7 Later selves and moral principles*

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I shall first sketch different views about the nature of personal identity, then suggest that the views support different moral claims.

1

Most of us seem to have certain beliefs about our own identity. We seem for instance to believe that, whatever happens, any future person must be either us, or someone else.

These beliefs are like those that some of us have about a simpler fact. Most of us now think that to be a person, as opposed to a mere animal, is just to have certain more specific properties, such as rationality. These are matters of degree. So we might say that the fact of personhood is just the fact of having certain other properties, which are had to different degrees.

There is a different view. Some of us believe that personhood is a further, deep, fact, and cannot hold to different degrees.

This second view may be confused with some trivial claims. Personhood is, in a sense, a further fact. And there is a sense in which all persons are equally persons.

Let us first show how these claims may be trivial. We can use a different example. There is a sense in which all our relatives are equally our relatives. We can use the phrase 'related to' so that what it means has no degrees; on this use, parents and remote cousins are as much relatives. It is obvious, though, that kinship has degrees. This is shown in the phrase 'closely related to': remote cousins are, as relatives, less close. I shall summarize such remarks in the following way. On the above use, the fact of being someone's relative has in its *logic* no degrees. But in its

nature – in what it involves – it does have degrees. So the fact's logic hides its nature. Hence the triviality of the claim that all our relatives are equally our relatives. (The last few sentences may be wrongly worded,[1] but I hope that the example suggests what I mean.)

To return to the claims about personhood. These were: that it is a further fact, and that all persons are equally persons. As claims about the fact's logic, these are trivial. Certain people think the claims profound. They believe them to be true of the fact's nature.

The difference here can be shown in many ways. Take the question, 'When precisely does an embryo become a person?' If we merely make the claims about the fact's logic, we shall not believe that this question must have a precise answer.[2] Certain people do believe this. They believe that any embryo must either be, or not be, a complete person. Their view goes beyond the 'logical claims'. It concerns the nature of personhood.

We can now return to the main argument. About the facts of both personhood and personal identity, there are two views. According to the first, these facts have a special nature. They are further facts, independent of certain more specific facts; and in every case they must either hold completely, or completely fail to hold. According to the second view, these facts are not of this nature. They consist in the holding of the more specific facts; and they are matters of degree.

Let us name such opposing views. I shall call the first kind 'Simple' and the second 'Complex'.

Such views may affect our moral principles, in the following way. If we change from a Simple to a Complex View, we acquire two beliefs: we decide that a certain fact is in its nature less deep, and that it sometimes holds to reduced degrees. These beliefs may have two effects: the first belief may weaken certain principles, and the second give the principles a new scope.

Take the views about personhood. An ancient principle gives to the welfare of people absolute precedence over that of mere animals. If the difference between people and mere animals is in its nature less deep, this principle can be more plausibly denied. And if embryos are not people, and become them only by degrees, the principle forbidding murder can be more plausibly given less scope.[3]

I have not defended these claims. They are meant to parallel what I shall defend in the case of the two views about personal identity.

II

We must first sketch these views. It will help to revive a comparison. What is involved in the survival of a nation are just certain continuities, such as those of a people and a political system. When there is a weakening of these continuities, as there was, say, in the Norman Conquest, it may be unclear whether a nation survives. But there is here no problem. And the reason is that the survival of a nation just involves these continuities. Once we know how the continuities were weakened, we need not ask, as a question about an independent fact, 'Did a nation cease to exist?' There is nothing left to know.

We can add the following remarks. Though identity has no degrees,[4] these continuities are matters of degree. So the identity of nations over time is only in its logic 'all-or-nothing'; in its nature it has degrees.

The identity of people over time is, according to the 'Complex View', comparable.[5] It consists in bodily and psychological continuity. These, too, are matters of degree. So we can add the comparable remark. The identity of people over time is only in its logic 'all-or-nothing'; in its nature it has degrees.

How do the continuities of bodies and minds have degrees? We can first dismiss bodies, since they are morally trivial.[6] Let us next call 'direct' the psychological relations which hold between: the memory of an experience and this experience, the intention to perform some later action and this action, and different expressions of some lasting character-trait. We can now name two general features of a person's life. One, 'connectedness', is the holding, over time, of particular 'direct' relations. The other, 'continuity', is the holding of a chain of such relations. If, say, I cannot now remember some earlier day, there are no 'connections of memory' between me now and myself on that day. But there may be 'continuity of memory'. This there is if, on every day between, I remembered the previous day.

Of these two general relations, I define 'continuous with' so

that, in its logic, it has no degrees. It is like 'related to' in the use on which all our relatives are equally our relatives. But 'connectedness' has degrees. Between different parts of a person's life, the connections of memory, character, and intention are – in strength and number – more or less. ('Connected to' is like 'closely related to'; different relatives can be more or less close.)

We can now restate the Complex View. What is important in personal identity are the two relations we have just sketched. One of these, continuity, is in its logic all-or-nothing. But it just involves connectedness, which clearly has degrees. In its nature, therefore, continuity holds to different degrees. So the fact of personal identity also, in its nature, has degrees.

To turn to the Simple View. Here the fact is believed to be, in its nature, all-or-nothing. This it can only be if it does not just consist in (bodily and) psychological continuity – if it is, in its nature, a further fact. To suggest why: These continuities hold, over time, to different degrees. This is true in actual cases, but is most clearly true in some imaginary cases. We can imagine cases where the continuities between each of us and a future person hold to every possible degree.[7] Suppose we think, in imagining these cases, 'Such a future person must be either, and quite simply, *me*, or *someone else*'. (Suppose we think, 'Whatever happens, any future experience must be either *wholly* mine, or *not* mine *at all*'.) If the continuities can hold to every degree, but the fact of our identity must hold completely or not at all, then this fact cannot consist in these continuities. It must be a further, independent, fact.

It is worth repeating that the Simple View is about the nature of personal identity, not its logic. This is shown by the reactions most of us have to various so-called 'problem cases'.[8] These reactions also show that even if, on the surface, we reject the Simple View, at a deeper level we assume it to be true.[9]

We can add this – rough – test of our assumptions. Nations are in many ways unlike people; for example, they are not organisms. But if we take the Complex View, we shall accept this particular comparison: the survival of a person, like that of a nation, is a matter of degree. If instead we reject this comparison, we take the Simple View.

One last preliminary. We can use 'I', and the other pronouns, so that they cover only the part of our lives to which, when speak-

ing, we have the strongest psychological connections. We assign the rest of our lives to what we call our 'other selves'. When, for instance, we have undergone any marked change in character, or conviction, or style of life, we might say, 'It was not *I* who did that, but an earlier self'.

Such talk can become natural. To quote three passages:

> 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. . . .[10]

> 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.[11]

> 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. . . .[12]

Whether we are inclined to use such talk will depend upon our view about the nature of personal identity. If we take the Simple View, we shall not be so inclined, for we shall think it deeply true that all the parts of a person's life are as much parts of his life. If we take the Complex View, we shall be less impressed by this truth.

It will seem like the truth that all the parts of a nation's history are as much parts of its history. Because this latter truth is superficial, we at times subdivide such a history into that of a series of successive nations, such as Anglo-Saxon, Medieval, or Post-Imperial England.[13] The connections between these, though similar in kind, differ in degree. If we take the Complex View, we may also redescribe a person's life as the history of a series of successive selves. And the connections between these we shall also claim to be similar in kind, different in degree.[14]

III

We can now turn to our question. Do the different views tend to support different moral claims?

I have space to consider only three subjects: desert, commitment, and distributive justice. And I am forced to oversimplify, and to distort. So it may help to start with some general remarks.

My suggestions are of this form: 'The Complex View supports certain claims.' By 'supports' I mean both 'makes more plausible' and 'helps to explain'. My suggestions thus mean: 'If the true view is the Complex, not the Simple, View, certain claims are more plausible.[15] We may therefore[16] be, on the Complex View, more inclined to make these claims.'

I shall be discussing two kinds of case: those in which the psychological connections are as strong as they ever are, and those in which they are markedly weak. I choose these kinds of case for the following reason. If we change from the Simple to the Complex View, we believe (I shall claim) that our identity is in its nature less deep, and that it sometimes holds to reduced degrees. The first of these beliefs covers every case, even those where there are the strongest connections. But the second of the two beliefs only covers cases where there are weak connections. So the two kinds of case provide separate testing-grounds for the two beliefs.

Let us start with the cases of weak connection. And our first principle can be that we deserve to be punished for certain crimes.

We can suppose that, between some convict now and himself when he committed some crime, there are only weak psychological connections. (This will usually be when conviction takes

place after many years.) We can imply the weakness of these connections by calling the convict, not the criminal, but his later self.[17]

Two grounds for detaining him would be unaffected. Whether a convict should be either reformed, or preventively detained, turns upon his present state, not his relation to the criminal. A third ground, deterrence, turns upon a different question. Do potential criminals care about their later selves? Do they care, for instance, if they do not expect to be caught for many years? If they do, then detaining their later selves could perhaps deter.

Would it be deserved? Locke thought that if we forget our crimes we deserve no punishment.[18] Geach considers this view 'morally repugnant'.[19] Mere loss of memory does seem to be insufficient. Changes of character would appear to be more relevant. The subject is, though, extremely difficult. Claims about desert can be plausibly supported with a great variety of arguments. According to some of these loss of memory would be important. And according to most the nature and cause of any change in character would need to be known.

I have no space to consider these details, but I shall make one suggestion. This appeals to the following assumption. When some morally important fact holds to a lesser degree, it can be more plausibly claimed to have less importance – even, in extreme cases, none.

I shall not here defend this assumption. I shall only say that most of us apply the assumption to many kinds of principle. Take, for example, the two principles that we have special duties to help our relatives, or friends. On the assumption, we might claim that we have less of a special duty to help our less close relatives, or friends, and, to those who are very distant, none at all.

My suggestion is this. If the assumption is acceptable, and the Complex View correct, it becomes more plausible to make the following claim: when the connections between convicts and their past criminal selves are less, they deserve less punishment; if they are very weak, they perhaps deserve none. This claim extends the idea of 'diminished responsibility'. It does not appeal to mental illness, but instead treats a later self like a sane accomplice. Just as a man's deserts correspond to the degree of his complicity with some criminal, so his deserts, now, for some past

crime correspond to the degree of connectedness between himself now and himself when committing that crime.[20]

If we add the further assumption that psychological connections are, in general, weaker over longer periods,[21] the claim provides a ground for Statutes of Limitations. (They of course have other grounds.)

IV

We can next consider promises. There are here two identities involved. The first is that of the person who, once, made a promise. Let us suppose that between this person now and himself then there are only weak connections. Would this wipe away his commitment? Does a later self start with a clean slate?

On the assumption that I gave, the Complex View supports the answer, 'yes'. Certain people think that only short-term promises carry moral weight. This belief becomes more plausible on the Complex View.

The second relevant identity is that of the person who received the promise. There is here an asymmetry. The possible effect of the Complex View could be deliberately blocked. We could ask for promises of this form: 'I shall help you, and all your later selves.' If the promises that I *receive* take this form, they cannot be plausibly held to be later undermined by any change in *my* character, or by any other weakening, over the rest of *my* life, in connectedness.

The asymmetry is this: similar forms cannot so obviously stay binding on the *maker* of a promise. I might say, 'I, and all my later selves, shall help you'. But it is plausible to reply that I can only bind my present self. This is plausible because it is like the claim that I can only bind myself. No one, though, denies that I can promise you that I shall help someone else. So I can clearly promise you that I shall help your later selves.

Such a promise may indeed seem especially binding. Suppose that you change faster than I do. I may then regard myself as committed, not to you, but to your earlier self. I may therefore think that you cannot waive my commitment. (It would be like a commitment, to someone now dead, to help his children. We cannot be released from such commitments.)

Such a case would be rare. But an example may help the argument. Let us take a nineteenth-century Russian who, in several years, should inherit vast estates. Because he has socialist ideals, he intends, now, to give the land to the peasants. But he knows that in time his ideals may fade. To guard against this possibility, he does two things. He first signs a legal document, which will automatically give away the land, and which can only be revoked with his wife's consent. He then says to his wife, 'If I ever change my mind, and ask you to revoke the document, promise me that you will not consent'. He might add, 'I regard my ideals as essential to me. If I lose these ideals, I want you to think that *I* cease to exist. I want you to regard your husband, then, not as me, the man who asks you for this promise, but only as his later self. Promise me that you would not do what he asks.'

This plea seems understandable.[22] And if his wife made this promise, and he later asked her to revoke the document, she might well regard herself as in no way released from her commitment. It might seem to her as if she has obligations to two different people. She might think that to do what her husband now asks would be to betray the young man whom she loved and married. And she might regard what her husband now says as unable to acquit her of disloyalty to this young man – of disloyalty to her husband's earlier self.

Such an example may seem not to require the distinction between successive selves. Suppose that I ask you to promise me never to give me cigarettes, even if I beg you for them. You might think that I cannot, in begging you, simply release you from this commitment. And to think this you need not deny that it is I to whom you are committed.

This seems correct. But the reason is that addiction clouds judgment. Similar examples might involve extreme stress or pain, or (as with Odysseus, tied to the mast) extraordinary temptation. When, though, nothing clouds a person's judgment, most of us believe that the person to whom we are committed can always release us. He can always, if in sound mind, waive our commitment. We believe this whatever the commitment may be. So (on this view) the content of a commitment cannot stop its being waived.

To return to the Russian couple. The man's ideals fade, and he asks his wife to revoke the document. Though she promised

him to refuse, he declares that he now releases her from this commitment. We have sketched two ways in which she might think that she is not released. She might, first, take her husband's change of mind as proof that he cannot now make considered judgments. But we can suppose that she has no such thought. We can also suppose that she shares our view about commitment. If so, she will only believe that her husband is unable to release her if she thinks that it is, in some sense, not *he* to whom she is committed. We have sketched such a sense. She may regard the young man's loss of his ideals as involving his replacement by a later self.

The example is of a quite general possibility. We may regard some events within a person's life as, in certain ways, like birth or death. Not in all ways, for beyond these events the person has earlier or later selves. But it may be only one out of the series of selves which is the object of some of our emotions, and to which we apply some of our principles.[23]

The young Russian socialist regards his ideals as essential to his present self. He asks his wife to promise to this present self not to act against these ideals. And, on this way of thinking, she can never be released from her commitment. For the self to whom she is committed would, in trying to release her, cease to exist.

The way of thinking may seem to be within our range of choice. We can indeed choose when to *speak* of a new self, just as we can choose when to speak of the end of Medieval England. But the way of speaking would express beliefs. And the wife in our example cannot choose her beliefs. That the young man whom she loved and married has, in a sense, ceased to exist, that her middle-aged and cynical husband is at most the later self of this young man – these claims may seem to her to express more of the truth than the simple claim, 'but they are the same person'. Just as we can give a more accurate description if we divide the history of Russia into that of the Empire and of the Soviet Union, so it may be more accurate to divide her husband's life into that of two successive selves.[24]

V

I have suggested that the Complex View supports certain claims. It is worth repeating that these claims are at most more plausible

on the Complex View (more, that is, than on the Simple View). They are not entailed by the Complex View.

We can sometimes show this in the following way. Some claims make sense when applied to successive generations. Such claims can obviously be applied to successive selves. For example, it perhaps makes sense to believe that we inherit the commitments of our parents. If so, we can obviously believe that commitments are inherited by later selves.

Other claims may be senseless when applied to generations. Perhaps we cannot intelligibly think that we deserve to be punished for all our parents' crimes. But even if this is so, it should still make sense to have the comparable thought about successive selves. No similarity in the form of two relations could force us to admit that they are morally equivalent, for we can always appeal to the difference in their content.

There are, then, no entailments. But there seldom are in moral reasoning. So the Complex View may still support certain claims. Most of us think that our children are neither bound by our commitments, nor responsible for all we do. If we take the Complex View, we may be more inclined to think the same about our later selves. And the correctness of the view might make such beliefs more defensible.

VI

What, next, of our present selves? What of the other kind of case, where there are the strongest psychological connections? Here it makes no difference to believe that our identity has, in its nature, degrees, for there is here the strongest degree. But in the change to the Complex View we acquire a second new belief. We decide that our identity is in its nature less deep, or involves less. This belief applies to every case, even those where there are the strongest connections.

It is worth suggesting why there must be this second difference between the two views. On the Complex View, our identity over time just involves bodily and psychological continuity. On the Simple View, it does not just involve these continuities; it is in its nature a further fact. If we stop believing that it is a further fact, then (by arithmetic) we believe that it involves less. There is still the bare possibility that we thought the further fact super-

ficial.[25] But it seems to most of us peculiarly deep.[26] This is why, if we change to the Complex View, we believe that our identity is in its nature less deep.

Would this belief affect our principles? If it has effects, they would not be confined to the special cases where there are only weak psychological connections. They would hold in every case. The effects would not be that we give certain principles a different scope. They would be that we give the principles a different weight.

Such effects could be defended on the following assumption. When some morally important fact is seen to be less deep, it can be plausibly claimed to be less important. As the limiting case, it becomes more plausible to claim that it has no importance. (This assumption is a variant of the one I used earlier.) The implications are obvious. The principles of desert and commitment presuppose that personal identity is morally important. On the assumption I have just sketched, the Complex View supports the claim that it is – because less deep – less important. So it may tend to weaken these principles.

I shall not here discuss these possible effects. I shall only say that the principle of commitment seems to be the less threatened by this weakening effect. The reason may be that, unlike the principle of desert, it is a conventional or 'artificial' principle. This may shield it from a change of view about the facts.[27]

I shall now turn to my last subject, distributive justice. Here the consequences of a change to the Complex View seem harder to assess. The reason is this : in the case of the principles of desert and commitment, both the possible effects, the weakening and the change in scope, are in theory pro-utilitarian. (Since these principles compete with the principle of utility, it is obviously in theory pro-utilitarian if they are weakened.[28] And their new scope would be a reduced scope. This should also be pro-utilitarian.[29]) Since both the possible effects would be in the same direction, we can make this general claim : if the change of view has effects upon these principles, these effects would be pro-utilitarian. In the case of distributive justice, things are different. Here, as I shall argue, the two possible effects seem to be in opposite directions. So there is a new question : which is the more plausible combined effect? My reply will again be: pro-utilitarian.

VII

Before defending this claim, I shall mention two related claims. These can be introduced in the following way.

Utilitarians reject distributive principles. They aim for the greatest net sum of benefits minus burdens, whatever its distribution. Let us say they 'maximize'.

There is, here, a well-known parallel. When we can affect only one person, we accept maximization. We do not believe that we ought to give a person fewer happy days so as to be more fair in the way we spread them out over the parts of his life. There are, of course, arguments for spreading out enjoyments. We remain fresh, and have more to look forward to. But these arguments do not count against maximization; they remind us how to achieve it.

When we can affect several people, utilitarians make similar claims. They admit new arguments for spreading out enjoyments, such as that which appeals to relative deprivation. But they treat equality as a mere means, not a separate aim.

Since their attitude to sets of lives is like ours to single lives, utilitarians disregard the boundaries between lives. We may ask, 'Why?'

Here are three suggestions. – Their approach to morality leads them to overlook these boundaries. – They believe that the boundaries are unimportant, because they think that sets of lives are like single lives. – They take the Complex View.

The first suggestion has been made by Rawls. It can be summarized like this. Utilitarians tend to approach moral questions as if they were impartial observers. When they ask themselves, as observers, what is right, or what they prefer, they tend to *identify* with *all* the affected people. This leads them to ignore the fact that *different* people are affected, and so to reject the claims of justice.[30]

In the case of some utilitarians, Rawls's explanation seems sufficient.[31] Let us call these the 'identifying observers'. But there are others who in contrast always seem '*detached* observers'. These utilitarians do not seem to overlook the distinction between people.[32] And, as Rawls remarks, there is no obvious reason why observers who remain *detached* cannot adopt the principles of

justice. If we approach morality in a quite detached way – if we do not think of ourselves as potentially involved[33] – we may, I think, be somewhat more inclined to reject these principles.[34] But this particular approach to moral questions does not itself seem a sufficient explanation for utilitarian beliefs.

The Complex View may provide a different explanation. These two are quite compatible. Utilitarians may both approach morality as observers, and take the Complex View. (The explanations may indeed be mutually supporting.)

To turn to the remaining explanation. Utilitarians treat sets of lives in the way that we treat single lives. It has been suggested, not that they ignore the difference between people, but that they actually believe that a group of people is like a super-person. This suggestion is, in a sense, the reverse of mine. It imputes a different view about the facts. And it can seem the more plausible.

Let us start with an example. Suppose that we must choose whether to let some child undergo some hardship. If he does, this will either be for his own greater benefit in adult life, or for the similar benefit of someone else. Does it matter which?

Most of us would answer: 'Yes. If it is for the child's own benefit, there can at least be no unfairness.' We might draw the general conclusion that failure to relieve useful burdens is more likely to be justified if they are for a person's *own* good.

Utilitarians, confusingly, could accept this conclusion. They would explain it in a different way. They might, for instance, point out that such burdens are in general easier to bear.

To block this reply, we can suppose that the child in our example cannot be cheered up in this way. Let us next ignore other such arguments.[35] This simplifies the disagreement. Utilitarians would say: 'Whether it is right to let the child bear the burden only depends upon how great the benefit will be. It does not depend upon who benefits. It would make no moral difference if the benefit comes, not to the child himself, but to someone else.' Non-utilitarians might reply: 'On the contrary, if it comes to the child himself this helps to justify the burden. If it comes to someone else, that is unfair.'

We can now ask: do the two views about the nature of personal identity tend to support different sides in this debate?

Part of the answer seems clear. Non-utilitarians think it a morally important fact that it be the child himself who, as an adult,

benefits. This fact, if it seems more important on one of the views, ought to do so on the Simple View, for it is on this view that the identity between the child and the adult is in its nature deeper. On the Complex View, it is less deep, and holds, over adolescence, to reduced degrees. If we take the Complex View, we may compare the lack of connections between the child and his adult self to the lack of connections between different people. That it will be *he* who receives the benefit may thus seem less important. We might say, 'It will not be *he*. It will only be his adult self.'

The Simple View seems, then, to support the non-utilitarian reply. Does it follow that the Complex View tends to support utilitarian beliefs? Not directly. For we might say, 'Just as it would be unfair if it is someone else who benefits, so if it won't be he, but only his adult self, that would also be unfair.'

The point is a general one. If we take the Complex View, we may regard the (rough) subdivisions within lives as, in certain ways, like the divisions between lives. We may therefore come to treat alike two kinds of distribution: within lives, and between lives. But there are two ways of treating these alike. We can apply distributive principles to both, or to neither.

Which of these might we do? I claim that we may abandon these principles. Someone might object: 'If we do add, to the divisions between lives, subdivisions within lives, the effects could only be these. The principles that we now apply to the divisions we come to apply to the sub-divisions. (If, to use your own example, we believe that our sons do not inherit our commitments, we may come to think the same about our later selves.)

'The comparable effect would now be this. We demand fairness to later selves. We *extend* distributive principles. You instead claim that we may abandon these principles. Since this is *not* the comparable effect, your claim must be wrong.'

The objection might be pressed. We might add: "If we did abandon these principles, we should be moving in reverse. We should not be treating parts of one life as we now treat different lives, but be treating different lives as we now treat one life. This, the reverse effect, could only come from the reverse comparison. Rather than thinking that a person's life is like the history of a nation, we must be thinking that a nation – or indeed any group – is like a person.'

To review the argument so far. Treating alike single people and groups may come from accepting some comparison between them. But there are two ways of treating them alike. We can demand fairness even within single lives, or reject this demand in the case of groups. And there are two ways of taking this comparison. We can accept the Complex View and compare a person's life to the history of a group, or accept the reverse view and compare groups to single people.

Of these four positions, I had matched the Complex View with the abandonment of fairness. The objection was that it seemed to be better matched with the demand for fairness even within lives. And the rejection of this demand, in the case of groups, seemed to require what I shall call 'the Reverse View'.

My reply will be this. Disregard for the principles of fairness could perhaps be supported by the Reverse View. But it does not have to be. And in seeing why we shall see how it may be supported by the Complex View.

Many thinkers have believed that a society, or nation, is like a person. This belief seems to weaken the demand for fairness. When we are thought to be mere parts of a social organism, it can seem to matter less how we are each treated.[36]

If the rejection of fairness has to be supported in this way, utilitarians can be justly ignored. This belief is at best superficially true when held about societies. And to support utilitarian views it would have to be held about the whole of mankind, where it is absurd.

Does the rejection of fairness need such support? Certain writers think that it does. Gauthier, for instance, suggests that to suppose that we should maximize for mankind 'is to suppose that mankind is a super-person'.[37] This suggestion seems to rest on the following argument. 'We are free to maximize within one life only because it is *one* life.[38] So we could only be free to maximize over different lives if they are like parts of a single life.'

Given this argument, utilitarians would, I think, deny the premise. They would deny that it is the unity of a life which, within this life, justifies maximization. They can then think this justified over different lives without assuming mankind to be a super-person.

The connection with the Complex View is, I think, this. It is on this view, rather than the Simple View, that the premise is more

plausibly denied. That is how the Complex View may support utilitarian beliefs.

To expand these remarks. There are two kinds of distribution: within lives, and between lives. And there are two ways of treating these alike. We can apply distributive principles to both, or to neither.

Utilitarians apply them to neither. I suggest that this may be (in part) because they take the Complex View. An incompatible suggestion is that they take the Reverse View.

My suggestion may seem clearly wrong if we overlook the following fact. There are two routes to the abandonment of distributive principles. We may give them no scope, or instead give them no weight.

Suppose we assume that the only route is the change in scope.[39] Then it may indeed seem that utilitarians must either be assuming that any group of people is like a single person (Gauthier's suggestion), or at least be forgetting that it is not (Rawls's suggestion).

I shall sketch the other route. Utilitarians may not be denying that distributive principles have scope. They may be denying that they have weight. This, the second of the kinds of effect that I earlier distinguished, *may* be supported by the Complex View.

The situation, more precisely, may be this. If the Complex View supports a change in the scope of distributive principles, it perhaps supports giving them more scope. It perhaps supports their extension even within single lives. But the other possible effect, the weakening of these principles, may be the more strongly supported. That is how the net effect may be pro-utilitarian.

This suggestion differs from the other two in the following way. Rawls remarks that the utilitarian attitude seems to involve 'conflating all persons into one'.[40] This remark also covers Gauthier's suggestion. But the attitude may derive, not from the conflation of persons, but from their (partial) disintegration. It may rest upon the view that a person's life is less deeply integrated than we mostly think. Utilitarians may be treating benefits and burdens, not as if they all came within the same life, but as if it made no moral difference where they came. This belief may be supported by the view that the unity of each life, and hence the difference between lives, is in its nature less deep.[41]

VIII

I shall next sketch a brief defence of this suggestion. And I shall start with a new distributive principle. Utilitarians believe that benefits and burdens can be freely weighed against each other, even if they come to different people. This is frequently denied.

We must first distinguish two kinds of weighing. The claim that a certain burden 'factually outweighs' another is the claim that it is greater. The claim that it 'morally outweighs' the other is the claim that we should relieve it even at the cost of failing to relieve the other. Similar remarks apply to the weighing of benefits against burdens, and against each other.

Certain people claim that burdens cannot even *factually* outweigh each other if they come to different people. (They claim that the sense of 'greater than' can only be provided by a single person's preferences.) I am here concerned with a different claim.[42] At its boldest this is that the burdens and benefits of different people cannot be *morally* weighed. I shall consider one part of this claim. This goes: 'Someone's burden cannot be morally outweighed by mere benefits to someone else.' I say 'mere' benefits, because the claim is not intended to deny that it *can* be right to let a person bear a burden so as to benefit another. Such acts may, for instance, be required by justice. What the claim denies is that such acts can be justified solely upon utilitarian grounds. It denies that a person's burden can be morally outweighed by *mere* benefits to someone else.

This claim often takes qualified forms. It can be restricted to great burdens, or be made to require that the net benefit be proportionately great.[43] I shall here discuss the simplest form, for my remarks could be adapted to the other forms. Rawls puts the claim as follows: 'The reasoning which balances the gains and losses of different persons . . . is excluded.'[44] So I shall call this the 'objection to balancing'.

This objection rests in part on a different claim. This goes: 'Someone's burden cannot be *compensated* by benefits to someone else.' This second claim is, with qualifications,[45] clearly true. We cannot say, 'On the contrary, our burdens can be compensated by benefits to anyone else, even a total stranger'.

Not only is this second claim clearly true; its denial is in no

way supported by the Complex View. So if the change to this view has effects upon this claim, they would be these. We might, first, extend the claim even within single lives. We might say, in the example that I gave, 'The child's burden cannot be compensated by benefits to his adult self.' This claim would be like the claims that we are sometimes not responsible for, nor bound by, our earlier selves. It would apply to certain parts of one life what we now believe about different lives. It would therefore seem to be, as a change in scope, in the right direction.[46]

We might, next, give the claim less weight. Our ground would be the one that I earlier gave. Compensation presupposes personal identity. On the Complex View, we may think that our identity is, because less deep, less morally important. We may therefore think that the fact of compensation is itself less morally important. Though it cannot be denied, the claim about compensation may thus be given less weight.[47]

If we now return to the objection to balancing, things are different. The concept of 'greater moral weight' does not presuppose personal identity.[48] So this objection can be denied; and the Complex View seems to support this denial.

The denial might be put like this: 'Our burdens cannot indeed be *compensated* by mere benefits to someone else. But they may be *morally outweighed* by such benefits. It may still be right to give the benefits rather than relieve the burdens. Burdens are morally outweighed by benefits if they are factually outweighed by these benefits. All that is needed is that the benefits be greater than the burdens. It is unimportant, in itself, to whom both come.'

This is the utilitarian reply.[49] I shall next suggest why the Complex View seems, more than the Simple View, to support this reply.

The objection to balancing rests in part on the claim about compensation. On the Complex View, this claim can more plausibly be thought less important. If we take this view, we may (we saw) think both that there is less scope for compensation and that it has less moral weight. If the possibilities of compensation are, in these two ways, less morally important, there would then be less support for the objection to balancing. It would be more plausible to make the utilitarian reply.

The point can be made in a different way. Even those who

object to balancing think it justified to let us bear burdens for our own good. So their claim must be that a person's burden, while it can be morally outweighed by benefits to him, cannot ever be outweighed by mere benefits to others. This is held to be so even if the benefits are far greater than the burden. The claim thus gives to the boundaries between lives – or to the fact of non-identity – overwhelming significance. It allows within the same life what, for different lives, it totally forbids.

This claim seems to be more plausible on the Simple View. Since identity is, here, thought to involve more, non-identity could plausibly seem more important. On the Simple View, we are impressed by the truth that all of a person's life is as much his life. If we are impressed by this truth – by the unity of each life – the boundaries between lives will seem to be deeper. This supports the claim that, in the moral calculus, these boundaries cannot be crossed. On the Complex View, we are less impressed by this truth. We regard the unity of each life as in its nature less deep, and as a matter of degree. We may therefore think the boundaries between lives to be less like those between, say, the squares on a chess-board,[50] and to be more like those between different countries. They may then seem less morally decisive.[51]

IX

We can now turn to different principles, for example that of equal distribution. Most of us give such principles only *some* weight. We think, for instance, that unequal distribution can be justified if it brings an overall gain in social welfare. But we may insist that the gain be proportionately great.[52]

We do not, in making such claims, forbid utilitarian policies. We allow that every gain in welfare has moral value. But we do restrain these policies. We insist that it also matters *who* gains. Certain distributions are, we claim, morally preferable. We thus claim that we ought to favour the worst off, and to incline towards equality.

Utilitarians would reply : 'These claims are of course plausible. But the policies they recommend are the very policies which tend to increase total welfare. This coincidence suggests[53] that we ought to change our view about the status of these claims. We should

regard them, not as checks upon, but as guides to, utilitarian policy. We should indeed value equal distribution. But the value lies in its typical effects.'

This reply might be developed in the following way. Most of us believe that a mere difference in *when* something happens, if it does not affect the nature of what happens, cannot be morally significant. Certain answers to the question 'When?' are of course important. We cannot ignore the timing of events. And it is even plausible to claim that if, say, we are planning when to give or to receive benefits, we should aim for an equal distribution over time. But we aim for this only because of its effects. We do not believe that the equality of benefit at different times is, as such, morally important.

Utilitarians might say: 'If it does not, as such, matter *when* something happens, why does it matter *to whom* it happens? Both of these are mere differences in position. What is important is the nature of what happens. When we choose between social policies, we need only be concerned with how *great* the benefits will be. *Where* they come, whether in space, or in time, or as between people, has in itself no importance.'

Part of the disagreement is, then, this. Non-utilitarians take the question 'Who?' to be quite unlike the question 'When?' If they are asked for the simplest possible description of the morally relevant facts, they will sometimes give them in a form which is tenseless; but it will always be personal. They will say, 'Someone gains, the same person loses, someone else gains. . . .' Utilitarians would instead say, 'A gain, a loss, another gain. . . .'

There are many different arguments for and against these two positions. We are only asking: would a change to the Complex View tend to support either one?

It would seem so. On the Simple View, it is more plausible to insist upon the question 'Who?' On the Complex View, it is more plausible to compare this to the question 'When?', and to present the moral data in the second, or 'impersonal', form.[54]

It may help to return to our comparison. Most of us believe that the existence of a nation does not involve anything more than the existence of associated people. We do not deny the reality of nations. But we do deny that they are separately, or independently, real. They are entirely composed of associated people.[55]

This belief seems to support certain moral claims. If there is nothing to a nation but its citizens, it is less plausible to regard the nation as itself a (primary) object of duties, or possessor of rights. It is more plausible to focus upon the citizens, and to regard them less as citizens, more as people. We may therefore, on this view, think a person's nationality less morally important.[56]

On the Complex View, we hold similar beliefs. We regard the existence of a person as, in turn, involving nothing more than the occurrence of interrelated mental and physical events. We do not, of course, deny the reality of people (our own reality!). And we agree that we are not, strictly, series of events – that we are not thoughts, but thinkers, not actions, but agents. But we consider this a fact of grammar. And we do deny that we are not just conceptually distinct from our bodies, actions, and experiences, but also separately real. We deny that the identity of a person, of the so-called 'subject' of mental and physical events, is a further, deep, fact, independent of the facts about the interrelations between these events.[57]

This belief may support similar claims. We may, when thinking morally, focus less upon the person, the subject of experience, and instead focus more upon the experiences themselves. Just as we often ignore whether people come from the same or different nations, so we may more often ignore whether experiences come within the same or different lives.

Take, for example, the relief of suffering. Suppose that we can only help one of two people. We shall achieve more if we help the first; but it is the second who, in the past, suffered more.

Those who believe in fair shares may decide to help the second person. This will be less effective; so the amount of suffering in the two people's lives will, in sum, be greater; but the amounts in each life will be made more equal.

If we take the Complex View, we may reject this line of thought. We may decide to do the most we can to relieve suffering. To suggest why, we can vary the example. Suppose that we can only help one of two nations. Here again, the one that we can help most is the one whose history was, in earlier centuries, the more fortunate. Most of us would not believe that it could be right to allow mankind to suffer more, so that its suffering could be more equally divided between the histories of different nations.

On the Complex View, we compare the lives of people to the

histories of nations. We may therefore think the same about them too. We may again decide to aim for the least possible suffering, whatever its distribution.[58]

X

We can next explain what, earlier, may have seemed puzzling. Besides the Complex View, which compares people to nations, I mentioned a reverse view, which compares nations to people. How can these be different?

It will help to introduce two more terms. With respect to many types of thing, we may take one of two views. We may believe that the existence of this type of thing does not involve anything more than the existence of certain other (interrelated) things. Such a view can be called 'atomistic'. We may instead believe that the things in question have a quite separate existence, over and above that of these other things. Such a view can be called 'holistic'.

One example of an atomistic view is the one we mostly take about nations. Most of us do not (here and now) believe that there is more to nations than associated people. On the other hand, we mostly do seem to assume that there is more to us than a series of mental and physical events. We incline to what I call the Simple View. Most of us are therefore atomists about nations, holists about people.

It is the difference between these common views which explains the two comparisons. The claim that X is like Y typically assumes the common view of Y. We shall therefore say 'People are like nations' if we are atomists about both. We shall instead say 'Nations are like people' if we are holists about both. Either way, we assume one of the common views and deny the other.[59]

We can end by considering a remark in Rawls. There is, he writes, 'a curious anomaly':[60]

> It is customary to think of utilitarianism as individualistic, and certainly there are good reasons for this. The utilitarians . . . held that the good of society is constituted by the advantages enjoyed by individuals. Yet utilitarianism is not individualistic . . . in that . . . it applies to society the principle of choice for one man.

Our account suggests an explanation. Individualists claim that the welfare of society only consists in the welfare of its members, and that the members have rights to fair shares.

Suppose that we are holists about society. We believe that the existence of society transcends that of its members. This belief threatens the first of the individualist claims. It supports the view that the welfare of society also transcends that of its members. This in turn threatens the second claim, for in the pursuit of a transcendent social goal, fair shares may seem less important. Social holists may thus reject both of the individualist claims.

Utilitarians reject the second claim, but accept the first. This would indeed be anomalous if their attitude to these claims rested upon social holism. If this were their ground, we should expect them to reject *both* claims.

We have sketched a different ground. Rather than being holists about society, utilitarians may be atomists about people. This dissolves the anomaly. For they are also atomists about society, and this double atomism seems to support the two positions Rawls describes. If we are atomists about society, we can then more plausibly accept the first of the individualist claims, *viz.* that the welfare of society only consists in that of its members.[61] If we are also atomists about people, we can then more plausibly reject the second claim, the demand for fair shares. We may tend to focus less upon the person, the subject of experience, and instead focus more upon the experiences themselves. We may then decide that it is only the nature of what happens which is morally important, not to whom it happens. We may thus decide that it is always right to increase benefits and reduce burdens, whatever their distribution.[62]

'Utilitarianism,' Rawls remarks, 'does not take seriously the distinction between persons.'[63] If 'the separateness of persons . . . is *the* basic fact for morals',[64] this is a grave charge. I have tried to show how one view about the nature of persons may provide *some* defence.[65]

Notes

* I have been helped in writing this by T. Nagel; also by S. Blackburn, E. Borowitz, S. Clark, L. Francis, H. Frankfurt, J. Griffin, R. M. Hare, S. Lukes, J. Mackie, A. Orenstein, C. Peacocke, A. Rorty, A. Ryan, S. Shoemaker, D. Thomas, R. Walker, and others.

1 But compare *'de dicto'* versus *'de re'*.
2 We might say, 'The concept of a person is too vague to yield such an answer'.
3 Here is another example. Some of those who dislike all Jews seem to take Jewishness to be a special, deep property, equally possessed by all Jews. If they lose this belief, their attitude may be both weakened and reduced in scope. They may dislike 'typical Jews' less, and untypical Jews not at all.
4 The thing of which X is true can only be, or not be, the thing of which Y is true.
5 Cf. Hume: 'I cannot compare the soul more properly to anything than to a republic or commonwealth.' (Hume, Book I, Part IV, Section 6, p. 261.)
6 They cannot be so dismissed in a full account. The Complex View is not identical to Hume's view. It is even compatible with physicalism. See, for example, Quinton (1962), and Quinton (1972), pp. 88–102.
7 Here are two (crude) ranges of cases. In the first, different proportions of the cells in our brains and bodies will be replaced by exact duplicates. At the start of this range, where there is no replacement, there is full bodily continuity; at the end, where there is complete (simultaneous) 'replacement', there is no bodily continuity. In the second range, the duplication is progressively less accurate. At the start of this range, where there are perfect duplicates, there is full psychological continuity; at the end, where there are no duplicates, there is none. In the first case of the first range there is clearly personal identity. In the last case of the second range there is clearly no identity. But the two ranges can be super-imposed to form a smooth spectrum. It is unbelievable that, at a precise point on the spectrum, identity would suddenly disappear. If we grant its psycho-physical assumptions, the spectrum seems to show that our identity over time could *imaginably* hold to any degree. This prepares the ground for the claim that it *actually* holds to reduced degrees.
8 The main such reaction is the belief that these cases pose problems. (Cf. our reaction to the question, 'When, precisely, does an embryo become a person?') Among the 'problem' cases would be those described in note 7, or in Williams.
9 That we are inclined to this view is shown in Williams. That the view is false I began to argue in Parfit (1971).
10 Proust (1967), p. 349. (I have slightly altered the translation.)
11 Proust (1949), p. 249.
12 Solzhenitsyn, p. 232. (Curiously, Solzhenitsyn, like Keats (p. 322), seems to attach weight not just to psychological but to *cellular* change. Cf. Hume.)
13 Someone might say, 'These are not successive nations. They are just stages of a single nation.' What about Prussia, Germany, and West Germany? We *decide* what counts as the same nation.
14 Talk about successive selves can be easily misunderstood. It is intended

only to imply the weakening of psychological connections. It does *not* report the discovery of a new type of thing. We should take the question, 'When did that self end?' as like the question, 'What marked the end of medieval England?' Cf. note 24. (There is of course another use of 'earlier self' which, because it equates 'self' and 'person', does not distinguish successive selves.)

15 I do not mean 'more plausible than their denials'; I mean 'than they would be if the Simple View were true'.

16 The implied factual assumption surely holds for *some* of us.

17 Talk about successive selves can be used, like this, merely to imply the weakness of psychological connections. It can also be used to assign moral or emotional significance to such a weakness. This 'evaluative' use I have sketched elsewhere, in Parfit (1972). It is the 'descriptive' use which I need here. On this use, if a convict says, 'It was only my past self', all that he implies is the weakening in connections. On the 'evaluative' use, his claim suggests that, because of this weakening, he does not now deserve to be punished for his crime. Since the questions I am asking here all concern whether such a weakening *does* have such significance, it is the 'descriptive' use which I here employ. The 'evaluative' use begs these questions.

18 Locke, Book II, chapter XXVII, section 26. (Cf. also the 'Defence of Mr. Locke's Opinion' in certain editions of Locke's *Works* (e.g. 11th edn, vol. 3).)

19 Geach, p. 4.

20 If we are tempted to protest, 'But it was just as much *his* crime', we seems to be taking the Simple View. The comparable claim, 'Every accomplice is just as much an accomplice' is, in the sense in which it is true, clearly trivial. (See Parfit (1972).) (It is perhaps worth repeating that the Complex View deals with our relations at certain times, to ourselves at other times. The convict and criminal are, timelessly, the same person. But the convict's present self and his past self are not the same, any more than Roman and Victorian Britain are the same.)

21 This is only generally true. Old men, for instance, can be closer to themselves in childhood than to themselves in youth.

22 It involves the new use of pronouns, and of the word 'man', to refer to one out of a series of selves.

23 I have here moved from the use of talk about successive selves which is merely 'descriptive', which merely implies the weakening of connections, to the use which is also 'evaluative', which assigns to such a weakening certain kinds of significance. It may seem confusing to allow these different uses, but they cannot be sharply distinguished. The 'merely descriptive' use lies at the end-point of a spectrum.

24 If we take the Complex View, we might add: 'It would be even more accurate to abandon talk about "selves", and to describe actions, thoughts, and experiences in a quite "impersonal" way. (Cf. Strawson, pp. 81–4). If these are not ascribed to any "subject", their various inter-

connections can then be directly specified. But the concept of a "subject of experience", like that of a nation, is an abbreviatory device of enormous convenience. If we remember that it is just this, and nothing more, it can be safely used.' (Cf. Mill, p. 252. Those who disagree, see note 57). These remarks may *not* apply to the concept of a persisting object. This may be essential to the spatio-temporal framework. But observed objects do not require observers. They require observations.

Here is another way in which the move from 'person' to 'successive self' may help to express the truth. Suppose that, in middle age, the Russian wife asks herself, 'Do I love my husband?' If it is asked in this form, she may find the question baffling. She may then realize that there is someone she loves – her husband's earlier self. (The object of love can be in the past. We can love the dead.) Cf. Solzhenitsyn, p. 393:

> 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, the wife he was going to leave again soon, but for the blond girl with the curls hanging down to her shoulders, the girl he had known in the tenth grade. . . .

Cf. also Nabokov, p. 64:

> They said the only thing this Englishman loved in the world was Russia. Many people could not understand why he had not remained there. Moon's reply to questions of that kind would invariably be: 'Ask Robertson' (the orientalist) 'why he did not stay in Babylon.' The perfectly reasonable objection would be raised that Babylon no longer existed. Moon would nod with a sly, silent smile. He saw in the Bolshevist insurrection a certain clear-cut finality. While he willingly allowed that, by-and-by, after the primitive phases, some civilization might develop in the 'Soviet Union', he nevertheless maintained that Russia was concluded and unrepeatable. . . .

25 As, for example, Leibniz may have done. See the remark that Shoemaker quotes in Care, p. 127. Locke sometimes held a similar view. (I refer to his claim that 'whether it be the same identical substance, which always thinks in the same person . . . matters not at all'.)

26 As Williams suggests. Cf. Bayle's reply to Leibniz quoted by Chisholm in Care, p. 139; and, for other statements, Geach, pp. 1–29, Penelhum, closing chapters (both implicit), Butler, pp. 385 ff., Reid, Essay III, chs 4 and 6, and Chisholm (more explicit).

27 We should perhaps add the obvious remark that the principle of desert seems itself to be more threatened by a change of view, not about personal identity, but about psychological causation.

28 That it may in practice be anti-utilitarian is, for instance, emphasized in Sidgwick (1901), Book IV, ch. V. (In Sidgwick (1902), p. 114, he writes, 'It may be – I think it is – true that Utilitarianism is only adapted for practical use by human beings at an advanced stage of intellectual development.')

29 There are some exceptions. If, for instance, we hold the principle

of desert in its 'negative' form (cf. Hart), its receiving less scope may in theory seem anti-utilitarian. Useful punishments might be ruled out on the ground that they are no longer deserved. But this would in practice be a minor point. (And there seems to be no corresponding point about commitment.)

30 Rawls, p. 27, and pp. 185–9.

31 Rawls mentions C. I. Lewis (Rawls, p. 188); but the explanation cannot hold for him, for he insists upon the claims of justice (Lewis, pp. 553–4). The explanation may seem to apply to Hare; see Hare (1963), p. 123; but p. 121 suggests that it does not. In Mackaye, pp. 129–30 and p. 189 seem to fit; but again, pp. 146–50 point the other way.

32 Among the many utilitarians who clearly remain detached is Sidgwick. To quote a typical sentence: 'I as a disengaged spectator should like him to sacrifice himself to the general good: but I do not expect him to do it, any more than I should do it myself in his place.' (Sidgwick (1901), pp. xvii–xviii.) Sidgwick ended the first edition of his book with the word 'failure' mostly because he assigned such weight to the distinction between people. (See, for example (1901), p. 404, or (1902), p. 67, or the remark in *Mind* (1889), pp. 483–4, 'The distinction between any one individual and another is real, and fundamental.' (Sidgwick's own view about personal identity is hard to judge. In (1901), pp. 418–19, he appears to disclaim one form of the Complex View. In *Mind* (1883), p. 326, he admits a Kantian claim about the necessity of the 'permanent, identical self'. Perhaps (like Kant himself?) he was torn between the two views.))

33 As we do if we are either contracting agents (Rawls), or universal prescribers (Hare).

34 As the contrast between the two halves of the first quotation in note 32 may suggest. For a different suggestion, see Hare (1972) and (1973).

35 Such as those which appeal to the undermining of the general sense of security, or to pessimism about the 'acceptance-utility' of utilitarian beliefs.

36 Cf. the claim of Espinas, that society 'is a living being like an individual' (Perry, p. 402). Good Hegelians do not argue in this way.

37 Gauthier, p. 126.

38 Someone might say: 'No. We are free, here, because it is not a moral matter what we do with our own lives.' This cannot be right, for we are allowed to maximize within the life of *someone else*. (Medicine provides examples. Doctors are allowed to maximize on behalf of their unconscious patients.)

39 As Rawls seems to do. Cf. his remark: 'the utilitarian extends to society the principle of choice for one man' (p. 28, and elsewhere, e.g. p. 141). The assumption here is that the route to utilitarianism is a change in the scope, not of distributive principles, but of their correlative: our freedom to ignore these principles.

40 p. 27; cf. p. 191; cf. also Nagel, p. 134.

41 The utilitarian attitude is *impersonal*. Rawls suggests that it 'mistakes

impersonality for impartiality' (p. 190). I suggest that it may in part derive from a view about the nature of persons. This suggestion, unlike his, may be no criticism. For as he writes 'the correct regulative principle for anything depends upon the nature of that thing' (p. 29).

42 The possibility of 'factual weighing' over different lives can, I think, be shown with an argument which appeals to the Complex View. But the argument would have to be long.

43 Cf. Perry, p. 674: 'We do not . . . balance one man's loss against a million's gain. We acknowledge that there are amounts or degrees of value associated with each party, between which it is impossible to discriminate.' This claim seems to be slightly qualified. (It is not wholly clear whether Perry is objecting *only* to *moral* weighing.)

44 p. 28. I omit the words 'as if they were one person', for I am asking whether this reasoning must involve this assumption.

45 The main such qualification is to exclude cases where the first person wants the second to receive the benefit.

46 It seems worth mentioning here an idea of Nagel's. Like Rawls, Nagel claims that if we imagine that we are going to *be* all of the affected parties, we may then ignore the claims of justice. He then suggests that this is only so if our future lives are to be had *seriatim*. 'We can [instead] imagine a person splitting into several persons. . . . This provides a sense in which an individual might expect to become *each* of a number of different persons – not in series, but simultaneously.' (Nagel, pp. 141–2; cf. Rawls, pp. 190–1.) *This* model, he believes, 'renders plausible the extremely strict position that there can be no interpersonal compensation for sacrifice'. Why? How can it make a difference whether the person's future lives are to be lived in series, or concurrently? The relation between the person now and the future lives is, in either case, the same. (It is 'as good as survival'; see Parfit (1971), pp. 4–10.) Nagel suggests an answer: '*Each* of [the] lives would in a sense be his unique life, without deriving any compensatory or supplementary experiences, good or bad, by seepage from the other unique lives he is leading at the time.' This, of course, is the *utilitarian* answer. (Cf. p. 15 above.) It treats *pure* compensation as of no value. It suggests that compensation only matters when it actually has good effects (when it produces 'compensatory . . . supplementary experiences'). The disagreement seems to disappear!

47 This distinction bears on the 'Is-Ought' debate. That it is unjust to punish the innocent cannot be denied; but the claim can be given no weight. We might say, 'It is just as *bad* to punish the guilty'.

48 It might do so, indirectly, if we cannot even *factually* weigh over different lives, and adopt utility as our only principle. No one (that I know) holds this position.

49 It would be their reply to the many arguments in which the objection to balancing and the claim about compensation are intertwined. Cf. Rawls's phrase 'cannot be justified by, or compensated for, by . . .' (p. 61), and similar remarks on pp. 14–15, p. 287, and elsewhere. Perry

writes: 'The happiness of a million somehow fails utterly to compensate or even to mitigate the torture of one.' This undeniable remark he seems to equate with the objection to balancing (Perry, p. 671).

50 Cf: 'The difference between self and another is as plain as the difference between black and white.' (Hobhouse, p. 51.)

51 Someone might object: 'On the Complex View, we may claim that the parts of each life are less deeply unified; but we do not claim that there is more unity between lives. So the boundaries between lives are, on this view, just as deep.' We could answer: 'Not so. Take for comparison the fact of personhood. We may decide that to be a person, as opposed to a mere animal, is not in its nature a further fact, beyond the fact of having certain more specific properties, but that it just consists in this fact. This belief is not itself the belief that we are more like mere animals than we thought. But it still removes a believed difference. So it makes the boundaries between us and mere animals less deep. Similar remarks apply to the two views about personal identity.'

52 These are examples of what both Sidgwick and Rawls would call 'the intuitionism of Common Sense'. I cannot here discuss Rawls's principles, or his 'contractual' argument. (I should point out that a contractual argument for the principles of justice seems to be in no way weakened by the Complex View. But alongside the contractual argument, Rawls suggests another: that these principles are required by the *plurality* of persons (cf. p. 29). This is the argument which, however strong, seems to me less strong on the Complex View.)

53 See, for instance, Sidgwick (1901), p. 425 (or indeed pp. 199–457).

54 I am here claiming that the Complex View tends to weaken distributive principles. What of the other possible effect, the change in scope? Might we demand fair shares for successive selves? *Perhaps*. (Cf. Findlay, p. 239). But the demand would, I think (and for various reasons), be rare. And the argument in the text only requires the following claim: the weakening of distributive principles would be more supported than the widening in their scope. The effects of the former would outweigh the effects of the latter. As the limiting case, if we give distributive principles no weight, nothing follows from a change in their scope.

55 This is ontological reductionism. It may not require the truth of analytical reductionism (or 'methodological individualism'). See, for instance, Strawson, p. 201, Dummett, p. 242, and Kripke, p. 271. I have no space to pursue this point here.

56 We could, of course, still claim that the fact of being associated-in-a-nation has supreme importance. But this claim, though possible, may still be less supported by this view. This it will be if the independent reality, which this view denies would have helped to support the claim.

57 Someone might object: 'The comparison fails. The interrelations between citizens could in theory be described without mentioning nations. The interrelations between mental and physical events could *not* in theory be described without mentioning the "subject of experience".' This seems to me false. The difference is only one of

practical convenience. (See Parfit (1971), section III, for a very brief statement.) But even if the comparison *does* fail in this respect, it would still hold in the respects which are morally important.

58 Someone might object: 'This reasoning only applies to the demand for equal distribution as between entire lives. But we might make the demand in a form which ignores both the past and the future. We might value equal distribution as between people (or "successive selves") at any given time.' True. But this new demand seems, on reflection, implausible. Why the restriction to the *same* (given) time? How can simultaneity have intrinsic moral weight? (The new demand may, of of course, have good effects. This is here irrelevant.)

59 I am here forced (by lack of space) into gross oversimplification. There are many intermediate views. To give one example: if we are atomists about organisms, we shall find it easier to compare nations to organisms. For some of the complexities see Perry, p. 400 onwards and Hobhouse.

60 Rawls, p. 29.

61 Cf.: 'As the public body is every individual collected, so the public good is the collected good of those individuals' (Thomas Paine, quoted in Lukes, p. 49). Sidgwick remarks that while we commend 'one man dying for his country . . . it would be absurd that all should: there would be no country to die for.' (1902, p. 79.) We might still deny that 'the public good is merely a . . . collection of private goods' on the ground that 'men desire fo rtheir own sake' irreducibly public goods (Plamenatz, p. 251). But this claim still appeals to personal desires.

62 The Complex View seems also to support other utilitarian claims, such as that the welfare of a person just consists in the quality of his experiences, or (to give a variant) in the fulfilment of his various particular desires. Cf. the remark in Anschutz (pp. 19–20) that 'Bentham's principle of individualism', unlike Mill's, 'is entirely transitional', since 'Bentham is saying that . . . as a community is reducible to the individuals who are said to be its members, so also are the individuals reducible, at least for the purposes of morals and legislation, to the pleasures and pains which they are said to suffer.'

63 Rawls, p. 27; cf. Nagel, p. 134.

64 Findlay, p. 393; cf. p. 294.

65 I have not claimed that it could provide a sufficient defence.

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