The Extended Self

For the nominalist ego-pole model of the self, the nuclear parameters and conditions for tackling the continuity criterion appear mostly resolved by the work of Derek Parfit; however, the range of extension of the self beyond the nucleus (as simply the absolute point of experience and psychological or experiential continuity) to the demarcation between the self and alterity remains mostly undetermined. Herein, I will construct this position of self through a form of active externalism, first setting up a framework of material mereology deduced from a Wittgensteinian principle of identity, then following with a series of case studies and thought experiments regarding the perspectival extension of the self upon the aforementioned framework.

On the subject of difference and identity, Wittgenstein proposed in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that "Two objects of the same logical form are – apart from their external properties – only differentiated from one another in that they are different."[1] In substantiation, I can form an initial application of this claim starting by forming a representation of two numbers in the mind. It does not matter which numbers are chosen, so long as they are identical, but for the sake of clarity, suppose we have chosen two number threes (3 and 3). Axiomatically, each three is logically identical but, in any case, each three will also occur as a representation (presumably in a spatial or temporal field). If we theoretically strip the representational qualities of each three so that two identical *forms* of the value of three exist, each value may be said only to exist independently in that they are different. An issue here occurs, though, as an identical duality of forms is illogical, considering that the quality of duality appears only viable as differentiation by dimensional relativity (spatial or temporal). Thus, this concept of pure difference can only exist as a linguistic exercise—an imaginative representation detached from the truth of reality. We can examine this further by physicalizing the scenario. So, suppose there

[1] {Wittgenstein citation placeholder}

are two atomically identical physical objects. The only thing that separates the two is that they exist at different spatio-temporal points. If we postulate, then, that each object is constantly teleporting into each other's exact position at an imperceptible speed, we lose any *sense* of spatio-temporal relativity. I must posit, however, that spatio-temporality is still retained, and that, besides the fact that perceivable difference has been lost, true relativity persists so that difference is not completely disentangled from the physical. This is obvious as, at any moment, each atom *must* still exist independently (at the risk of losing a concrete axiom), regardless of the perceptive integration, which is essentially a temporal illusion. So, in any case, we can deduce that our subjects are essentially dependent on their physicality as atomic facts whereby they may exist independently in any other conceivable facet.[2] And, thus, apart from the quality of perceptive existence, all spatio-temporal actualities must ultimately be composed entirely through contextual exchange, which may then prove exhaustively decayable. Or, more simply, I have, in effect, configured the identity traits of individuality and contiguity as mereological indeterminacies.

Per the self, I will first apply these principles to the extension from mind to flesh. Conforming to the nominalist supposition, the mind here refers simply to an indeterminate and dynamic conglomerate of senses, which manifests as a singular experience and may generally reside within the corpus. Commensurately, the point of experience acts as a central processor, fulfilling actions bilaterally by intaking sensible interaction and commanding actionable physical extension. Thus, the mind is ontologically dependent on a perpetual informational exchange, manifesting externally through the command of flesh and corporeal sense. In effect, however, this construction of mind displaces informational storage to a realm of self exterior to the nuclear ego, meaning that Chalmers's conceptual extended mind simply becomes a non-mind extended

[2] {Ibid., 2.0122}

self. And, under these terms, the body as a homogenous structure is also a non-mind extension of the self.[3] With this distinction, the body and mind become a dynamic but dissociative unit, seeing that any component of corporeal self theoretically need not be necessary for the construction of mind. So, at any instance, constituents of the body may exist detached from cognitive processes, materializing them to the fullest and rendering them essentially dead matter by means of perceptive ignorance. I have no reason to doubt that this can apply to every atomic configuration in the conglomerate of the body so that the entire corporeal self becomes mereologically dissociative. To wit, the mind acts as an active mutilator, dismembering cognitively inactive biological structures to the realm of "not-I" and to a base identity of merely material existence. But, even for the sensorily active, I would assess that the mind as a central experience acts transcendentally (figuratively/introspectively) as a gestalt apparition that affixes itself onto corporeal units so that these units retain the same fundamental ontological material identity, except they are then perceptively distinguished. More simply, this characterizes the body as a more literal vessel of causal interaction so that the mind as a physical manifestation is its causal distribution.

I would prefer, however, to avoid cliché hippiedoms and platitudes concerning stardust that some may erroneously construe with my material construction. Foremost, it is important to distinguish that a notion of self by these terms is still cephalocentric and far from entirely discorporable. Here, the self is instead a dynamic system of metaphorical sinews that connects sensory activity between the body and the external world, consolidating itself through the processor mind. In locating the self as primarily attached to the head, we may also see the sensorial stretch as a degrading process outward. So, direct operators of sensory activity are more

[3] "The body as a homogenous structure" is used to refer to a corpus which must, of course, include the sensory components of the mind, but in which senses are individuated to instead coincide with non-mind corporeal contiguities—essentially equivalent to the body as merely a material object.

becoming than their external support. Consider the eye, for example. The eye is a primary constituent in a system of direct sensorial operators employing sight as a sinew between the aggregate experience and the external composition. The eye as a function of the self is as much its sinew to the objects it is not as it is itself. With its enucleation, a tie is completely severed from the external world, causing a reduction in the self. This is unilateral, however, as the external informational values are subject to any amount of variation, whereas the eye must maintain some constant of distinction capabilities. So, closing your eyes or turning the lights off in the room you are in (supposing these are temporary) should not constrict (or construct) identity, though blindness can. To put this into perspective, take the previous teleporting objects example, except this time you are holding the object, perhaps a box. Rather than being absolutely atomically identical, in this scenario, each box is atomically identical in every aspect except color, where one is red and one is blue. Quite obviously, identity here cannot be constructed through touch (or smell, &c.). This has the same implications when applied to human examples, so that the initial values of *q*-memories in Parfit's example of a split self may also rely on sight, or perhaps similarly with Dave Chappelle's black white supremacist as well.

To examine this further, we will look at the greatest hour of television in history with season four of Lost's fifth episode "The Constant." Here, our protagonist, appropriately christened Desmond David Hume, experiences amnesia and is teleported between two realities separated in time and space, configuring a duality of personal identities (one for each scenario). In order to reconcile himself, Desmond implants knowledge into a subject (the constant) that will appear in both realities so that he can relativize his situation and understand which self he truly is. This introduces us to a concept that I call "superimpositional identities," which are essentially informational identity traits placed externally to the identity subject, or the self outside of the

self. For the case of Desmond, he places a piece of information in his constant about his relative position which could then be relayed back to himself to confirm his relative position. A more simple quotidian example of superimpositional identity occurs to everyone just with the passing of sleep. To illustrate, we observe that there is a gap between the points of experience when you fall asleep and when you wake up where any sense of relativity could theoretically disappear, but you still consider yourself the same person (to a degree) when you wake up as when you were when you fell asleep. You are able to deduce this from the superimpositional identities of yourself onto the room. So, since you are able to sense when you wake up that you fell asleep in the same bed, in the same apartment, and in the same body, you are able to deduce that you are indeed the same person who fell asleep the night before.

These cases have mostly constructed notions of self with superimpositional identities necessarily tied to memory, however, this formula may not prove to be imperative. If we refer back to David Chalmers's amnesiac character Otto and his notebook of memories, we may also consider the notebook a conveyor of superimpositional identity. With this, Otto may still construct his own identity on beliefs from the notebook, even without prior knowledge to relativize any knowledge in the notebook. So, superimpositional identities alone, as simply conveyors of information, may inform the construction of identity. Although, as with Parfit's *q*-memories (&c.), individuation is better achieved with the supplementation of relativity and reason, providing more stable continuity.

The issue still remains, however, of whether or not these superimpositional identities should be considered a part of the self. Keeping with bundle theory, I believe a distinction should be made in regards to how qualities are grouped in a bundle of self. If we expand our notion of self to include everything that adopts our superimpositional identities, the self becomes too broad

and, seeing this concept of superimpositional identity as merely an adoptive quality, begins to include more “not-I” than “I.” However, if we constrict the self to simply the confines of the mind, the distinction of self becomes too incongruous in light of the construction of the mind as a dynamic system of dissociative senses. In reconciliation, I figure it is best to ground the self as more or less constricted to what phenomenal sense can directly overtake, meaning simply the biological organism. Still, this corporeal sense of self is reliant on its external relativity and extended through its superimpositions (so Otto may still lose his identity if he loses his notebook, though it may not constitute a part of himself). The term “extended” should not, however, connote literal parthood, per se, but more along the lines of a mereological indeterminacy whereby these extensions exist as essentially replicas of the originally bundled properties superimposed externally. I will admit, though, that this still only constructs a rather indefinite form of an extended self that might not account for more atypical scenarios. For instance, for two minds in a shared body, how does the self extend? Or, if phenomenal sense is expanded beyond the body to an inanimate object (e.g. through Salvia divinorum), does this extend the self further? For now, I do not know.

Works Cited