters. Our continuing identity does not ground our prudential concern. But there are other ways of interpreting the claim that I am neither Lefty nor Righty without implying the identity-is-not-what-matters view.

One way of interpreting the “I am neither Lefty nor Righty” response is to say that when I divide, there are two equally good candidates for my successor. But since Lefty and Righty are both equally good candidates, it follows that I am neither of them. This is what is known as the best-candidate theory or the closest continuer theory.¹¹ The motivation behind this theory is that the fission case is not really an argument for the identity-is-not-what-matters view; rather, it only shows that an analysis of personal identity is *extrinsically* grounded.

The best candidate theory tells us that the question whether identity is what matters should be taken independently of the question whether personal identity admits analysis. Unlike Parfit who claims that we should have a negative answer to the former question if we have a positive answer to the latter, we could have positive answers to both questions.

The main claim of the theory is that personal identity admits analysis. But this analysis is extrinsically grounded. Whether I continue to exist depends on whether I have one or two close continuers. Defenders of this view take the fission case as an exemplification of this main claim. After fission, two equally good continuer candidates are available. Since Lefty and Righty are equally good continuer candidates, I have some reason to think that I will no longer survive. My existence, then, depends on whether just one continuer exists.

¹¹ This view is originally developed and defended by Nozick (1981). A later version of this could be seen in Noonan (2003).

One objection that can be raised against the best candidate theory is as follows: how can my existence depend on the existence or non-existence of some other future person? Suppose we have a possible world where during a fission transplant a nurse dropped half of my brain which is supposed to occupy Righty's body. In this world, I survive as Lefty. Suppose that in another world, the nurse did not drop half of my brain, and thus Righty and Lefty both exist. According to the best candidate theory, in this second world I did not survive. The theory, therefore, gives us two verdicts in these two worlds. In the first world I did survive and in the second world I did not. Thus, my survival depends on the existence or non-existence of some future person who is not even causally related to me. But how can someone who does not exert any causal influence on me cause my death?

3.4. *Fission is not even possible*

A fourth way of resisting the fission case is to claim that it is not even possible. There are two ways of cashing this out. One way is to claim that though the fission case is *conceptually* possible, it is still *nomologically* or even *metaphysically* impossible.¹² The other way is to claim that we are emotionally ill-equipped to handle the Fission Case; as such, we cannot imagine how this scenario would spell out. Animalists, like Eric Olson, may be said to hold the first view; while Bernard Williams and Richard Swinburne the latter view.¹³

Animalists hold that because we are necessarily biological entities of a certain sort, some governing natural laws necessarily apply to us. And though it is true that we could imagine cases where people divide, this remains to be nomologically impossible. Certain evolutionary laws prohibit the fission of people. Other biological entities, like an amoeba and certain type of cells, do divide. They divide because this is their only way to reproduce. But people are not a biological entity of this sort. As such, though the fission case is conceptually possible, it offends nomological possibility (see Olson 1997, 46-57).

¹² This general outlook is also shared by Gendler (2002); Gunnarsson (2008); and Wilkes (1988).

¹³ For a recent version of the latter view, see Kind (2004).

There are ways to address this resistance to the fission case. First, the claim that we are necessarily biological entities of a certain sort needs to be argued for. Indeed, we could say of ourselves that we have biological characteristics, and these characteristics are governed by natural laws. But it does not follow from this that we are necessarily biological entities. If all that we are is the preservation of our psychological states, then it is possible for us to leave the biological body that we have now and be put into an artificial body, but still manage to exist. The burden of proof now lies on the animalists to prove their claim.

Second, even if we are governed by nomological laws, it still seems possible for parts of our brains to be transplanted to another body. Medical science made it possible for us to transplant different organs of our bodies to some other body. Heart, liver, and kidney transplants are now a commonplace. If the brain holds our mental life, then if it were to be transplanted to another body, it seems plausible that the notion of who we are would likely be transferred to that body as well. So, though we are governed by nomological laws, no natural law is broken in imagining the fission case. As such, this resistance to the fission case is not promising.

Another way of cashing out the “fission is not possible” response is to say that we cannot imagine what it would be like for us to undergo fission. There is just no fitting emotional response to this case. When we are confronted with the possibility of fission, there is no correct emotional response if we consider the case from our own point of view.

Suppose that a mad surgeon captures you and announces that he is going to transplant your left cerebral hemisphere into Lefty’s body, and your right hemisphere to Righty’s. He is going to torture one of the resulting persons and will give the other a million dollars. You can choose which of the resulting persons is going to be tortured and which will receive the sum of money. The mad surgeon is true to his word; he would do whatever it is that you will choose. But the question is how would you choose? Would you choose to give Lefty the money and let Righty suffer the torture? Or would you choose to do otherwise – give Righty the money and let Lefty be tortured?¹⁴

¹⁴ A version of this thought experiment is due to Williams (1973, 46-64); cf. Swinburne (1984, 18).

The fission case tells us that Lefty and Righty are both physically and/or psychologically continuous to you, but they are not exactly you. And there is no marked difference if we think of them as such. We should care for their welfares. It does not matter whether either one of the two is identical to you or not. What matters is that they are both continuous to you. But if this is the emotion that the fission case wants to elicit from us, then it would have to wait until we develop a different set of attitudes from what we naturally have.

All that we could have in the case where we have to choose between a future torture and a future pleasure is a mixed emotional response. We cannot decide who of Lefty or Righty is to receive torture because there is a risk in the choice. The risk could be spelled out in terms of the notion of identity. I cannot decide which of Lefty or Righty should be tortured after the surgery because I do not, and cannot, know who of the two will be me. I care for my own future welfare. And if it turns out that I had made a wrong choice – i.e. I choose to torture Lefty and not Righty, and it turns out that I am Lefty, then I am doomed to suffer the torture.

If the fission case, and hence Parfit's argument itself, wants us to say that prudential concern is not grounded on our continuing identity, then we should feel that there is no risk in choosing either of the two future outcomes. But since there is a risk involved, it follows that my prudential concern is really grounded on my continuing identity.

A defender of the identity-is-not-what-matters view could reply that the risk that one feels when confronted by this scenario only occurs because it is assumed that identity is what matters. If we abandon this assumption, then no risk would occur. But as this reply runs, it seems to commit to a vicious circle. Identity is not what matters because what matters is the R-relation. The R-relation matters because it does not involve a risk. It does not involve a risk because identity is not what matters.

So, as far as the argument goes, the idea that fission is not possible when we think of it from our point of view holds true. As such, it would seem that fission could be resisted. And thus we have no motivation to accept Parfit's argument for the identity-is-not-what-matters view.

3.5. *I survive as either Lefty or Righty*

Another plausible way of resisting the fission case is to say that I survive as either of the two resulting persons. Immediately after fission, though both Lefty and Righty are physically and psychologically continuous to me, I would have to be one of them. As such, even if Righty believes that he is me, but actually I am Lefty, then Righty's belief is wrong.

What motivates this response is that if we grant the possibility of the fission case, then either of two things will happen. Either my first-person point of view is preserved in Lefty or it is preserved in Righty. That is, if I can still refer to myself as myself in one of the two resulting persons, then my identity is preserved.

There are problems with this way of resisting the fission case. One is that since both Lefty and Righty are symmetrically related to you, then the only way for you to claim that you are either of the two is to conjure up a Cartesian Ego which grounds the first-person point of view. But since we can never really know whether there is such a thing as a Cartesian Ego, then we could surely deny that the first-person point of view needs to be accounted for.

Furthermore, from the third-person point of view, there is no real difference between the consciousnesses of Lefty and Righty. Both of them claim that they are continuous with me. Lefty says that he remembers all my memories; while Righty claims to have the same memory. As such, there is no real difference between the two claims.

There are responses to these objections. First is that the first-person point of view does not need a Cartesian Ego to ground its existence. We obviously cannot know whether there are Cartesian Egos. But my first-person point of view need not be grounded on a Cartesian Ego or even on anything to know that I have a first-person point of view. My experiences have a unique phenomenology, a feeling of what it is like to experience such and such. And this is what matters to me. It simply is not the case that I sustain having two or more sets of symmetrical phenomenological experiences. That is, I cannot see the world from two points of view at the same time. I cannot have an experience of the world from both Lefty's eyes and Righty's eyes.

Furthermore, since I have a unique set of phenomenological experiences, if I am Lefty, then Lefty also has this unique set. Righty could share

my memories and experiences, but he has a different point of view from me. That is, we could both share the same type of experiences, but since I am Lefty, Lefty's point of view is different from that of Righty's. Righty sees the world from his own first-person perspective. Thus, this shows that Lefty and Righty are not really symmetrically related to me. Since one could preserve my point of view, while the other does not.

The "I survive as either Lefty or Righty" response offers a unique way to preserve the identity-is-what-matters view. Since it matters to me that some future person is identical to me, i.e. that I can still see the world from my own personal perspective, it follows that what matters in my survival is that my first-person point of view is preserved. The concern I have for my own future welfare therefore is grounded on the continuity of my first-person point of view.¹⁵

This does not imply, however, that the continuity of the first-person point of view is reductive in nature. I am not reducing my existence to this point of view. My personal point of view is in-itself a person-involving concept which could not be reduced to other non-person-involving concept. Nor does it imply that my continuing identity is analyzable in terms of the continuity of my personal point of view. Therefore, like the previous response discussed in the last section, this resistance to the fission case is also plausible.

4. Conclusion

The question about what matters asks whether our prudential concern is grounded on our continuing identity or whether it is grounded on some relation, which only coincides with identity. In section 2, I discussed Parfit's fission case as a motivation for the identity-is-not-what-matters view. In section 3, I have examined five ways of resisting the fission case, and have found that there are plausible ways of showing that the fission case is not a good motivation for the identity-is-not-what-matters view.

¹⁵ This is what Dainton refers to as phenomenological continuity. See Dainton (2008).

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