

Reflected View on the Personal Afterlife

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, I try to argue that, from the methodological position of reflected equilibrium, it seems to be reasonable to build a theory of personal identity that enables a person to continue her existence after the biological death of her body. This conclusion is supported by the argument that our practice reflects that our identity-presupposing concerns reach beyond biological continuity. We have also good reasons to maintain such concerns and practices. As the best candidate to implement such concerns in a theoretical account of practical identity, I will identify the person-life view, where personal identity depends to a great extent on social conditions. I also show how this theory can implement the classical belief in the afterlife, and how it could conceptualize the difference of the afterlife from a physicalistic and a theistic point of view.

KEYWORDS: afterlife – Marya Schechtman – reflected equilibrium – Pascal’s wager – personal identity – person-life – Radim Bělohrad – Samuel Scheffler.

1. Introduction

“There are no words to describe the bravery required to take such an action. ISIS were robbed of a predictable macabre propaganda opportunity by Ryan’s action. I personally believe he deserves the

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very highest of military honors for such outstanding bravery in the face of such a barbaric enemy." Mark Campbell²

This quote doesn't seem too interesting, philosophically, at first glance. The point is that the celebrated act was an act of suicide undergone to prevent being taken as a prisoner by ISIS. That means that Mark Campbell (Kurdish rights activist) claims, that Ryan Lock deserves some honors, though he knows that he is dead. This is an example of ascribing personally relevant concerns to a person, who is biologically dead. In this paper I will try to think through possible reasons and theoretical consequences of such a common practice (I will try to show, that it is common practice indeed as well). Many traditional or classical theories allow that we continue to exist after our biological death. However, the continuity of personal existence rests here on the presupposition of conscious experience after death. Since the question of whether there is such an afterlife is highly controversial, the argument will be made without that assumption, and the idea of a traditional afterlife will be revisited after the argument is made. I will try to argue that when we apply the methodology of reflective equilibrium, it seems to be reasonable to strive to build a theory of a personal identity which allows for the person to continue after the biological organism ceases to exist, even if we don't accept the continuity of experience after death.

2. Methodology

At first it is nevertheless crucial to make clear on which methodological steps the conclusion essentially rests. There is a strong tradition in the area of philosophy of personal identity which builds theories of person in purely metaphysical terms. Both Derek Parfit and Eric Olson as the main figures of the most influential – psychological and animalistic – strands deliberately try to make such an account, which does not consider our everyday practice in the first place. Mark Johnston (1997) goes still further and claims that there is no relation between our practical concerns such as moral responsibility, compensation, survival or self-concern,

² Quoted from Robson & Wheatstone (2017).

which are traditionally held to presuppose personal identity (I will call such a concerns in accordance with Bělohrad (2016, 8) “i-concerns”), on one hand and the concept of person on the other hand. A crucial disadvantage of such an approach is that this prevents us from the possibility of reforming our practice. Such theories don’t take in account how (psychologically) deep some practices and i-concerns lie. This easily results in a theory implying such grave practical changes (when it has some practical aspiration at all) that it doesn’t have great chances to be effectively adopted (Bělohrad 2016, 51).

On the other hand, there is also a host of authors who begin their research in personal identity with the i-concerns (e.g. Schechtman 1997; Korsgaard 1989; Mackenzie & Atkins, 2008). Nevertheless, it isn’t clear in which way this approach has a better position to bring a practical impact. Must this not remain a purely descriptive project? Bělohrad (2016) in this context suggests to apply the method of reflective equilibrium, which I will embrace here. I believe that the core of this method, which is widely spread in other areas of philosophical research (e.g. ethics, logic), is succinctly expressed in the insight of David Lewis:

One comes to philosophy already endowed with a stock of opinions. It is not the business of philosophy either to undermine or to justify these preexisting opinions, to any great extent, but only to try to discover ways of expanding them into an orderly system. (Lewis 1998, 99)

This method gives us the possibility to reject belief that is a) not in accordance with our other beliefs and b) for us not more important than the sum of our beliefs which it contradicts.

The second important methodological step is bound to the acknowledgment of the plurality of i-concerns. For some i-concerns, we need a more narrowly defined entity to be able to apply these specific i-concerns. For example regarding anticipation, the future entity needs to be conscious, whereas for moral responsibility arguably it does not (Shoemaker 2007; see also Bělohrad 2016, 225). Now comes the question: “What happens when not all i-concerns are applicable?” There seems to be an agreement that the person exists when there is an entity which is subject to at least some of the i-concerns. In that manner, Schechtman (2016) defines *person* very broadly as an entity with person-life (the condition is so loose that,

e.g., people in pervasive vegetative states fulfill that condition). She is aware that some objects which fulfill her definition of a person are not able to engage in the full range of *i*-concerns and related practice, but that does not mean that this entity isn't a person at all. Similarly, Bělohrad (2016, 225) considers the human organism as the main entity relevant to *i*-concerns, though he is aware that for some kinds of *i*-concerns it isn't a sufficient condition. The reason for this step seems obvious. When we take *i*-concerns seriously as concerns that presuppose identity, we can conclude that where there is some *i*-concern, there must be a person (leaving aside the possibility that other *i*-concerns may not hold).

With this methodological background (which is admittedly rather unconventional, but also not completely novel), I will try to show that there is a possibility to argue for the continuing existence of a person after death even without any supernatural intervention or non-naturalistic occurrences. To my best knowledge, for the existence of personal afterlife was argued so far only from the theistic perspective. Though I am not sure that other authors embracing the reflective equilibrium method aren't already on the point of accepting my conclusions, none of them has directly addressed this topic, so even if it is a relatively evident implication of this method, I believe it is meaningful to explicate it.

3. *i*-concerns beyond the biological continuity

The first necessary step towards the desired conclusion is to show that we hold at least some *i*-concerns that go beyond the point of death (I will call these concerns *afterlife i-concerns*). I will focus on two of them that belong to the most important and most discussed – egoistical concern and compensation.

Self-concern (sometimes also called egoistical concern) is a special kind of practical concern which I feel exclusively toward my own person. I can be deeply concerned for my close ones and the concern for others could be even in some respects stronger as for myself, but egoistical concern is qualitatively different from the concerns we feel toward others. As the pain of others is phenomenologically different from the pain I personally experience, also the expected pain of others is different from expected pain that I personally will have to undergo.

I identify three institutionally supported ways in which egoistical concern goes beyond our biological death. Firstly, we have an afterlife self-concern for our bodies. There is a difference between our concern for corpses of others and concern for our own corpse. When we imagine that our corpse will be treated in some disrespectful way, we feel that it would be personally offending. On the other hand, when we imagine that it will be treated reverentially we feel honored. And also when we treat some corpse in some reverential way we are convinced that in that act we honor the person of the dead body. Afterlife self-concern is probably manifested most strongly in our conviction that we have a right to decide what should be done with our body after our death. That is not merely an airy intuition of a few people; this judgment is also reflected legally. At least in many countries, everybody has a right to decide whether their organs could be taken for transplantation or not.

Something similar applies to our material property. We are personally concerned about the question what will happen with our property when we die in virtue of being our property. We feel that our personal right is violated when we cannot control what will be done with our property after our death, and we have indeed a legal right to determine it by writing a will.

Thirdly, we have an afterlife self-concern in respect to our reputation. We feel the same kind of outrage when we imagine that someone will spread lies about us after our death, as if he were to do so while we were alive. There is again also a legal right to defend one's post-mortem reputation (through the relatives).

The second i-concern that I argue for, which goes beyond biological death, is compensation (in a broad sense that involves not only material compensation but also praise, for example). We tend to say that someone deserves compensation for what he has done, even though he is dead. The perfect example for that is the example mentioned at the beginning of my paper. Mark Campbell obviously doesn't see any problem in saying that Ryan Lock deserves honors, though he is dead. Again, there are also legal cases that are underlined by afterlife compensation judgments. Copyrights are a form of compensation for the effort of creating a certain product of which others can take advantage. Inheritance of copyrights (which is legally guaranteed) could then be seen as a post-mortem compensation for that effort. But there is also a legal right to be compensated for events that

happen after the biological death. The action for the protection of personality guarantees that slander and other kinds of reputational harm will be compensated for even when they happen after the biological death of the person. That is the reason why the deceased journalist Ferdinand Peroutka has the right to be compensated (in the case that the article that Zeman claims Peroutka has written was not written) for the words of the Czech president Miloš Zeman.³

4. The importance of afterlife i-concerns

I believe I made a point that we do have some afterlife i-concerns. I can now apply the second methodological step and say that, as we have beliefs in afterlife i-concerns, we are bound to belief in some form of existence of person after death. It seems to be very strange to believe that someone has a right to be compensated and at the same time to believe that he doesn't exist anymore. But there is still the possibility, that we should sacrifice our belief in the appropriateness of afterlife i-concerns in order to keep some other potentially more salient beliefs. To evaluate this possibility we first have to consider the psychological value of our afterlife i-concerns.

4.1. *The value of collective afterlife*

The first source, which gives us the possibility to appraise the importance of this belief, draws on the thoughts of Samuel Scheffler, summed up in the book *Death and the Afterlife* (Scheffler 2013). Here, Scheffler presents thought experiments that are intended to show that our values crucially depend on our beliefs concerning the fate of mankind after our (biological) death. In the doomsday scenario (Scheffler 2013, 18-19) we are invited to imagine how we would react emotionally, if we found out that 30 days after our own death, the Earth would be destroyed in a collision with a giant asteroid. Scheffler supposes that most of us would react with “profound dismay” (Scheffler 2013, 21), and that lot of things that we value would lose their value for us. There is a type of

³ See the details of this famous affair on *Kauza Hitler je gentleman* [*The Affair: Hitler is Gentleman*] in Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, retrieved online [05.05.2017]: https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kauza_Hitler_je_gentleman.

activity in which this is quite clear. The value of all projects, where a) the ultimate success is perceived as laying in the distant future or b) the value of the project derives from the benefits for a large numbers of people over a long period of time, is obviously threatened (Scheffler 2013, 24). A paradigmatic example is cancer research or improving the social institutions. But the novel by P. D. James *The Children of Men* suggests that also far more routine aspects of our lives would be threatened (James 1992, 38). One way how Scheffler explains this supposed reaction is by noticing “something approaching a conceptual connection” (Scheffler 2013, 60) between valuing something and wanting something to be preserved. “To value X is normally to see reasons for trying to preserve or extend X over time” (Scheffler 2013, 60). When we know that the Earth would not be preserved, we would know as well that the things that we value would not be preserved. So as long as we are valuing anything (except for quite few exceptions), it is important for us to know that when we die everything else stays quite the same.

As one of the most valuable things for us are our personal relationships, it is both very important and desirable for us that there remains a network of valuable social relationships after our death, out of which we are wrenched. In this respect, it is more important for us that our close ones survive than that we personally survive. Through the survival of other persons, we can still retain a “social identity”. According to Scheffler, many people seem to feel that “not being remembered is what being ‘gone’ really consists in” (Scheffler 2013, 29-30). When you know that some people who value their relationship with you stay after your death it makes you feel that you have a place in the social world of the future. On the other hand, when this is missing you are faced with the frightening prospect of a blank eternity of nonexistence. Scheffler identifies this as a powerful imperative for those who are bereaved to not forget.⁴

One can expand or specify this imperative not to forget to the larger scale of practices that help to keep the social identity. These practices include, I believe, the range of afterlife i-concerns that I discussed earlier. Scheffler unfortunately doesn't specify what he means by the term “social identity”, but he describes this kind of concern also with the term “personalized relationship to the future” (Scheffler 2013, 31). Here it is quite clear

⁴ The whole paragraph paraphrases Scheffler (2013, 29-30).

that when I do have a right to write my will, I feel personally more involved in the world that comes after my death. The same applies when I know that there will be some legislative power to protect my reputation, or that my dead body will be treated with some respect.

In the previous paragraphs, I showed that there is arguably an important psychological link between valuing things and belief in the collective afterlife and that the value of collective afterlife rests to a great extent on its ability to create a personalized relationship to the future or the social identity after our death, which in turn seems to rest to a great extent on practices bound to our afterlife i-concerns. This means that the rejection of these practices could induce not only a bigger fear of one's own biological death, but it could affect our valuing of things in general.⁵

4.2. *À la Pascal's Wager*

Another line of argument about reasonableness of afterlife i-concerns doesn't support the thesis about the importance of our post-mortem i-concerns for us, but presents a reason for keeping such i-concerns besides the importance for us as living beings on this Earth. The argument takes a form similar to the famous Pascal's Wager. The first premise says that we are not sure, whether there is some life after death. Though some think that it is completely impossible that we could survive our death (e.g. Johnston 2010), there are lot of models that defend the position that it is at least logically possible to survive the biological death.⁶ And there is arguably also *some* empirical evidence for the existence of the afterlife – for example in the area of near-to-death-experience or parapsychology (Hasker & Taliaferro 2014). So I suppose it is quite safe to present our situation as an agnostic one. In this position of uncertainty we have the possibility to act as if the biologically dead persons would continue to exist, or as if they would cease to exist.

⁵ Scheffler in his text rejects personal survival after biological death, but his distinction between collective afterlife and personal afterlife rests mainly on the personal survival (see Scheffler 2013, 65), which my conception doesn't necessarily entail. My disagreement with Scheffler is insofar just terminological.

⁶ For example simulacrum model, falling elevator model, constitution account etc. See Green (undated), Hasker & Taliaferro (2014).

Let us first take a look on the possibility that there is no afterlife in the ordinary sense. In the previous arguments I argued that there is a great advantage (for the living persons) to act as if the biologically dead persons would continue to exist. But for the sake of this argument I could even admit that there are possible costs for such a behavior. When we act in this way, we arguably lose the opportunity to transplant organs from bodies of those who reject it and the possibility to ignore the testaments of rich people who want their rich relatives to inherit their belongings and possibly distribute the heritage among the more needy (though there is a worry how this could work in practice). So I can admit that when there is no afterlife in the classical sense there are some costs of acting as if the dead one would continue to exist, but these don't prevail over the benefits.

The situation changes dramatically when the dead persons continue to exist (in the ordinary sense). In such a case, when we act as if they don't exist anymore there is at least some probability that they are harmed through our behavior, that they could feel offended or hurt by our behavior. They would probably feel in a similar way as when a friend doesn't want to be one's friend any more without any appropriate reason. The described situation is schematically presented in the following table.

| | Continuing to exist (and care about our world) | Ceasing to exist/not care |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Acting as continuing | C&B + Benefits for survivors | C&B |
| Acting as disappeared | C&B + Costs for survivors | C&B |

Table 1: Afterlife wager
(C&B stands for costs and benefits)

4.3. Advantages of believing in the classical notion of afterlife

So far, I have only addressed the possibility of afterlife shared by those who don't believe in any biological or soul-like continuation of the person after death or are at least agnostic about it. But it seems to be relevant to also highlight the special psychological advantages of believing in the

afterlife in the classical theistic sense. Scheffler identifies four main features of the importance of the traditional afterlife. Firstly, it simply allows personal survival and reduces the fear of death. Secondly, it offers the possibility of reuniting or at least communicating with loved ones. Thirdly, it allows to believe in some kind of cosmic justice. It offers the possibility of appropriate afterlife compensation for all the terrible suffering, or afterlife punishments for the most grievous wrongdoings.⁷ Fourthly, it gives life its cosmic meaning. It seems at least possible to argue that if there is no afterlife then nothing ultimately matters. By this point, however, Scheffler argues that life without classical afterlife apparently doesn't lead to life without meaning in reality. Many people live life without this belief and it seems that it doesn't diminish the extent to which things matter to them and they are engaged in a "full-array of valued activities and interactions with others" (Scheffler 2013, 71).⁸

Nevertheless, this seems to be a problematic statement. It is quite clear that such people can't see the same meaning in, e.g., prayer for the dead or in attempts to communicate with the loved ones. But given that there isn't any cosmic justice, it seems to be clear that it changes the value of moral behavior as well. It is relevant in this context to mention the story of the philosopher Holm Tetens, who after many years of being atheist/agnostic about the classical afterlife converted to theism/belief in the classical afterlife (Tetens & Scholl 2016). In his book in which he tries to rationally defend the theistic belief, he argues that given (at least) the uncertainty about the truthfulness of naturalistic explanations of the world,⁹ it seems to be reasonable to choose such a metaphysics, which allows us to avoid prob-

⁷ The possibility of punishment is not explicitly mentioned by Scheffler but, for example, Scholl admits that, for him, this is the most attractive aspect of afterlife (Tetens & Scholl 2016; 57:25-57:35).

⁸ Nevertheless, this stance seems to be vulnerable to the following objection. One can imagine that in the same manner as one got used to the idea of the non-existence of the classical afterlife, one could become accustomed to the belief in the non-existence of collective afterlife. Though there may be satisfying answers to this objection, my claim seems to be less vulnerable, if I claim that those who don't believe in classical afterlife miss some motivation to engage in some projects.

⁹ Tetens stresses in the first place the inability of explanation of the mind/body problem in naturalistic terms (Tetens 2015).

lematic attitudes in the fight against evil and suffering. Because the naturalistic view that excludes a classical afterlife presses us to adopt such a problematical stance as a “resignation, tragic opposition, cynical egoistical hedonism or the self-destroying delusion of self-redemption and in every case a moral awkwardness, giving a meaning of great amounts of evil and suffering in the best case as a mean to a human progress” (Tetens 2015, 78) it is more reasonable to adopt the theistic-redemptionistic metaphysics, which allows to avoid such an attitude. So, for Tetens, the promise of redemption, vindication and justice in the coming world presents a deciding reason to adopt a new whole ontological frame. That seems to be an evidence that, for some of us, the perspective of classical afterlife offers us still lot more than the perspective of the collective afterlife.¹⁰

To sum up my argument so far: I have argued that some of our *i*-concerns reach beyond biological death. I also showed that we have some quite important reasons to preserve these *i*-concerns. In order to be able to say whether it is really reasonable to embrace a belief in afterlife, now we have to look for a theory of personal identity that could implement naturalistic afterlife and consider which other beliefs such a theory forces us to sacrifice.

5. Person with an afterlife

A model that is the most frequently associated with the possibility of afterlife is the dualistic model of body and soul. The presented argument maybe gives some more attractiveness to this model, but I do not believe that the importance of afterlife *i*-concerns is powerful enough to overcome

¹⁰ It might be nevertheless objected that, though belief in classical afterlife could bring a personal gain, it could be unfavorable for the society. A believer doesn't have such a big motivation to restore the righteousness on the earth as an unbeliever and so he could be more comfortable with, e.g., oppressive political conditions. From the position of Tetens one could reply that our capabilities to establish a righteous society are so negligible (in the face of the overwhelming power of injustice) that there is not much sense in even trying to make a change. When we on the other hand believe that there is a real possibility of the victory of justice, we could have a lot more motivation to commit ourselves to some specific policies.

the deep ontological disagreement of materialists about dualistic metaphysics (though we saw in Tetens that one could be willing to radically change one's metaphysical framework in order to have the possibility of a classical afterlife). There are other accounts of surviving biological death that are materialistic (one could for example make use of psychological theory of personal identity; see Zimmerman 2013), but nevertheless presuppose the existence of God, which is again a problem of deep metaphysical disagreement. There is yet another account of survival of the biological death presented in Mark Johnston's *Surviving Death* (2010) which is built on naturalistic assumptions. This account is nevertheless not fitting in my argumentation insofar as it claims that the self is only an illusion. Johnston claims that the possibility of continuity after one's death lays in the redirection of our concerns to take a form of radical altruism (or *agape*). Through overcoming one's egoistical concerns and identification with humanity "one quite literally lives on in the onward rush of humankind" (Johnston 2010, 49). So it seems that this account, though it might have much in common with my arguments, isn't the best option to promote one's personal afterlife i-concerns.

5.1. Person-life view

The account that I see as the most promising for a theoretical anchoring of afterlife i-concerns comes from the book *Staying Alive* written by Marya Schechtman (2014). The theory described in this book, called person-life view (PLV), claims that a person is defined by living a person-life. According to Schechtman, it isn't accurate to think about the person as exclusively a forensic object. The forensic capacities (such as moral responsibility) are in our lives inseparably intertwined with all other activities (such as eating, sleeping, reproducing etc.).¹¹ There are – according to Schechtman – three different interrelated layers of a typical person-life (as a whole): a) individual attributes (biological and psychological), b) social interaction and c) social and cultural infrastructure (institutional

¹¹ As an example, Schechtman presents a situation of a wedding celebration, where eating and mating and traditions and rituals are all mixed together. It is not that we eat and mate and aside of it we also have traditions and forensic interactions (Schechtman 2014, 119).

framework of person-practices) (Schechtman 2014, 112-113). But according to PLV, all the features of the typical person-life needn't be present for a person to exist. In this sense, the concept of person is protean. The person-life is a cluster concept in a similar way as Chiong's (2005, 25) concept of biological life. Schechtman shows that even when there are attenuated individual attributes as in the case of a baby, a mentally handicapped person or a person in a pervasive vegetative state, there is still a whole range of person related actions of the people from their surroundings as well as legislative and cultural norms to treat such people in the person specific way, that enables the person to continue to exist (Schechtman 2014, 120).

On the other hand, Schechtman argues that all kinds of oppression and mistreatment (such as slavery) don't express that the oppressor treats the oppressed in a non-person-related way. It differs qualitatively from the way one would treat animals. For example, Slave Codes, which prevent slaves from testifying in courts, making contracts, buying or selling goods, etc., show acknowledgment of the slave's ability to do such things, which differentiates them from animals and other non-persons. Person specific treatment doesn't mean good treatment. In that sense even the oppressive institutional framework gives a human being a person-space (Schechtman 2014, 127).

But someone could object that we treat also other objects than people – typically pets – in a person-specific way. “There are pampered poodles, for instance, who wear sweaters and jewels, sleep in beds, have their births registered, go to doggie daycare and on playdates, are given therapy if they demonstrate anxiety, and eat ‘people food’ off of plates” (Schechtman 2014, 121). Schechtman points out here again that the attitudes that we hold toward pets qualitatively differ from those we hold toward a mentally handicapped child for example (though their mental forensic abilities could be at the same level). That seems to be apparent in the difference of the reactions of the parents of a cognitively disabled child, when they are confronted with the realization that their child won't be able to talk, to dress or feed herself on the one hand, and the owner of a pet, who gets the same information about her beloved poodle. In the first case we expect big emotional reaction, while in the second case we would expect puzzlement about expressing such a trivial statement. We are aware that children are not able to be included in all i-concern related practices, but that doesn't matter

because we expect them to be able of that in the future or in the past. But even if in some concrete case these expectations were irrational that wouldn't change anything. Probably no one thinks that the status of a child (in the sense that it would be no longer a person) should suddenly differ from other children just because its expected development is different. These children are the right *kind* of entity (because they are humans) and that is enough. This step should be easily seen as an expression of speciesism, but Schechtman tries to show that this step is not as arbitrary as it can seem at first glance. We have a deep natural tendency to treat other humans as persons, because they have through their biological outfit the best conditions to live with us in one community of persons – they are

born from us (and later can reproduce with us) [...], require the kind of nourishment and temperature regulation that are optimally provided by a human mother. They have the same sleep cycles we do, are nourished by the same foods, rely on the same senses, are subject to the same illnesses, can move at roughly the same speed, and so on. These are all facts about our biology, but they are also facts with immediate and wide-reaching implications for how we can and do live together. (Schechtman 2014, 124)

I didn't present entire PLV theory (with all its metaphysical consequences), but it seems clear to me that the main difference between PLV and other theories of personal identity lays in the crucial importance of the social aspect. Though other practical accounts such as the narrative theory put some weight on it,¹² no other theory I am aware of states social feature as a constitutive feature of a person. This seems to be very favorable for my purposes – my main concern is after all the (social) practice of backing up the personal identity in the first place.

Though Schechtman didn't comment in her book on the possibility of afterlife, it was objected that her theory doesn't, at least in principle, exclude this possibility (see Bělohrad 2014, 576). If we take features of person-life at face value, it seems clear that there are social interactions and

¹² For example, in her earlier narrative self-constitution view, Schechtman claimed that identity constituting narrative has to cohere with the beliefs about the most basic features of reality of other persons (Schechtman 2014, 119).

cultural infrastructure that are identity-relevant. There seems to be no difference in kind between the relationships or the legal rights and other social institution we have towards people in a pervasive vegetative state (which Schechtman claims to be identity-constituting) and towards people who are biologically dead. It was seen as a problem of the theory. Bělohrad (2014, 577) writes that “no one would accept that persons are entities [...] that can survive their death, burial or cremation and that stop existing gradually as their position in person-space slowly disappears as their close friends and family forget them”. I don’t claim that people, who don’t believe in the classical afterlife believe in surviving death (and insofar I agree with him). However, as I have already mentioned, Scheffler pointed out that being forgotten is (at least for some people) what being gone (or being no more) really consists of. Insofar, I believe it is not that unreasonable to believe that one stops existing gradually, as one is being forgotten by close friends and family.

6. Problem of “social afterlife”

The apparent problem for including the afterlife existence in the theory is that it radically amplifies the conventional nature of personhood. Even when we accept that it is not arbitrary – that human beings are treated by other human beings as persons – the existence of a person is (at least in some cases) determined by the contingent fact of the strength of the dying person’s social network or by the number of people who will remember him. On this account, “immortality” really is gained through some history-changing deeds. The glory would really purchase long life for oneself, in a more literal sense than we are ready to agree on.¹³

One possible answer to such a question is that the existence of a person is still not completely conventional, because it is still parasitic on the

¹³ It would also mean that even morally bad deeds can guarantee you longer life (through a heroic fame). That seems to be morally problematical but only insofar as one presupposes that every form of existence is better than non-existence. I believe that it’s arguable that such a kind of existence, which consists only of perpetual blaming, isn’t worth striving for and therefore it is more like a kind of punishment to exist in such a form.

biological and mental outfit (if there were no forensic capacities by humans as a kind, there would be no human persons). Another possible answer seems to be at hand when we come back to the list of main i-concerns. As already mentioned, I don't claim that those not believing in a classical afterlife judge death as enabling personal survival. It could seem strange to claim that a person continues to exist but doesn't survive, but that is what we can claim given the pluralism of the i-concerns. In this line of argument we can claim that social interactions and social framework enables only personal existence without survival, and that means a very limited form of personal existence, which doesn't seem so counter-intuitive anymore.

7. Social and classical afterlife

But there also seems to be another possible reaction to a conventional objection, which is however available only within a specific metaphysical framework. It seems to be clear that if there is an almighty creator who enables you to carry your life on in a community of others, including those who passed away before you, neither afterlife nor personhood seems to be a matter of convention. I believe that it is a big advantage of the PLV theory that it is suitable with both physicalist/non-classical-afterlife and theistic/classical-afterlife metaphysics and shows also the difference of possibilities of an afterlife in each of them, where on one hand there is a limited afterlife without survival on the side of the physicalist/no-classical-afterlife metaphysics and a full afterlife on the side of theistic/classical-afterlife metaphysics. This reflects also my analysis of the benefits of afterlife belief. I showed there in which way there are premium psychological benefits in believing in classical afterlife, which nevertheless demand sacrificing beliefs preventing us from embracing theistic worldview (which is for many of too great value).

8. PLV as reflectively equilibrated

The rather conventional character of person is probably the highest price one has to pay for the possibility of embracing the non-conventional

afterlife. Schechtman shows that there are also beliefs of a more metaphysical nature that one has to sacrifice to adopt PLV. The most important one is probably that organism is not an “object of everyday life”, but more some theoretical abstraction from the totality of our experience (Schechtman 2014, 183-186). This seems to be a quite counterintuitive statement and Schechtman makes lot of effort to significantly reduce its counterintuitiveness. Her argument is in this point quite complex and therefore unfortunately unsuitable to present it here.

Arguably, it is hard to compare values of various beliefs and I don't have the illusion that everyone is ready to make the trade-off suggested above. But on the other hand, I suggest that the price is reasonable enough to consider it as a real option and that PLV could be included in the list of theories of personal identity which fit the criterion of reflected equilibrium best.

9. Conclusion and future direction

In my paper, I discussed the topic of afterlife *i*-concerns, meaning identity-presupposing concerns that go beyond the continuity of our biological body. I showed that there are indeed such concerns and that we have practical and ethical reasons to maintain them. Then I presented the person-life view as the best candidate to implement such ideas and show how it works differently within the different ontological frameworks. I tried to show that the final position that the person-life carries on after death seems to be reasonable from the perspective of reflective equilibrium. Nevertheless, there are still a lot of open questions, which could invalidate this conclusion. It could turn out that there is after all a possibility to rationally defend one's *i*-concerns even when there is no link between them and a concept of a person. One could potentially interpret our practices which I linked to afterlife *i*-concerns without invoking them. There is of course also a possibility that PLV implies still more counterintuitive beliefs that Schechtman is not aware of. Lastly, another theory could be developed which is more intuitive than PLV and could adopt a non-conventional afterlife at the same time. I hope that this paper encourages more vivid debate about such issues.

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