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Explaining the Referent of “We”: An Explanatory Answer to Olsen’s Question

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Explaining the Referent of “We”: An Explanatory Answer to Olsen’s Question

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Abstract

This paper explores current philosophical theories of what we are as a kind and how we persist as individuals. In doing so, these theories give an account that attempts to answer the question, “What are we?” This paper focuses on the dialogue between Animalism and First Person Perspectivism, competing theories of what we are. In setting up this dialogue the paper will explore the strengths and weaknesses of each theory. Animalism is shown to face a problem with cases of revival and First Person Perspectivism faces an issue with justifying certain commitments the theory makes. In an attempt to solve these issues a revised theory is proposed that centers on the physical hardware of an individual and the mental processes which it runs. After proposing my theory, I address a potential dilemma that it faces. Overall, this paper contributes to the broader philosophical dialogue by drawing on existing work to create a revised theory of what we are and how we persist.

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Introduction

When we stop and ponder what or who we are, there are many ways we go about considering these aspects. We can ask questions about the body and how it works, but these questions are biological in nature. We can ask questions about our brain and our behavior, but these questions are psychological in nature. Turning to more philosophical questions, we can even look at personal identity, exploring what persons are and how they exist over time. While these questions are more philosophical in nature, they both assume that we are in fact persons. Underlying all these questions however, is a more fundamental question. What is it that makes each of us a part of the group we refer to with the term “We”? The discussion regarding this question is at its most basic level about the identity of the kind of thing we all are. The answer to this question will allow us to make decisions about the scope of the community. By knowing what is referred to by “We” the group can determine what counts as one of us. Knowing what we are and how we persist is something we have an innate desire to discover. In this paper, I aim to situate myself between Animalism and First Person Perspectivism by taking an intermediate position that focuses on *both* the body and the mental processes.

Philosophers have tried to answer the question “What are we?” using many different methods. Most prominent views however assume that we are people and that theories of what we are should be theories of personhood.¹ This move is too quick however, as it assumes that people are their own metaphysical kind and stipulates that whatever we are falls under that kind (Olsen 2007: 9). I don’t want to make this same assumption here, as I believe it puts limitations on the explanatory power of potential theories. If we take it for granted that we

¹ For a brief introduction to theories of personhood see Conee & Sider (2015) Chapter 1.

are people, then we run the risk of leaving out/including different things based on this assumption and not because of how they compare to what we are. For example, if a theory of personhood tells us persons are living, intelligent things, then we immediately remove the possibility of sentient machines as they are not living things. Not counting a sentient robot as one of us is not problematic in and of itself, but it is problematic here because of *why* we do not count it. Here we do not count the sentient robot as one of us, not because it does not have the characteristics of the referent of “We”, but because it is not a person. A good theory of what we are should leave open the possibilities for what the referent of “We” is unless there is good reason to do otherwise. For the purposes of brevity, I will use “ROW” to refer to the phrase “Referent of ‘We’” for the rest of this paper.²

This paper will first explore some existing theories of what the ROW is, in an attempt to evaluate their theoretical vices and virtues. While I have only hinted at it above, I am concerned not only with what a theory says regarding what we are, but also regarding how individual ROWs persist. I will expand on the importance of answering both questions later, but I want to point out the dual concern here as it informs my evaluation of the existing theories. In examining these theories, I aim to determine the philosophical virtues of each, but also the theoretical vices, in order to see which theory is more virtuous overall. I will draw on the findings of this examination to construct my own view that aims to retain the virtues of each of the theories without suffering any of the vices. In doing so I will provide us with a new view with the most philosophical virtues at the least theoretical vices of the ones in the dialogue.

² Note that “What are we?”; “What is the ROW?”; “Which one of us count as ROWs?” will be taken as similar questions and to avoid cumbersome phrasing I will use whichever sounds best in the particular sentence.

In particular, I would like to involve myself in the dialogue between Animalism on the one hand and First Person Perspectivism on the other. I believe that there are virtues to both of these theories, but also major shortcomings of each. However, we can avoid these shortcomings with a revised view. Eric Olsen's Animalism and Lynne Rudder Baker's Constitution View (a style of First Person Perspectivism) clash as Olsen focuses on the body whereas Baker focuses on the first person perspective. I believe the work Thomas Metzinger has done can help us move the dialogue between the two competing theories forward.

Chapter 1: Desiderata

Section 1: Introduction to the Desiderata

This paper sets out to construct an informative account of what the ROW is and as such it must meet certain desiderata, or it will fall short of being a useful theory. The desiderata I put forth are ones I believe are unreasonable and ones that are typical of a good theory of what we are and how we persist. I will first lay out the criteria and then elaborate on each one in turn. A good theory of what we are and how we persist ought to fulfil the following desiderata:

1. It provides an account of identity over time
2. It provides a coherent way of dealing with problem cases
3. It is explanatory

Section 1.1: A Diachronic Account

Regarding the first desideratum, theories of ROWs tend to have two parts: a synchronic part and a diachronic part. The synchronic part tells us what the ROW is *as a kind*, where the diachronic part however will tell us how an individual ROW persists.

When we give an account of how an individual ROW persists over time, we identify the persistence conditions for an individual ROW. For many objects, their persistence conditions are grounded in their essential properties. If this is the case for ROWs, then giving an account of how they persist can help inform our account of what we are, as it will give us insight into the essential features of the ROW. This may or may not be how ROWs are but given the possibility, it is irresponsible to presume how they are not at the outset. We should at least undertake giving an account of how an individual ROW persists if we want our theory to meet the proposed desiderata.

Section 1.2: Problem Cases

Second, there are certain famous cases that present as hard cases for theories of what the ROW is. Specifically, these cases press on both the synchronic part of a theory and the diachronic part. The hard cases not only test a theory's ability to track how an individual persists, but also test a theory's ability to make it clear what we are, as the answers to the cases vary depending on what a particular theory says the ROW is identical with. One of the most prominent style of cases takes the form of Locke's Prince and the Cobbler case. Locke gives us the case of a Prince's soul being transferred into the body of a Cobbler (Locke 1690: 118). Where Locke uses the phrase "soul" in his example, we can substitute in the individual ROWs for both the Prince and Cobbler. Effectively the case represents an instance where it seems as though the individual ROW of the Prince is being transferred into the Cobbler's body.

Cases like this help evaluate a theory in two ways. First, they force a theory to be extremely clear on exactly what the ROW is identical with, so it can accurately locate what is being transferred in the situation. Second, they test a theory's account of an individual

ROW's persistence. These cases give us situations where we must track the individual ROW and give a reason for whether or not it has switched bodies.

While there are no "correct" answers to problem cases like this, there are some widely held answers that most people find intuitively correct. Looking at a theory's answers show us how well the theory lines up with our intuitions. Being in line with the common intuitions is a virtue of a theory, as holding with our intuitions allows us to hold on to more of our broad metaphysical preconceptions of how the world works. Providing an answer that is not intuitive is not grounds for the dismissal of a theory, but rather represents a lack of virtue. Granted, these problem cases are contentious and the "right" answer is not agreed upon. However, if a theory gives similar answers to what the common intuitions on the issues are, all else equal, it is better than a theory that cannot.

Allow me to set up a couple example problem cases here to get us clear on some of the different formulations and how I will be using them to evaluate the different theories in this paper. I will break down two accounts of body switching regarding the ROW, borrowing the framework of Locke's initial Prince and Cobbler. When these cases are applied to the different theories examined later in the paper they will be worded slightly different to account for what each theory says an individual ROW is, but the framework presented here will be used throughout.

Case 1: First, the Scientist takes the individual ROW identified with the Prince and *transfers* it into the body of the Cobbler. Then the Scientist takes the individual ROW identified with the Cobbler and *transfers* it into the body of the Prince. Now, while the framework of the case has it that the ROW is transferred between the two bodies, when we examine them and test our theories against them, we want to imagine

ourselves in the place of an individual who is observing the situation unfold and not presuppose what has happened. Allow me to break this case down and show how it would look from such an angle.

Imagine the Prince and the Cobbler before the Scientist has done his experiment. They go to sleep and the Scientist comes and removes their respective brains, putting each brain into the other's head.³ Then the Scientist reattaches the brains, making them function as if nothing ever happened. Now imagine that the Prince's body wakes up, but as the Cobbler's brain inside it becomes active, the individual is bewildered by this new body and strange surroundings. The being that comprises the Prince's body and the Cobbler's brain believes it is the Cobbler and has all the thoughts and feelings of the Cobbler. Furthermore, upon going to the Cobbler's wife, the being is able to convince her that he (the Cobbler) has been transferred into the Prince's body after showing her the scars on the head from where his skull was cut open and the brains swapped out. It would seem in this case that the thing we refer to when we say "the Cobbler" has been transferred into the Prince's body.

This case gives us a way of thinking about how we determine which ROW a specific one of us is. Here it seems as though the one of us who we originally called the Prince, is now in the Cobbler's body and the one of us who we originally called the Cobbler is now in the Prince's body. In a sense, the individual ROW that is the Prince and the individual ROW that is the Cobbler have switched bodies. Now let us look at a similar, but importantly different case.

³ I am simply using the brain in these cases for exposition, not to commit myself to saying the ROW-making aspect of an individual is the brain.

Case 2: The ROW identified with the Prince is *transformed* to match the ROW identified with the Cobbler, and the ROW identified the Cobbler is *transformed* to match the ROW identified with the Prince.

In this instance, imagine that when the Scientist comes upon the sleeping Prince and Cobbler, he does not remove their brains but instead alters each brain to mimic the other individual's brain. So, the brain of the Prince now has all the memories of the Cobbler, will believe it is the Cobbler, thinks like the Cobbler, etc. The brain of the Cobbler is made to do the same but with the memories, thoughts, beliefs, etc. of the Prince instead.

Now when the Prince's body wakes up, that individual tries to convince everyone that it is the Cobbler. Again, taking the viewpoint of one watching the situation unfold, we can see what one's intuitions might be. Much like before, imagine that the individual with Prince's body runs to the Cobbler's wife and tries to explain how he is the Cobbler, but he has no stitches or cuts in his head from where a brain switch might have occurred. No laser burns from where he might have been zapped into another body, or anything else indicative of a brain switch. Here it would seem as though the Prince's brain has only been altered and that he is still the Prince, but simply mistaken about his beliefs. The thing we refer to with "the Cobbler" is still identified by the Cobbler's body and the thing we refer to with "the Prince" is still identified by the Prince's body, each is simply undergoing an extensive delusion.

Section 1.3: Explanatory Power

Third, in searching for a philosophical theory of what we are and how we persist we should not be satisfied by accounts that do not provide any depth or explanatory power.⁴

⁴ Note here that while it may not arise, an explanatory answer cannot be circular either.

Drawing from a description of a good explanatory theory from Elizabeth Barnes, the theory should do more than merely tell us what things count as ROWs, it should tell us what it is *to be* a ROW (Barnes 2016: 12). The latter is what I am driving at by making this an explicit desideratum. In other words, a theory should give us an answer to Olsen's titular question, "What are we?" as opposed to simply saying which things count as one of us (Olsen 2007). This is where desiderata 1 & 2 also come into play, as they both help to differentiate a theory that simply tells us what things count as one of us from a theory that tells us what we are and how we persist. A theory that is simply a constantly updating list of every one of us alive on the planet does not tell us what we are, it simply tells us which beings count as one of us. Yes, a good theory will end up telling us what things count as one of us, but that is not all it will do. When a theory fulfils these other desiderata, it comes closer to telling us what we are as a kind, and we get a sense for what is essential to being one of us. There are also other aspects of what we are that we take for granted, having a self-consciousness for example. While a theory does not need to account for these, if it can explain more of the common conceptions we have about what is essential to what we are, then the more explanatory it will be overall.

Chapter 2: Existing Theories of the Referent of "We"

Section 1: Analysis of Existing Theories

To help explicate the benefits of my theory, I want to first explore some existing theories that attempt to answer this question but in differing ways. I will use a representative physicalist theory and a representative non-physicalist theory in order to provide two very distinct methods for explaining what the ROW is. Among these theories, there is not a consensus as to what "We" refers to. I will be looking at Olsen's Animalism and Rudder

Baker's Constitution View. While these are certainly not exhaustive of all theories of what we are and how we persist, I believe they do a good job of representing different points along the spectrum of theories. Also, these two theories create a dialogue that dominates the discussion of what we are, and I aim to contribute to this discussion with my theory.

One good way of analyzing these theories is to construct a theoretical cost-benefit analysis. While traditionally a tool of economics, a cost-benefit analysis can give us a clear account of what we have to pay for and what we can do with the things we get when we accept a theory. We can turn this tool into a philosophical one by using it to first look at the ontological commitments as the costs of the theory. Then we can use it to determine which relevant explananda are explained; the benefit of the theory. Finally, we can check the quality of our analysis by seeing if any desiderata are left unaccounted for.

In terms of relevant explananda, let us recall our desiderata. A good theory should explain what the ROW is and give an account of how an individual ROW persists. We have briefly introduced some attempts at explaining what the ROW is, appeal to the body and appeal to the first person perspective from Olsen and Baker respectively. One major facet of these theories is their attempt to explain what the ROW is as a kind. In terms of explaining how an individual ROW persists, some existing theories have attempted to explain this by appeal to an individual ROW's self-consciousness or even an individual ROW's physical body.

While I do not want to assume these are correct ways of explaining what the ROW is and how an individual ROW persists, they give us insight into some general beliefs that individuals hold. Because some of these common beliefs are so widely held, it is important that a good theory of what we are and how we persist at least address these common

intuitions. Much like the problem cases, a theory does not have to give us the answers we intuitively have, but it should not simply ignore these beliefs or presuppose what abilities the ROW has.

Section 1.1: Animalism

In short, Animalism identifies the ROW as the human animal. Olsen has distinguished himself as a prominent member of those who hold the Animalism viewpoint, so I will be using his work as a reference for my analysis.⁵ He also frames his work as an attempt to identify the ROW and not presuppose that ROW's are persons.⁶ Olsen explains that by not assuming we are people we have access to more, potentially better, theories about what we are and to restrict these theories based on an assumption is irresponsible (Olsen 2007: 10).

As an Animalist, Olsen believes that the ROW are not persons but rather the biological organisms that we are identical with (Olsen 2007: 24). The only relevant ontological commitment of this view is that physical human animals exist. This view holds that organisms cease to exist when they die, accounting for an individual ROW's persistence as simply the continuity of the living animal that the individual ROW is identical to (Olsen 2007: 29). Olsen handles problem cases like Case 1 and Case 2 in the following ways:

Case 1: First, the Scientist takes the brain (for the sake of exposition Olsen uses the brain) of the Prince and transfers it into the body of the Cobbler. Then the Scientist takes the brain of the Cobbler and puts it into the body of the Prince. However, under Olsen's view, the brain is not the ROW-making aspect of the individual. Rather the

⁵ Other supporters include: Snowdon (1990) & van Inwagen (1990).

⁶ Olsen's argument for this has motivated me to eschew talk of personhood and instead give a theory of what we are.

individual is identical with the animal body. As such, the individuals have simply been given new brains, and while they both still count as ROWs, the specific one of us that is the Prince has not switched bodies nor has the specific one of us the Cobbler is.

Case 2: In this case the Scientist comes upon the sleeping Prince and plays with his brain until he has all the memories of the Cobbler, thinks like the Cobbler, and believes he is the Cobbler. Then the Scientist goes and does the same with the Cobbler, giving him the memories of the Prince, making him think like the Prince, and making him believe he is the Prince. Again, they are both still animals, so they are both ROWs. As to the question of which one of us they are, Olsen’s view will say they have not changed which one of us they are.

While the result produced in Case 2 is in line with the general consensus, the result from Case 1 is not. Although the general consensus regarding Case 1 is that the specific individuals have switched bodies, Olsen tells us they have not and that they are the same individuals as before but with different brains (Olsen 2007: 42) The following cost-benefit analysis can be applied to Animalism:

Ontological Commitments	Explananda Explained	Desiderata Accounted For
1. Physical human animals	1. What the ROW is 2. How an individual ROW persists 3. A method for addressing problem cases not in line with consensus	1. Yes 2. Yes 3. Yes

Table 1

Section 1.2: First Person Perspectivism & The Constitution View

In general, First Person Perspectivism claims that the ROW are beings with first person perspectives. Allow me to explain the nuances of this view presently. Baker is a main proponent of this view and as such I will be using her body of work to analyze it.⁷ In particular, I will be using Baker's Constitution View, a type of First Person Perspectivism. In the explication of her theory, Baker distinguishes between two types of first person phenomena, weak and strong (Baker 2000). These first person phenomena are the experiences that an individual has.

According to Baker, weak first person phenomena are simple experiences where one is at the center of the perspective (Baker 2000: 61). In short, an experience where one is the *experiencer*. These are the type of phenomena experienced by animals like manatees. Imagine a manatee floating along and suddenly seeing a patch of luscious shoal grass in front of it. From its own perspective, it might process this experience as "that's some nice shoal grass up there, let's go it eat." In this sense, the weak phenomena are simply an experience of stimuli and a focusing of internal attention to that stimuli, in this case, the luscious shoal grass.

Strong first person phenomena are more complicated experiences. They consist of the experiencer conceiving of themselves *as* the individual having an experience (Baker 2000: 66). Effectively, a strong first person phenomenon is an instance of an individual being able to conceive of themselves as their own first person perspective. For example, take an individual who is struggling to solve a puzzle. During this experience the individual might have a weak first person phenomenon in the sense of "this is a difficult puzzle", but they can also have the stronger first person phenomenon of "*I* am the individual that is struggling with

⁷ Other supporters include: Johnston (2007) & Shoemaker (2011)

this difficult puzzle.” That higher level of introspection and cognitive processing is what distinguishes the weak from the strong. It is the capacity to experience these strong first person phenomena that Baker’s theory relies on.

An important part of Baker’s Constitution theory is how it serves as a response to Olsen. Olsen not only argues for Animalism, but also lays out a charge against theories of personhood (Olsen 1995). David Degrazia explores this charge and makes the debate between the two clear. As Degrazia (2002) formulates the debate, Olsen charges those theorists who believe the ROW is a person (e.g. Baker 2000) to “provide a plausible account of the relationship...between the person and the human animal.” (Degrazia 2002: 104). Baker responds to this charge by claiming we are persons *constituted* by physical human animals (Baker 2000: 19). Hence the Constitution View.

In terms of the constitution relation, allow me to elaborate briefly on how Baker explains it. Baker appeals to the general idea of constitution as a relationship between individual things (Baker 2000: 33). While her account of constitution goes into greater technical detail, all we need here is the basic idea: that under certain circumstances, things can be constituted by other, related things. For example, a candle is constituted by the wick, the wax, and the jar. In this way, Baker’s Constitution view says that the person which has a first person perspective is constituted by the human animal.

Baker also states that the ROW is *essentially* a person and what makes us human persons is that we are persons with first person perspectives constituted by human animals (Baker 2000: 105). While we are essentially persons, it happens to be that we are constituted by physical human animals. In formulating her theory as such, Baker leaves open the possibility of other kinds of persons depending on what they are constituted by.

Baker also believes that an individual persists as long as their first person perspective remains active, regardless of what it is constituted by (Baker 2000: 108). This commits us to placing priority on the first person perspective of an individual person, in turn making the body that constitutes them secondary. In short, one's body is not what makes a specific individual, it is their first person perspective. This suggests that Baker believes in cases of body switching, where one's first person perspective could be reconstituted by another body and the individual ROW that one is would switch bodies and track with that individual's first person perspective. Baker's Constitution View would handle problem cases the following ways:

Case 1: First, the Scientist finds a way to extract the first person perspective of the Prince and transfers it into the body of the Cobbler, so that the Prince's first person perspective is constituted by the Cobbler's body. In this case, Baker would tell us that the person who is the Prince is now constituted by the Cobbler's body and has in fact switched bodies.

Case 2: In this case, the Scientist comes and reformats the first person perspective of the Prince to be like that of the Cobbler the Prince believes that he is the Cobbler trapped in the Prince's body. The same happens to the Cobbler. His first person perspective is transformed to be just like the Prince's initial first person perspective and now the individual constituted by the Cobbler's body believes they have the Prince's first person perspective. Here Baker would say that although the individuals believe they have switched bodies, the first person perspectives have not been reconstituted, so the individuals are the same individuals they were before. Each individual is simply suffering from an extensive delusion.

As we can see, Baker's Constitution View gives us answers that are in line with the traditional intuitions on the cases.

Another virtue of the Constitution View is that it gives us a way to explain our self-consciousness. The weak and strong first person phenomena discussed earlier represent simple and complex experiences that can be expressed as thoughts. This allows us to account for psychological explanations that require an appeal to a first person perspective. Baker uses the example of Oedipus' self-blinding to show how this.

According to Baker, Oedipus would have to be able to conceive of himself as an individual in order to come to realizations about the killing of Laius that drove Oedipus to self-blind (Baker 2007: 78). Recalling our earlier desiderata, Baker's theory not only gives us an account of what we are, but it also goes on to explain some of the more commonly held intuitions about the features the ROW has.

Baker's theory is not free from vice however. The Constitution View does not give us an explanatory account of how an individual ROW persists. While Baker admits that her best theory would be that identity over time consists in sameness of first person perspective over time, she also admits that she cannot give any non-circular criteria for determining the sameness of a first person perspective at two different times (Baker 2000: 132). This makes her theory unexplanatory with respect to questions of how an individual ROW persists. We can construct the following analysis of Baker's theory:

Ontological Commitments	Explananda Explained	Desiderata Accounted For
1. Physical human animals 2. First person perspectives	1. What the ROW is 2. The relationship between mental processes and the human animal 3. A method to answer problem cases in line with consensus 4. Explanations of self-consciousness	1. No 2. Yes 3. Yes

Table 2

Section 2: Some Issues

Now that we have an explanation of these views and a look at what they do, we can take a more critical look at the issues the theories face. By making these issues clear we can build from these theories to construct an account of what the ROW is that does not face these same problems. I have identified two problems that cause issues for these theories. They are what I call the “Revival Problem”, and the “Justification Problem”. Here I will show how the problems are detrimental to both Olsen’s and Baker’s accounts of what we are and how we persist. In a later section I will address how my theory does not face these issues.

Section 2.1: The Revival Problem

The Revival Problem arises when a theory’s account of how an individual ROW persists is incompatible with the possibility of revival. Recall Olsen’s account of identity over time: an animal’s life lasts as long as it is alive, and once it dies it ceases to be one of us. For Olsen, the life of an organism is “a self organizing biological event that maintains the organism’s complex internal structure”; and this position allows his theory to account for the constant replacement of cells and matter over the life of an organism (Olsen 2007: 28). When this biological event ceases to function and stops maintaining the structure of the organism,

then the animal ceases to exist. The organism is gone and now all that remains is a lump of organic matter, something that on Olsen's theory is not one of us. While this is intuitive and does not seem controversial at first glance, it is incompatible with certain cases of an individual ROW's persistence.

We can see this clearly in cases of revival. Take for example an organism whose vital processes all stop and remain stopped for 10 hours. According to Olsen, this is an instance where the organism's biological event has ceased, as all vital processes are stopped. To all those spectating, the organism has died, but in the 11th hour, the organism's vital processes restart and it functions just as before the vital processes had stopped, with all the memories and beliefs as before.⁸

The best explanation for a case like this is to say the organism was revived; it seemed to pass away, but it actually didn't. The particular ROW that initially seemed to pass away persisted through the experience. However, if Olsen wants to say this, he has to say that the individual who is identical to the organism also persisted, but the ways he can make this claim all run counter to his theory.

To accept the possibility of revival, Olsen must either say: 1) an organism persisted through the time when its vital processes ceased; 2) the particular ROW went out of existence and then came back into existence; or 3) the particular ROW is not identical to the organism that dies nor to the one that existed after, but rather was constituted by one at one time and the other at a later time.

If Olsen were to accept the first claim, then he must also reject his theory of when an organism remains in existence. To say that an organism persisted through the time when its

⁸ Take for example Velma Thomas, revived after 17 hours of no brain activity, pulse, or vital functions (Elsworth 2008).

vital processes stopped is to say that an organism persisted through the time when its “self-sustaining biological event” has ended (Olsen 2007: 28). However, Olsen makes it clear that the ending of this biological event is what marks the end of an organism life, so accepting this claim renders his account of an organism’s life false. As his theory is one that identifies the ROW as the *living* human animal, if he were to reject his account of when an organism remains alive, then he would have an incomplete account of what the ROW is.

If Olsen were to accept the second claim, then he must also accept that specific individuals can pop in and out of existence. This concept is deeply implausible. Endorsing this claim would be to say that the cessation of something’s existence is not the end of that things existence. This runs counter to traditional thoughts on what it means to exist and if Olsen were to accept this claim he would have to account for how something can exist after it has ceased to exist.

Finally, if he were to accept the third claim, then he must reject Animalism all together. This claim is a direct contradiction to Animalism, as it makes the individual identical with something other than the animal body. As shown, Olsen faces a trilemma when it comes to accepting cases of revival. While this is not a reason to reject Animalism outright, the Revival Problem should be considered when comparing two theories against one another.

Section 2.2: The Justification Problem

The Justification Problem arises when a theory commits itself to certain claims it has no way of justifying. We can see this in the commitments that Baker’s theory makes regarding Case 1 and Case 2. The Constitution View is committed to saying that Case 1 and Case 2 represent different states of affairs and that there is a factual difference between the

two. However, when we introduce a third case, we can see how Baker faces a justification problem.

Case 3: The Prince and the Cobbler have both been chatting with the Scientist, and they agree to go away to his laboratory for an experiment. The following day the Scientist returns with the Prince and Cobbler declaring his experiment complete.

Upon returning, the Prince bodied person insists they are the Cobbler seeing through the Prince's body and the Cobbler bodied person insists they are Prince seeing through the Cobbler's body. Each has the memories of who they claim to be.

When faced with this case, we ask Baker what has happened; have the two switched first person perspectives like in Case 1, or are they just delusional like in Case 2? Recall that Baker is committed to saying that Case 1 and Case 2 represent different states of affairs and that there is a fact of the matter as to which state of affairs obtains at a given time and place. However, Baker has no way to give us a justified answer to which case, case 1 or case 2, has occurred here.

To give us a justified answer, Baker would have to tell us what the first person perspective consists in in physical or other identifiable terms. Without a way to identify the first person perspective, we have no way to find out which individual possess which first person perspective in this case. If we could identify an individual's first person perspective, then we could justifiably say whether this is an instance of case 1 or case 2.

However, as Degrazia has shown, Baker has no such tools to identify the first person perspectives at her disposal. Baker cannot rely on immaterial objects to be what the first person perspective consists in as she is a devout materialist, but neither can she rely on biological objects as she denies that the first person perspective is identical with any physical

property, part, or process (Degrazia 2002: 117). So, Baker cannot give us a justified answer as to which case has occurred here. Moreover, the way the Constitution View is structured, she cannot find a justification without going back on part of her theory and giving up either: 1) that persons are material or, 2) that first person perspectives are not identical to a physical property, part, or process. Neither seems to be an option she would take.

Chapter 3: The First Person Processes of the ROW

Section 1: Introduction to First Person Perspective Systems

There is an alternative way of constructing what the ROW is that avoids the problems of Animalism and First Person Perspectivism yet retains their strengths. In particular, this new way of looking at the ROW draws on Baker's Constitution View, with the important distinction that the first person perspective is actually a complex group of systems as opposed to a singular thing.

I want to explain and contextualize some relevant work done by Metzinger at this juncture. Some of the work he has done in the fields of cognitive science and the philosophy of mind is helpful in drawing out a new theory that avoids the failings discussed in the previous section. Specifically, I want to use the concepts of what Metzinger calls the Phenomenal First Person Perspective and the Cognitive First Person Perspective (Metzinger 2003). Each of these is an abstract type of a first person process that provide us with a more nuanced idea of the first person perspective.

We can think of the Phenomenal First Person Perspective (PFPP) as the mechanism for processing Baker's weak first person phenomena. Metzinger refers to the PFPP as a process of "attention" meaning that the PFPP handles the allocation of resources based on stimuli (Metzinger 2003: 365). Note that this entails the PFPP relies on some sort of physical

sensory hardware that “runs” the PFPP process. We can say here that the PFPP is realized by this physical hardware.

We can get a sense for how the PFPP looks in action if we return to our manatee example from earlier. In this example the PFPP is what processes the stimuli of seeing the shoal grass and focuses the manatee’s attention on it. Although the stimuli processing does represent a level of cognition on most views, Metzinger distinguishes this type from a higher-level cognition by focusing on the kind of content the process creates.

Metzinger explains the content generated from the PFPP process as “non-conceptual”, meaning that they are simple thoughts like Baker’s weak first person phenomena (Metzinger 2003: 365). Essentially, the type of content we get when the PFPP processes information is merely attentional and does not represent a higher level cognition on the part of the experiencer. This part is crucial, as the PFPP functions without the level of cognition that is needed to be able to conceive of oneself as a subject.

Understanding the PFPP is important as having a PFPP is a necessary pre-requisite for one to have a Cognitive First Person Perspective (CFPP). The PFPP is a necessary part of what gives an individual the capacity for a CFPP as the CFPP builds on the base level of processing we receive from the PFPP. The CFPP is a higher level of self-consciousness that allows for cognitive self-reference, i.e. conceptualizing of oneself as oneself (Metzinger 2003: 367). Again, we can lean on Baker’s terminology here and think of the CFPP as the mechanism that processes strong first person phenomena.

While Metzinger establishes that the PFPP is necessary for a CFPP, it is not sufficient for one. Having a CFPP would require some sort of other mental capacities beyond those needed for a PFPP. According to Metzinger, the capacity needed to achieve a CFPP is the

ability to have “consciously experienced cognitive self-reference” (Metzinger 2003: 367). By that, Metzinger means the type of strong first person phenomena Baker is referring to: experiences of conceiving of oneself as oneself. So, one needs the ability to have these experiences to be able to process them via the CFPP.

Much like how the PFPP needs some sort of physical sensory hardware, we can say that this capacity to have a CFPP also requires hardware that give the system that capacity of being able to conceive of oneself as oneself. We can also see how these are different pieces of hardware, as Metzinger makes it clear that having a PFPP is a necessary, *not* sufficient for having a CFPP.

In terms of how these first person processes, the CFPP & PFPP, work, we can conceive of them as processes that are “run” by some hardware in the same way a computer CPU runs different programs like the operating system. Before I outline my theory, I want to explore some of the different possibilities for what these systems are identical with and the possible persistence conditions for a specific ROW over time depending on how we formulate the theories. In exploring these different formulations, I simply aim to sketch out how they might work and briefly identify some of the positives and negatives. For the sake of space, I will not fully explicate each possible objection, but rather introduce the possible issues so one can work them out if they choose to accept the certain theory.⁹ I hope to highlight the positive and negatives of each formulation, allowing us to see the reasoning behind the formulation I select for my theory.

⁹ In an earlier version of this paper, I conducted an in depth exploration of the objections to each theory, but it turned the focus of this paper away from a theory of what we are and how we persist.

Section 1.1: Possible Identity Theories

According to the desiderata I set for myself earlier, if a theory fails to specify what the ROW is identical with it would not be explanatory. We need to provide an account of what the ROW is identical with specifically to deal with issues of individuating specific ROWs. Using the PFPP and the CFPP I will sketch out the possible formulations of what the ROW is identical with below. Specifically, I will be exploring whether the ROW is identical to the physical system, the first person processes, or a compound of both.

Section 1.1 (a): The Physical Theory

For ease of expression, I will refer to the Physical Theory as a single theory with a few different formulations, all of which identify what we are as a specific physical region of the body. This can take the form of specific brain parts, the brain as a whole, the body as a whole, or even the body as a whole in relation to other bodies. The underlying feature of these views however is their emphasis on the *physical* object that runs the abstract FPP systems. It is these physical parts that are identical with the ROW.

However, when we examine this theory we can see how depending on what parts are included, we can receive different answers to the problem cases. While this isn't a reason to reject the theory outright, it is important to note when comparing it against the others.

Section 1.1 (b): The Abstract Theory

This theory focuses on the abstract first person processes introduced in the beginning of Chapter 3. According to the Abstract Theory, what we are is identical to the abstract first person processes. Like the Physical Theory, there are different formulations of the Abstract Theory that differ on the processes included. These different formulations would give us different answers to what counts as one of us depending on which processes were made

necessary and which processes and individual possesses. Overall the underlying feature of the different formulations is their focus on just the abstract processes.

However, much like the Physical Theory, we need to be careful of how we formulate this theory. Depending on the scale of the perceptual processes that are included, the theorist could be pushed into accepting somewhat controversial claims. For instance, if the theory identifies the ROW with the PFPP process and visual processing, then anything without a visual processing system would fail to be an individual ROW. Effectively, there is an inverse relationship between the systems a theory includes, and how exclusive it becomes.

Section 1.1 (c): The Compound Theory

This theory, as its name would suggest, claims that what we are is a compound of the abstract first person processes and the physical parts that run them, not one or the other like the previous two theories. So, this account requires both the abstract first person processes and the physical hardware that can run them. It is in this sense that it is a compound theory, as it is concerned with the sum of both parts.

This theory would require one to work through the exact nature of the relationship between the processes and the physical hardware that run them. While a more complex discussion of how this compound works is necessary, I will expand on this later in the paper. This section merely introduces the concept so that we may see it in relation to the other possible formulations.

Section 1.2: Possible Persistence Conditions

While discussing what we are is crucial to determining *where* an individual ROW exists, persistence conditions are crucial to determining *when* an individual ROW continues to exist. There are multiple candidates for the persistence conditions of an individual ROW

that vary depending on which theories I have sketched above is used. This section will explore these possibilities.

Section 1.2 (a): The Physical Theory

The persistence conditions for the Physical Theory focus on how the specific physical part/parts that are identical with the ROW persist. So, if a theory says that what we are is the entire brain, then we can determine how an individual ROW persists by looking at how its brain persists.

A consequence of this theory is that the persistence conditions for an individual ROW depend on the persistence conditions for the physical part that the ROW is identical to. Much like the Abstract Theory in Section 1.1(b), the more that is included in the physical object the ROW is identical to, the more exclusive the theory gets. For example, if the ROW is identical to the entire brain, then someone who lost a small part of their brain would cease to be an individual ROW.

Section 1.2 (b): The Abstract Theory

The persistence conditions for the Abstract Theory center around the functioning of the PFPP process and the CFPP process. Specifically, this theory defines when an individual ROW persists as when their first person processes persist. So, the theory makes an individual ROW's persistence conditional on either: 1) the continued activity of its first person processes, or 2) the continued capacity for its first person processes.

These formulations each have their own issues that must be addressed if chosen. First, focusing on the continued activity of the first person processes could lead one to cease existing the instant they are knocked out. Second, focusing on the capacity for the first

person processes would require one to explain when an individual does and does not retain the capacity for these processes.

Section 1.2 (c): The Compound Theory

The Compound Theory has a more complicated set of persistence conditions as it must account for both the physical part and the abstract systems. The possible formulations of this theory can be created by combining the different options of the above theories. For the sake of brevity, I will not go through and re-explain each combination. Instead I have constructed the diagram below that shows the options along with their possible persistence conditions.¹⁰

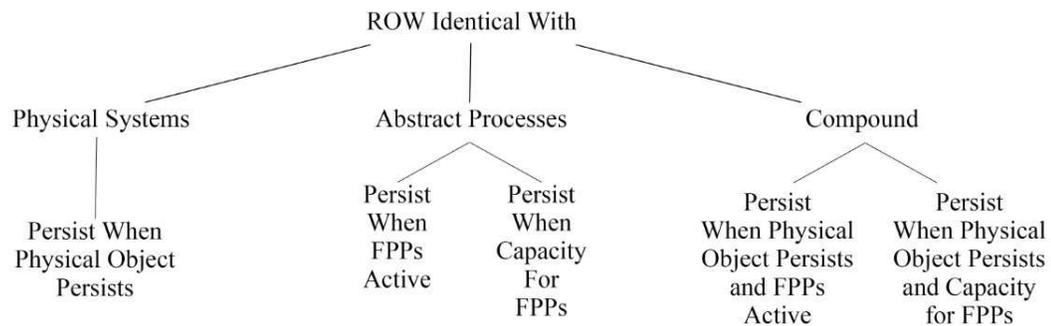


Figure 1

In going through each theory briefly, I have introduced the different possible formulations a theory can choose from. Each view can be formulated slightly differently as shown in each respective section. There are also certain aspects of each that must be accounted for and explored more intensely, but as I will only be selecting one for my theory I have not undertaken this exploration here.

¹⁰ For visual clarity I have used FPPs to refer to “first person processes” in the diagram.

Chapter 4: The Revised Theory

Section 1: An Introduction to the Theory

After examining some existing theories of what we are and how we persist, I will now put forth my view, the Revised Theory.¹¹ My theory draws on both Olsen and Baker, with the help of Metzinger. According to my theory every given ROW is identical to a physical object with the property *being capable of having a CFPP*. This answer appeals to Baker in the sense that being capable of having a CFPP is essential to what the ROW is. It also draws on Olsen by placing importance on the physical body, as the PFPP is necessarily realized by a physical body. As such, I have formulated a compound theory that gives both an account of what we are and how we persist.

Section 1.1: An Account of What We Are

In constructing the Revised Theory, I have chosen the compound theory as the basis for my formulation as it avoids problems that both the Abstract Theory and the Physical Theory face on their own, while also giving us a useful addition to the dialogue between Olsen and Baker. Being the synchronic part of my theory, this will aim to answer the question of what the ROW is. Under the Revised Theory the ROW is:

- a. A physical object with the property *being capable of having a CFPP*.

By determining that the ROW making aspect of something is the property *being capable of having a CFPP*, we in turn make having a PFPP a necessary condition for being an individual ROW. Additionally, one must have the hardware necessary for having a CFPP. So, here we need to introduce two more properties that are necessary for being an individual ROW. The property *having a PFPP* and the property *being the necessary hardware for a*

¹¹ While “The Revised Theory” might not tell you much about the theory, it is an uncontroversial title and works well for rhetorical purposes.

CFPP. I will break down in precise detail the relationships between these properties and their bearers later, I merely want to introduce the terminology to the reader here.

Turing back to the processes themselves, we can get a sense for how the theory is compound. Both the *CFPP* and the *PFPP* are *abstract*. However, having/being capable of them are *physical* properties of an object. It is in this sense that this is a compound theory. One cannot have these properties without having the necessary abstract processes to bring them about.

One virtue of relying on these processes is that the theory can give an account of self-consciousness in the same way Baker does, as the *CFPP* is similar to Baker's first person perspective. Where Baker uses the first person perspective to account for Oedipus's self-blinding, we could work through the same argument with the *CFPP* in place of Baker's first person perspective.

Section 1.2: An Account of How We Persist

To satisfy my desiderata I must also posit an account of how an individual ROW persists. To do so I have looked towards the different persistence conditions laid out earlier and determined that an individual ROW at Time 1 is the same individual ROW at Time 2 iff:

- a. The individual ROW at Time 1 has the same physical parts with the properties *having a PFPP* and *being the necessary hardware for a CFPP* as the individual ROW at Time 2.

Note here that at both times the individual is already established to be a ROW because by virtue of the properties the individual still possesses the capacity for a *CFPP* throughout.

While this may seem simplistic, it gives us a tool that we can use to avoid both Olsen's

Revival Problem and Baker's Justification Problem. Allow me to explain using the cases from each respective problem.

The Revival Problem: Recall that Olsen's theory was incompatible with revival, here I will show how the Revised Theory is compatible with such cases. Imagine again the case where an individual's vital processes (heartbeat, breathing, etc.) all cease. After multiple hours in this state, the processes restart and the individual is alive again with all of their past memories, feelings, etc. According to the Revised Theory, the individual would still be the same specific ROW as before as long as they retained the property *being capable of having a CFPP*. So, where Olsen is forced into accepting one of three controversial claims, my theory is not. I do not have to accept that the individual ROW came in and out of existence, nor do I have to accept that the individual was constituted by two different organisms. Rather, I can accept the first claim that the individual persisted through the time when the vital processes were stopped without detriment to my theory. As long as that individual retains their PFPP and the hardware necessary for the CFPP.

The Justification Problem: Baker's Constitution View faced an issue where Baker could not give a justified answer as to which problem case had occurred, Case 1 or Case 2, even though her theory claimed there was a fact of the matter as to which case happened. The root of this issue was Baker's inability to identify what the first person perspective consisted in. My theory does not face this issue, as the CFPP and the PFPP are processes that are run on physical hardware, which we can use to track the individual processes.

Over all, we can construct the following cost benefit analysis of my theory:

Ontological Commitments	Explananda Explained	Desiderata Accounted For
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical human animals 2. The Phenomenal First Person Perspective 3. The Cognitive First Person Perspective 4. Building relations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What the ROW is 2. How an individual ROW persists 3. The relationship between mental processes and the human animal 4. How to address problem cases in line with consensus 5. Explanations of self-consciousness 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. Yes 3. Yes

Table 3

Section 2: The Properties and Processes Explained

Thus far, I have been slightly vague on the exact nature of a given ROW and how it relates to the three properties I mentioned above: *being capable of having a CFPP*, *having a PFPP*, and *being the necessary hardware for a CFPP*. To delve into the details of the physical object and how it bears these properties earlier would have overcomplicated things. Thus far I have established that a sufficient condition for something to be an individual ROW is that it bear the property *being capable of having a CFPP*. Now I will explore how a physical object gains this property.

To explain this well, I want to properly introduce the concept of building relations. In short, building relations are a family of metaphysical relations that work to construct something nonfundamental from something fundamental. Building relations are also explanation relations in the sense that the more fundamental thing explains the less fundamental thing that it builds. This is a general description, but this is not a paper about the nature of building relations, so the generality is acceptable here.¹²

¹² For an in depth discussion of building relations see Bennett (2017)

In particular, I want to draw upon the relation of microbasing. Karen Bennett describes microbasing as a many-one relationship between a property of a whole and the properties of its parts (Bennett 2017: 10).¹³ For example, the color of the whole jigsaw puzzle is microbased in the colors of its individual pieces. Microbasing is importantly different from some other closely related building relations and I want to make those distinctions clear before we continue.

First, microbasing relations are distinct from emergence relations. Microbasing relations do *not* produce relata that are anything over and above any of the other relata (Bennett 2017). This is in contrast to emergence relations where one relatum is over and above the fundamental relatum from which the other relatum emerges (Kim 2006). This is a relevant distinction for the purposes of my theory as it distinguishes it from a body of theories that explain what we are as something emergent (Hasker 2001; O'Connor and Jacobs 2003).

Second, microbasing relations are distinct from realization relations in that microbasing relations relate a property of a whole thing to properties of its parts, where realization relations hold between properties of an individual and other properties of that same individual (Bennett 2017). This difference in the relata is what distinguished microbasing relations and realization relations.

Finally, microbasing relations are distinct from supervenience relations. Supervenience relations are not building relations in the way I use building relations here (i.e. according to Bennett 2017). This is because supervenience relations are simply relations of covariation between sets, they are not explanatory relations. We can see this by looking at a

¹³ According to Bennett (2017) microbasing has a few different formulations, but this is the formulation relevant for my paper.

canonical formulation of supervenience between a set of properties A and a set of properties B where the A properties supervene on the B properties, “There cannot be an A difference without a B difference” (McLaughlin and Bennett 2018). This is not an explanatory relation however, and as such it is distinct from microbasing.

Returning to how this microbasing relation is used in my theory, allow me to first lay out the relata. Under my theory, to be an individual ROW, the individual must bear the property *being capable of having a CFPP*. Here, it is important to note that this property is one the individual ROW bears. The property, *being capable of having a CFPP*, is microbased in both the properties *having a PFPP* and *being the necessary hardware for a CFPP*. Here it is important to note that these two properties are properties of *parts* of an individual ROW.

There are two key aspects of the theory to make note of here: the microbasing relation between the properties and what things bear the properties. Allow me to illustrate these with two diagrams. Figure 2 shows the relation between the properties where figure 3 shows what bears the properties.

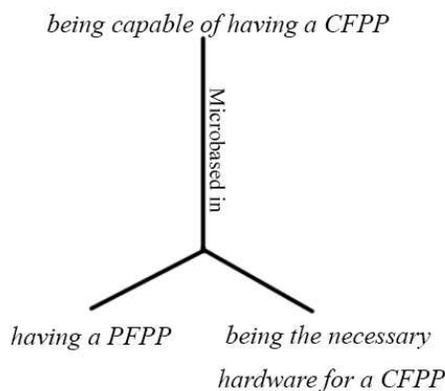


Figure 2

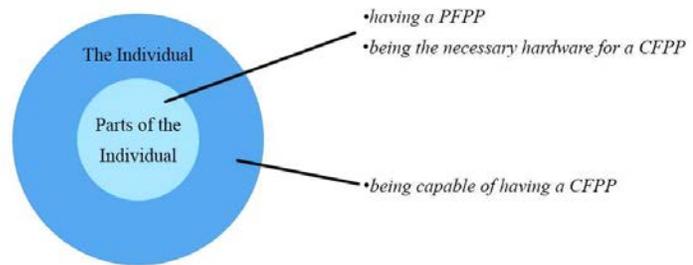


Figure 3

Let’s move through this more slowly, distinguishing the properties from the processes. When an individual has hardware running the PFPP process, then that specific

piece of hardware bears the property *having a PFPP*. When the hardware is present that makes the CFPP process possible, then that hardware bears the property *being the necessary hardware for a CFPP*. Finally, the PFPP process and the hardware needed for the CFPP give the individual the capacity to have the CFPP process. That is, the property *being capable of having a CFPP* is microbased in the two other properties; *having a PFPP* and *being the necessary hardware for a CFPP*.

Section 3: Value of the Revised Theory

As I have intimated above, the goal of the Revised Theory is to provide a theory of what we are and how we persist that has a clear method of responding to problem cases and is explanatory. I have explained above how the theory gives us answers to what we are and how we persist but allow me to walk through the remaining aspects to show it is a better choice than the competing theories.

First, my theory gives us answers to Case 1 and Case 2 that are in line with general consensus. Granted this is not an immediate indicator that it is a stronger theory, in the context of the overall comparison it will count in its favor.

Case 1: First, the Scientist takes the physical parts of the Prince that bear the properties *having a PFPP* and *being the necessary hardware for a CFPP* and transfers them into the Cobbler's body. Next, the Scientist does the same thing with the physical parts that bear those properties from the Cobbler, putting them into the Prince's body. Since which one of us we are is determined by the physical parts that bears the properties that microbase the property *being capable of having a CFPP*, we can say that the one we call the Prince, is now in the Cobbler's body, and the one we call the Cobbler is now in the Prince's body. This is similar to the initial brain

switching case but adjusted to fit my theory's terminology. Here the result we get when applying the Revised Theory aligns with common intuitions.

Case 2: The Scientist takes the Prince and identifies the physical parts of the Prince that bear the properties *having a PFPP* and *being the necessary hardware for a CFPP*. Then the Scientist transforms these parts to function exactly like the corresponding parts of the Cobbler. Then the Scientist goes and repeats this procedure on the Cobbler. In this case, the CFPP process of the Prince bodied person will function like the CFPP process of the Cobbler and the CFPP process of the Cobbler bodied person will function like the CFPP process of the Prince. So, each individual will believe they have switched bodies, when in fact nothing has actually transferred between the two. Here, the Revised Theory tells us that the one we call the Prince is still in the Prince's body and the one we call the Cobbler is still in the Cobbler's body. This is a case of an extensive delusion, as the physical parts that bear the properties *having a PFPP* and *being the necessary hardware for a CFPP* have not transferred bodies. Again, the result we achieve is in line with common intuitions on this case.

In terms of being explanatory, when we look at the explananda accounted for by the Revised Theory we can see that it has more explanatory power than both Animalism and First Person Perspectivism.

To start, allow me to show how neither of those theories explains more than the Revised Theory. Animalism explains: 1) what the ROW is, 2) how an individual ROW persists over time, and 3) how we address problem cases. When we look at the Revised Theory, it too can explain all of these things. First Person Perspectivism can explain: 1) what

the ROW is, 2) the relationship between mental processes and the human animal, 3) how we address problem cases, and 4) self-consciousness. Again, the Revised Theory explains all of these.

Moreover, the Revised Theory explains more than Animalism and more than First Person Perspectivism. Where Animalism cannot account for explanations of self-consciousness, the Revised Theory can as it drawn on the same psychological explanations Baker provides. Where First Person Perspectivism cannot explain how an individual ROW persists over time, the Revised theory has laid out persistence conditions that can explain this. Overall, the upshot of my theory is that it provides not only the explanations we get from Animalism and First Person Perspectivism, but it allows us to do more than both of them.

However, my theory does contain more in its ontology than the others. To accept Animalism, we need only accept that there are physical human animals. To accept Baker's Constitution View, we need only accept that there are physical human animals and first person perspectives. For my theory, we need to accept physical human animals, Phenomenal First Person Perspectives, Cognitive First Person Perspectives, and building relations. That being said, as long as we are engaging in cognitive science, then we need to accept abstract mental processes. Similarly, if we are doing metaphysics, then we need to accept building relations. So perhaps my theory is not asking an undue amount.

Chapter 5: A Strong Objection

Section 1: Olsen's Dilemma

Taking the standpoint a proponent of Animalism might take, I would like to pose a dilemma to my theory. I will refer to this dilemma as Olsen's Dilemma, as it is motivated by his work. According to Olsen's Dilemma, my theory either A) gives us the same answer as Olsen's theory or, B) gives us a different answer but at a greater ontological cost. Allow me to explicate the consequences of each prong in turn.

Section 1.1: Olsen's Dilemma Prong A

My theory claims to answer the same question as Olsen's, namely "What are we?" This is stated explicitly in the Introduction, and while it is phrased in terms of the ROW, my theory gives us an account of what we are just the same as Olsen's. Furthermore, my theory actually gives a remarkably similar answer to Olsen's, as both are based on the physical body of the individual. Olsen identifies what we are with the human animal, I identify what we are based on a physical object with a property, e.g. a property-bearing human animal. This answer is no different from Olsen's except in the sense that I explicitly state the property bearing aspect and he implicitly states the property bearing aspect. If this is the case, then my theory adds nothing new to the dialogue between Olsen and Baker. It simply gives us an answer we already have which adds no philosophical value to the discussion. If this is the case, there is no reason to accept the Revised Theory.

Section 1.2: Olsen's Dilemma Prong B

Where Prong A is an attack on how my theory is different from Olsen's, Prong B poses a methodological argument against my theory. Prong B states that because my theory comes at a much greater ontological cost, it is the weaker theory and should not be adopted.

Where Olsen requires us to accept only physical human animals, my theory requires not only physical human animals, but also first person processes, and building relations. The ontology of my theory contains more in it, an aspect of my theory that is particularly vulnerable to Ockham's Razor. When we apply the Razor to a theory, we look at what is included in the ontologies of two competing theories and select the one with the least number of things. Looking at my own philosophical accounting, we can see that Olsen's theory has a much lower ontological cost than my theory does. So, we can use Ockham's Razor to effectively cut away my theory, discarding it in favor of Olsen's.

Section 2: Unlocking Olsen's Dilemma

Olsen's Dilemma poses a strong objection to my theory and seems to force my theory into a situation where the only way out is to accept defeat. However, let us break down the claims made and address them in turn. While I need only remove one side of the dilemma to salvage my theory, I will address both aspects in order to satisfy even the most fervent objector.

First, Prong A claims that my answer to the question of what we are is essentially the same as Olsen's. I can understand how at first glance this claim can seem convincing. Yes, both Olsen and I use the physical animal as a basis for identifying what the ROW is. However, my theory says that what we are is more than just a living human animal. The Revised Theory says that the ROW bears certain properties where being a human animal is not a sufficient condition for bearing those properties. This last part is crucial because the objection only works if every living human animal is also an object with the property *being capable of having a CFPP*. However, this is not the case under my account.

Under the Revised Theory, there can be instances where a living human animal is not an object with the property *being capable of having a CFPP*. Imagine a human animal who is connected to machines that maintains the vital processes to keep them living. That individual then has their brain, their heart, and all of their vital organs removed. Under Olsen's account, this individual is still alive as their vital processes are being maintained. However, under my account if the hardware that makes the CFPP possible is removed, then the individual is still living, but no longer has the property *being capable of having a CFPP*. As this case illustrates, my theory does not fall to Prong A of Olsen's Dilemma.

While I have already dispatched Prong A, I will still address Prong B as it poses an interesting methodological addition to the discussion. Prong B relies on Ockham's Razor as a methodological tool to evaluate the worth of a theory. However, there are reasons to doubt the value of the Razor in comparing metaphysical theories. As Bennett points out, the Razor does not take into account the difference between fundamental things and nonfundamental things posited in a theory's ontology (Bennett 2017: 220). This is an issue for the Razor as it reduces the Razor to simply analyzing a theory on its simplicity, not on its *relative* simplicity.

Allow me to illustrate how this is a short coming of the Razor with an example of two theories of a possible universe. In this universe, there is just a single room that contains a dresser and a lamp. When the lamp is turned on the dresser casts a shadow in the room. Now we have two competing theories we can use to explain this universe.

Theory 1: The only things in the universe are the lamp and the dresser. According to this theory, we do not explain the shadows existence and simply ignore it. The ontology of this theory contains two things, the lamp and the dresser.

Theory 2: The only fundamental things in this universe are the lamp and the dresser. However, the shadow is a built entity and because it is built is nonfundamental. Here the theory's ontology contains three things, two fundamental things (the lamp and the dresser) and one nonfundamental thing (the shadow).

When we apply the Razor to these two theories, we look only at the total number of things in each theory's ontology. According to the Razor, we should accept Theory 1 here as it posits less in its ontology. However, we don't want to say that theory one is better because it simply ignores one third of the things in this proposed universe. In fact, it seems as though theory one is irresponsible as it just discounts anything it cannot explain easily.

Luckily for us, this shortcoming of the Razor has been addressed by Jonathan Schaffer who has revised Ockham's Razor to give us a new philosophical tool: Ockham's Laser (Schaffer 2015).¹⁴ Before I continue, let me be clear that this section is not an argument for the methodological superiority of the Laser vs. the Razor, but rather the application of a philosophical tool that other metaphysicians have found useful.¹⁵ According to Schaffer (2015), the Laser tells us that when comparing theories the solution with the fewest fundamental entities is the stronger theory, all else equal. This means that the Laser does not count nonfundamental things as an additional cost over and above the fundamental things posited in a theory's ontology. In the case of our hypothetical universe used above, the Laser would not count the shadow in the room as adding any additional cost to the ontology of Theory 2.

¹⁴ While there are other tools that can be used (Schaffer's Phaser, Bennett's Taser), I have chosen to use the Laser for simplicity.

¹⁵ An argument for the Laser's methodological superiority can be found in Schaffer (2015), *What not to Multiply Without Necessity*

Recall that the things in my ontology which are not in Olsen's are built out of the same fundamental entity that Olsen posits in his theory, the physical human body. The PFPP and the CFPP are built entities and as such are nonfundamentalia. So, when we apply the Laser instead of the Razor, my theory does not have a higher ontological cost than Olsen's. While this is enough to unlock the dilemma, I would like add one last note.

The use of the Laser here highlights the importance of a theory's explanatory power. Where the Razor focuses simply on the costs, the Laser accounts for what we are able *to do* with the things we buy. Essentially, if we can get our theory at a cheaper ontological cost, but those savings come at the expense of the explanatory power, then it really is not a better theory. This applies to my theory in the sense that it can do so much more with what we buy. As I illustrated in Chapter 4 Section 3, my theory allows us to explain more than Olsen's or Baker's. Overall, we have found our way out of the dilemma and in the process strengthened my theory.

Conclusion

At the start of the paper we began with a simple question, "What are we?" and set out to answer it. While some answers to this question assumed us to be people, Olsen correctly showed us that we should not assume this to be the case. Focusing specifically on the Olsen/Baker dialogue, I have identified a major flaw in each theory: the Revival Problem and the Justification Problem. Finally, I posited a theory of my own that accounts for both of these issues and draws on both sides of the Olsen/Baker dialogue, along with the ideas discussed by Metzinger.

My theory gives us a tool for both understanding both what the ROW is and also how an individual ROW persists. It accounts for both the physical body and the abstract processes

that allow us to explain our thoughts and our self-consciousness. It also helps to explain the difference between weak first person phenomena and strong first person phenomena in terms of the difference in the content generated by the PFPP process and the content generated by the CFPP process.

While the discussion of Animalism and First Person Perspectivism accounts of what we are and how we persist are certainly not exhaustive of theories attempting to do the same, they are two theories that dominate the current dialogue and present a good area for myself to add to the dialogue. That being said, I believe there are ways to situate the Revised Theory amongst other attempts to answer what we are and how we persist. For example, emergence theories of what we are and how we persist. In particular, when comparing my theory with emergence theories, the things in my ontology that are built out of microbasing relations do not count as fundamental where they do with emergence relations. This simply goes to show that while I have not done so here, one could compare my theory to other theories of what we are and how we persist.

Ultimately though, our discussion regarding what the ROW is serves as part of a much larger discussion, one concerned not so much with the question “What are we?” but rather concerned with the question “*Why* are we?”. What is our purpose and what is our place in the universe? To the first part of that question I cannot say much as it is beyond the scope of this paper. The second part however, I can touch on briefly. In giving us a theory that explains what the ROW is, we can begin to see our connections with other things in the universe. The way the theory is set up leaves room for things to count as ROWs that are not human. As long as something has the property *being capable of having a CFPP*, then it can

count as one of us. I would like to briefly explore two examples to illustrate how this is a positive aspect of the theory.

First, I would like to take the well-used example of the non-human animal that is somehow given a way to communicate in English (e.g. Locke's rational parrot, Mr. Ed, Darwin from seaQuest DSV, and many others). In these examples, it is shown that the animal in question has the capacity for a CFPP and is then treated like one of us by those who know the animal in question. While these are fictional examples, perhaps one day they will move from fiction into reality; my theory accounts for this possibility. Second, take the idea of a silicon based intelligent life form (i.e. a robot). In this case, if the robot were to have the necessary parts to develop the property *being capable of having a CFPP* then we would consider it one of us.

While some may dislike these possibilities and the idea of including non-human entities into our concept of what the ROW is, that is a debate to be had in another paper. Overall, this paper has been an exercise in revision. Revising our thoughts on Animalism and First Person Perspectivism, revising our theory of what the ROW is and how an individual ROW persists, and revising our conception of how we relate to other things in this world. It is this process of revision that is so crucial to the philosophical quest and if this paper can aid in that process of revision, and indeed I believe it has, then I will consider it a successful endeavor.

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