Laurance J. Splitter

Identity and Personhood

Confusions and Clarifications across Disciplines

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For my mother Jean and the memory of my father Leon.

Preface

It's a familiar scene: a crowd of annoyed passengers wielding boarding passes for a flight that has just been cancelled. As time wears on and nothing seems to be happening, tempers begin to fray; suddenly, one irate customer pushes himself to the front of the crowd and yells at the harried assistant behind the counter. "This is ridiculous! Do you know who I am?" whereupon the assistant calmly picks up a microphone and says, in as sweet a voice as she can manage: "Ladies and gentlemen, there is a man here who does not know who he is. If anyone can provide some assistance, please step forward."

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At the end of the exam, the teacher instructed all students to stop writing immediately. One student continued to write, ignoring several warnings to put down her pen. The student finally approached the front desk to submit her test booklet, only to be informed by the teacher that this would be a pointless exercise as she would be disqualified anyway. The student then asked the teacher "Do you know who I am?" to which the reply was "I have no idea, but your name is on the test", whereupon our clever student shoved her own booklet into the middle of the large pile already submitted. She then quickly left the classroom.

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Asked by the bank manager to confirm his identity, the elderly gentleman took out a small mirror, looked at it for a moment, and replied: "Yep, that's me all right!"

Some years ago, I taught an honors class of undergraduates at a well-known university in the USA. My chosen topic for the course was "Identity", and I hoped that the students (who were reputedly bright and enthusiastic) would be willing to engage with just about anything I presented to them. Having pursued for many years the topic of identity in its mathematical, logical and broader conceptual manifestations, I had relatively recently become aware that identity was a major focus of attention in the social sciences. One reason for this shift, which occurred around the 1950s–1970s, was the emergence of a range of civil rights movements (particularly in the United States), in response to years of persecution and discrimination perpetrated against the members of groups that threatened the dominant *status quo* characterized as heterosexual, white, male, Christian and able-bodied. The second, more theoretical factor, whose origins predated the first by at least 100 years, was

the reaction against Modernism and the idea of a fixed self who both controlled, yet remained outside, a fully determinate natural world. Selves – or persons – in the emerging "post-everything" age of population growth and decline, growing acceptance of gender and sexual diversity, ethnic and religious conflict, the tragic and unpredictable movement of refugees, economic and cultural colonization, climate change and so on – were (and are) increasingly thought to take on multiple or shifting identities. Behind this recent shift of focus – to what is known, in the social sciences, as *Identity Politics* – lies an assumption which is rarely exposed, let alone challenged, namely: that the determinants of our own identities are those same groupings, collectives and associations to which I referred, whose admittedly uncertain and shifting identities infect and infuse those of their members. Nation-state affiliations (citizenship), gender traits and roles, formerly distinctive and separate cultural markers, etc., are becoming fuzzier and more fluid; accordingly – so the assumption implies – our own identities are following suit. If we add another largely unexamined assumption – that identity (and only identity) answers the question "Who am I?", then we appear to arrive at the disturbing conclusion (for me, at least) that not only do many people not know who they are, but that there is nothing there for them either to know or not know. Neither you nor I *have* any identity! I do not think we have to accept this conclusion.

Returning to the Honors class, when planning the course, I knew that I wanted to discuss both the logic of identity and identity politics (as characterized above), but I made no real attempt to connect the two (mainly because I not yet worked out the connection). So, for the first several weeks, I presented the formal properties of identity and some of its associated logical and conceptual puzzles, including Heraclitus' thesis that you cannot step into the same river twice, the paradox of *Theseus' ship* which involves two separate but contemporaneous ships claiming identity with one earlier ship, numerical versus qualitative identity (Leibniz's Law and "Identity of Indiscernibles"), and the challenge of identifying and re-identifying familiar objects through space and time (see Chaps. 2, 3, and 4). How, I had long wondered, could anyone *not* be fascinated by this fundamental concept which, on the one hand, is part of every student's mathematics toolbox as soon as they learn that when you put two apples on the table, and add three apples, the result is (always) five apples but, on the other hand, appears to resist all attempts at definition? Identity is that relation which a thing bears to itself and to no other thing, to be sure. But how can we understand what "other" means here unless we already know what makes something "the same"?

As I proceeded merrily to think out loud about the logical structure of the identity relation, my students who, as it happened, constituted a fair representation of the fluidity, fuzziness and diversity already noted (they included several gays and lesbians, one transsexual, two individuals of indeterminate gender, one disabled student, several non-white students, one Buddhist and so on), progressed through the stages of patient indifference, bewilderment and, eventually, outright hostility. Why, they demanded, was I wasting time discussing rivers, ships and obscure logical principles when what they wanted – what they had taken the course for – was the opportunity to affirm their own (marginalized) identities and, thereby, clarify *who they*

were? Sadly, by the time we reached that part of the syllabus where the latter issues were to take center stage, I had already alienated a good many of them. My student evaluations for the course were disastrous.

This book represents my best attempt to make it up to those students, at least in my own mind. I now feel that I understand the connection between the logical and conceptual dimensions of identity, on the one hand, and the range of issues that fall under the heading of "Identity Politics", on the other. But the connection is, I fear, not very encouraging. When we understand the meaning and function of the identity relation in what I call its literal (numerical) context, we find that the concerns of *identity politics*, so-called, have *nothing* to do with this conception of identity at all. Why this is true, and why it matters, are among my chief concerns in what follows.

We humans have been asking apparently serious questions about our own identities since our hominoid (hominid?) ancestors first stood up on two legs and realized that their grunts could be understood by others just like them. That we did – and still do – ask questions at all reflects certain emergent features of our evolutionary development, most notably: a capacity for speech, an awareness of the world around us, a desire to know what is going on in that world ("What is it?", "What is it doing and why?"…) and, presumably, an expectation or hope that someday, someone will come up with the answers. Many, albeit not all, such questions also reflect the realization that we – i.e. those asking the questions – are *part of* that same world, in the sense that we can affect, and be affected by, things that are in it – including, as a special case, others like us. This notion that we are *causally related* to the world and its objects, as familiar as it is, nevertheless reveals a profound truth about the *kind of thing* that we are, as I shall explain. Whatever that kind is in specific terms, it binds us to the objective world of our ordinary experience: we humans exist in space and time, and our *identities* – which underscore that existence – are a product of that world.

What, then, do we say about the question of our *personal* identities which, presumably, are the target of the silly jokes with which I began? Under what circumstances can we seriously ask "Who am I?" and what would constitute a serious answer? I shall spend some time dealing with these questions, although I fear that my responses will be somewhat "underwhelming". Briefly put, my thesis about our own literal identities – like those of any other natural objects – is that they are accounted for, conceptually at least, in virtue of the kind of (physical) thing that we are (*living organism*, perhaps). It follows that such questions as "Who am I?" in so far as these are questions of identity, are to be answered either by referring to our physical identities or by reinterpreting them as questions about something else entirely. I am many things – an Australian citizen, a resident of Hong Kong, Caucasian, a not-very-observant Jew, an ardent fan of Bach's choral music, an academic, left-handed, gay, chubby, the eldest son of my parents, the author of these words and on and on. But with one possible exception (I will leave the reader to find it!), *not one* of these categories, groups or associations constitutes any part of my

literal *identity*, even though it may be quite appropriate to say that I strongly *identify* with several of them.

"Identity or identification?" – "Who cares!" one might ask, with utter disdain for semantic pedantry. However, such indifference is not good enough. It is true that *identity* and *identification* are closely related in some contexts – as in "What is the identity of that object?" and "Can you identify that object?", where the appropriate answers will involve an understanding of the *kind* of object that it is. But there are other contexts in which the apparent connection is quite misleading – as in "I've lived in so many countries and cultures, I don't know who I am anymore" (read: "I don't know my own *identity*"), versus "I've moved around a lot but I still *identify* with Australia/Australians" (alternatively: "I still identify as Australian"). Here, I submit, there are important differences. The former claim is either false or nonsensical (barring such rare phenomena as total amnesia, advanced Alzheimer's, or schizophrenia), while the latter suggests a certain attitude or feeling (roughly, feeling good about certain connections and affiliations). Such affective associations, though powerful, are usually morally innocuous, but not always. The notion of identifying as Australian might be short-hand for identifying with (feeling good about) certain character or racial traits rather than others. Trouble comes when affect is transformed into crude morality. It is, for example, difficult to interpret some social policies and practices as anything other than reflections of xenophobia or racism in the broader community, whereby the sins of a few are visited upon the many (i.e. all members of the most salient minority group that includes those few extremists). Ethnic and religious genocide are still present in the world, as are acts of terrorism whose perpetrators value some causes, ideals or other abstractions more than they value persons (themselves included). All such examples reveal extreme degrees of hatred whose origins lie in an apparent need to find or affirm one's own *identity* by *identifying* with one group and – thereby – distancing oneself from others. Exposing not just the likely dangers of such an "us and them" mentality (which are well known), but the mistaken thinking that underlies it, is another of my prescribed goals here. So is offering a way forward, one which adheres to the old proverb "Prevention is better than cure", as I shall explain.

Those intent on avoiding the sort of crude collectivist mentality portrayed in the previous paragraph – whereby we see ourselves in terms of the various groups, associations and affiliations that are most important to us – might be tempted to retreat to some form of moral and/or existential individualism, when it comes to characterizing our own personhood. Conversely, critics of individualism have often embraced just such a mentality in order to highlight each person's essential involvement in, or dependence on, the various groups, associations and affiliations that take her beyond the limits of her own self. However, when I reflect back on my own life, I realize that I have always been fearful of both extremes (as I now see them). On one hand, I see my life and well-being as essentially bound up with the lives and well-being of others; not, I should clarify, *others* in some abstract sense of "anyone other than myself", but *specific* others with whom my life is, in some sense, interwoven. I am, from time to time, reminded of the importance of these individuals when, for whatever reason, they are no longer present (death is one reason, but when

it comes to friends and romantic attachments, other factors often come into play, needless to say). It is as if a part of me has also ceased to be. On the other hand, I do not feel a strong sense of attachment to groups, associations and collectives, particularly those I regard as having agendas of their own that may or may not be in harmony with my own sense of who I am and where I want to go. Of course, I belong to many such *supra-persons* as I call them: I am a citizen of Australia, a member of the Jewish people, a homosexual, left-handed, an academic, Caucasian, fan of J.S. Bach and on and on (not all of these associations are *supra-persons* in the pejorative sense I will later attach to this term: some do not really constitute groups at all, just properties or qualities that people share; others, like my choir, are groups that have no moral pretensions to being more than merely the sums of their actual members). However, I see neither my identity as an individual person nor my moral sense in terms of, or relative to, such groupings.[1]

The twin fears I described above were nowhere more clearly realized than when I was a school student. Like many, my fondest memories (beyond my own school friends) are of a small number of outstanding teachers – particularly, in my case, those who nurtured and encouraged my sense of curiosity about the "big questions". But my main recollection is of having a vague feeling that we were all playing a kind of game, one which managed somehow to combine intense individualism (in the guise of "competition") with the sense of fulfilling a pre-ordained role in a system which did not really exist for our benefit. Later, as a university student, my passion for philosophy and pure mathematics overshadowed these concerns (helped, no doubt, by the happy fact of being a very good student). But when, some years later, I shifted my primary focus from philosophy to education by way of my "discovery" of philosophy for children, what attracted me as much as the prospect of bringing philosophy and children together was the collaborative and dialogical approach of the classroom *community of inquiry*. Here was an environment, both affectively and cognitively nourishing, which allowed, indeed enabled, children to *become persons*, wherein each individual became aware of her/himself as *one among others*, and in which the sense of community was not that of a *supra-person* with its own agenda, but a network of relationships whose sole rationale was the well-being of its members. This distinction between groups that are, and groups that are not, larger (in both a moral and an ontological sense) than the sums of their own parts (members) seems to me to be of the utmost importance.

This book represents my current thinking about the relationship between personhood and identity. In short (and at the risk of sounding overly dramatic), there is none! Once we see this, we can take a more critical look at those *supra-persons* which lay claim to capturing something essential about who I am and how I ought to relate to others. In the course of this examination, I find good reasons for shifting

[1] The philosopher Hannah Arendt reportedly told a close friend who accused her of abandoning the Jewish people (because she had implied that those who died at the hands of the Nazis were not entirely blameless for their own fate) that she felt a great affection for, and connection to, many individuals in her life, but had no feeling for collectives such as *peoples*, *religions*, *nations*, and so on. I "identify" with Arendt here.

the focus away from the various ways in which persons seek to unite – and, therefore, divide – along such *supra-personal* lines as citizenship, religion, culture and so on; and towards those crucial characteristics which truly unite us as persons – in particular, language, morality and a triangulated sense of awareness (awareness of myself, of others and of a common world). With this realignment firmly in place, I turn back, finally, to education, and confirm the central place of collaborative inquiry through dialogue as *the* pivotal dynamic in teaching and learning.

For a variety of reasons, both personal and professional, it is quite some time since I was a member of a community of like-minded philosophers. Accordingly, I cannot here thank anyone for "reading an early draft of the entire manuscript" (except, of course, for the very helpful folk at Springer), but I can thank a select few for offering insightful comments, criticisms and suggestions, not to mention for reassuring me that the struggle to complete the book would be worthwhile in the end. They include friends and colleagues alike: Adrian Beavis, Jen Glaser, Kerry Kennedy, Lam Chi-Ming, Leung Chung-Hang, Leung Yan-Wing, Megan Laverty, Mark Mason, Margarita Pavlova, Danny Schiff, William Sin, Elliott Sober, Michael Smith. And, although it is many years since I last had any real contact with them, I cannot ignore my former teachers, advisors and mentors, particularly those who helped me shape my own views on identity and related matters: Michael Ayers, Donald Davidson, Gareth Evans, David Hull, A.C. "Camo" Jackson, Peter Strawson, David Wiggins.

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Laurance J. Splitter

Contents

Chapter 1
Introduction

Identity in its proper home and place (specifically mathematics and logic, with some conceptual extensions), is one of those juicy concepts ripe for philosophical reflection and deliberation. This is because it satisfies what I term the "3Cs": identity is ***central*** to ways in which we understand and experience the world (5 year olds learn about the "=" sign, largely because not much mathematics can proceed without it; and we often need to know when objects are identical or the same, particularly when perceived at different times); sufficiently ***common*** (familiar) to have generated a broad consensus concerning its ordinary linguistic use (i.e. we know how to use the term "identity" or "="); yet ***contestable*** just because its meaning is not clear, and its various interpretations have been the subject of ongoing dispute among scholars for whom conceptual clarity is a matter of considerable importance (chiefly, philosophers).[1] Nevertheless, I contend, we need to confine the scope of identity to what I am calling its proper place, because it has nothing useful to offer the social sciences. There *is* no issue or problem of identity when it comes to knowing who I am (or who we are); my actual identity is given by the *kind* of thing that I am, which is not a matter for social science, but for physical or natural science. Still, I do not so readily dismiss the idea that society – along with its members, i.e. ourselves – has a legitimate stake in answering the "Who am I?" question; this question can highlight qualities or characteristics of an individual that have *nothing to do with* the identity of that individual. This is because our capacity to *identify* individuals and their various characteristics is *predicated* on the assumption that the matter of identity for such individuals has already been settled.[2] Still, it is clear that such a capacity extends beyond our understanding of ourselves as purely physical and mechanistically driven objects. I am not suggesting that the problems raised under the heading of "Identity Politics" can be summarily dismissed as confused or chimerical. One to which I shall devote some attention is based on the idea that some

[1] See Splitter (2000, 2003), where I discuss the 3Cs.

[2] My use of the terms "identify" and "predicated" is deliberate: it underscores that our understanding of such technical concepts as *identification* and *predication* relies on being clear about *identity*.

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of the associations and affiliations with which we identify – whether by choice or not – make moral claims on us that are unjustified. Exposing the fallacy behind such thinking will commit me to defending a thesis I call "The Principle of Personal Worth" (PPW), which states that my (and your) moral status as a person overrides that of the nations, religions, gangs and cultures to which we belong, irrespective of the strength of our identifications with these larger entities. When we properly understand in what such identification consists (Chap. 7), we realize that it points, at best, to a *qualitative*, not *quantitative* or *numerical* identity among persons. But qualitative identity is nothing other than *similarity* with respect to one or more salient traits (or qualities) – and similarity, no matter how pervasive, does not constitute literal identity.

I hinted above at a *relational* conception of personhood ("one among others"). But it is one which does not respect the boundaries of the various groups and associations to which we belong. Accordingly, I need to examine the issue of how and when we develop those interpersonal relationships that are constitutive of our personhood, if it is not via those very groups and associations. In so doing, we shall find that persons can be inoculated against the presumption that their identities can be destroyed, or even significantly disrupted, by the loss of, or change in, their group affiliations and associations – both those that they join and leave voluntarily, and those that are imposed on them. To realize that neither one's personhood nor one's identity can be destroyed in these ways is itself a key liberating step in our own personal development.

Outline of Chapters

I follow some of the structure of my not-entirely-successful course on Identity referred to in the Preface but, hopefully, with a much clearer sense of connectedness. Chapter 2 looks at identity from the perspective of mathematics and logic, where it becomes clear that a precise, non-circular definition is not easy to find. Still within the frame of logic, I begin to discuss some of the many non-mathematical, ordinary world examples of identity, pointing out that we readily make identity claims about objects in the world, particularly those that persist over time. But there is already room for conceptual vagueness here (for example, the same train that I catch each morning: if this is a genuine identity, what objects does the identity relation relate?); not to mention a fundamental ambiguity in the concept of *identity* to which I shall return in later chapters. The ambiguity is between *identity* in its *quantitative* or *numerical* sense and *identity* in its *qualitative* sense: that dilapidated, half-shredded and nearly hairless toy that my grand-nephew takes to bed each night is *the very same* object as the fluffy bear my father used and passed to me (notwithstanding its having undergone – and survived – many qualitative changes); on the other hand I, as a Jew, am of *the very same* people as the first descendants of Abraham four thousand odd years ago (notwithstanding that we are all numerically distinct

persons). I take the opportunity to clarify the logical distinctions among various uses of the verb "to be"; notably: the "is" of identity, the "is" of predication, and the "is" of existence. These distinctions also will matter for what follows.

Chapter 3 continues the examination of identity in the familiar world of pens, sugar bowls, dogs and horses. I acknowledge the wisdom of my former teachers P.F. Strawson and, especially, David Wiggins, to whom I owe the key organizing principle that the criteria which govern statements or judgments of identity are based on the *kinds* of objects involved, where the latter might be *natural* or *artifactual*. This principle, which links such kinds with both the identity and the existence of the objects which belong to them, constitutes a modest form of *essentialism*, but it is important to note – as I do on several occasions throughout the book – that such essences do not extend to the objects themselves. By this I mean that where object **a** belongs to kind K, nothing about K allows us to identify or individuate **a** uniquely. For this we need to bring in the correlative idea that the ordinary objects to which we refer are related, both to one another and to us who perceive and describe them, within a *spatio-temporal framework* that allows us to identify them because they are also members of kinds that specify how they should be *tracked* through space and time. In brief, we cannot track mere objects or things (we can't even properly identify or count *objects* unless we know what kind of object to look for); conversely we cannot locate an object at the purely conceptual or "kind" level; we can do that only within the same spatio-temporal framework that we, ourselves, occupy.

I support Wiggins' (2001) defence of identity as an absolute (i.e. non-relative) relation which, in every particular instance of its use (even in mathematics) requires the existence – whether known or not – of some underlying kind K, such that **a** = **b** if and only if **a** and **b** belong to K (they are both Ks), and **a** is the *same K as* **b**. Providing that K is the right kind of covering concept or kind (it must, at the very least, apply to the objects which fall under it throughout their existence, from go to whoa), then it provides the most basic answer to the question "*What is it*?" with respect to the objects that belong to it. By way of testing these principles, I examine several familiar challenges to the notion that identity is both absolute and determinate, including: "You cannot step into the same river twice" (attributed, not entirely accurately, to Heraclitus), and the puzzling case of the ship of Theseus which starts out as a single ship and ends up as two (or more) ships each competing for identity with the original. In general, I support Wiggins' counter-claims that either such challenges smuggle in relations like "is constituted of/by" in the name of actual identity, or they trade on the vagueness which is inherent in the meaning of such concepts as *ship*, remembering that ships are designed by humans for a specific purpose, and as long as they can fulfill that purpose, we do not need to be more specific about the actual meaning of the word "ship". I also put forward a principle of my own, roughly as follows: *expressions like* "*same train as*" *and* "*same ship as*" *must*, *at least on some occasions of their use*, *be expressions of literal identity*. No matter what the phrase "same train" actually means (same set of carriages, same timetable…), there must be some material object to which I can point and say "*That's* a train!"

The final section of Chap. 3 smoothes the way for Chap. 4 with a brief examination of how the concept of identity, as developed so far, stands up to such natural phenomena as fission and metamorphosis, and the decidedly "unnatural" phenomenon, recorded in the Book of *Genesis*, whereby Lot's Wife "became" a pillar of salt.

In Chap. 4, I narrow the focus of the inquiry to the identity conditions for *natural kinds*, anticipating that thenceforth, my interest will be on those objects which, on the one hand, are closest and most familiar to us but, on the other, remain curiously mysterious and puzzling, namely, *ourselves*. Wiggins (2001) has proposed that for a natural kind K, the conditions of identity and of what he calls *activity* for members of K can be pinned down, only after appropriately rigorous investigation into the true meaning of K undertaken, not by philosophers in their proverbial arm-chairs, but by experts who must discover what it means to be K. These experts (e.g. biologists or neurologists in the case of living things) will make use of the best available evidence, laws and theories (the theoretical aspect being involved because, among other things, a full understanding of K will provide the basis of an *explanation* of why members of K behave the way they do). Ironically, as I argued in my doctoral thesis (Splitter 1982) some 30 years ago (and as others have argued before and since), when it comes to the obvious candidates for the natural kinds to which we human beings and other living things belong – namely, biological species – the combination of evidence and appropriate theory weighs heavily against them. In brief, either biological species are not kinds (but more like spatio-temporal individuals which will, thereby, belong to higher-level kinds) or they are not natural (but artifactual, like other taxonomic categories such as races and genera). In support of this conclusion, I cite some of the contemporary literature on such biological concepts as *evolution* and *phylogeny*, *speciation*, *asexuality* and the *Biological Species Concept*. While the practical and theoretical evidence drawn on comes from natural science, the argument itself is properly philosophical, beginning with the conceptual thesis that the existence of kinds or categories of natural objects requires that there be *identity criteria* which make it possible to identify, and re-identify, those objects. Applied to the special case of *Homo sapiens* – i.e. *ourselves* – the assumption that we are, at some level, material objects subject to the laws and contingencies of nature, entails that we are members of some kind K (*living organism*, perhaps), but I do not pursue further the question of what K might be.

Chapter 5 deals with the thorny question of precisely how to distinguish – if at all – between a conception of ourselves as purely physical or natural beings, and that of ourselves as something more or something different (historically the latter was taken to be a correlative *non-physical* entity, but this is an interpretation I find hard to accept). That there are two different conceptions here seems unexceptionable, in the sense that being a physical object (whether a human being or something broader such as a living organism) and being an entity which thinks and reasons, is self-aware, etc., are clearly not the same, i.e. not the same collection of properties or features. I am, however, both a physical object and a thinking being which, in turn, provides two kinds of answer to the question "Who/What am I?"; but the legitimacy of both ways of responding to this question is misleading, because it tempts us to infer that I am, at one and the same time, two different *objects* or *entities*.

Here I introduce the concept *person* in what I presume is its normal or everyday sense – that is, following Strawson (1959), as exemplified by entities which have both physical and non-physical characteristics (roughly, *M-predicates* and *P-predicates* in his terminology). Strawson famously argued that this concept is epistemologically *primitive* with respect to both kinds of characteristics, thereby claiming to resolve the Cartesian dilemma of construing ourselves as (constituted of) two different kinds of entity – a physical and a non-physical one – which somehow interact with each other. Our ordinary understanding of a person is of someone who has both types of characteristic at one and the same time. Concerning the related epistemological problem of how *I* can know about *your* psychological states (since I can neither observe them directly nor feel them directly as I do in my own case: I don't need any evidence or reasoning to establish that I feel sad or joyful), Strawson concedes that our first-person knowledge and our third-person knowledge come about in different ways, but insists that the knowledge we have (e.g. that both of us are sad or joyful) is the *same kind* of knowledge in both cases. My feeling sad and your feeling sad are, in a sense, the same kind of feeling; our warrant for saying this is that the property of sadness applies to persons, and persons – in this case, you and I – are precisely the kind of entities to which such properties may be synonymously applied. Indeed, according to Strawson, such personal predicates as "being sad" make sense only on the assumption that they can, in principle, apply to more than one object. This point is important for understanding personhood as essentially *relational* whereby each person regards her/herself as *one among others*.

Each of us is both a natural entity of some kind (a member of some K) and a person. But there is still only one entity being referred to, in the sense that the K (living organism, say) that I am is also the person that I am. As to the question of which of these concepts (if either) provides the crucial criterion of identity for this entity, I support the analysis offered by Eric Olson (1997, 2007) (and, less assuredly, by Wiggins), which provides strong grounds for going with the physical or biological concept here, rather than any concept – including that of *person* – which requires some kind of psychological or non-physical way of tracking objects over time. Persons are not distinct entities from human beings, with their own distinct identity conditions; rather, the concept or kind *person* does not require identity conditions because individual persons derive their identities from the kind of object that they are. In this respect, *person* is like those concepts that Wiggins (2001) refers to as "phase sortals", i.e. concepts that apply to objects during part of their existence (*professor*, *infant*, *resident of Tsim Sha Tsui*, etc.), and whose identity conditions are simply those of whatever underlying sortal or kind concept K subsumes them (*human being*, *living organism*, etc.). Much of the chapter is devoted to defending this position. In certain contexts, it is appropriate to answer the question "What am I?" by asserting "professor and resident of Tsim Sha Tsui", but I am *not* three (or more) separate entities: a member of K, a professor, and a resident of TST.

It follows that whatever properties or characteristics I possess by virtue of being a person must be properties of the underlying K that I basically am. The apparent contradiction that surfaces here – a property like sadness is a feature of my being a person and is not a purely physical property; yet (human) persons are, in the final

analysis, physical objects if they are anything – is masterfully resolved by Donald Davidson (2001a), by way of his celebrated thesis *Anomalous Monism*, according to which the language we use to describe persons is (i) indispensable to any linguistic community that seeks to make rational sense of the world and our place in it; (ii) not semantically reducible (i.e. in terms of meaning) to the language of physics or any other law-governed domain; and (iii) referentially opaque, in the sense that in so far as that language carries any ontological commitments – i.e. can be understood only by reference to actual real-world entities – the ontology in question is part of physics, not part of some shadowy mental or subjective realm called "mind".

The thesis of Anomalous Monism suggests that we cannot easily give up the language we use to talk about ourselves, both in physical and non-physical terms. But why is so much of our language given over to describing (evaluating, analyzing…) persons in ways that cannot be understood in physical or material terms? Why, in short, are we so concerned with persons (ourselves and others)? I give notice here of being interested in at least two aspects of this concern, one to do with *epistemology* – my own self-awareness vis-à-vis my awareness of others and the world – and the other to do with *ethics* – how important or valuable, morally speaking, are we when compared to one another, to non-human creatures, and to those larger collectives and associations with which we are affiliated and which seem to play such a large part in our lives? As to why we should be concerned with such issues, there are several plausible answers, ranging from "We are continuously confronted with ourselves and the world around us, so it must be possible to establish how these are connected", to "Nearly all societies subject their young to endless hours and years of formal education, in which they are expected to gain knowledge both of the world and of how they ought to conduct themselves in that world; we need to believe that such subjection is both necessary and worthwhile".

In Chaps. 6 and 7, I pick up the question of why the concept *person* matters so much to us, even though, from an ontological perspective, it does not correspond to any basic kind of existent. Chapter 6 seeks to clarify just what we mean by asserting that someone is a person, why this concept is of such interest and importance – particularly in epistemological and ethical terms – and why it is plausible to claim that persons are more valuable, morally speaking, than such non-persons as fish, birds, reptiles and (most) mammals, yet not more valuable than one another. These claims constitute part of my Principle of Personal Worth. In addressing the question of meaning, I turn once again to Davidson (2001b), this time to his analysis of the psychological state of *awareness* which provides the basic ingredients for thought and knowledge. Davidson argues, on semantic and epistemological grounds, that my own self-awareness (subjectivity) is conceptually inter-dependent with both my awareness of others (i.e. other persons) and my awareness of a world which is common to myself and others. The ground of such *triangulated* awareness can only be our shared capacity for communicating with one another about those objects of our awareness, that is, our capacity for *language*. It is vital to our sense of ourselves as persons that we are all members of one or more language communities.

By highlighting language as the primary condition of personhood, I provide a link both to our capacity for rationality, judgment, goal-setting etc., and to traits that

can, in principle, be observed and measured scientifically (since language is largely a function of brain size and complexity). It may or may not be true that only members of *Homo sapiens* have language (in a sufficiently rich sense), but it is language that underpins the status of (most) human beings as persons. The word "status" is deliberate here, for much of Chap. 6 is devoted to a defence of that part of PPW which asserts that persons are more valuable, morally speaking, than non-human animals. On that issue I confess to being not entirely confident that there can be a water-tight argument here: morality and personhood may be made for each other, in the sense that all and only persons are capable of moral judgment and decision-making, but to prove that such judgment must always favor persons over non-persons – a judgment that seems irresistible – remains, in my view, problematic.

I also deal (briefly), in Chap. 6, with that part of PPW that states that all persons are of equal value (morally, but perhaps aesthetically as well). Since the characteristics that bestow value on persons – language, rationality, intentionality, etc. – are distinctive *in kind* from those that relate to non-persons, my claim here may be viewed as akin to Immanuel Kant's thesis that persons – i.e. *all* persons – should be treated as ends-in-themselves.

Chapter 7 gets to the heart of my defense of the Principle of Personal Worth (indeed it, together with Chap. 8, form the heart of the book), focusing on the claim that persons are (i.e. each individual person is) more valuable and worthwhile than what I call "supra-persons" such as nations, religions, cultures, roles, corporations, gangs, "the family", "the economy", and so on. A *supra-person* is a group, association or collective of, or abstraction from, persons which has characteristic features that do not reduce to the properties of its members. They have histories, traditions and, usually, agendas of their own, and are often accorded a moral value or worth which can – *contra* the Principle of Personal Worth – subvert or override the value of its individual members, i.e. ordinary persons. It is common for those members to *self-identify* as such (identifying as English or British or, equivalently, identifying with other English or British persons or simply with England or Britain itself). But identification in this sense is *not* strict (i.e. numerical) identity, and while the concepts which designate these collectives may well generate criteria of identity for the groups themselves, they do not contribute to the actual identities of the individuals which belong to these groups. Further, any normative or moral claims made on behalf of either the groups themselves or their members can only derive from the moral status of those members as persons. This meta-ethical claim combines two others: that the moral status of individual persons is greater than that of the *supra-persons* to which they belong; and that the moral status of individual persons depends simply on their being persons, not on their being members of such *supra-entities*.

I examine the concept of identification in detail because it also features in criteria of identity for ordinary objects (including us) when it is used to *refer* to such objects (either as being of a certain kind, or as being the same object as previously referred to). But the botanist who identifies a new (kind of) plant or the witness who identifies the defendant as the murderer is engaged in a quite different activity from the patriot who identifies with her country.

I acknowledge that *supra-persons* have value for those who identify with them, but contend that such value is either subjective and affective (we derive pleasure, satisfaction and even pride from such identification) or reducible to that which individual persons find valuable or worthwhile. I reject the idea that attributions of value can legitimately be used to judge that one *supra-person* (nation, religion, culture, sexuality) is morally superior to others.

I cite numerous examples (including some well-known slogans and mottos) where the well-being of the group is put ahead of its members, arguing that the only legitimate defense open to supporters of this moral order is to insist that by caring for, protecting or valuing the group, we are *thereby* caring for, protecting and valuing (*all*) its individual members. But the onus here is on those making this claim. So, for example, when governments proclaim the value of the State or of bringing the national Budget into surplus, it is reasonable for individuals to demand to know the details here: exactly *how* does giving preference to the State or the Budget surplus actually benefit its members?

By grounding all moral claims concerning persons directly in their personhood, I am advocating a form of moral universalism over moral relativism. In expanding on this position, I cite several examples mainly to do with religion and culture (often presented as *supra-persons* which take moral precedence over their adherents – if not over everyone else as well). I also offer a critique of the expanding literature on citizenship and citizenship education, in so far as much of this literature makes substantive claims about both the identities of individual citizens vis-à-vis the nation-states they "identify" with, and the values inherent in conceptions of civics and citizenship. In line with my earlier arguments, I claim that whatever merits may be associated with citizenship, neither our actual identities nor our sense of moral worth or commitment are among them. And I trace the idea that the alleged distinction between "civic" and moral values is based on the familiar distinction between our private and public selves to the entrenched, but confused, distinction between the *subjective* and the *objective*. Following Davidson (and, to a certain extent, those philosophers who laid the groundwork for his perspective, including Wittgenstein and Strawson), this distinction is vitiated by a triangular network in which our subjective, inter-subjective and objective modes of awareness are conceptually and epistemologically interwoven. Here, I tender my qualified support for the contemporary notion of ("grounded") *Cosmopolitanism* (Hansen 2010), which embeds persons into a worldly framework that bypasses national boundaries. Rather than viewing persons as members of some impersonal and bland global citizenry, I prefer to begin with the most intimate of interpersonal relationships and imagine these relationships expanding outward to embrace all persons, while never losing their connection with the paradigm case in which I see myself as *one among others*.

In the latter part of Chap. 7, I revisit the concept of authenticity (having written about it some years earlier), suggesting that its most plausible interpretation is one that promotes personhood as a *project* which proceeds in various stages over time. Moreover, in line with the views of Charles Taylor (and others before and since, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey, Barbara Thayer-Bacon and Kwame Anthony Appiah), such a project is "dialogically constituted" reflecting, once more, the idea that each of us, *qua* person, is *one among others*.

At various points in this Chapter, I cite examples from both the philosophical and broader social science literature where, so I claim, the concept of identity is dealt with equivocally, specifically with respect to the fundamental distinction between numerical (quantitative) and qualitative identity. The examples cited, all of which focus on the concept of *person* (typically, in response to the question "Who/What am I?"), include shifting from quantitative identification – wherein one particular object is identified and re-identified as *numerically the very same* object – to qualitative identification – wherein groups and collectives of persons declare their sameness or similarity with respect to one or more salient qualities (ethnicity, citizenship, sharing a common tradition or framework, etc.); and a corresponding shift from individual persons to the *supra-persons* with which they are affiliated.

As an indicator of how insidious such equivocation can be, even among philosophers, consider the following two comments, both from the popular online resource *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. First, under the title *Identity*:

1. Much of the debate about identity in recent decades has been about personal identity, and specifically about personal identity over time, but identity generally, and the identity of things of other kinds, have also attracted attention. Various interrelated problems have been at the centre of discussion, but it is fair to say that recent work has focussed particularly on the following areas: the notion of a criterion of identity; the correct analysis of identity over time, and, in particular, the disagreement between advocates of perdurance and advocates of endurance as analyses of identity over time; …. A distinction is customarily drawn between *qualitative* and *numerical* identity or sameness. Things with qualitative identity share properties, so things can be more or less qualitatively identical…. Numerical identity requires absolute, or total, qualitative identity, and can only hold between a thing and itself (Noonan and Curtis 2014)

So far so predictable. As their essay makes clear, Noonan and Curtis are interested in *numerical* identity, whether of persons or more generally. But juxtapose this commentary with the following, written under the title *Identity Politics*:

2. The second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of large-scale political movements—second wave feminism, Black Civil Rights in the U.S., gay and lesbian liberation, and the American Indian movements, for example—based in claims about the injustices done to particular social groups. These social movements are undergirded by and foster a philosophical body of literature that takes up questions about the nature, origin and futures of the identities being defended… Wherever they line up in the debates, thinkers agree that the notion of *identity* has become indispensable to contemporary political discourse, at the same time as they concur that it has troubling implications for models of the self, political inclusiveness, and our possibilities for solidarity and resistance…. From this brief examination of how identity politics fits into the political landscape it is already clear that the use of the controversial term "identity" raises a host of philosophical questions. Logical uses aside, it is likely familiar to philosophers from the literature in metaphysics on personal identity—one's sense of self and its persistence. Indeed, underlying many of the more overtly pragmatic debates about the merits of identity politics are philosophical questions about the nature of subjectivity and the self… (Hayes 2012; underscoring added for emphasis)

Where the first commentary explicitly places the topic of *personal identity* in the domain of logic (broadly construed to include semantics and other strands of analytic philosophy), the second *brushes this domain aside* while still claiming that the

term "identity" is familiar to philosophers from the literature on personal identity. However, as the context makes clear, Heyes is definitely referring to *qualitative* identity here, in the sense of what it is that unites and divides (numerically) distinct individuals.

We need to tread carefully here – more carefully, I suggest, than many writers have previously – when sorting out just how the distinction between numerical and qualitative identity really does bear on the central concept of *person* and its moral, linguistic and social dimensions. My attempt so to tread has resulted in Chap. 7 being by far the longest Chapter in the book.

In concluding the Chapter I turn back from theory to practice by citing some actual scenarios in which deeply entrenched cultural and civic barriers are, or might be, stripped away to reveal the basic but powerful unifying power that links us together as persons. Such cases reveal, once more, the fragility of these barriers in the face of direct, often spontaneous, challenges.

In Chap. 8, I review what has gone before, and examine its implications for education – specifically, the education of young people for which responsibility, in most societies, is assumed by schools, classrooms and teachers. In what is either the climax or the denouement of the book (I am not a literary scholar), I confess, both here and there, that my underlying goal, from the beginning, is to confirm that classrooms should be transformed into *communities of inquiry*, as understood and embraced by philosophers, teachers and students around the world in the context of *Philosophy for Children* (or *Philosophy with Children*, *Philosophy in Schools*, etc.). Acknowledging that the concept of *communities of inquiry* both predates and extends beyond Philosophy for Children, I argue in some detail that the significance of the former lies in its affinity with the model of triangulated awareness borrowed from Davidson (2001b) and elucidated in earlier chapters. In other words, to be a member of a *community of inquiry* is to engage in several intertwined activities, specifically: becoming aware of (hence, knowing): myself as a person among other persons, each of whom is engaged in learning about her/himself; others who are also so engaged; and the world which they jointly inhabit and with which they interact. While these different forms of awareness are conceptually linked, in practice we persons use language *both* to reflect and communicate them, *and* to generate them. The link between awareness (thought) and language finds support among scholars across disciplines, including Vygotsky, Dewey, Taylor, Lipman, etc, and constitutes, in my view, a powerful argument for focusing on language development in schools, not just in terms of communication and expression but also, and more profoundly, as a catalyst for improving the quality of thinking. Further, echoing views expressed by such philosophical giants as Socrates and Davidson, it is not just literacy in its traditional modes of reading and writing which matters, but literacy as both the spontaneous and reflective generator of thought, i.e. speaking and listening. The primacy of dialogue is emphasized by the scholars I have referred to, but it also underscores the point – often forgotten or ignored in these times of economic stress, management take-overs, and corporate globalization – that at the very heart of

education (if not also its body and soul) is the normative ideal of *becoming a person*. Striving for this ideal involves cultivating environments for teaching and learning in which we both learn about the world and *become persons*. Persons, on my account, are not a specific kind of entity somehow distinct from the natural kind of creature that we are; rather, to be a person – or better, the process of *becoming* a person – involves seeing oneself as "one among others", bound to others in relational networks forged, first and foremost, by bonds of language and morality.

Finally, I revisit the Principle of Personal Worth in order to clarify the relationship between individual persons and the inquiring community or communities to which they may (if they are fortunate) belong from time to time. Persons are relationally constituted and the *community of inquiry* provides the ideal environment for the formative development of such relationships. But, where the various *supra-persons* with which we inevitably associate and which may also claim our allegiance are taken to be greater than the sums of their parts or members (particularly in moral terms), the *community of inquiry* can have no such pretensions. Its importance lies in its sole role, which is the cultivation and nurturing of (developing but nonetheless genuine) persons which – so I will have argued – has nothing to do with issues of identity or our natural development, but everything to do with how we think, speak and behave as beings in the world. Mathematics and literacy, science and humanities, even technology and business studies – all may have a place in our schools and colleges, but only if they are continually justified and revitalized by reference to the core goal of becoming a person.

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Chapter 2
The Formal Home of Identity: Mathematics and Logic

Introduction

There are good reasons for beginning a cross-disciplinary discussion of identity within the familiar but abstract realm of mathematics (or, more precisely, mathematical logic), chief among which is that mathematical logic supplies a succinct – if tautological – definition of identity. Granted, such a starting point may also deter some readers from reading on, particularly those who have managed skillfully to avoid anything overtly mathematical since their last compulsory maths class (and who probably never studied logic in the first place), or those who could not care less about the formal origins of a concept which, for them, comes to life only within such real-world contexts as social and political studies. But here I issue a plea for patience and understanding. After all, it is a core claim of this book that the concept of identity is used equivocally across disciplinary contexts and, moreover, that such equivocation *matters*. So it is surely appropriate to be as clear as possible, right from the start, about *which* concept we are talking about here. What, in its simplest and most unequivocal formulation, is identity?

Within the realm of integers and simple arithmetic operations like addition, the statement "2 + 3 = 5" could hardly be simpler. But assuming that the truth of this statement reflects some-thing in the "real" world of numbers, what is this thing? Try this: take the number 2 (or any two objects), add it to the number 3 (any three objects), and the result is 5 (five objects). Fine, but this does not define identity. It merely reveals an interesting – and, as we shall see, quite misleading – grammatical quirk about English, namely, that the word "is" sometimes means "is *identical* to". How about this: the number 2 + 3 and the number 5 are not two numbers but one – and that's what we mean by "identity". But surely our ability to distinguish between one and two objects *presupposes* that we already understand what identity is, and so it cannot serve as a definition of it.

One problem, then, in finding a good definition of "identity" is that it seems so basic, so conceptually *primitive*, that it is already embedded in any definition we

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might come up with. After all, think about what a typical statement of definition looks like: "A table *is* any object with a flat surface designed to prevent objects placed on it from falling off". Again, what does "is" mean here, if not "identity"? Such a consideration led the German logician Gottlob Frege to declare that identity is, indeed, indefinable (Dummett 1973, p. 542).

Still, mathematical logic has not conceded this lack of definability without a struggle. Before outlining a couple of alternative attempts to, at least, shed some light on the concept of identity, let us agree to say that identity is an example of a *binary or two-place relation*, other examples of which are indicated by such expressions as "bites", "hates", "is larger than", "is a compatriot of", etc. Simply put, a two place relational expression requires the addition of two terms, each standing for an appropriate object, in order to produce a complete sentence, thus: "Funnel-web spider bites baby", "She hates her father", "An Aussie rules footy field is larger than a soccer field",… And, at least, grammatically, we may add "The Morning Star is identical to the Evening Star"; "The number obtained by adding 2 and 3 is identical to the number 5". Notice that these uses of "relation" are more general than the usual familial relations (mother of, cousin of, etc.); notice, also, the difference between a relation and the term or expression we use to refer to or express it. The relationship of relative size is expressed by the term "is larger than", etc.

The concept of identity satisfies what I have elsewhere (see Splitter 2000, 2003) called "The 3Cs" (Common, Central, Contestable): a familiar (*common*) idea, *central* to our very understanding of just about everything, yet (to some of us, at least), puzzling and unclear (*contestable*). Consider: when interpreting a normal relational term, we just have to picture the relation referred to "in action" so to speak. *Biting* is a relation between some (nasty) creatures and other things, whereby the former sinks its teeth or fangs into the latter; *being larger than* is a spatial relation which allows us to rank objects in terms of their (relative) size, and so on. And identity? Well, it is that relation that holds between two things **a** and **b** when they are both the same (i.e. identical!), that is, when **a=b**. But of course, if the identity statement "**a=b**" is true, then there are not two things, there is only *one* thing, i.e. **a** (or **b**, it matters not). And what can the relation of identity be saying about this one thing except that it is what it is, i.e. **a=a**! But mathematical logic tells us – as if we didn't already know – that there is a huge difference in meaning between "**a=b**" and "**a=a**": the former may well be interesting, even surprising, whereas the latter is a *tautology*, a statement of the utmost triviality.

This semantic puzzle has commanded the attention of philosophers for centuries. Frege (1997) used it to support his famous distinction between the sense (*Sinn*) of an expression and its reference (*Bedeutung*) – i.e. what the expression stands for. For an expression of the form "**a=b**" to be significant and non-trivial, it is not enough to refer to the references of the terms involved (i.e. **a** and **b**) because there is only one object to be referred to. So the relevant difference must lie in the *sense* (roughly: the meaning) of the terms in question. And intuitively, it seems reasonable to assert that the sense of the term or phrase "The Morning Star" is quite different from that of "The Evening Star" (even though the Morning Star is actually identical with the Evening Star). But Frege's semantic theory remains contentious and is rejected by

those who cannot countenance a third domain (senses, or meanings) located somewhere between the domain of language and that of the world to which the language refers.

Extending Identity into the World (Just) Beyond Mathematics and Logic: Indiscernibility, Equivalence, Types and Tokens

It will be useful, at this point, to add to our somewhat meager fund of examples, in case it be thought that the identity relation – and, in turn, the puzzles it generates – applies solely to mathematics and a few esoteric scenarios beloved of philosophers. Consider the following:

1. The man in the dock is the same man as (is identical to, or just *is*) the man I saw shoot the victim
2. That pen you are holding is (identical to) my pen (so give it back!)
3. I catch the same train every morning
4. (Parent to child) You can't wear that (the same) shirt 3 days in a row
5. (Attendee at a very expensive social event) Oh no! I paid a fortune for this jacket and s/he is wearing the very same one
6. Take a look at this old school photo; see if you can find (identify) *me*!

I take it that (1) these examples describe reasonably familiar and (to varying degrees) non-trivial situations or events; and (2) they are all identity claims of some sort or another. There is something interesting to be said about each of them but for now, to avoid straying too far into the subject matter of my later chapters, I just note that the statements listed can all be expressed in the logical form of the Predicate Calculus. Accordingly, such claims have a place in this chapter whose main concern is how we are to understand identity within the domain of mathematical logic. To cite just one example, #1 could be expressed as follows:

$$(\forall x)(\forall y)\left[\left((\textit{The man in the dock})x \,\&\, (\textit{The man I saw shoot the victim})y\right) \rightarrow x = y\right].$$

Back to the task of attempting to define or, at least, characterize, the relation of identity in a way which is not entirely trivial. Logic textbooks sometimes begin with the assertion that identity is a relation each thing bears to itself and to no other thing (see Deutsch 2007 referring to Zalabardo 2000; and Noonan and Curtis 2014; both in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). But once again it seems that the very concept we are trying to characterize has been smuggled in to the description, rendering the latter circular, or worse (what does "other" mean here if not an object not identical to!). Deutsch (2007) offers the following pair of statements as representing what he calls the "standard account of identity". Simplifying his formal notation, the identity relation satisfies both the Principle of Reflexivity (R: a thing is related to itself; i.e. in this case, **a=a**), and what is often referred to as Leibniz's Law

(also known as the Principle of the Indiscernibility of Identicals: if **a** is identical to **b**, then any property or characteristic of **a** is also a property or characteristic of **b**). Leibniz's Law may also be expressed, conversely, as asserting that if **a** and **b** differ in any respect at all, then they are not identical. What can we say about such a characterization? Several things, actually, some of which will prove to be quite relevant later on.

1. Reflexivity has an air of triviality about it but the class of relations which are reflexive is by no means trivial. For example, all relations expressing sameness or similarity are reflexive, including such relations as "same color as", "same height as", "same nationality as", etc., but also relations like congruence and isomorphism in mathematics…
2. Reflexivity is one of three properties which, taken together, characterize what are termed "equivalence relations".[1] The other two properties are as follows:

   (a) Symmetry: If **a** is related to **b**, then **b** is related to **a** (examples: "same color/height/… as", "near to", "far from", "cousin of");
   (b) Transitivity: If **a** is related to **b** *and* **b** is related to **c**, then **a** is related (in the same way) to **c** (examples: "same color/height/religion/nationality…as, "smaller/larger/richer/poorer/…than, "brother of", "east of").[2]

   Equivalence relations lead to the creation of *equivalence classes*. Consider the relation specified by the term "_ is the same color as _", where the blanks are to be filled in with terms that stand for such everyday objects as tables, chairs, houses, human bodies, and so on (i.e. things that are usually colored). Then "_ is the same color as _" is an equivalence relation because it is reflexive, symmetric and transitive. To keep things simple, let us assume:

   (i) That all colored objects constitute one large collection or class of objects;
   (ii) That each member of the "class of colored objects" has exactly one color (ignoring all those striped, spotted and other multi-colored objects out there), and,
   (iii) That we have at our disposal a complete list of colors (it could be quite general, comprising the major colors of red, yellow, blue, green, brown, etc., or it could be much more detailed comprising, in addition, lighter and darker shades of these colors, plus such variations as indigo, violet, light cyan, dark magenta, etc.).

   Then the relational term 'same color as' "carves up" the class of colored objects into a number of discrete sub-classes, one for each color. These sub-classes are the equivalence classes for the equivalence relation "same color as". Each equivalence class contains precisely those objects that are of the same color.

[1] Noonan and Curtis (2014) offer an alternative – but still circular – characterisation of identity, namely it is the "smallest equivalence relation".

[2] As can be easily shown, Reflexivity and Leibniz's Law, taken together, entail symmetry and transitivity, which explains why the latter do not need to be formally included in the above characterization of identity.

Notice that each colored object belongs to exactly one equivalence class – no more and no less. So the class of colored objects is *partitioned* (to use the appropriate mathematical term) into a series of non-overlapping sub-classes.

Two more points are worth noting. First, we can provide a formal definition of the concept of *color* – albeit a rather weak one –by reference to these partitions. Someone wanting to know what color light cyan is would be directed to that particular sub-class which contains precisely those objects which are light cyan in color, and so on. No doubt, science can give us more precise definitions in terms of wave lengths, but pointing out the relevant sub-class is not a bad way to proceed, especially for those who prefer to define things in terms of what they see (i.e. *ostensively*), rather than what they are told. Secondly, if our only interest were in the colors, not the colored objects, we could define a new collection or class at one level of abstraction beyond the original class of colored objects, viz. the class of *colors*. Generally speaking we could do the same for any equivalence relation, that is, abstract from a collection of objects that is *partitioned* by this relation to form a new collection, which consists in the partitions themselves. To anticipate a later topic, if a nation is constituted simply by the totality of its citizens, then the equivalence relation "same nationality as" could be taken to constitute the (more abstract) class of *nations* by partitioning the class of persons.

3. Leibniz's Law seems reasonably intuitive (if **a** and **b** are genuinely identical, then there is only one object there to talk about), and is actually part of the foundation of basic algebra, albeit in a slightly different form, namely: if **a** and **b** are identical (**a=b**), then whatever operation you perform on one can, indeed must, be performed on the other (for example, *adding 5 to both sides*, to solve an equation, etc.). Still, there are some superficially contrary cases. To mention a couple, look again at the examples of identity statements offered above.

   (a) Concerning #1, suppose the man in the dock is indeed the very same man I saw shoot the victim, but suppose that I do not know this. Then I may well believe that the man in the dock is innocent and should be released but that the man I saw shoot the victim is guilty and should be imprisoned. But Leibniz's Law sanctions substitution here, which appears to yield the following absurdity: "I believe that one and the same man is both innocent and guilty."
   (b) Concerning #6, the 8 year old in the photo was cherubic-looking but extremely naughty, whereas I am wrinkled and haggard but a model citizen. It seems that "he" and I differ quite considerably, although we are, apparently, identical (the very same person or human being).

   Some skeptics may regard such cases as sufficient reason for questioning, even rejecting, the concept of identity *per se*. But on more considered reflection, it seems that it is not identity that causes the problem here; rather, it is confusion about the person we claim to be referring to in each case. To take (b) first, we may insist on the identity statement being correct, but note that the properties or features in question – a certain appearance, a certain disposition, etc. – apply *at*

particular times. On this interpretation, I *am* (i.e. was), indeed, cherubic-looking 50 years ago, and that naughty child in 1958 *is* (i.e. will become) a model citizen 50 years later. There is still only one person involved and he does share all the same properties, as long as we understand that such properties change through time. In other words, I have changed over time, but – and this is the crucial point – it is still *me* who has changed. Who else could it be?

The problem raised by (a) has led some commentators to adapt Frege's insight behind his distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, without actually embracing the distinction itself.[3] It is plausible to assert that in certain semantic contexts, terms such as proper names and descriptions *do not have their familiar or standard reference*. Such contexts were called "oblique" by Frege (or his translators) and "opaque" by later philosophers. To continue with the above illustration, the linguistic context of belief – as in "I believe that the man in the dock is innocent" – is *opaque* in that the "object" of belief – that which I believe – is not what it seems. It may seem that the man in the dock – that very individual – is part of the object of my belief, since my belief is, apparently, *about* him. But it is not. The object of my belief, if it is anything at all, is not something in the ordinary world of objects, which explains why Leibniz's Law does not apply to it (Leibniz's Law being a principle that applies to real world objects **a** and **b**, when **a = b**). But what, then, *is* the object of my belief, and where does it reside? There is a can of philosophical worms just begging to be opened here, and I invite anyone with a taste for *Vermes* to go right ahead. However, I shall resist the temptation for now (but see Chap. 5), except to point out that several candidates have been proposed as the "objects" of belief, ranging from propositions (abstractions from categorical statements) to mental entities of one kind or another. It seems that opacity is generated, not just in cases of belief, but in a large number of cases which have to do with our mental states, including desires, intentions, hopes, fears, and so on. I may yearn to eat that apple on the bench yet loathe the very idea of eating the large worm that I spotted earlier, at least before my realization that the one has taken up residence inside the other. But strict adherence to Leibniz's Law entails that I do, indeed, yearn for the worm as well. An even more obvious locution suggests, however, that mentality does not tell the whole story: if LJS is typing these words, then the eldest son of Jean and Leon Splitter is doing so (by a straightforward application of Leibniz's Law); but if I *utter the words* "LJS is typing these words", I am most decidedly *not* uttering the words "The eldest son of Jean and Leon Splitter is typing these words". Utterances, in their most literal form, allow for no substitution whatsoever, which indicates that whatever is being uttered is not an object in the normal sense.

4. Leibniz's Law, or the Principle of the Indiscernibility of Identicals, can be turned around to become the (distinct) Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles, an even more troublesome claim which is open to several interpretations. Informally, the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles asserts that if objects **a** and **b** share

[3] For example, Dummett (1973).

all their properties or characteristics, then they are identical.[4] As some commentators have pointed out, when it comes to considering ordinary medium-sized objects (i.e. those things which we can perceive under normal circumstances), the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles seems reasonable from a practical or empirical perspective. Many years ago, I had an interesting discussion with some kindergarten students about something closely related to it. I placed two chairs at the front of the room and asked the students if the chairs were "the same". The ensuing conversation went something like this:

Child A: No, they are not the same; that one is scratched, see!
Teacher (LJS): OK, so let's use our imaginations and imagine that we put a scratch on the second chair, which is exactly the same as the scratch on the first chair.
Child B: But that chair is more wobbly.
LJS: OK,… [I leave the reader to follow this line of thought through to the point where, at least in our imaginations, the two chairs are now indistinguishable, i.e. *indiscernible*]
LJS: So, now, are the chairs the same?
[General signs and nods of assent except for one child…]
Child C: They are *still* not the same, because this one is *here* [pointing] and that one is *there*!

Notice that the distinction revealed in this snippet of dialogue echoes the difference between examples 4 and 5 given at the beginning of this section We may say that the sameness indicated by #4 is numerical (literally, "token") identity, whereas that indicated by #5 is qualitative ("kind" or "type") identity, and that once this distinction is acknowledged, we may readily agree that we often identify objects as being numerically distinct, but of the same type. (Strictly speaking, the complainant in #5 should have said "…s/he is wearing a numerically distinct shirt of the same kind or type"). Actually, the children were adhering to an even tighter standard of qualitative sameness: it was not enough for them that the two chairs were (of) the same type or kind (same manufacturer, same design, same size, same color, etc.); they insisted that the chairs match each other with respect to every (observable) characteristic, i.e. "warts and all".

But how sharp is the distinction between numerical and qualitative sameness? Suppose a particularly precocious kindergartener (PPK) were to continue the dialogue, thus:

[4] See Forrest (2010); equivalently, but somewhat more intuitively, if objects are not identical, then there is at least one property or characteristic by which they differ. Notice that combining Leibniz's Law with the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles serves to underscore the difference between numerical (quantitative) and qualitative identity. If object **a** is numerically identical to object **b**, then **a** and **b** share all their properties and qualities at all times of their existence. This accommodates the everyday phenomenon of **a** changing (many of) its properties (typically, for physical objects, over time) as long as it be allowed that **b** must also change in precisely the same manner. Qualitative identity, by contrast, draws attention to properties that distinct objects have in common.

PPK: But that just means that we have not yet completed our task of making the chairs (qualitatively) the same, since "being in this particular place/space" is, itself, a quality. Once we eliminate this qualitative difference, then surely the chairs will, indeed, be the very same.[5]

True enough, except that now we no longer have two chairs at all, so it is far from clear that we have adhered to the original task of finding a counter-example to the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles, by way of making the two chairs the same in every respect. Some philosophers have speculated over the conceptual possibility of having two spheres located symmetrically such that they really did share all their qualities, including their (relative) position in space and time. However, I shall not explore this idea any further here. I am more interested in making sense of the assumption – which lies behind even hypothesizing the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles – that a particular object could be uniquely characterized – *defined*, we might say – by the totality of its properties or attributes.[6] This assumption brushes over a fundamental syntactic and semantic distinction: that between an object or thing which *has* properties, and the properties themselves which, properly speaking, must always and only be considered as being *of* something else. If I am holding an orange, I am holding an object which is (roughly) round, orange in color, sweet-tasting, rich in vitamin C, and so on. In picking out, *referring to* or *identifying* that object, I am doing more than referring to a collection or bundle of properties (roundness, orange-ness, sweetness, etc.). Those properties, taken singly or together, somehow fail to capture the very *thing-ness or object-ness* of the orange itself. But now the question arises: "What or where is this object-ness if it is not in the properties of the object?" Could we, perhaps, locate it by stripping away – conceptually at least – *all* these properties, so that what is left must be the object itself? Two images come to mind here: an onion and a piece of fruit with a core or nut inside. Unfortunately neither is of much help: when we peel the onion, thereby removing its "outer layers", we end up with nothing at all! And if we consider an apple and think of the apple core as the desired "inner" object, freed of its "outer" properties, then our PPK from the earlier dialogue will just laugh and say: "But the core still has such properties as a certain shape, color, texture, etc.… so you have not located the real – the *essential* (as some philosophers have called it) – thing yet". Fair enough, we reply, so we need to delve inside the apple core to find the real core – it will, at the very least, have to be *much* smaller. At this point, a scientist (fruitologist?) may offer to assist: "What you are searching for, my ignorant friends, is that from which this particular apple sprung; we used to think it was a seed, but we now know that there is a genetic story to be told here, one which links your apple to its ancestral apple tree. The genes of this apple constitute the real core or essence of the

[5] Is spatio-temporal positioning a form of qualitative determination of the objects positioned? This question, in various forms, has a venerable pedigree in the history of philosophy, going back to Aristotle and including Hume and Kant. As the book proceeds, I shall follow Wiggins' (2001) own preference for characterizing each determinate object as a *this-such*, where "this" pins down, in space and time, the object that is identified as a "such (and such)" kind of thing.

[6] See reference to the German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, in Wiggins (2001, p. 63).

apple". Well, I doubt that our scientist would add this last sentence, and for good reason: for even genes are not things without properties (albeit unobservable properties) and so the conceptual or semantic core for which we are searching remains elusive.

The idea that there is a uniquely defined object or *thing* which constitutes the essence of those ordinary objects we perceive around us – whether as the totality of their properties or the elusive thing *behind* all those properties – has been called *haecceity*, i.e. the basic or core *this-ness* that every object possesses. As unattractive as both the term and its connotations may be, I shall need to come back to them later (see especially Chaps. 3 and 7), because something akin to them (and/or the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles) may be lurking behind recent debates in *Identity Politics*. Common to these debates is the idea that our very identities are defined, somehow, by our qualities – in particular, by those qualities which connect us to such larger entities (which I call "*supra-persons*") as nations, religions, cultures, sexualities, tribes, traditions and the like. As we shall see, this idea commits the logical fallacy of *equivocation*, whereby the truth of a particular claim relies on an ambiguous term or concept – "identity" in this case – shifting, unannounced as it were, from one meaning to another (as in "I am going to the bank because I need to withdraw some money, so I need to be careful not to fall in the river").[7] In this case, the term "identity" is the culprit: our literal, or *numerical*, identities are taken to be determined by one or more of those qualities that characterize our *qualitative* identities.

Do the kinds of philosophical or conceptual identity-related puzzles that I have raised cause any problems in our everyday lives? Rarely, it seems. One potential area of ambiguity arises in connection with *counting*, because counting objects presupposes an understanding of the kind or type of object under consideration. Counting the number of *objects* (or things) in a room may seem fairly straightforward, but the lack of any *identity conditions* associated with the concept of an object *per se* means that, strictly speaking, we could not even *begin* the task, let alone complete it. Does the telephone on my desk count as one object (it is certainly one phone)? How about the cord connecting the hand piece to the main console, or the display screen, or the key pad, etc.? Are these all separate objects (for counting purposes) or are they all subsumed under *phone* simply because they are physically attached to it? But my arm is now leaning on my desk; does it follow that I should count the desk+my arm as one object? If you find such examples unrealistic – in the sense of being of interest only to philosophers – then how about this? Try counting the number of books on a book shelf? Normally we proceed copy by copy, but precisely how we do this may depend on our interests. Granted, the removalist counts in this manner because he needs to determine how much space will be required to ship the books. But how about a librarian, book-seller or someone seeking to make

[7] The online posting on this subject from one Philosophy Department includes the following example, immortalized in a famous *Monty Python* sketch in which a person seeking to "buy" an argument gets more than he bargained for: "Sure philosophy helps you argue better, but do we really need to encourage people to argue? There's enough hostility in this world". (http://www.txstate.edu/philosophy/resources/fallacy-definitions/Equivocation.html)

an academic appointment based on the number of publications attained by the applicant? In these cases, twenty copies of the same text still only count as one.

In a lovely whimsical story called *The Doll Hospital*, written by my late colleague Ann Margaret Sharp (Sharp and Splitter 2000), the "doctor" at the doll hospital offers to fix Jesse's doll Roller which (who?) had lost its head as the result of a tricycle accident (Roller was in the carry-basket; she was not actually doing the pedaling). "Don't worry" says the doctor to a distressed Jesse; "We'll make Roller as good as new; we'll just get her a new head." In response, Jesse can do nothing except stand there gaping in horror. Her father, in a vain attempt at reconciliation, insists that "the new head will be exactly the same as the old one; you won't be able to tell the difference", but this comment succeeds only in aggravating Jesse's emotional state. Still, the doctor is as good as his word, and a few days later, Roller(?) is back home with Jesse. Jesse, after careful consideration, places a chair next to her chest of drawers, climbs up and places Roller on the very top shelf. The final paragraph of the story is as follows: "Days come and go. My doll is still up on the shelf. I can see her up there. But I've never taken her down since the day I brought her home from the doll hospital." The reader is left with many questions about the significance of Jesse's actions, not least in regard to her (changed?) understanding of just what a doll really is.

Shifting gears somewhat, consider an earlier example: "I catch the same train every morning." What I find puzzling about such a familiar scenario is precisely that we ordinarily do *not* find it puzzling or ambiguous at all, even though the least reflection reveals that its exact meaning is far from clear. Since I physically board and sit in the train, it must itself be a physical object; it is, in fact, oblong in shape, about 3 m in width and height, and variable in length, usually comprising a number of like objects joined together, at least one of which has an engine which allows the train to be driven. But in so far as this description characterizes the train I took this morning, it was almost certainly *not* the same train as the one I took yesterday. Nor can the usual abstraction to the *type* of train help us here, for what is the type in question, other than that which characterizes just about *all* trains? Notice that here, as earlier, the interests of those who make the identity claim in the first place need to be considered. A child who has not yet lost interest in wondering about mundane things may well point out to her mother that "This is not the same train as the one we were on yesterday; look, this carriage has 40 seats and they are made of metal, but yesterday the carriage had only 25 seats and they were soft and comfortable." But as the harried commuter in our story, I have little interest in such matters. All I care about (apart from getting a seat, whether hard or soft) are the *departure and subsequent arrival times* of whatever physical contraption turns up, and *that* involves an even greater degree of abstraction. In short, the sameness of the train in question reduces, strictly speaking, to sameness of *schedule*. But now my original identity claim looks decidedly shaky: the sameness in question refers to a particular time of day, but, to repeat, the thing I actually board and ride on is not a time, but a physical object as per the description offered above. All things considered, it is a wonder that I make it to work at all! And yet, I do make it (almost) every day!

If there is a moral here, it may seem somewhat self-destructive; something like: "If you want to succeed in such mundane tasks as commuting to work, don't think about it too much." In my own defense, however, I suggest that the kind of conceptual puzzle which might, but does not actually, bother us in the everyday practice of commuting, does generate real problems in such contexts as classifying persons as citizens and linking citizenship to nationality (thereby defining persons, at least in part, in terms of their nationality). If my (personal) identity derives from my citizenship – or, indeed, from any such collectivist notion, taken in isolation or in combination (ethnicity, culture, religion, …), as the train's identity derives from its place in a timetable (at least from the commuter's point of view), then it may seem that my own physical, intellectual and moral personhood becomes as immaterial in the broader social scheme of things as the number and composition of the seats in a train carriage are in the commuter's scheme. This is an issue to which I shall return.

The Logic of "Is"

Before ending the chapter, I need to clarify some semantic or logical points which are easy to miss when using languages, like English, which employ the term "is" (or "are", "was", etc.) to express any of (at least) three ideas[8]:

(i) The "is/are" of *predication* (also called "copula"): when a property (more precisely, a predicate, which is a linguistic term) is attached to a subject (term), to form a complete sentence or thought, as in "Splitter is wise", "Splitter is a great scholar", etc. (for our purposes, the truth of the statements in question is irrelevant!);

(ii) The "is" of *existence*: as in "In the actual world, Mt Everest *is*, but Mt Doom *is not*; this idea is difficult to express in formal terms because the *existential quantifier* is not, itself, a predicate – at least, not what is called a "first-order" predicate which we use to describe ordinary objects (intuitively, as David Hume realized, existence is not a property of things), but we could say, at least, that the existence of Mt Everest is implicit in the simple statement "Mt Everest is 29,000 ft high"); conversely, there is no true statement of the form "Mt Doom is x feet high", assuming that non-existent entities have no genuine properties;

(iii) The "is" of identity: as in "That fellow over there is Laurance Splitter", "Nine times thirteen is one hundred and seventeen", "The inventor of bifocals is (or was) the first Postmaster General of the United States", etc.

[8] The ideas and distinctions referred to in this section were discussed somewhat more elegantly – but also more cryptically – by the logician W. V. Quine in his landmark 1960 work *Word and Object* (1960, pp. 114–118)

Both conceptually and within the formal system referred to, these interpretations of "is" are mutually *irreducible*. In particular, this simple but powerful system provides no support for the thesis of the *Identity of Indiscernibles*, discussed above; nor for a version of it which I discuss below when looking at issues of identity in sociocultural contexts (this version, as noted, states that a person's "identity" emerges from her involvement, whether voluntary or not, in the various groups, associations and collectives that are part and parcel of normal life). The point to emphasize here is that no amount of predication *per se* constitutes true or literal identity.

Conversely, to assign a property or characteristic to an object – which is what the act of predication achieves – is *not* to assert a relationship of identity between that object and some other object (e.g. in the examples above, between Splitter and a wise person, or a great scholar). Predicate logic, as developed by Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell *et al*. requires a semantics which assigns entities, as referents, to *subject* but not *predicate* terms; i.e., in the above examples, to "Splitter" (whose referent is the person typing these words), but not to any of the terms "wise", "is wise", "great scholar", "a great scholar" or even "wisdom". Part of the issue here is an ancient one about the difference between first-level *particulars* (such as me) and higher-level *universals* (such as the quality, ideal or Platonic *form* of wisdom, etc.). In ordinary predicate logic, independently of any argument in favor of accepting universals into our ontology, they are simply not needed semantically. Indeed, it is difficult to see how two such disparate entities as the particular object which I am and the abstract universal *wisdom* could "fit" together in order to form a meaningful assertion or thought, as expressed by the sentence "Splitter is wise". It is as though the copula, "is" could function as *glue* here, but such a metaphor is hardly illuminating (it is more like trying to fit a peg into another peg, rather than into the hole that is made for it). Within the semantics of predicate logic, the sentence in question may be understood simply as expressing the thought/assertion that *Splitter is wise*. We need just one entity in order to understand this, and in order to determine the truth of the statement, we need to determine whether or not that entity is wise.

The semantic question of how to interpret simple statements of predication is different from that of whether or not to accept universals into our ontology. P. F. Strawson (1959), on whose work I shall draw later in this book, held staunchly to the view that there are particulars *and* universals in the world, but this view did not thereby commit him to reject the most common way of interpreting predicate logic. We may refer to the quality of wisdom (indeed this sentence does so!), while accepting that there is no reference to that quality made by someone who utters the sentence "Splitter is wise".

The distinction between predication and identity may be summarized as follows. Interpreting identity statements of the generic form "**a=b**" requires two independent acts of reference (or *identification*): one to **a** and one to **b**, which follows from the notion that identity itself is a two-place relation. Predication, on the other hand, involves just one act of identification, as explained above. Now this may seem unremarkable in the case of such examples as those cited ("Splitter is wise", etc.) – although even simple predication entails a weak form of identity in the sense that if Splitter is wise then there is a particular wise person with whom Splitter is

identical – but consider something that looks more like a statement of identity, e.g. "Splitter is the wisest person in the room". Does the tiny word "is" play the role of identity or predication here? The answer may depend on how many acts of reference are involved in interpreting this statement. If, in addition to referring to the person Splitter, there is also an independent reference to "another" person, viz. the wisest person in the room (as determined by an independent test, for example), then it seems plausible to interpret the statement in terms of identity: Splitter and the wisest person in the room – those two individuals – are actually one and the same (which, as noted above, still retains a slightly paradoxical air). If, on the other hand, we are asserting that Splitter not only is wise, but is wiser than everyone else in the room, then we may interpret our statement as a sophisticated – albeit familiar – form of predication, involving not just a descriptor ("wise" or "is wise") but a *definite* descriptor ("is not only wise but wiser than everyone else in the room"). Unfortunately, however, the issue is not entirely resolved, because according to at least one celebrated account of how we should understand definite descriptions (as given by Russell and, in due course, opposed by Strawson in an exchange that has become a classic in analytic philosophy), the concept of identity sneaks in again via the back door, so to speak.[9] The example under consideration does not make this apparent because we may understand the superlative "wisest" in terms of just being wiser than everyone else. We need a different kind of example, such as the infamous "The King of France is wise" (spoken any time after the abdication of Louis Philippe I) or even "Splitter is the King of France" where, on Russell's account, in order to accommodate the descriptor "the King of France" in the language of predicate logic, we reduce it to a combination of simple predication ("Splitter is a King of France"), and an *identity* statement which declares that if anyone has the property of being a King of France, then that person is identical to Splitter.

So where does this brief excursion into the logic of identity leave us? As a student of both philosophy and mathematics, I find it oddly reassuring that in spite of first appearances – whereby logic is seen as a branch of mathematics, with definite and final solutions to all its questions – we find the same kind of contestability as exists everywhere else in philosophy, and for the same reason: that the key concepts involved, no matter how simple or basic, are just not entirely clear.

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[9] Bertrand Russell: "On denoting" (1905, reprinted in his 1956); P. F. Strawson: "On referring" (1950, reprinted in his 2004)

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Chapter 3
Identity in the World of Objects and Their Kinds

Introduction: Identity, Kinds and Criteria

In a myriad of ways and contexts, we make and rely upon claims of identity in our dealings with ordinary objects – including other people. By "ordinary objects" I mean the material things that we encounter in our daily experience of the world, and that constitute a large component of that experience. We eat at tables, chew bread, sit on chairs, tap key boards, play and listen to musical instruments, travel in planes, trains and boats, swim in pools and rivers, and interact in various ways with other people and animals. Moreover, for both theoretical (conceptual) and practical reasons, we assume both that these objects have some kind of continuing identity, and that we could – if we wanted or needed to – make claims of identity in regard to them.

When I say "make claims of identity in regard to them", I have in mind several considerations which are part and parcel of our ordinary ways of interacting both with one another and with the world in general. Suppose we are enjoying a cup (or, rather, cups) of tea together, and you ask me to pass you the sugar and a napkin. We both know what this request amounts to, and what I need to do in order to satisfy it; not, for example, grabbing the entire table and attempting to pass it to you just because the sugar bowl and napkin are located on it; nor dipping my finger in the bowl and picking up a few grains to scrape into your cup. What I need to do is pass you two distinct objects which we can readily identify: the bowl containing a quantity of sugar and a napkin. That one of the things you requested is a *quantity of stuff* – which is why I need to pass another object, viz the bowl containing the sugar – and the other a discrete *object* in its own right is simply taken for granted. And yet without a mutual understanding of the *kinds* of thing being requested, it is quite unlikely that your request will even be understood, let alone met.

An equally familiar – yet conceptually more complex – scenario obtains when I demand the return of *the pen* that I lent you last week, or when the lawyer asks the witness to point to *the person* he saw shoot the victim. In both cases, I need to

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understand, not merely what kind of object a pen or person is, but which *specific* pen or person is being referred to. These are cases involving not just identification of an object, but *re*-identification of that same object. The re-identification called for presumes that such objects as pens and persons remain the *same* – i.e. the very same objects – over *time*. Similar, albeit less common, examples of re-identification over *space* might occur, e.g. when I need to locate the end of a particular electric cord I am holding in order to ensure that I insert the right plug into the right socket (in a situation where several cords are mixed up together). Notice, however, that the cases are not exactly similar: when I re-identify an object over time, it is natural to say that it is the *whole* object– not a part of it – which exists, first at one time, and later at another; but when I re-identify an object through space, we usually say that the object in my left hand (one end of the cord), and the object in my right hand (the other end) are separate parts of a single object, viz. the whole cord. In short, *objects spread themselves out over space*, but *move as wholes through time*. This apparent asymmetry between time and space is one of the differences between these two basic dimensions of our experience, but it has been challenged by some philosophers who prefer to think of that which is identified at any one time as merely a *temporal slice* of the entire object (much as that part of the cord I am holding is one part of the whole cord, from a spatial perspective).[1] The object itself would then be constituted of these slices, taken together in some way or other, much as it is constituted of its spatial parts. In an earlier draft of this chapter, I spent several paragraphs attempting to refute the "temporal slice" view, but I decided to omit them. I see little point in positing a relatively abstruse scenario and then making use of arguments which are at least as abstruse, in order to refute it. Intuitively, when I hold an apple in my hand, I hold the *whole apple*, not any kind of slice of it – temporal, spatial or otherwise. And if I slice off a piece, I am left holding a spatial, but not temporal, part of the apple. This much follows from our everyday understanding of what an apple is, and I see no reason for making our conceptual lives more complicated than they need to be.[2]

I follow in the tradition of those who insist that our success at individuating/identifying and re-identifying objects rests on a reasonably clear conception of what *kinds* of objects we mean. Think about how we first learn to use such words as "apple" or "table" successfully (I have in mind here the child's *first* language; learning a second language is conceptually simpler to grasp because we are, by and large, matching up its terms with those in our first language). It *could* be by way of a verbal definition ("a table is any object designed and/or used to prevent other objects from falling when they are placed on its surface", for example), but it is more likely

[1] The idea that material objects have such temporal parts or stages has been called "perdurance", in contrast to the more intuitive view that such objects *endure* through all times of their existence (Noonan and Curtis 2014).

[2] See Wiggins (2001, pp. 30–31), Olson (1997, chapter 5); Olson (1997, p. 95) cites Chisholm (1977, p. 169): "[I]n our theoretical thinking, we should be guided by those propositions we presuppose in our ordinary activity. They are propositions we have a right to believe. Or, somewhat more exactly, they are propositions which should be regarded as innocent, epistemically, until there is positive reason for thinking them guilty."

by way of some kind of *ostension* or – in more familiar terms – by *pointing* and saying something like: "See that object over there; *that* is a table, and the object on the table is an *apple*". However – and I have heard even young children make this point (I have also read it in Wittgenstein) – how does the person looking in the direction of my pointed finger know that I am referring to the table, or the apple, rather than, say, the colors brown and red respectively, or to such shapes as oblongs and circles, or – to put these two ideas together – to any large brown oblong combined with a smaller red circular object, etc?

In practice, we learn about objects – including what constitute their spatial boundaries, their persistence conditions (what sorts of changes tables and apples can survive), etc. – through *experience*, which usually means by trial-and-error. The child who thinks that a dog is any four-legged creature (which is too broad a conception) or that it has to be brown (which is both too broad and too narrow), based on his initial association of word and object, will usually self-correct with the help of others ("no dear, that one is called a *horse*!"). Still there is a residual conceptual concern here, which is that I seem to be assuming that at some point in the child's early experiences, she will learn, not just what tables and dogs are, but that there is a class of *things* "out there" just waiting to be so classified. Such things are *objects* in two senses: we regard them as *objective* (i.e. in the world beyond ourselves, and not merely figments of our imaginations, although it is possible that they could be on any specific occasion); and we regard them as *things* that have properties or attributes, rather than just attributes themselves (I noted this distinction in Chap. 2). Language (at least the ones I am aware of) reflects this fundamental distinction in nouns like "table" and "dog" rather than adjectives like "oblong" and "brown-colored"; but (i) language is not always a reliable guide (consider a noun like "sugar"), and (ii) there is a distinct suspicion of question-begging here, for the issue is how the young child first comes to classify the things in her experience, and this includes – or should include – how she understands the difference between an object in the above sense, and a mere attribute (like shape or color) or a quantity of *stuff* (like sugar).

Philosophy (not to mention psychology, neurology, cognitive science and linguistics, among other disciplines) has proposed several options for dealing with this issue, perhaps the most well-pedigreed of which comes from Aristotle, via Kant and such contemporary analytic philosophers as P. F. Strawson and David Wiggins. The basic idea is that we are *born* (or otherwise imbued *a priori*) with the core concept of a thing, object, or *substance* whose attributes of shape, size, color, etc. are provided by experience (i.e. literally by using our five senses, or however many we happen to have). Whether because we, ourselves, are such objects – at least with respect to one another – or for some other reason, we naturally give referential primacy to those items in our experience which occupy specific – usually uninterrupted – regions of time and space (albeit asymmetrically, as already noted) and, accordingly, can be located in relation to ourselves and each other. We might imagine a table which has *no* specific location at all, but every real table that has existed and will exist can, in principle, be located in the very same spatio-temporal frame that we, ourselves, occupy. Still, it seems intuitively clear that when it comes to such

tasks as identification, description and re-identification, the fact that the object in question *is* a table, rather than a chair, or a hunk of wood, or a table-plus-set of chairs (a dining suite), or the color brown, or even just that object which I can perceive over there, is significant. Further, my ability to perform these tasks successfully depends on my being clear – whether just to myself or to others as well – about precisely *which* table is the object of my attention. And here, according to the line of thought I am following, no amount of conceptual understanding or terminology will suffice. To pin the object down, so to speak, we must locate *it* in space and time, i.e. in the same referential frame which we all occupy; and we must find ways to signal how we are related to it in that frame. In practice, we usually rely upon some kind of ostensive reference ("I am referring to *this* table", etc.) to complement our conceptual understanding. In sum, both ostension in time and space, and conceptual classification are *necessary* in order to refer successfully to things in the world and, considered jointly, they are *sufficient* as well. This is the thesis defended by Wiggins (2001) who follows Aristotle in conceiving of an object as a *this-such* (pp. 109, 126). The relevance of this duality to my broader concerns will become clearer later.

Wiggins has written with great authority on the concept of identity, articulating and defending both its formal (logical) properties (such as Reflexivity and Leibniz's Law, discussed in Chap. 2), and its role in supporting our ordinary "real-world" classifications and references. He has defended two theses which, taken together, provide a strong conceptual grounding for statements/claims of identity in terms of kinds (or *sorts*). The two theses are as follows:

("Identity A") The Absoluteness of Identity Identity is a relation, formally speaking, but it is *not relative*; more specifically, it is not relative to the *kind* of thing that is being referred to in an identity statement. Once objects **a** and **b** are identical, then there is no classification or categorization under which they are *not* identical. In other words, let us assume what seems to be intuitively correct, that we can answer the question "What is **a**?" by reference to a large number of concepts or categories (**a** is a person, an ex-soldier, **a** child of my cousin, **a** citizen of Australia, **a** person I admire, **a** pharmacist, …), some of which apply at different times of **a**'s existence (Wiggins refers to such concepts as *sortals* or *substance concepts*; I shall use these terms interchangeably); then the following combination is *not* conceivable (initial impressions notwithstanding): **a** is *the same f as* **b**, but **a** is *not the same g as* **b**, where *f* and *g* are chosen from the list of concepts that, grammatically and intuitively, answer the question "What is **a**?".

("Identity D") The (Sortal) Dependency (or Determinacy) of Identity Every true identity statement ("**a** = **b**") is linked to some fundamental sortal concept *f* which has the following properties: (i) Both **a** and **b** fall under *f* (i.e. both **a** and **b** are *f*s); (ii) *f* answers the question: "What (kind of thing) is **a** (or **b**)?"; and (iii) **a** *is the same f as* **b** (Wiggins 2001, pp. xii, 56, 64, etc.). Intuitively, this means that identity claims are made both meaningful and true by the classification of the objects being identified as members of a particular kind or sort. Conversely – although it is really part of the same thesis – such kinds generate *criteria of identity* for those

objects which belong to them.[3] Wiggins offers a formal or *deductive* argument in favor of "Identity A", i.e. against the notion that identity is relative, but it is not entirely convincing[4]; he then argues, more tellingly, that a number of well-known alleged counter-examples are actually quite consistent with "Identity A". Granted, this strategy – like all *inductive* arguments based on experience – will not convince the most obdurate and resolute relativists, but Wiggins' aim here is to sharpen our understanding of identity by showing that ordinary syntax and usage can be misleading; in particular, that what looks like identity might actually be no such thing.

It is hard to conceive how "Identity A" could be false if we take Wiggins' second key thesis "Identity D" to be true. The latter states that the truth of an identity statement "**a** = **b**" (though not necessarily *how we determine* its truth) requires the existence of some underlying concept *f* which is sufficiently *fundamental* to the existence of **a** and **b** to guarantee both that **a** and **b** are *f*s throughout their existence, and that **a** is the same *f* as **b**. If we assume the truth of this thesis, then no matter what other concept applies to that object at any time of its existence, that concept cannot prescribe any judgment of identity which conflicts with the fundamental one. Suppose we picture this fundamental concept as a deep groove etched on the surface that the object follows; as long as it exists, the object cannot escape from this groove, and its continuing existence – or its demise – depends on that same groove, even though there may be other grooves which are embedded in the main one, and which may begin or fade out over time (as the term "child" ceases to apply to an individual who has become an adult). To deny "Identity A" is to postulate that an object can continue to follow one groove as one and the same object, yet somehow also follow another groove where it is replaced by a distinct object (as opposed to the second groove no longer applying). Since the original object cannot escape from the first groove, this scenario is impossible to imagine.

Let me try to put this in other words. The identity relativist posits that **a** can be the same *f* as **b** but not the same *g* as **b**, even though **a** and/or **b** are g's. But what are **a** and **b** in the first place? If we are unable to answer this question in terms of what I am calling a fundamental kind or concept, then there is little reason to think that **a** and **b** are anything at all, merely phantom or pseudo entities masquerading behind

[3] Noonan and Curtis (2014) state that "The notion of a criterion of identity was introduced into philosophical terminology by Frege… and strongly emphasised by Wittgenstein…. Exactly how it is to be interpreted and the extent of its applicability are still matters of debate."

[4] The formal argument relies on a combination of the two defining principles mentioned in Chap. 1: the reflexivity of identity (a = a) and Leibniz's Law (Wiggins 2001, pp. 25–27). It proceeds, via a series of elementary deductive steps – like any proof in algebra, geometry or logic. But I am sympathetic to those critics who are skeptical about the idea that such a contentious claim as "Identity A" – which has been rejected by a number of eminent philosophers – could be established so simply. In his argument, Wiggins helps himself to a version of Leibniz's Law (identical objects share all their properties), namely, that if a is the same f as b (where f is a sortal concept as explained above), then a and b will share *all* their properties. But surely the relativist can simply deny this, citing the property of *being the same g as b* as a counter-example (a is the same g as a, so a should be the same g as b, but this is what the relativist denies). Wiggins (2001, p. 15), Gallois (2011), and Grandy (2007) question the claim that being the same f implies sharing all the same properties.

the linguistic terms "a" and "b". However, once we specify a fundamental kind *f*, then being the same *f* and *continuing to be* (i.e. *exist*) amount to the same thing. There may well be some *g* such that **a** at one time is not the same *g* as **a** at another time, but this is not enough for the relativist; he must suppose that it should be the very same object which survives as **b** under *f*, but not as **b** under *g*.

I doubt that Wiggins would endorse my line of reasoning, for the simple reason that he appears to draw upon "Identity A" in arguing for the dependence of an object on some fundamental kind or concept, i.e. "Identity D"; so my attempt to strengthen the former by appealing to the latter would be somewhat circular, to say the least. In any case I shall, henceforth, take both principles to be correct.

The idea that *f* is *fundamental* or *basic* to the existence of **a** and **b** (as captured in the formal definition above in condition (ii)) is crucial, for if we just chose "any-old" concept under which **a** and **b** happen to fall, then the sortal dependency principle threatens to become trivial. The reason is that by most standard accounts, to say that **a** is the same *f* as **b** is simply to say that **a** is the same as **b**, *and* **a** and **b** are both *f*s. In the Preamble to his 2001 book, Wiggins attributes this claim to the logician W. V. Quine. Notice that on this analysis, *being the same f as* is a relation that embraces both the more basic relation of identity and the predicates "_ is an *f*" and "_ is a *g*". Following Wiggins, we may approach the distinction between a fundamental concept and "any-old" concept by way of a simple manipulation of quantifiers in elementary logic. What matters here is the extent to which the concept in question is bound by time, specifically, the time period in which the objects being identified may be taken to exist. It is one – relatively trivial – thing to assert that whenever some object exists at a particular time, there is a concept under which that object falls at that time. As Wiggins (2001) points out, all that this guarantees is "a succession of *phased* sortal concepts" (p. 64), where a phased sortal concept is one that applies to objects at various times of their existence (p. 30). With regards to myself, examples would be given by such terms as "professor", "somewhat overweight", "10 year old child", "singer of Bach chorales", etc. The salient point here is that we can conceive of times when these terms did not or do not apply to me, while I myself continued to exist at those times; indeed, as noted earlier, my continued existence seems required in order to make sense of the idea that *I* was once a child but am no longer, or that *I* was once not somewhat overweight but, alas, not presently. It is, however, quite another thing to assert that if an object exists – and, accordingly, exists at a particular time as well as over a period of time – there is some concept under which that concept falls *throughout its existence* and, moreover that this concept plays an essential role in determining *what that object is*.[5]

I stated that for a given phase sortal, we can *conceive* of times when it does not apply, while the object in question persists. That this is not merely a contingent matter may be illustrated by concepts which happen to apply throughout an object's existence, but which we would still not want to call "fundamental" in the sense that Wiggins – and I – intend. Suppose, for example, that an infant is born overweight,

[5] The logical difference here is akin to the difference between (i) the modest but true claim: "Every person has one unique birthday", and (ii) the much stronger – and patently false – claim: "There is 1 day which is the unique birthday of every person". The difference, in logical terms, concerns the *scope* of the quantifiers "every" and "one".

and remains as such throughout her entire life. Still, being overweight would not be a fundamental property of her with respect to her literal identity or existence, just because it is easy to imagine that that same person lost weight at some point and lived on – possibly for more years than she did in fact – as a much thinner person. In that imagined case, it would still be the same person who was fat and became thin. As a second kind of example, we may cite properties which are conceptually bound to the objects that fall under them but in a *generic* or even *trivial* sense. Wiggins suggests "animal", "machine", spatiotemporal continuant, and "entity" as examples here. However, this point is made without saying more about what makes other concepts (more) fundamental in the required sense. The idea, as I shall shortly explain, is that the examples suggested above do not determine a sufficiently precise principle for identifying and re-identifying items that fall under the concepts in question. As already noted, we cannot even begin to pick out and individuate specific *entities*, *objects* or *things* in a given space at a given time.

The fundamental concepts or kinds that I am seeking are those that apply to the objects that fall under them throughout their existence, precisely because they – the concepts – specify *what it is* for things of that kind to come into existence, to continue to exist, and to go out of existence. Most importantly, for my purposes here, such concepts determine *criteria of identity* for objects that fall under them. I will need to give some attention to what this amounts to.

Before continuing down this more theoretical path, I should like to reinforce both "Identity A" and "Identity D" by briefly reviewing several of the more celebrated putative counter-examples discussed (and rejected) by Wiggins.

Putative Counter-examples to "Identity A" and "Identity D"

You Can Step into the Same River Twice, but You Cannot Step into the Same Water Twice

This statement – which I shall label ("River 1") – purports to contradict "Identity A" because it asserts that the object one steps into twice remains the same river, but not the same (body of) water. It has been attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, although there is no textual evidence that he actually said this, or its Greek equivalent (see below). As soon as we clarify the precise relation between a river and the water it contains, we see that the above statement ("River 1") fails as a candidate for negating "Identity A". That negation requires that a given thing **a** (that which one first steps into) be *the same river as* a given thing **b** (that which one steps into at a later time), but not *the same* (*body of*) *water*. Identity relativism arises only if **a** and **b** are both rivers *and* bodies of water. However, as ably explained by Wiggins, if **a** and **b** are (identical with) rivers, then **a** and **b** are not identical with bodies of water; rather, they are *constituted of* bodies of water (or just water). Alternatively, if **a** and **b** are (identical with) bodies of water, then they are not identical with rivers; rather they *constitute* rivers. There is no clash of identities here,

but merely a conjunction of one identity statement with one statement about constitution. Exactly the same may be said for a range of other alleged counter examples to "Identity A", all of which trade on a linguistic ambiguity between what something *is* (i.e. is identical to) and what it *is constituted of*. A statue is not identical with the stone that constitutes it. This fits with the way we intuitively think about an object and its constituents, where the latter is nothing other than the collection (lump, pile, totality) of *stuff* or *matter* used to make the former. If I smash an armchair to pieces, I destroy the chair (because it can no longer *function as* a chair: more on this below), but I do not thereby destroy the stuff that constitutes it. Conversely, if I replace much of that stuff over time with different stuff (a new leg here, some new fabric there), I have, arguably, preserved the chair, but not the (exact quantity of) stuff.

One notable implication of distinguishing relations of constitution from identity *per se* is that it allows, indeed compels, us to say that distinct material objects can exist in the same place and at the same time. There is no reason to exclude the matter or stuff that constitutes an object at a given time from the realm of material objects, as long as we are willing to allow that it is *not* the same entity as the object it constitutes because it is fundamentally of a different kind or sort, with different identity conditions.[6]

As a corollary to my earlier discussion of the tiny, but semantically troublesome word "is" (p. 23 above), I note that in addition to the "is" of predication, identity, and existence, we may add the "is" of constitution, but in this case it is to be understood as a casual abbreviation; for example, we may say that the statue is stone, and the coat is pure cashmere, but what we mean is that the statue and coat are (predicatively) *constituted* by/or their respective ingredients.[7]

Somewhat ironically, this interpretation of Heraclitus provides some ancient support for Wiggins' Thesis "Identity D", which links the ongoing existence of an object to the kind of object that it is. The very idea of *ongoing existence* (persistence,

[6] Quantities of matter or stuff are similar to classes in mathematics, whose identity conditions depend precisely on the parts or members that constitute the whole. Since a quantity of sugar is nothing other than the sum of its parts, the loss of any one of those parts would destroy the (identity of) the whole. This is tantamount to declaring that quantities do not have any genuine identity conditions. When we look at the identity criteria for *persons*, the relationship between an individual person and the quantity of matter which "constitutes" it becomes problematic because the same quantity constitutes at least one "other" entity as well, viz. the human body. See Chap. 4 below.

[7] In the interest of historical and textual accuracy, what Heraclitus actually wrote was the following (in translation):

("River 2") "*On those stepping into rivers staying the same other and other waters flow*."

One commentator has pointed out that this needs to be interpreted in the context of Heraclitus' overall philosophical stance, which may be described as "the coincidence of opposites" or "unity in the world of change" (Graham 2011). And, indeed, this statement does seem to appeal both to something staying the same (either the river *or* the person stepping into it), and to something (the water) changing into something else (other), i.e. another body of water. What is important here is that the concepts of persistence and change are conceptually inter-dependent: as I remarked earlier in connection with the photo example, the notion of change involves the idea that some (one) thing has changed, i.e. that the thing in question persists, at least during the period of change. (When I change the color of my wall by painting it, it is the very same wall, otherwise what else is it that has changed?).

endurance) invites the question: existence as *what*? And the putative answers to this question (a river, a chair, etc.) come precisely from the stock of concepts we have previously called *sortal* or *kind* concepts. It is when we understand these concepts that we come to realize just what changes objects which fall under these concepts can endure without being destroyed themselves. Painting a room does not destroy it (except perhaps aesthetically) whereas burning it down does.

Theseus' Ship

This famous conundrum, thought to have originated with the historian Plutarch, and embellished by the Seventeenth Century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, constitutes a challenge to the Determinacy Thesis "Identity D" because it implies that many of our most common-place "sortal" concepts fail to determine a single groove or path for objects which fall under their extensions (Wiggins 2001, pp. 92ff). I once rewrote it in the form of a short story for middle school students, which I paraphrase here:

> Long ago a village decided to run a competition to find the oldest wooden ship in the world. By the end of the competition, one candidate – named "Praise of the Two Lands" ("PTL") – seemed destined for glory. It was 101 years old, with successive deeds of ownership confirming its continued existence throughout. Of course, as with nearly all material things, it had had its parts *replaced* over the years – a plank here, a mast-head there – indeed, *all* of its parts had been replaced at one time or another, albeit not all at once. However, just as the judges prepared to announce PTL as the winner, another wooden ship – Minerva ("M") – sailed proudly into the harbor and berthed right next to PTL. Now even before anyone knew the history of M, a collective murmur arose amongst the watching villagers, for M bore an uncanny resemblance to the original ship – call this one just "Ship 1" ("S1") – as verified by some old photographs taken 101 years ago (yes they took photos in those days). Indeed, by all appearances, M seemed a stronger candidate than PTL for being *qualitatively* identical – i.e. exactly similar – to S1. This was because when S1 had its parts replaced over time, they were usually of a quite different color and texture as compared to the original parts, so that the finished product, PTL, bore little resemblance to S1. Still, if this had been M's strongest claim to fame, the judges – familiar as they were with the distinction between qualitative and numerical identity – would have stuck with PTL, on the common understanding that while one and the same object routinely survives alteration and replacement of its parts, two numerically distinct objects can be (more or less) qualitatively identical. But M possessed another feature which could not so easily be dismissed, for it transpired that as each original part of S1 was removed, it was carefully stored away until, when all the original parts lay stacked together, they were *reconstituted* into the very ship that had berthed so smugly next to PTL, i.e. M. The owner of M (an embittered great-great-grandson of the original owner, whose family thought that S1 should never have been sold in the first place, and so had secretly kept all the original parts as they were replaced) insisted that his ship was, indeed, identical with S1 and should therefore win the prize. In support of his claim, he pointed out that objects are often taken apart and reassembled or reconstituted with the same (or even somewhat different) parts. Witness the broken watch that I, anxious not to be parted from, take to the watch-maker for repair. When I return to collect my watch, it is with the clear intention of collecting *it* from the watchmaker, notwithstanding that the day before it lay in pieces on his work-table. (Here I follow a common intuition that the watch still exists while in pieces, since an object that ceases to exist cannot come back into existence at a later time).

> At this surprising turn of events, the judges are stumped, for both PTL and M can credibly claim to be identical to the original ship, S1. Of one thing they – and we – can be certain: assuming that each of PTL and M is a ship in its own right, then it is logically impossible for both "S1 = PTL" and "S1 = M" to be true statements. This is because identity, like any equivalence relation, is both *symmetric* and *transitive*, from which it inevitably follows that if both PTL and M are identical with S1, then they are identical with each other, which they manifestly are not (because they are berthed, side by side, at the docks).

The puzzle of *which* ship is *really* S1 has generated a range of putative solutions over the centuries. If we believe that continuity through space and time is necessary (but not sufficient) for persistence or endurance, i.e. for the continuing *identity* of S1, then PTL will seem the preferred candidate for identity with S1 and, hence, the winner of the competition to identify the oldest ship. It is surely not just incidental that the successive changes made to S1, taken one by one, do not interfere with our ability to go on identifying and re-identifying the same ship. Even if we allow that at any given time, the microscopic particles that constitute the larger material object are not fixed but in an ongoing state of flux, and that they, too, come and go over time, we do not feel that our conception of the object *as an object of a certain kind* is any less secure, for this is precisely what such objects ordinarily *do*.

On the other hand, several factors may tip the scales in the opposite direction, in favor of M, the reconstituted ship. Consider:

- The example of the watch in pieces on the watchmaker's table suggests that taking something apart and putting it back together again is quite consistent with that thing's continuing identity;
- It is not reasonable to reject M just because PTL is a viable candidate (because we could simply do the opposite and reject PTL on the grounds that M is available)[8];
- A material object such as a ship is made of other material objects which are its parts, so the criteria for re-identification of the object ought to take such parts into consideration. M has precisely the same (macro) parts as S1, whereas PTL has none of the same parts.

Needless to say, the supporters of PTL's claim to the prize (including Wiggins) are not done yet. They appeal to the sortal (or kind) concept *ship* (which demarcates the *kind* of object in question), to insist that it is only by tracing S1 under this concept that we can speak of the kind of continuity that makes identity intelligible. Ships, unlike rivers, are human *artifacts*, designed by us to fulfill a specific purpose or function (something to do with floating on the sea, conveying people or cargo from one port to another, etc.). Even though both PTL and M are able to function in this way (and so can appropriately be described as *ships*), only PTL can legitimately claim to have functioned in this way at all times since "it" (i.e. S1) was built in the first place. M, on the other hand, existed, if at all, as a pile of wooden bits and pieces – beginning with just one such piece – right up to the time that they were put

[8] This is an instance of Wiggins' "Only a and b" rule, according to which, when considering questions of identity between objects a and b, no *other* object is relevant (Wiggins 2001, p. 96).

together to form a ship. Since, presumably, one plank does not a ship make, the requisite continuity in the lead-up to M is simply absent.

One way to both have our ship and eat it (so to speak) is to insist that at the time the original ship S1 is built, there is not one ship but two: the ship that will become PTL and the ship that will become M. This suggestion goes further than allowing that there are two *physical objects* in the same place at the same time (assuming that an object of a certain kind is distinct from the collection or assembly of its constituent parts, then both the object and the collection of its parts exist at the same place at the same time, but they belong to quite different kinds). For we are supposing here that there are two objects *of the same kind* (i.e. *ship*) and this is counter-intuitive, to say the least. In fact, since no one knows the fate of S1 at any time – it might be repaired, reconstituted, or a combination of both, etc. – the same argument can be extended to allow three, or any number of, ships being in the same place at the same time. But now we are in danger of losing our conceptual grip on what a ship actually is.[9]

There is something appealing about the notion that since artifacts are constructed by us to serve our purposes, such puzzles as that generated by the Ship of Theseus are the result of conceptual imprecision or vagueness. After all, it would be futile to await further scientific or empirical findings to resolve them. In ordinary, every-day contexts – an example of which my tale of the "oldest ship" contest pointedly is *not* – our understanding of such concepts as *ship* suffice for our purposes. From this one might infer that in those deliberately contrived contexts beloved of philosophers, one can say more or less whatever one likes. In such cases, it is not identity which causes problems, but the concept *ship*. Indeed, Wiggins (2001) himself seems to admit as much: "The truth is though that, for some practical purposes [e.g. when collecting a watch from the repairer], we simply do not mind very much about the difference between artifact survival and artifact replacement" (p. 101). On the other hand, Wiggins concedes that there are cases in which this difference may matter a great deal; for example, when the antiquity of the watch or its having been made by a "great artist" imbues, not merely *the watch* but also all its original parts, with great personal value. In such cases, "he [the owner] should take more precautions than we normally do take. He should care about its original constitution." In such cases, the owner may just have to accept that his precious artifact is beyond repair.

Still, all is not quite well. Recall from Chap. 2 the train that I regularly take to work. The issue of identity arises from considering exactly what is meant by stating that I take *the same* train (an artifact if ever there was one) every day, where it seemed that the train's actual continuing identity derives from its place in a time-table (at least from the commuter's point of view). In order to preserve the *this-such* conception that applies to ordinary material objects that we can track through space and over time, there does need to be a real physical *object* that I can point to and say: "*This* is *the train* that I take to work each day; I certainly do not

[9] Readers are here referred to Wiggins' sympathetic but critical discussion of Peter Geach's example pertaining to 1,000 cats sitting on one and the same mat (Wiggins 2001, pp. 173–174; also Noonan and Curtis 2014).

climb aboard a time-table. Perhaps we might say that there is not just one object that warrants the description "The train that I catch to work"; rather, this phrase is short-hand for something like: "any member of the class of objects that have the property of being a set of carriages running on a railway line, that runs according to such-and-such a schedule". But now we have created an *equivalence class* of objects that run on rails and conform to that schedule, from which it follows that the relation "same train as" is an *equivalence relation* – much like "same color as" when applied to objects that are colored – and not a strict identity relation. Here then is the choice before us: preserve the idea that a train is a concrete material object but dispense with strict identity, *or* keep identity and accept that trains are abstract entities defined by their place in a time-table. Either way, the common-place statement that I catch the same train every day requires considerable semantic unpacking before it can be regarded as meaningful, let alone true. For what it's worth, I prefer the equivalence class solution: When I say "This is the train I catch to work every day", I mean "This is a member of a certain equivalence class" (as outlined above). To reiterate a point I made earlier, we should not be tempted to interpret either of these statements as identity statements *per se*, notwithstanding the use of the term "is" which, to be sure, can mean "is identical with" in some situations. But this is not one of them.

It may be thought that my *train* example is somewhat unusual or esoteric; we are prepared to use a term like "the train I take to work" quite loosely precisely because I have little or no interest in a particular physical object (set of carriages, etc.) even though (1) it is just such an object that conveys me to the office, and (2) it seems natural to persist with the idea that the literal meaning of both "train" and "same train" is directly linked to particular material objects (viz. sets of carriages and wheels, etc.), and only indirectly linked to timetables. The child who observes that the train he is on today is not the same as the one he was on yesterday is making an identity claim (or, rather, denying one); the commuter, strictly speaking, is not.

I think there is a general principle to emerge from these reflections on various modes of transportation. Harking back to my initial statement of Wiggin's *Determinacy of Identity* thesis "Identity D", let us allow that terms like "train" and "ship" stand for kinds of thing that answer the question "What is it?" – that is, these terms designate *sortal* concepts in Wiggins' sense. It follows that from an understanding of such terms flows an understanding of the conditions or criteria of identity that allow us to identify and re-identify individual trains, ships, and so on. Accordingly, *expressions like* "*same train as*" *and* "*same ship as*" *must*, *at least on some occasions of their use*, *be expressions of literal identity*. So, for example, trains are material objects which can be traced through space and time according to just such criteria of identity, from which it surely follows that when "same train as" is *not* an expression of literal identity (but, let us suppose, an expression of equivalence or qualitative similarity with respect to a slot on a timetable), then our understanding of what a train is *must precede* our understanding that trains are (also) the sorts of things that tend to run to specific schedules or timetables.

Reflecting on the Connection Between *Entity* and *Identity*

The twentieth century logician and empiricist philosopher W.V. Quine is famous for championing several semantic theses, including "*No entity without identity*" (Quine 1969). Leaving aside the formalized strictures within which Quine often worked, the basic idea behind this thesis is that it is a minimal condition of being able to refer to an entity, **a** and, thereby, imputing the *existence* of **a**, that we can make sense of *identity* statements involving **a** ("**a** = **b**"); specifically, that we can associate with **a** a *criterion of identity* which allows us to identify and re-identify, not just **a** itself, but all things appropriately like **a** (or, as I prefer to say, in the spirit of this chapter, all things of the same *kind* as **a**). Less formally, if we are going to allow $\mathbf{a}_s$ into our world, then we need to know how to identify and re-identify $\mathbf{a}_s$, otherwise we cannot be sure that we are singling out one particular entity, as opposed to multiple entities or nothing at all. For example, I may postulate the existence of Mercurians (natives of the planet Mercury) but unless there is some way to identify one or more Mercurians, and to distinguish one Mercurian from another, then it is unclear just what my claim amounts to. (If I tried to bypass the problem by suggesting that there is precisely *one* Mercurian – so there is no problem about how to tell one from another – I would jump from the proverbial frying-pan into the fire, for now we face the deeper conceptual issue of whether something totally *sui generis* can exist at all (it could not be one of a kind). I will say more about this later (see end of Chap. 6) but notice that it casts doubt not just on the existence of a single Mercurian, but also on the existence of any object that is not seen as one of a kind – e.g. the One God, perhaps). Later, I shall argue that there are no specific identity criteria for *persons* (i.e. no criteria associated with being a person) which, according to the "no entity without identity" thesis, seems to entail that there are no persons either. I hope that the apparent absurdity of such a claim will tempt the reader to "stay tuned"!

Identification and *Identification*

In Chap. 2, I highlighted the difference between (and potential ambiguity surrounding) numerical and qualitative identity by way of two mundane sartorial examples: the numerically identical shirt that needs to be washed, and the qualitatively identical jackets that bring dismay to their respective owners. Although my concern, thus far, has been with the conceptual underpinnings of numerical identity – noting that in everyday practice, we ascribe such identity on the basis of separate acts of identification – it is important (and will become increasingly so in subsequent chapters) to understand the role of identification in ascriptions of *qualitative* identity. The person who observes that the two jackets are (qualitatively) identical is committed to an act of identification over and above that which is involved in merely identifying them *as* jackets. Just as the parent makes tacit use of an appropriate identity

criterion to identify today's shirt as the *very same* item of clothing which was worn for 3 days running, so the party goer, having identified the two jackets, makes a further judgement of identification, namely: that both jackets are of the same type, design, etc., i.e. are identical with respect to those salient qualities.

In the social sciences, notions of personhood and the self are very often based on acts of *self-identification*, as we shall see. But such acts are inevitably qualitative and not quantitative, in the sense that it is not my own literal identity (as a human being or person, for example) to which I attend, but my identity *as*, say, an Australian, a Jew, an academic, a gay man, etc. Allowing that such affiliations and groupings are taken as providing answers to the question "Who am I?", it is easy to overlook the conceptual machinery at work at the numerical or quantitative level – notably, the involvement of an underlying sortal or kind concept in actually tracking an object through space and time. By the theory of identity I am subscribing to, following Wiggins, in order to identify myself in a qualitative sense, I must already have literally identified *myself*, where the latter mode of identification provides a more fundamental answer to the question "Who am I?" In subsequent chapters, I shall argue that paying attention to this level of conceptual analysis matters when it comes to understanding and critiquing the so-called identity-related claims made in the social sciences. In particular, I contend that we are better off in various respects (including morally, affectively and politically) when we attend to the matter of identification at this more basic level. To realize that neither our personhood nor our literal identity is at risk if and when – as often happens – we shift among various associations and affiliations, or even give them up altogether, is to take a key liberating step in our own personal development.

Transition to Chap. 4: Natural Versus Artifactual Kinds

Assuming that the core identity theses "Identity A" and "Identity D" are correct, there remains the question of how to determine *which* fundamental sortal concept is appropriate for any given object. I need to confront this question in preparing to deal with claims of identity in the realm of human persons.

Many writers, Wiggins included, have thought it important to distinguish between two categories of sortal terms and concepts, representing two broad types of object. These two types are *natural* and *artificial* (or *artifactual*, as the objects in question are referred to as artifacts). A preliminary – but, as we shall see, not entirely satisfactory – way of marking the difference is to refer to two types of object: those which are found in nature, and those which are made by us to fulfill a particular purpose or function. We regard rivers and apples, insects and human beings, quantities of sugar, and lumps of wood, as belonging to the former type, and ships, tables, trains, statues and sugar bowls, as belonging to the latter. Wiggins marks the distinction by referring to *principles of activity* and *principles of functioning*, respectively, where such principles play a pivotal role in determining the identity and persistence conditions of objects which conform to them (Wiggins 2001, p. 72).

Such conditions, in the case of apples and insects, are determined by observation and discovery within the natural world; but for artifacts like tables and ships, the corresponding conditions are determined by those who designed, made and – to some extent – use them. My earlier discussion of ships and trains spelt out how such conditions operate in practice, with the salient point being that the identity conditions for artifacts are, in the main, stipulated rather than discovered, and are based on determining the extent to which such objects serve the function for which they were constructed (even if these conditions do not always determine clear-cut answers to identity-related questions). Apart from such functional applications, there is no single feature or property that these objects must have. But how do the corresponding conditions or principles operate in the case of natural objects or, more precisely, objects which belong to *natural kinds*?

In anticipation of responding to this question, consider some phenomena which reveal the diversity of identity-related behavior in the natural world. While the relevant entities and their characteristic behaviors are familiar enough, several questions lurk in the background, including: "What are the appropriate natural kinds for these entities?", and "Are the most commonly-proffered candidates for natural kinds either *natural* (in some appropriate sense) or *kinds*? It should be noted that the term "kind" in this context is a variation on the term "class" which calls to mind both those abstract – some would say, "timeless" – denizens of mathematics, and the idea of *classification*. Further – and it is this point which justifies devoting an entire chapter to the issue of natural kinds – where such individuals as biological organisms are properly said to have *parts* (which are, in various ways, bound to one another to form a whole), the kinds which purportedly underlie their identities have *members* (bound together by sharing certain properties characteristic of those kinds). It is important for Wiggins that his principles of activity for natural entities take the form of law-like generalizations which emerge from an understanding of relevant scientific theory, where these generalizations range over all and only the members of the relevant kind. In the case of natural organisms, human and other, the obvious and time-honored candidates for such kinds are *biological species*. A key difficulty here, as we shall see, is that science itself appears to be at odds with the very idea that species are natural kinds, construing them either as too arbitrary to be truly natural, or too much like individuals to be truly kinds. In any case, as the next chapter will reveal, what has become known as "the species problem" not only raises issues of identity which are of interest in their own right, but impacts directly on questions of identity for organisms like ourselves as well.

Two Examples and One Pseudo Example of Identity and Persistence in Nature

1. One characteristic form of behavior, typically in very small natural entities, is *fission*, whereby a simple organism such as an amoeba divides symmetrically, to become two of the same kind. I agree with Wiggins that:

(i) The assumed symmetry in fission necessitates judging that the original organism *O* has ceased to exist; this is because any ground for declaring *O* to be identical to *one* of the two post-fission organisms *O1* or *O2*, would be grounds for declaring *O* to be identical to the *other* as well; but since identity is a *transitive* relation, it would follow that *O1* and *O2* would also be identical – i.e. one and the same organism – when they plainly are not; however:

(ii) Such reasoning notwithstanding, it is *not* the symmetric division *per se* that determines that *O* ceases to exist (for how could the logic of identity alone determine matters of survival, birth and destruction in the natural world?); there must be an independent reason for this determination, based on what scientists know about the behavior of organisms *of that kind* (presumably, that the internal disruption to the parts of *O* during fission are inconsistent with its continuing to exist). This point is connected to Wiggins' *Only a and b* Rule, noted above. It implies, for instance, that even if one of the symmetrical successors dies or ceases to exist at or soon after fission, this cannot, by itself, warrant a claim to identity between the parent object and the surviving successor.

2. More or less the opposite process is exemplified in *metamorphosis* (partial or complete), whereby a natural organism (tadpole, larva or even – stretching the idea somewhat – seed) undergoes radical transformation to "become" something that looks and acts quite differently, but is, in natural fact, the same entity (somewhat like, if more extreme than, the slender child in the photo who becomes the portly adult looking at an image of himself 50 years later). Once again, it is important to distinguish between an overly general claim to persistence based on mere continuity, and a more precise claim based on the *kind* of entity in question. It is to the latter that we must look if we are faithful to the idea that claims of identity and persistence are governed by an underlying sortal concept.
3. Wiggins cites a famous Biblical story to test the thesis that there must be an underlying sortal concept to support claims of identity and persistence: that of *Lot's wife*, who "became a pillar of salt" when she, somewhat foolishly (to put it mildly), disobeyed the divine command and looked back on the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (2001, pp. 64–67). By using the word "became", the text itself highlights, but does not resolve, the crucial question of persistence: does Lot's wife *survive* as a pillar of salt, or does she *cease* to be at the very moment that the pillar *comes* to be? Over and above the issue of plausibility of the story itself, this question is a conceptual one. Here I agree with Wiggins that while we could imagine a single persisting object under the sortal concept *woman-pillar*, it is both simpler and more in accordance with what we already know about human beings and pillars of salt to interpret the act of becoming as an act of destruction followed by an act of creation (coming to be). In other words, an object of one kind is replaced by an object of quite a different kind.

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Chapter 4
Natural Kinds and Identity

Introduction: Kinds: Natural and Other

I confess to a degree of nervousness about using the term "natural". At the very least, if it does suggest one half of a dichotomy, we should reject the idea – whose coherence is as dubious as its value – that the contrast is with things which are *unnatural*. This idea has moral connotations that attempt to secure legitimacy by locating specific moral principles firmly within nature itself. It provides fundamentalists of all persuasions with pseudo-arguments for condemning as *unnatural* particular practices that they, themselves, find abhorrent. But apart from willfully confusing what *is* with what *ought to be*, such arguments inevitably collapse on their own terms: *that* the practices in question *do* occur (obviously) suffices to show that nothing in nature prevents them. I shall return to questions of morality later, but needless to say, they will not be dealt with by appealing to any kind of natural-unnatural dichotomy.

If there is a genuine dualism worth considering here, it is between things that *occur in nature* and things that are *made by humans*, although even here there is some room for confusion. We regard birds' nests and spiders' webs as natural even though they are made by those who use them – perhaps because we do not impute such mental states as agency or intentionality to birds and spiders. Further, horses, rocks and (quantities of) water are not designed – at least, not designed by human beings – and so it is tempting to assume that there is some kind of innate or nature-giving quality which makes them what they are. However, this idea is not well-expressed, being ambiguous between making an object what *it* (individually) is, and making an object the *kind* of thing that it is. Wiggins advocates a modest form of *essentialism* (2001, pp. 108ff), whereby certain natural kinds of objects – including our own kind – may be associated with necessary or essential properties that are constitutive of these kind and, moreover, that such properties play a key role in the continuing identity – hence, the very existence – of these objects; but he rejects the idea that an individual object has its own unique essence (what is sometimes referred to as

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haecceity, a concept discussed briefly in Chap. 2). So, in the case of what may be termed *natural* objects, the naturalness – in so far as it has anything to do with identity at all, which is what I am about to consider – is not a direct feature of the objects as particular things but, rather, a feature of the *kind* of thing that these objects are.

The identity conditions for objects of a kind are to be found in, or constructed from, one or more properties that are constitutive of the kind. But unlike the matter (stuff) that constitutes material objects, the constitutive properties of a kind will also *identify* it as being that very kind and not some other. Furthermore, the properties that identify a certain kind will be the very properties that determine the conditions of identity and persistence for *objects* of that kind (although, as noted, they will not be uniquely determinate of any particular member of the kind, for they are properties which all members of the kind share). If a table is considered to be any raised object with a surface that can be used to support objects, then this condition both defines the concept *table* in terms of a specific function (and determinate shape, but only in so far as the shape is necessary for the function), *and* is the key for making identity-related judgments about tables as individual objects. This link between the object and its kind works because such kinds are classes of objects defined (one way or another) by specific functional properties. In the case of natural objects and their kinds, we should expect to find similar links, except that the properties that define – are constitutive of, in the above sense – a natural kind will, in some appropriate sense, be derived from nature, not from human function or design. My chief objective in this chapter is to find out whether or not this expectation can be fulfilled in the specific case of *ourselves*: Does nature, as uncovered by some domain of natural science, determine an answer to the question "What (kind of thing) am I?"

Wiggins maintains that there are sortals or kinds that warrant being called *natural* because they are, ultimately, defined by reference to underlying properties that are, themselves, natural. But what does this mean and why is it relevant to discussions of identity? The answer has to do with what contemporary philosophers regard as constitutive of *naturalness*, viz. relationships among certain properties that may be described as *nomological* or law-like, where the laws in question are *laws of nature*. Taken together, these properties demarcate *natural kinds*, i.e. groupings of objects with these properties, which behave in certain characteristic ways, according to the kinds of objects that they are. These properties may be regarded as necessary or *essential* relative to the kind in question, meaning that any object belonging to the kind will necessarily possess them. And among these essential properties there may be a small number – perhaps just one – which I shall term *nomologically primary* which can both explain and predict the behavior (and other characteristics) of members of a natural kind. Why do samples of (pure) water (whether in single drops, buckets or lakes) behave or affect us in certain ways (tasteless, having a certain weight, sustaining life, freezing at 0 °C, etc.)? Because water has the nomologically primary property of being composed of H_2O molecules (or some other, perhaps even more basic property; as long as there *is* a scientific consensus on this point, the details do not matter here). Okay, but why does water have *this* molecular property? And here the only appropriate answer is: Because that's what water *is*! It is a natural kind whose essence may be given summarily in terms of a particular molecular

structure. Whatever has that structure counts as water and, of course, *vice versa*. (There is a different question here, namely: "What makes a particular object or quantity the kind of thing that it is?", to which I shall return shortly.)

Notice that it will be the nomologically primary properties which are constitutive of their kind – even though other properties may also be essential to it – because they play a crucial role in *explaining* the characteristic behavior of things of that kind (the theories of which they are part include laws under which specific causal interactions can be subsumed). Put simply: water does what it does *because* of the kind of thing (or stuff) that it is.

We need to acknowledge the distinction between kinds of *stuff* and kinds of *objects* (whether natural or otherwise). Literal exemplars of the former are *quantities*, rather than individual objects. By contrast the exemplars of a (putative) natural kind like *horse* or *cypress tree* (to use two of Wiggin's examples) are particular objects in their own right. Granted, we usually deal with water in *containers* (whether themselves natural like a lake or artificial like a cup), which allow us to demarcate or individuate specific quantities of the stuff (and, if needs be, to re-identify said quantities – but remember Heraclitus!), whereas horses and trees already come pre-packaged, so to speak, as individuals. And, of course, the two types of *kind* are related, in that each and every three-dimensional object, whether natural or not, is constituted of one or more kinds of stuff. But as I have already noted, such objects are not *identical* with their constituent stuff; a table might be made or constituted of wood – might even *be*, loosely speaking, a specific *piece of wood* – but it is not, for all that, *identical* with it. Somewhat ironically, while our interest here is chiefly with kinds of objects rather than kinds of stuff, the idea, taken for granted by Wiggins and other philosophers, that objects such as horses and trees have essential properties – let alone properties I am calling "nomologically primary" – is often met with incredulity among scientists – specifically, biologists – who have bothered to think about such issues. Why this is so will shortly be explained.

"Essentialism" in Our Time

The idea of essences has tantalized philosophers (among others, e.g. theologians) for centuries, but it is only in the last 50 or so years, thanks to some innovative semantic thinking, that it has been somewhat purified of its mysterious metaphysical connotations ("something I know not what"), in favor of a semantically and scientifically coherent conception of what (certain) things are, and why they do what they do. As Wiggins and other contemporary analytic philosophers such as Saul Kripke (1980, 2011) and Hilary Putnam (1975) have explained, if an object x is a member of a natural kind K, and if K is nomologically associated with some underlying property P (as with gold and its atomic structure, or water and its molecular structure, etc.), then we may assert that x essentially, or necessarily, possesses P (Wiggins

2001, p. 124).[1] One feature which renders essences scientifically respectable is that properties such as P in the above example and, indeed, the property of being a member of K itself, even if necessary or essential, are discoverable *a posteriori*, i.e. through experience; they are *not* posited a priori like the essences of old (if the essential properties of a material thing or kind are taken as knowable a priori – that is, determinable by reason alone – it is not surprising that they should turn out to be unknowable). But not just any common experience will fill the bill here; if K is a genuine natural kind, then the properties in question will be discoverable through *scientific inquiry*. We lay-persons may know how to pick out water, gold and horses, but the task of uncovering the nomologically primary properties underlying objects belonging to these kinds (samples of water and gold, and individual horses) is a scientific one. It is worth citing Wiggins' characterization of natural kinds, for although problematic, it reveals a degree of sensitivity to actual scientific practice:

> … *x* is an f (horse, cypress tree, orange, caddis fly…[but also, sample of pure gold, water, etc.]) if and only if, given good *exemplars* of the kind that is in question, the best theoretical description that emerged from collective inquiries into the kind would group *x* alongside these exemplars… An object *x* is an f just if *x* is similar in the relevant way to genuine exemplars … (Wiggins 2001, pp. 79–80)

Although my interest lies chiefly in the deference given here to a notion of similarity which is based on the nomological or law-like discoveries of (the best available) scientific theories, it should also be noted that Wiggins' account grounds the *meaning* or sense of natural kind terms on objects in nature which are *already classified as* (*purportedly*) *belonging to the kind in question*. There is here a deliberate attempt to align natural kind words with another class of linguistic terms, namely, ordinary *proper names* (Wiggins 2001, p. 84). The alignment here is semantic rather than merely linguistic or syntactic, and while a complete elucidation would take us too far afield (specifically, into an account of how certain words *refer* to items in the world, and how such reference is presupposed by our capacity to *make sense of* the things we say), the basic idea is that there is a *history* to the way words – specifically, names – are used and, at least for all the members of a given language community, when we use proper names and natural kind terms we, knowingly or not, link that usage to previous uses of the same terms, all the way back to whoever it was who first used them to refer to, stand for, or designate either a particular object (in the case of proper names) or a (natural) grouping/kind of object (in the case of natural kind terms).[2]

I described Wiggin's characterization as showing sensitivity to actual scientific practice. More than what this statement says, I have in mind here what it does *not* say. It does not say that objects belonging to a natural kind must share some *internal*

[1] There is an interesting but – perhaps fortunately – irrelevant digression here, on the subject of the nature and scope of the necessity posited here. Does it follow that laws of nature themselves are, if true, then necessarily true, and is this notion of necessity tantamount to the logician's strong sense of necessity, or to something weaker (Wiggins 2001, p. 85)?

[2] See Kripke (1980). Kripke is regarded as the modern-day champion of this view of proper names, with his theory of *rigid designation*.

or structural properties. It may well be the case that the *essence* of water or gold is a particular internal molecular or atomic structure, respectively and, moreover, that this structure plays a key role in theoretical explanations of other features of these kinds. But biological natural kinds, if there are any, will not be like this even if, as some physicists no doubt believe, biology turns out to be completely *reducible* to the more basic sciences.[3] I recently rediscovered this very line of thinking in my own doctoral thesis entitled *Natural Kinds and Biological Species* (Splitter 1982) which was written (quite) some years ago. I also found there something I now realize to be more problematic: what I termed *The Appropriate Similarity Condition* for natural kinds, according to which the members of a natural kind will be similar – as judged according to the most complete scientific understanding of the day – to exemplars which have been independently recognized as being in that kind. However, notwithstanding that Wiggins also falls back on the idea of *relevant similarity* (Wiggins 2001, p. 82), as just about any evolutionary biologist will point out, similarity is an unlikely candidate when it comes to characterizing biological natural kinds. To put the point somewhat bluntly, and with due deference to the relevant "experts", there appears to be no prospect of defining such biological kinds as species in terms of structural properties which are similar, in some theoretical sense, across all and only the members of those kinds.

Biological Natural Kinds[4]

Still, might there not yet be a role for the notion of similarity to play, as a broad standard for membership of a kind, natural or not, once we remember that this notion is semantically incomplete; as with the concept of *thing* or *object*, it awaits completion by reference to a specific concept – some particular *respect* in which objects are to be regarded as (appropriately) similar? Any two objects – supposing that there really are *two* – can be found to be similar in any number of respects and (qualitatively) different in any number of (other) respects. But once we specify the required context of similarity – same shape, same genetic structure, same ecological role, etc. – then we have a genuine *equivalence* relation. In the case of biological natural kinds, specifically *species*, the question, then, is: "Is there any way to complete or contextualize a notion of similarity so that it can bring together just those individuals which are co-specific?"

[3] Such reducibility would have many casualties, including the very terms which were postulated as biological natural kind terms in the first place. If all the characteristics and behavior of such biological entities as horses and cypress trees can be explained in terms of the characteristics and behavior of atoms, molecules and other non-biological entities, then there seems little point in positing *horse* as a natural kind since, as such, it has no real explanatory power.

[4] Some of the material in this section and those sections following is taken from my previously published journal article (Splitter 1988). I am grateful to the publisher for permission to use this material here.

What emerges from the relevant literature is that biologists pretty much reject notions of similarity which relate to the internal properties of organisms – irrespective of the nature of these properties. In summary terms (after all, I did write an entire thesis on this topic), *phenotypic* definitions (i.e. based on observable characteristics) are notoriously unreliable – notwithstanding that we lay-persons rely on them for our own taxonomic purposes (although there is substantial evidence that biological taxonomists use phenotype as the basis of classification for such supra-specific groupings as genera, orders, etc., as well as for sub-specific groupings as subspecies and races). But the same is true of definitions which appeal to deeper structural features: chromosomes, genes, etc.; whatever it is that characterizes biologists' conceptions of species, it is *not* such properties. This finding is borne out by studying the literature on species identification, differentiation and re-identification. I shall shortly summarize key aspects of this literature in relation to several scientifically well-known species definitions, beginning with one grounded on the evolutionary or *phylogenetic* relations of ancestry and descent.

Notice that it is not only the characterizations of species that distinguish our everyday understandings from those of scientists and other specialists, but the very *names* assigned to species and other biological kinds. Wiggins refers to horses, cypress trees, oranges and caddis flies (above), but within biology, in so far as these entities are referred to at all, the corresponding taxa – as per the system invented by Carolus Linnaeus – are *Equuscaballus*, various members of the family *Cupressaceae*, fruit from any species of plant from the genus *Citrus*, and a loosely defined collection of species belonging to the genus *Oecitis* and/or the order *Trichoptera*, respectively. It is noteworthy – as we shall shortly see – that the members of such categories are taken to be *whole species*, rather than the organisms that belong to them.

Phylogenetic Conceptions of Species

The phylogenetic characterization of species stipulates that a given species is uniquely identified by its place in the phylogenetic system commonly referred to as the *evolutionary tree*. Just as I may be uniquely identified in my family "tree" as the eldest son of Leon and Jean Splitter, born on July 8, 1950, so the kind to which I belong – namely, *Homo sapiens* – is uniquely identified by its place in the evolutionary tree. Among the implications of such a view is that just as no individual with a different origin from mine could actually *be* me – no matter how similar in other ways – so no species with a different origin from a given species S could be identical with S. In particular, no members of the second species could be co-specific with members of S, irrespective of the degree of similarity in other respects (so there could be no oranges or horses on some distant planet, unless there had been, at some time, an actual spatio-temporal link between Earth and that planet – e.g. if some members of an ancestral species, bearing ancestral fruits, had made their way from one planet to the other); and once a species goes extinct, *it* cannot return to existence

because any subsequent species would, *ipso facto*, have a different origin. Ditto, of course, for human beings. If this line of reasoning is correct, then the creation of human beings in a laboratory or other artificial environment is *conceptually* impossible, the facts and limits of science and technology notwithstanding.

I cannot resist posing the same question for *persons*: might they be created in a laboratory, e.g. as robots or very advanced computers? Strange as it may seem, the answer to this question could be based empirically – not conceptually – on the extent of human ingenuity and technology. This is another way of saying that whatever category *person* stands for, it is not a natural kind – that persons are entities (of whatever kind, natural or otherwise) with certain characteristic properties. As we shall see, this point has important educational implications – specifically, that the making or development of persons is not something that can be left to nature and its devices but, rather, is very much the product of what happens to (young) human beings (who *are* part of nature) in their interactions with others, i.e. other persons.

Looking back at the characterization of natural kinds proposed by Wiggins, does a phylogenetic definition fill the bill? Could we reasonably hope that once we have good exemplars of a species, we may declare as co-specific all and only those individuals which phylogeny would group alongside those exemplars, as being appropriately or relevantly similar to them – where the similarity in question is precisely that of sharing a common origin?

The answer to this question is, emphatically, "No!" To characterize an entity in terms of its actual origin is to emphasize its relational features over its structural features, where these relations, whatever else they are, must be primarily relations in space and time. *However*, *no amount of information about origins and ancestry is adequate to the task of providing criteria for identification and – more significantly – re-identification*. If a particular insect were to split in half or thirds or twentieths, whether in equal or unequal parts, the fact that it has a particular origin would be of no help at all in determining whether it has now ceased to exist, or survives as one of the parts, or survives in some discontinuous manner as all of the parts. All we can say, as per the previous paragraphs, is that the actual origin and ancestry of organisms (as well as species) are *necessary* to their identity; they are *not* sufficient!

In shifting from organisms to species, we may confidently assert that the facts of phylogeny (ancestry) do not suffice to determine criteria of identity for particular species or other taxa, even on the assumption that species are bound together by relations of ancestry and descent. As with our variably dividing insect, such facts will not support claims of identity or difference at precisely those places where they are most crucial and contentious (speciation events, for example, by which "new" species are formed out of "old" ones). I have endorsed the view, articulated by Wiggins (but in the tradition of Aristotle and Leibniz, *et al.*), that each individual whose continuing identity makes sense to us must be thought of as a *this-such*: with the "this" component providing the ostensive marker (picking something out in space and time) and the "such" the conceptual content (the kind of thing it is). In the case of so-called biological natural kinds, phylogeny may provide the ostensive or

deictic component (*this*) but something more conceptually-laden is needed as well (*such*). This point parallels one made by Wiggins in relation to ordinary objects, whether natural or artifactual: in restricting our concept of *object* to things that have spatio-temporal continuity, we do not thereby imply that bare continuity *per se* can provide the required identity criteria for objects that exist and persist in space and time. It cannot.

Still, even if phylogeny cannot provide such criteria – and, accordingly, cannot provide the nomologically primary properties required by species if they are to count as natural kinds – it does suggest something of great significance nonetheless – although not something which all natural kind advocates would welcome. Repeating a point from the previous paragraph, phylogeny provides the key ostensive or deictic component for those entities which participate in the process of evolution, most notably, species themselves. But it follows that species are *individuals* with definable beginnings and ends in space-time, rather than kinds characterized by relations of similarity among their members which are not bound by any specific spatio-temporal constraints. And, indeed, this is borne out by what biological theorists tell us: just as those laws and theories central to the scientific understanding of evolution do *not* govern the behavior of individual organisms (which are the putative members of species as natural kinds) and their parts, there is no theory which governs the behavior of particular species and their constituent organisms. But there are – or may be – theories which govern the behavior of species in relation to one another, over space and time. The upshot of this line of thinking is that the concept of *species* itself could function as a higher-order natural kind, a proper understanding of which reveals those principles of activity for (including criteria for identifying, re-identifying and distinguishing) its members, i.e. individual species taxa. We need to *ascend* one level of classification here: rather than focus on how organisms behave within the species to which they belong, evolution is concerned with how *species and populations of organisms behave in relation to one another* (a familiar corollary: those worried about the likely extinction of a species and those worried about the death of specific organisms are not worried about the same thing; there are different levels of concern operating here).

What kinds of biological theories govern the relationships of species to one another? There is more than one answer to this scientific question, especially if we take into account the *environments* which species and their constituent organisms inhabit (i.e. the complex field of *ecology*). Still, among evolutionary theorists, there is one kind of relationship which is regarded as particularly significant when it comes to identifying or distinguishing one species from another, namely, the relationship of *interbreeding* which, while it necessarily involves individual organisms, provides the basis for the most well-grounded theories generating identity conditions for species themselves. This basis has been called the *Biological Species Concept* or *Biospecies*.

The Biological Species Concept

An early definition of Biospecies, offered by one of the most celebrated evolutionary biologists of the Twentieth Century, Ernst Mayr, runs as follows:

> [species are] groups of actually or potentially interbreeding natural populations which are reproductively isolated from other such groups (Mayr 1942, p. 12).[5]

Correlatively, populations of organisms are *reproductively isolated* from one another when they – which can only mean their constituent organisms – do not actually interbreed. This gives rise to the suggestion that the identity conditions for such populations are best given in terms of reproductive isolation: populations P_1 and P_2 are identical if and only if they are not reproductively isolated (Splitter 1982, p. 157).

Might such a definition meet the condition stated by Wiggins (and echoed in my Appropriate Similarity condition, above) for species to count as natural kinds: an organism belongs to a particular species if and only if it is grouped, via the relation of interbreeding, with other organisms already classified as belonging to that species? In support of this characterization is the fundamental role played by sexual reproduction in preserving and transmitting genetic material – hence, all other biological traits. However, to echo the general point made above, even though it is inevitably the case that specific acts of interbreeding involve specific individuals (usually two of them), it does not follow that there are any recognized laws or law-like principles that determine the sexual behavior of these individuals (or pairs of individuals). There are laws, albeit in statistical form, which govern the behavior of populations, but these laws do not apply to specific organisms within these populations. In other words, the behavior of such organisms cannot be derived from that of populations of organisms, which suggests that the former stand in a part/whole relation to the latter, not as common members of a class or kind.

I note here that one species-related phenomenon which, by definition, cannot be captured by the Biological Species Concept is that of asexual or uni-parental species. Far from being atypical, many biologists maintain that such non-sexual forms are in the majority, largely because of their prevalence in the plant kingdom. Various responses by proponents of Biospecies have been proposed (including claims that asexual forms are derivative upon sexual ones, and that the former are maladaptive) but the reality is that many living things have managed to survive, even thrive, for millions of years in the absence of any form of interbreeding.

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[5] Mayr was consistently opposed to any form of *Essentialism* when it came to defining or specifying the meanings of species and other biological concepts, although it is arguable that his views on what constitutes essentialism were somewhat limited (Splitter 1982). One philosopher who also wrote extensively against both essentialism and the thesis that species are natural kinds is David Hull (1965, for one of many exemplary papers).

Even putting aside the issue of uni-parentalism, we begin to see the precariousness of the species concept itself, in its bid for natural kind status. It is no accident that definitions such as Mayr's above refer to *populations*, leaving species facing an uncertain status as mere *groups* of populations which may only have the *potential* to interbreed. Mayr recognizes this problem by distinguishing between "non-dimensional" and "multi-dimensional" species concepts, but an examination of this distinction reveals that it is does little to enhance the status of *species* as natural kinds.

The Recurring Problems of Space and Time: *Non-dimensional* Versus *Multi-dimensional* Species Concepts

As soon as we start to see a small population being extended in space and over time – specifically, beyond the point where actual interbreeding is occurring – it is not clear just what biological processes serve to maintain species as biological wholes. The paradigm example of a biospecies is the local breeding population, i.e. a relatively small group of interbreeding organisms confined to a specific region of space, and considered at a given time (Splitter 1982, p. 173). Such populations can legitimately be construed as individuals with organisms as their parts, bound together by relations of interbreeding and ancestry and descent. However, few biologists would equate these entities with species, precisely because the latter are taken to be *multi-dimensional* across space and time. Indeed, without the dimension of space, notions of ecology would not make sense, whereas without the dimension of time, the very concept of evolution would be empty. The difficulty, as proponents of Biospecies are well aware, is that the coherence of relations of interbreeding and reproductive isolation becomes stretched to breaking point as local breeding populations spread further over space and time.

Populations Extended in Space

Consider two or more co-existing populations. With respect to determining conditions of species identity or distinctness, there are two main challenging scenarios to consider.

Scenario #1 Two or more populations of the same species occupy distinct, non-overlapping areas of space (e.g. Siberian and North American populations of wolverines) (Wiggins 2001, p. 187). Unless we are prepared to speculate about future possibilities – namely, that *were* these populations to come into contact, they would interbreed with one another – there seems no way of using the biospecies concept to defend the identity claim here. And for what it's worth, biology does provide some

support for this view, since such geographical isolation is often the precursor of a verifiable speciation event, whereby at least one new species comes into being.

Scenario #2 *Chains* and *rings* of races (populations) across space. There are numerous documented cases of overlapping chains of populations which satisfy two apparently conflicting conditions: outlying members of one population successfully interbreed with outliers from neighboring populations, yet as the populations move further apart from one another, there are reasons for speculating that they could not interbreed. The most compelling cases actually form a *ring* of populations, with interbreeding in areas of overlap, but with marked reproductive isolation between the "book-end" populations which close the ring. In such contexts, the relation *interbreeds with* fails *transitivity*: population P_1 interbreeds with P_2, P_2 interbreeds with P_3, and so on, yet the last population in the series, P_n, does *not* interbreed with P_1. If follows, inexorably, that in such situations, this relation cannot constitute sameness of species (because any sameness relation must be transitive). Various ways of accommodating this conceptually embarrassing phenomenon have been proposed, but suffice to say that it, too, puts pressure on the idea that biospecies are multi-dimensional.

Chains of Populations Over Time

The biospecies concept sits uncomfortably with the core evolutionary (and intuitive) notion that species can persist for lengthy periods, regardless of whether they ultimately give rise to new species or simply become extinct. It is commonly held that populations which are temporally continuous or overlapping are co-specific because relations of interbreeding permeate them. But suppose we jump a few generations and wonder about co specificity – or species differentiation for that matter – again. How can there be any relations based on direct interbreeding in such cases? And if we try and infer sameness of species by virtue of "serial transitivity" (populations P_1, P_2 and P_3 are conspecific as long as P_1 interbreeds with P_2, and P_2 interbreeds with P_3), we may well ask how speciation – the process whereby new species are formed – can ever occur? Here the problem of phylogeny threatens to re-emerge: assuming that serial interbreeding occurs up and down all branches of the evolutionary tree, doesn't the biospecies conception leave us with just *one* species after all?

The Formation of New Species: *Speciation*

I can no longer ignore the key biological and evolutionary process of *speciation*, whereby new species are formed "out of" old ones. By contrast with the more intimate and well-understood process of animal procreation – in which two organisms of the same species (or perhaps just one) produce one or more offspring, also of the

same species – the actual facts of speciation have been the subject of fierce debate among evolutionary biologists (as opposed to being completely denied by creationists and other pseudo-scientists). Different viewpoints have given rise to different schools of thought over such questions as: 'Must the parent species become extinct at or after speciation?'; 'Can speciation take place in the absence of any kind of branching or splitting of populations?'; and 'Is speciation a gradual process (relatively speaking) or one which involves a (relatively) abrupt interruption to an otherwise static situation?' Remembering that the Biological Species Concept, in its strictest form, can only adjudicate issues of identity among populations when the dimensions of space and time are minimized (i.e. the populations co-exist in roughly the same spatial environment), we can see why it offers little assistance with respect to such questions; in the eyes of many biologists, it is futile to speculate on what spatiotemporally diverse populations *would* do if brought into contact.

Interestingly, questions of identity – specifically, in relation to the survival of the parent species and the number of new species formed – have been somewhat obscured by what has been the prevailing model of speciation, in which the answers to the three questions posed above are, respectively: "Yes" (the parent species must become extinct); "No" (speciation requires branching); and "The former" (speciation is a gradual process). On this model, evolution is a gradual process by which two or more populations of a single species (or population) are divided by external barriers of some kind so that, over time, the separated populations are subjected to different selection pressures and evolve into distinct species. The distinctness of the two descendent species may be determined in a manner consistent with the Biological Species Concept – specifically, they may develop devices (isolating mechanisms) which prevent successful interbreeding – but only because they co-exist in time (Splitter 1982, p. 96). The extinction of the parent species would seem to be a matter of necessity, particularly if we assume that the process of division is symmetric.

However, the prevailing model of speciation has been challenged by a theory which is consistent with the survival of the parent species; one which replaces the idea of symmetric and continuous gradualism with that of non-symmetric discontinuity or what is known as "punctuated equilibrium". The core idea here is that an evolutionarily static situation is interrupted when a small localized population "becomes isolated at the margin of the geographical range of its parent species". Over a relatively short period of time, if the isolate survives, it is likely to develop isolating mechanisms which prevent the isolated population from successfully interbreeding with the original parent species (Eldredge and Gould 1972, p. 94; Splitter 1988).

One key difference between the two theories is that where the non-survival of the parent species is required by the symmetric gradualist model, it is not required by the alternative "punc-eq" model. And this is a distinct point in favor of the latter. Earlier, I echoed Wiggins' point that fission in nature requires a properly scientific account of why the parent organism does not survive, *over and above* the claim that survival is inconsistent with the logic of identity, specifically the property of transitivity. The same point may be made in the case of speciation: symmetry *per se* can-

not account for the demise of the parent species. However, the Biological Species Concept is silent on the question of survival or demise, just because there is no way of testing interbreeding across time. In fact, there is an emerging consensus among evolutionary biologists, geneticists, and paleontologists in favor of punctuated equilibrium, in which the formation of new species may or may not spell the demise of the parent.

One more phenomenon in relation to speciation is worth mentioning here: that of *phyletic speciation* – the formation of new species in the absence of any kind of branching or splitting, whether symmetric or not. From an empirical perspective, biologists have been divided on whether phyletic speciation occurs, depending on how vital they regard some kind of isolation or branching as being to the speciation process. From a conceptual viewpoint, some philosophers have rejected phyletic speciation by analogy with organisms, as follows: We are not tempted to regard an organism that undergoes qualitative change – even something as radical as metamorphosis – as undergoing *replacement* by a new organism. Degrees of similarity, whether phenotypic or more deep-seated, do not address the issue of numerical identity. Similarly, so the argument goes, a single species that undergoes change over time should not, thereby, be regarded as undergoing speciation to form a new species. However, the analogy fails because it begs the very question at issue: By what criterion do we judge that the species has survived or been replaced? Granted, neither phylogeny itself nor degree of similarity or difference can constitute such a criterion, but unless we have one at hand, there is simply no basis for making, or denying, any identity claim in the case of an evolving species (Splitter 1982, p. 94).

A little reflection reveals that phyletic speciation is actually a necessary feature of speciation, even when budding or splitting occurs. A population that becomes isolated from another has yet to become a new species; the assumption being that at the time of separation, it is part of the same species as the parent. The process of development into a new species would seem to be a kind of phyletic speciation. However, this interpretation simply strengthens the case for a species definition which – unlike the phyletic and biological species concepts – both allows and explains the formation of new species over time. And I close this discussion by noting that such definitions have, indeed, been proposed, albeit tentatively. In the final section of my dissertation, I speculated that the theoretical concept of *homeostasis* – which refers to those internal forces and processes that promote cohesion and stability within a given individual (whether organism, population or larger entity) – could form the basis of a species definition that supports judgments of identity and distinctness – what Wiggins refers to as the *principle of activity* for members of natural kinds (see also Ereshefsky 1992). I do not intend to explore this idea here, except to note that *if* it is viable, it provides a key for classifying, not species as natural kinds – for they will remain individuals, ontologically speaking – but the *species category as a natural kind*. The members of this kind will be individual species which, in turn, comprise populations of organisms in and across space and time. Species, along with their component populations and organisms, will be individuals according to the thrust of the previous discussion.

Organisms and Their (Natural) Kinds

Having suggested, albeit in rather broad and inconclusive terms, a way of understanding the species as a natural kind, I cannot close this chapter without returning to the issue with which it began (following the discussion in Chap. 3): if the species and populations to which organisms belong are individuals, rather than kinds, then whence derive the principles of activity – including conditions of identity and persistence – for individual organisms? They cannot derive from the species of which they are part because wholes and parts are not bound together by laws of nature. Species may have their appropriate kind – namely, the species as a category of evolutionary significance – but what about the individual organisms which constitute them?

In Chap. 3, I endorsed Wiggins' *Principle of the Sortal Dependency of Identity* ("Identity D"), whereby the desired conditions of identity and persistence for material objects are given by their being classified and organized under sortal or kind concepts. It is interesting to note that Wiggins felt that it would be those individuals classified under artifact kinds that posed the greatest challenge to ("Identity D") (Wiggins 2001, p. 87), and that the required principles of activity and organization for natural kinds and their members would, as it were, take care of themselves. In other words, artifact kinds are the conceptual creations of us humans, but natural kinds are "out there" in the world, waiting to be discovered, not by philosophers, but by specialists in the relevant disciplines. Ironically, however, in the paradigm case – that of ordinary entities found in nature, whose conceptual underpinnings have to carry the weight of supporting judgments of identity and persistence which are, themselves *natural* (by contrast with lumps of stuff, which are not individuals in this sense, and artifacts, which are not natural) – the science itself fails to come through. The most obvious candidates for natural kinds – namely, the species to which individuals belong and which make their very naturalness intelligible – turn out not to be natural kinds at all. *Either* the category *species* may be registered as a natural kind – in which case, its members – individual species – will be individuals and the relationships among organisms and species reduce to those of parts to whole – *or* nature and its law-like principles fail to register the concept of species *per se* opting, instead, for the more closely contextualized concept of *population* as the natural kind whose laws explain the facts and processes of evolution. If the latter, then species, whether as classes or compounds of populations, will become like genera, families, orders, and phyla: convenient levels of classification that are of taxonomic interest to us, but with no explanatory significance in nature itself.

Tadpoles become frogs; larvae become pupae then butterflies; human babies become human adults that sprout wings and feathers: it is tempting – *natural*, as we might say – to think that the truth of the first two transformations (including the ongoing identity of the organisms in question) and the falsity of the last are reflective of the *kinds* of organism in question. Butterflies *will* sprout wings unless they are mutations, but humans will not. However, if we follow through the findings of this chapter, we have yet to identify any natural kinds that support and explain these

developmental differences and the ongoing identity of the organisms. This is not to say that organisms belong to no natural kinds at all; it has been suggested, for example, that concepts such as *male*, *female*, *tree nester*, and *diploid organism* designate natural kinds because the characteristic behavior of (all) males, females, etc., can be subsumed under natural laws which serve to explain why organisms of these kinds behave as they do (I am not here questioning whether this is actually the case). But such groupings are *trans-specific* and are defined by properties which are not restricted in space and time as species and populations are. If the large number of types of metamorphosis – to take one example of a fairly radical change that is consistent with the survival of the organism – is to be accounted for in any theoretical framework which gives prominence to natural kinds, then we must look elsewhere for the latter.

A further point to note here is that most documented cases of metamorphosis are not species-specific, but range across various taxonomic categories (genera, families, etc., especially in insects and amphibians). Since few would argue that taxa at all of these levels should be regarded as *natural*, it seems, once again, that the connection with natural laws must be sought elsewhere.

The view of natural kinds which I have attributed to Wiggins states that kind membership involves two basic ingredients: the idea that the members of natural kinds are *individuals* which are grouped together alongside other exemplars of the kind (the *deictic* or *ostensive* component), and the idea that the relevant science (its laws and theories) provides the *conditions of similarity* for all members of the kind. *Nothing uncovered in the present chapter is inconsistent with either of these ingredients*. What we can assert – by appealing to the relevant science in question – is that species are *not* the relevant natural kinds with respect to individual organisms, because the latter, while organisms in their own right, are *parts of* the former which are not kinds, but individuals themselves. Further, we may take it that a sufficiently robust concept of *species* supports the thesis that the species category is a natural kind, whose members are individual species, according to the characterization offered by Wiggins. The question before us is this: "By examining relevant aspects of biological theory, can we identify one or more natural kinds which generate the appropriate identity conditions for organisms?"

The answer to this question may well be staring us in the face, as it were. Might the concept of (*living*) *organism* match the description of natural kind which generates identity conditions for individual organisms? Are there theoretical properties in common to all organisms that can account for such phenomena as metamorphosis in amphibians and, in general, the degree of variability and difference that may be observed across all organisms? There are two aspects of this concept worth noting, as I briefly examine this question:

1. The concept of an organism is substantially richer than that of mere *spatio-temporal continuant* which, as we have seen, is hardly more descriptive than concepts such as *object*, *thing*, etc.;
2. The concept of *organism* seems to indicate a level of development, growth, and organization that is increasingly important as the complexity of the organism

itself increases; these component stages are not incidental or arbitrary but are common to all organisms.

It is, in a way, reassuring to reflect that the question of what constitutes an *individual in nature* – and, therefore, a member of some natural kind – has not been well studied either scientifically or philosophically. For what this suggests is that the conceptual puzzle this chapter has opened up is neither trivial nor easily solved. We should hope, at least, to uncover grounds for distinguishing *biological* (i.e. *living*) individuals (with organisms as the paradigm case, and human beings even more so) from non-biological ones (such as bits of rock or gold, and quantities of salt or water, etc.). One suggestion, which I find plausible, is that where the latter are characterized by homogeneity – as one writer puts it[6]: if you've seen one electron or hunk of gold, you've seen them all, more or less – the former are characterized by heterogeneity which is intrinsic to the kind of entity that they are. If you've seen one tiger, or coral reef, you have *not* seen them all. Further, it is no accident that such intrinsic heterogeneity or variability should be a characteristic feature of organisms; after all, it is also characteristic of those larger entities – we do not normally refer to them as organisms but perhaps they are alive – of which organisms are parts, namely, populations and even species. But what is emerging here is that the natural kind underlying (all) organisms is that of *organism* itself, which parallels – but is not subsumed by – the notion that species are individuals of the kind *species*.

As to a satisfactory definition of the putative natural kind *organism*, Wilson (2005) – see also Boyd (1999) – has proposed to ground it on the concept of *homeostasis* (referred to earlier in connection with a putative definition of *species*), but allowing for the kinds of variability that characterize all biological entities, by specifying a range or *cluster* of properties, none of which is essential, but which, together, capture what we actually mean by *organism* (although even here, some natural entities remain troublesome in terms of their categorization as individual organisms; Wilson cites several examples, including giant fungi and coral reefs whose boundaries are not clear, and such "super-organisms" as ant colonies and bee hives). His view, in summary, is that organisms are characterized in nature by three key features: they are living things that interact causally with their environments (including other organisms); they have reproductive life-cycles (more precisely, they are parts of reproductive lineages since some organisms – drones in a hive, for example – do not reproduce, but contribute in various ways to those which do); and they exhibit some kind of *functional autonomy* (they are a source of their own agency or power).[7]

Whether or not such a tripartite characterization works is something to be settled, either by philosophers with sufficient scientific expertise, or by scientists sufficiently disposed to reflect on the conceptual underpinnings of their practice. But let us remember, one more time, what is at stake: the notion that such paradigm

[6] Boyd (1999).

[7] "Part of what makes something a living organism, I suggest, is its capacity to coordinate and regulate its metabolic and other vital functions" (Olson 1997, p. 133).

individuals as living organisms may be grouped together according to law-like principles which explain why they behave in certain characteristic ways in terms of a small number (Wilson has proposed three) of nomologically primary properties, is what lies behind the idea with which I am primarily concerned, namely, the conditions of existence and identity for such individuals. If *organism* is the natural kind representing such a natural grouping, then it follows that all organisms will be organized according to the same general principles, and will possess the same conditions of existence and identity, precisely *because* they are living things with homeostatic (internally-sustaining) reproductive life-cycles, that exhibit some form of functional autonomy. But organisms will also be spatio-temporal parts of larger individuals, namely populations, species and so on, and it is the latter which have, over time, acquired selection and adaptation mechanisms for surviving and evolving. We may push this a little further and speculate that these individuals also qualify as *ecological* units, in the sense that the mechanisms in question are not features of the constituent organisms alone, but of these individuals *in relation to their local environments*. Accordingly, even though the identity and persistence conditions will, in broad terms, be common for all organisms – and will be based on concepts concerning homeostasis, retaining autonomy as living things that have reproductive life-cycles, etc. – the *details* of how this plays out for particular species and population lineages may well differ quite markedly. Where metamorphosis, for example, has become a survival mechanism for amphibians, this is not the case for mammals. But this difference is, we may say, *contingent* upon the particular histories and ecologies of the constituent populations of these broadly defined taxa; it does not have to be seen as reflecting a necessary or essential difference at the level of kinds.

It is not clear if Wiggins' account of sortal concepts could incorporate this conclusion, for the latter implies that neither our pre-theoretic taxonomies (which classifies living things as horses, cypress trees and caddis flies) nor those supported by relevant theories such as evolution (which classifies things as "belonging to" species and other biological taxa) match up with the natural kinds that underpin conditions of identity, principles of activity, and so on. Natural kinds are now seen as carving out groups of things at a much more general level (*organism*, *population*, *species*); the many and varied species that remain the basic units of evolution do not qualify as natural kinds.

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Chapter 5
Who or What Am I?

Introduction

I move now to focus on the nature of, and conditions of identity for, that entity which we humans regard as both the most familiar and the most important object in our lives: *OURSELVES*! By "ourselves", I mean to refer to each of *us*: me, you and everyone else. After all, who or what is more familiar, more well known to each of us than our very own selves and, perhaps, the selves of others who are close to us in one way or another (family, friends, compatriots, etc.)? There are those with whom I interact on a daily basis, and there are those I may never encounter in my entire life. And, of course, there is that one entity or object with which I interact (almost) all of the time, namely, myself, me, I; from which it ought to follow that I am, indeed, the most familiar object in my own life.

However, beneath the surface of these apparently innocuous statements of the obvious, there lies another writhing can of worms (or a can of writhing worms). The problems begin with the reflexive language we use (at least in English): my-*SELF,* our-SELVES, suggesting that there is something – some object – which is not just me, but an inner self which is *inside*, or *owned by*, me. So it is appropriate to ask exactly what kind, type or sort of thing is it that you, I and everyone else *are* – or, are members of? Further, do I know myself better, or more intimately, than I know you, or her? Is my knowledge of myself – my *self-awareness*, as some would say – somehow prior to my knowledge of others (or vice versa)? Shifting from the epistemological to the ethical domain: Am I more important, valuable or worthwhile than you (in my own eyes)? Is each of us more important than objects like dolphins, artistic treasures and pristine wilderness areas? Are we more important as individuals, taken one by one, or as wholes or collectives (states, nations, cultures, etc.)? And, to come full circle, if I really do know myself so well, do I thereby know my own identity conditions – i.e. the conditions under which I can be individuated at a particular time, and re-identified over time (by myself and others)? In the tradition of those who see an intimate connection between the conditions under which

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something may be said to *exist*, and the conditions of that thing's identity and persistence through time (see Chap. 3), can I even be certain of my own existence?

Persons, Human Beings, Living Organisms

In this chapter and those following, I will argue that there is no one type or sort of entity that can be referred to in order to address all these issues. More specifically, my identity will be a function of the (natural) kind of thing that I am; but my capacity for self-awareness, along with my moral status will be functions of my being a *person*. In so far as we are all both persons *and* living organisms, we are part of, and directed by, the laws and contingencies of nature, but our personhood, while not designating a new or different kind of entity, is not merely a fact or happenstance of nature. We *develop* or *emerge* as persons, and the norms and pathways of this development are determined by our interactions with other persons around us. Parents, families, and friends play their part here; so, in one way or another, do the associations and collectives with which we are affiliated or which we inherit (nations, religions, ethnicities, tribes, traditions, cultures, roles…). And so does the school (as society's provider of formal education). I will defend a particular conception of personhood that places clear demands on the state when it comes to the provision of formal education, demands which are in danger of being overlooked when corporate, nationalistic, religious or even familial interests are positioned ahead of those of young people who are the principal stake-holders in the formal education process. I shall argue that schools and classrooms can and should play a large part in determining how well children develop as persons, in moral, linguistic, cognitive and affective terms, and that this has as much to do with how effectively schools foster a healthy sense of self and the building of an ethically and affectively rich network of inter-personal relationships, as with how well they perform academically.

Returning to the question which forms the title of this chapter, how difficult is it to specify just *who or what* it is we are talking about here? The *who* part seems reasonably clear: on the common-place assumption that the answer to any "who" question will always refer to a person (an assumption which is noteworthy in and of itself), it is usually answered either *ostensively* ("Who is Jeremy Daniels? – That fellow over *there*!", or simply, "*I* am!/*He* is!") or, more commonly, by appealing to a *description* which is sufficiently precise, in the circumstances, to single out an appropriate individual ("Who is Jeremy Daniels? – He's the guy who…./with…", etc.). Notice that the first person use of "who", as in "Who am I?" is usually asked, if at all, either rhetorically (e.g. as in *Les Miserables*: "Who am I? – I'm Jean Valjean!") or in a fit of amnesia (recalling the wizard from *Harry Potter* whose memory-wiping spell backfired; he was obliged to ask not just "Who are you?" but also "Who am I?").

On the other hand, numerous candidates stand out immediately in answer to "*What* am I?": a middle-aged, balding, chubby academic; a left-handed Jewish

Australian residing in Hong Kong; a social introvert with a weird sense of humor who is prone to depression; any combination of these; and so on. In claiming that none of these descriptive nouns or phrases counts as sufficiently *basic*, I am *not* merely making the point that none of them uniquely instantiates me (I am certainly not the only middle-aged, balding, overweight academic around, although I might have been). For one thing, it may well be that in certain circumstances, such terms may be used to do just that: e.g. as noted, a student looking for me in a crowded seminar room may well uniquely identify me from the descriptor "middle-aged, balding, overweight academic" (especially in Hong Kong, whose residents are, by and large, remarkably slim by Western standards). For another, as discussed earlier, in referring to and identifying a particular object, we rely on the *deictic* component ("this") as well as the descriptive component ("such that"). No, the claim that these terms are not basic is the denial that any of them answers the key question posed by Wiggins: "*What is it*?" – where, as we saw, the answer to this question – and there should, in the end, be at most *one* answer to avoid the pitfalls associated with referential and identity relativity (Chap. 3) – points the way to the conditions of identity for identifying and tracking particular objects through space and time. According to these very conditions, no entity came into existence when I became middle-aged, and/or balding, and/or overweight, just as none will cease to exist if and when I cease to have these properties (unless, as does seem likely, my ceasing to have them happens to coincide with my death).

In most contemporary discussions of this issue, there appear to be only two or three basic candidates as plausible answers to "What am I?" or, rather, two or three broad *types* of candidate. These may be specified either ontologically or semantically. In terms of classifying myself as a particular kind of entity, we may opt for (i) something manifestly physical – a human being in the strict biological sense (a member of *Homo sapiens*, in taxonomic terms), a human body, even a brain, etc. – (ii) something apparently non-physical – a mind, soul, spirit, etc. – or (iii) something both physical and non-physical (i.e. with both physical and non-physical characteristics) – most notably, a person. Alternatively, we might draw attention away from what some regard as dubious metaphysical commitments by focusing, instead, on the *language* we use to describe the entities in question (a move which characterizes much of twentieth century analytic philosophy). P. F. Strawson (1959) famously distinguished, among the predicates or descriptors we commonly use to describe various entities, between those which impute *consciousness* or some related mental condition, and those which impute physical or bodily characteristics to these entities, calling these "P predicates" and "M-predicates", respectively (Wiggins 2001, p. 195).[1] Making the distinction in these terms highlights one crucial feature of ordinary language usage: that while some predicates sit fairly comfortably on one side or the other of the "mental/physical" divide ("thinks", "chooses",

[1] This way of marking the distinction follows a convenient modification suggested by Wiggins, The labels chosen by Strawson (1959) reflect the *material* nature of M predicates and the *personal* nature of P predicates. It is unfortunate – and a trap for the unwary – that "M" and "P" might also stand for "Mental" and "Physical" respectively.

"hopes for", etc. versus "weighs 95 kg", "is located in this building", "has dark skin", etc.), others do not ("walks", "writes", "smiles", "plays the piano", etc.) (Wiggins 2001, p. 234). Further, we confidently and familiarly use all three kinds of predicate (P, M and borderline) across boundaries which, on reflection, seem somewhat formidable, if not impenetrable – particularly that between first person ascription and third person ascription of both P and borderline predicates. Speakers in a given language community quite happily use terms which attribute mental states to themselves *and others* on the clear assumption that these words do *not* change meaning in the transition. When I attribute a headache or feeling of unbounded joy to myself, I mean the same as when you attribute these traits to yourself, and also when I attribute them to you, or you to me. There is a familiar epistemological puzzle here, namely, how it is that we so confidently use such terms in first, second and third person contexts when it appears that our *ways of knowing* are so different (I don't look for bodily symptoms or any form of observable behavior to confirm my own headache, but I do so to learn about yours). Nevertheless, the so-called *object* of knowledge – that which is known, the headache in this example – is the same kind of thing for both of us. I shall return to this idea below, because it speaks directly to the kind of entity both *I* and *you* are. Meanwhile a crucial clue as to how we might deal with it is given by Strawson (1959), who points out that as a matter of logic, each one of the ordinary predicates that we use to refer to, describe and classify objects – whether P, M or borderline – can be meaningfully, albeit not necessarily truthfully, applied to a *range* of objects of one kind or another. We simply could not use words like "overweight", "headache", or "joy" – whether in the first person case or otherwise – unless it made sense to apply them to more than one object. Further, while this "pluralist" (as opposed to singular) understanding of predication is clearly relevant to the ways in which we speak about objects in the world, it has particular significance for one category of objects, viz. ourselves as *persons*; more specifically, a *core precondition of my regarding myself as a person is that I regard myself as "one among others" (*i.e. *other persons)*. I shall have more to say about this key idea in subsequent chapters.

Strawson's reflections on P and M predicates led him to propose that the concept of *person* is conceptually and epistemologically *primitive* with respect to other concepts which might be taken to answer the question "What am I?" – most famously, the Cartesian notion that I know myself, first and foremost, as a *thinking being* (mind) but, equally, the strong physicalist view that I am nothing other than a material object (e.g. my own body). In proposing personhood as primitive, he rejected the grounds from which several notorious philosophical problems are often taken as emerging. Skepticism about "other minds" – a notorious problem for the Cartesian – cannot even be coherently expressed, according to Strawson, because to do so we must start with an adequate conception of our *own mind*, i.e. the first person case. But such a conception, when properly understood, *presupposes* the idea mentioned above, that each of us must see him/her-self as *one among others*.

If the concept of *person* is primitive in the sense described above, doesn't it follow that *what* I am, at the most basic level, is a person (this would be Strawson's view)? To see that things are not so straightforward, remember what some of the

alternatives might be in addressing this question. In particular, where does a Strawsonian commitment to persons place us with respect to seeing ourselves as *human beings* (members of *Homo sapiens*)? My short answer to this question, to be elaborated below, is along the following lines. We do, indeed, regard ourselves as persons in Strawson's sense but, equally, we regard ourselves as human beings (i.e. members of *Homo sapiens*), with all the biological connotations usually given to that classification. Moreover, whether we regard ourselves as one or the other depends upon our interests: as entities with determinate identity and persistence conditions, we are human beings or – given my reservations about the status of this concept as a natural kind – animals, living organisms, etc., that is, objects whose identities are carved out according to an appropriate classification in nature, supported by relevant laws, etc. But as entities with a privileged moral status in the world, capable of self-awareness and rationality, of belonging to a language community, of being educated, and of forging meaningful relationships, etc., we (perhaps along with some who are not human, not animal or not even living) are persons.

My separate allegiances to both Wiggins and Strawson on the subject of identity and persons, respectively, may seem somewhat problematic. After all, where Strawson elevates personhood to conceptual pre-eminence, Wiggins opts for *human being* as the appropriate sortal (i.e. conceptual specifier of identity conditions) for the kind of creature that you and I are (2001, pp. 193–244). Even if Wiggins is mistaken here – as I suggested in the previous chapter – I am prepared to accept that some such scientifically-supported concept (e.g. *living organism*) will do the job. For the sake of the present discussion (and to keep in the background the matter of *which* such concept or kind to choose here), I shall refer to this concept as *K*. The question at issue, then, is this: "Is there a way of acknowledging, with Strawson, the conceptual primacy of personhood, while conceding that *K* is the most appropriate concept for specifying the identity conditions for the entities which we are?" Answering this question involves determining which identity conditions, if any, are associated with the concept of *person*.

Before getting into this issue, let's review some of the ways in which we understand ourselves as physical beings. In previous chapters, I followed Wiggins in distinguishing between entities whose kinds or sorts – i.e. those concepts which answer the basic question: *What is it*? and which, in turn, determine the relevant identity and persistence conditions for things which fall under them – are *natural* and those which are not; with the clearest examples of the latter coming from those objects and associated kinds that we humans construct for one purpose or another – i.e. *artifacts*. An outcome of my earlier discussion (Chap. 4) was that while the principle of assigning living creatures to natural kinds is worth preserving, the exact specification of those kinds remained unsettled, although there is an emerging argument for looking at the level of (living) organisms themselves, rather than at something more taxonomically specific. In the vast majority of cases in nature, the issue of kind identification is one which nature itself can be expected to resolve in due course, as we become more knowledgeable about the nomological framework(s) which govern(s) the – entirely physical – behavior of the entities in question. It is

only when we move to consider apparently non-physical phenomena that issues about the limitations of nature emerge, most notably, needless to say, in regards to ourselves (but leaving open the possibility that some non-humans may also be involved here). Still, in so far as we are living organisms – side-stepping for the time being the exact interpretation of *are* here – the appropriate account of our physical identities (origins, space-time trajectories and demise) ought to be subsumed by one for *all* living organisms, at least all those that share with us the world that we know as *nature*.

The concept of *Homo sapiens*, while informed by many different disciplines (anthropology, psychology, history, sociology, politics, genealogy, among others) is, fundamentally, biological, referring to that particular species of which you and I are exemplars, and named according to Linnean taxonomy. In the previous chapter, I examined both the ontological question regarding species (are they individuals, classes, natural, artifactual, etc.?), and the conceptual question (as a quasi-theoretical concept of biology, how is the species category to be defined – phylogenetically, phenotypically, biologically, genetically, etc.?). But irrespective of how we answer these questions, it seems that *qua* biological concept, we must look to the relevant science (or sciences; e.g. genetics, embryology, etc.) for information and understanding about the actual behavior of ordinary human beings. In particular, such questions as "When does a human being begin to exist?" and "When does a human being cease to exist?", may be answered by appealing to the relevant biological facts.

As organisms, our "hard-wired" paths through life are, I take it, fairly well known. At one extreme, irrespective of the timing of our actual *birth*, the time of our coming into existence may be located soon after the moment of conception, i.e. when the single spatio-temporal entity known as the zygote or embryo begins to take shape and grow. Contemporary philosopher Eric Olson comments as follows:

> Many embryologists believe that a genuine human embryo – the multicellular organism that later becomes a foetus, an infant, and an adult – comes into being about sixteen days after fertilization, when the cells that develop into the foetus (as opposed to the placenta) become specialized and begin to grow and function in a coordinated manner. (Olson 1997, p. 91)

Even if we refer to individual sperm and egg cells, and the fertilized egg resulting from their union, as organisms, it seems reasonable to insist that none of these is yet *me*; I come into being as a spatio-temporally continuous entity that is sufficiently stable and unified to withstand further cell division.[2]

Similarly, but *mutatis mutandis*, for all other living organisms. Let me reiterate that I am referring here to the origin that is common to all members of my kind, rather than that which is unique to me as an individual member. The latter idea challenges the view that no amount of descriptive or predicative content can "pin down" an individual, semantically speaking, because it suggests that I can be uniquely

[2] See Ford (1988) and McLaren (1986): life begins early but the individual begins with the primitive streak beyond which further removal of cells would kill it.

defined as the particular organism that grew from the fertilized egg produced by my actual parents. But even supposing that an individual's actual origin is *essential* to the very organism that it is, it would hardly follow that its subsequent journey through life is thereby uniquely determined. For that we still need the *this-such* conditions provided by tracing a spatio-temporal continuant under an overarching sortal concept (as discussed earlier).

Consistently with Wiggins' treatment of identity and persistence – specifically his key principles "Identity A" and "Identity D" (Chap. 3) – we need to be somewhat cautious when it comes to postulating multiple physical continuants as occupying the same space and time as *I* do (I am not referring to such potential entities as souls or spirits; if they are anything at all, they are not material and they do not occupy space). Leaving aside, for the moment, the person that I am, where does this leave us with respect to my actual collection of bodily parts or cells at any one moment, my body, and the human being/animal/organism that I am? First, concerning the collection of cells that constitute me at any given moment, its persistence conditions – hence its very existence – are relatively transitory; because the individual cells have such a short life span, whatever relation I stand in to any one collection (constitution perhaps, as discussed in Chap. 3), it cannot be that of numerical identity since, notwithstanding Hume, *I* neither cease to exist nor become newly created over and over, as my cells come and go.

Somewhat more puzzling, perhaps, is the relationship between me and my own body. Olson sees reasons to doubt any numerical identity here, in part because we use such relational expressions as "my body", thereby assuming, at least linguistically, that the relation between myself and my body is not identity but something like ownership or possession (a thing cannot literally own itself). But, as we saw above, language is not always a good guide on such issues; after all, we also commonly use such expressions as "any/everybody" (as in "Is anybody there?") without any implication that we are talking about bodies rather than people. If there is an intuitive aversion to identifying an individual human being with his/her own body, it may well be because our intuitions remain largely *dualistic* when it comes to talking about ourselves; we somehow feel the need to leave room for the non-physical part of us – the mind, or the soul – and so the only time we take our bodies to be *all there is* is after death, i.e. the death of the person or the human being. When someone has died, it is their body – i.e. their bodily *remains* – that is/are buried or cremated, not *them* as such (they have either ceased to exist or gone onto a (hopefully) better place, depending on one's point of view).

My own admittedly tentative view is that we human organisms are, indeed, identical with our own (living) bodies, largely on the grounds that it seems implausible to suppose the existence of two separate material objects occupying the same place and time for most of their existence. I say "most" because the view that I, the human being, am not identical with my body does allow us to say that at death the former, but not the latter, ceases to exist. However, except for the unfortunate case of the *human vegetable* (to be discussed later), we could also describe this natural and

inevitable scenario as one in which both the human being and the person that I was are no longer – in short, *I* have been replaced by something else.[3]

Identity Conditions for Persons

Suppose, then, that science does – or will – furnish the conditions under which we define, identify and re-identify physical kinds of things, including ourselves as human beings, animals, organisms, or whatever. Where does this leave matters in terms of the definition, identity and re-identification of *persons*? If we use *K* as short-hand for whichever natural kind specifies such existence and identity conditions for that which I most basically am, there seem to be four options, conceptually speaking: (1) that even allowing that the concepts *person* and *exemplar of K* (i.e. a single K) are not synonymous – perhaps, not even *co-extensive* (if there could be persons who are not Ks or vice versa) – objects falling under these concepts share their identity conditions; (2) that identity conditions for persons are, in some sense, *derivative upon* those for Ks; (3) that *person* generates its own distinctive identity conditions; and (4) that *person* is not the kind of concept that has, or requires, identity conditions.

In order to evaluate these options, we need an intuitively clearer sense of the distinction between persons and Ks, but not one that preempts the question of identity with which I am primarily concerned. One way to do this is by way of Strawson's distinction between P and M predicates. Specifically, let's say that persons are those entities to which *at least* P-predicates may be meaningfully – and sometimes, truly – applied. P-predicates, remember, are predicates which impute *consciousness* and/or various forms of mental activity to their objects, including terms like "thinks that", believes that", "knows that", "fears that", "feels sad" and, more contentiously perhaps, "writes" and "smiles". Ks, by contrast, are those entities whose characteristic predicates are physical or material and are, thereby, linked to some kind of appropriate scientific framework; examples of M (material) predicates are: "weighs 50 kg", "has yellow and black stripes", "is soluble", "serves the function of pumping blood around the body containing it", "is designed for the purpose of producing legible marks on paper", and "is part of a reproductive cycle". Needless to say, the most plausible candidates for being Ks are human beings, animals or, more generally still, living organisms. But there is one reason for allowing for other kinds or sorts of object here as well, namely, that we do not need to insist that only humans, animals and organisms can be – in whatever sense of the word "be" is most appropri-

[3] This is reminiscent of Wiggins's *Lot's Wife* example, except that where that example stretches the bounds of what is scientifically plausible, death *per se* is the inevitable complement to life. Do bodily remains or corpses adhere to the *principle of activity* that Wiggins associates with objects that belong to natural kinds? If so, then such a principle will surely be quite different from that which governs the behaviour of our physical bodies when we are alive; the latter will include such terms as "growth" and "replenishment", while the former will focus on "decay" and "decomposition".

ate – persons. I am prepared to entertain the possibility that futuristic computers and robots, along with Martians and spirits, could count as persons. In some – if not all – of these non-standard cases, there will be concepts akin to *K,* i.e. concepts that have a scientific connotation or derivation. I raise this possibility in order to cut off an immediate objection to option (2) (above) – that persons must derive their identities from their underlying physical structure as human beings, animals or organisms – namely, that there might be persons who are none of these things. But it would still be appropriate to inquire into the relationship between the identity conditions for such persons and those for computers, robots, Martians and the like. In other words, even if we restrict the term "person" to the familiar human context – whereby I and you seem to be both persons and human beings (although you *might* be both a person *and* a robot or a Martian!) – we must still resolve the semantic issue of how persons and human beings (Ks) are related.

Some brief comments on the idea of non-human persons. Several types of example come to mind. First, there are those who, having studied in great detail the behaviors and brain structures of such animals as elephants, dolphins and chimpanzees, would attribute personhood to some or all of these (in such cases *K* may well remain *living organism*). I find myself open to this idea but skeptical nonetheless. However, saying why must wait until the next chapter, when I take up directly the question of defining personhood. Likewise for such "possible-but-not-yet-realized" entities as intelligent aliens, computers or robots which have developed some form of self-awareness (here *K* would be something other than *living organism*, if we agree that neither computers nor robots count as living organisms). I once saw a cartoon depicting a little green alien which (who?) was dying of thirst in the desert: "Arsenic, I need arsenic!" he (it?) cried, neatly capturing the idea of a person who is definitely non-human. And Hollywood has exploited this idea with characters such as *Hal* (from *2001: A Space Odyssey*), *ET*, *Shrek*, *Bugs Bunny*, among countless others. Fantasy fiction is replete with characters who appear, for all intents and purposes, to be persons, albeit definitely non-human ones (*The Lord of the Rings* has an entire cast of such characters, including: Hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, Wizards, and so on. It also features regular animals such as horses and birds who, in the context of the novel, are clearly not persons). While I hesitate to bestow personhood on *The Blob*, giant marauding insects, zombies, or Shelob the Great, how about vampires? I offer my own view in the next chapter, but note that in most – but perhaps not all – of these cases, the physicality or imagined biology of such entities is simply not at issue: they are all Ks of one kind or another and, we may presume, have identity conditions as determined by *their* conceptual underpinnings. Dolphins are actual living organisms, hobbits are imaginary ones, but no Wigginsian principle of activity will help to determine whether or not they deserve to be classified as persons. Something else, I suggest, is at issue.

One final example before returning to the conceptual dichotomy of *person* and kind *K*. The famous *Elephant Man*, as depicted in the moving film of the same name and brilliantly portrayed by John Hurt, is chased and cruelly tormented by a hysterical mob. When finally cornered in some dark place, he screams at them: "I am *not*

an elephant, I am *not* an animal; I am a *human being*!"[4] John Merricks' reference to his own humanity here, as in similar uses of the term (being a humanitarian, the Humanist movement, etc.), is surely misleading: he is not pointing out that he belongs to the same biological taxon as that of his tormentors; it is hard to see the point of doing so. Instead, he is, in an expression of desperate but eloquent empathy, appealing to his affinity with them *as a person* and, accordingly, as someone who merits their respect, not their ridicule. *Person* does, where *human being* – like "K" terms in general – does not, designate a category of *moral* significance. I return to this crucial point in the next chapter.

What, then, should we make of the four options presented above? According to (1), whereby persons and Ks have the same identity conditions, in so far as I am both a person and a K (human being, animal or organism), both designations could answer our fundamental question ("What am I?") because there could be no clash of identities between the two. However, I am inclined to accept the arguments provided by several philosophers – including Wiggins and Olson – aimed at establishing that the continuity required by the ongoing persistence of a person is neither *necessary* nor *sufficient* for the continuity required by the ongoing persistence of a K (for Wiggins, *K* is *human being*; for Olson, it is *animal*; in the previous chapter I suggested it might be something like *living organism*). It is not necessary because an individual can exist as a K without being a person throughout its existence; and it is not sufficient because one and the same person might be said to survive the loss of identity of any associated K. Regarding necessity, the two familiar counter examples provided by Olson are those of a human foetus or embryo, and the victim of a catastrophic accident or illness who is left in a vegetative state. Both the embryo which I once was, and the "living vegetable" which I could tragically become are, it would seem, still human beings/animals/living organisms. But it seems plausible to deny them the status of personhood, since there will be few, if any, P-predicates applicable. Granted, the embryo will, other things being equal, acquire such properties, and the living vegetable did once have them, but the whole point of determining persistence conditions for individuals is to account for situations in which it is appropriate to say that they exist at one time, but do not exist at another. Concerning sufficiency, a coherent counter example has to involve an entity which persists as a person though not as a K or, more specifically, not as the *same* K. Admittedly, it is harder to find "real-life" cases here; but I will pick up an example offered by Olson which is a clever variation on a favorite thought-experiment: the brain transplant. In the classic case (see Wiggins, following Shoemaker), one individual's brain is transplanted into the head of another, whereupon – and conveniently – the brain's original owner simply dies (i.e. ceases to exist as a person *and* as a living organism and, thereby, it would seem, ceases to exist *simpliciter*). The surviving individual, upon

[4] His protests at being called an elephant, while understandable, are ironic in light of current research which suggests that elephants are among the most advanced of mammals, and share some important traits with humans (grieving for dead relatives, for example). As I argue in the following chapters, this does not suffice to prove that elephants are persons or that they deserve to be treated as such (even if they do warrant much greater protection than has traditionally been provided).

awakening, sincerely believes that he *is* (identical to) the original owner; after all, he has complete psychological continuity with the latter (same memories, etc.). He may well be shocked to discover that he now has a new (i.e. different) body, but this, so the argument goes, is just a more extreme case of awakening after any other transplant operation. Notoriously, even this classic version has its problems (e.g. "What is the size and weight of the continuing person during the period that the brain is in limbo between the two heads?"), but the refined version offered by Olson exposes a more serious defect.[5] In his version, only that part of the brain responsible for higher thought processes (the cerebrum) is removed from the first individual and placed into the head of the second. In this case, the first individual *does not die*; he survives, albeit in a severely diminished state (much like the human vegetable example). But *what*, precisely is it that survives? A good deal of Olson's writing on this subject is aimed at establishing that it is the human being/animal/living organism (the K), even though we probably want to say that he is no longer a person, and that whatever psychological continuity there is involves the second individual as well as the first. As Olson sees it the recipient of the cerebrum may wake up claiming to be the same person as the original individual but he would be *mistaken*; the latter has not died, he is lying there in a cognitively diminished state, so how can the person who awakens *be* that very individual (remember, we are talking about literal or numerical identity here)? We could try saying that he is the same person but not the same K, but apart from violating Wiggins' key principle of the absoluteness of identity (Identity A), this example, along with those offered above, demonstrates that *even if* there are identity and persistence conditions for persons, they are not the same as the corresponding conditions for Ks.

How about the second option: that identity conditions for persons are, in some sense, *derivative upon* those for exemplars of *K*? The most familiar examples are those which involve *sortal* and *phase* sortal concepts, a distinction discussed in Chap. 3. Between the ages of (say) 0 and 6, I was an infant; I then became a child, then a teenager, a young adult, and so on. But through all these stages, or phrases, I was and remain a human being (or animal, or living organism). The fact that the boundaries of these various stages are imprecise is irrelevant, because we may think of cases where the boundaries are quite determinate (becoming a widower, for example). The salient point is that because our concept of an infant, child, etc., involves that of a human being (animal, etc.), we do not need – indeed cannot have – separate identity or persistence conditions for infants and children. The only way I can cease to *persist* is to cease to *exist*, i.e. cease to exist as a human being (animal, organism, etc.). When I "ceased" to be an infant, or a child, no object went out of or came into existence. Rather, the object in question underwent some (qualitative) changes over time. Here we see, once again, both the power and the enigma of the logical device of predication. *Pace* Hume, changes in properties – depicted linguistically as changes in predication – do not generally entail existential changes, although they might in particular cases (for example, if *K* is the appropriate sortal concept for what I am, then ceasing to be K does indeed entail ceasing to exist).

[5] Olson (2007).

So the question before us here is: To what extent can *person* be regarded as a phase sortal with respect to the underlying sortal concept *K*? Viewed in this way, both the embryo and human vegetable examples make sense: my ceasing to be an embryo or being reduced to a human vegetable is like – in terms of identity – my ceasing to be an infant or becoming a retiree respectively. But note that, *qua* phase sortal, *person* does not have any identity conditions apart from those for *K*, which implies that if, by the latter, the individual in question ceases to exist (e.g. as the result of removing his entire brain), then so does the person that this individual was. In so far as I am a person, I cannot survive the loss of whichever K I also am; which is bad news not only for the recipient of my brain but also for believers in life after death.

Interestingly, both Wiggins and Olson are inclined to shy away from pushing the concept of *person* too hard. The former develops a degree of skepticism about the very coherence of brain transplant examples, largely on the grounds that numerous P-predicates – "smiles" to take one example – impute both consciousness and materiality to their owners: "Surely the character of a person is not independent of his or her physiognomy, and this physiognomy can scarcely be independent of the body" (Wiggins 2001, pp. 234–235). He later continues:

> …the natural process, sustained by the numerous laws of biochemistry, physiology and the rest, by which a human being comes into existence, matures and eventually ceases to be, by 'natural death'. That process is… certainly guaranteed not to produce multiples, not to transplant brains or half-brains, and not… to furnish new bodies to living, continuing brains. (Wiggins 2001, p. 238) … in trying to make sense of the alleged processes involved, we lose track of *who it is* we are talking about, … (Wiggins 2001, p. 241)

Wiggins ends by speculating that the best way forward could be to treat persons as *artifacts*, i.e. beings manufactured by us for our own purposes – in which case its identity conditions, if any, would become a matter of utility or convention.

Olson remains genuinely agnostic about the identity conditions for persons, on the grounds that a perfectly adequate answer to the question "What am I?" is given by (his version of) "I am a K".[6] Moreover, Olson states quite explicitly that he is not particularly interested in persons *per se* (Olson 2007, Chap. 2). However, since I maintain that personhood is central to key aspects of our lives – notably, language, morality and education – and irrelevant to others – notably, our (numerical) identities – I am committed to a more determinate view of the matter.

The third option regarding the relationship between *person* and *K* is the claim that *person* generates its own distinctive identity conditions. Given my commitment

[6] John Locke's treatment of personal identity suggests that he, like Strawson in our own day, saw that the concept of person is somehow separate from both that of *spirit* or *mind* and that of *man* (*human being*, *body*). Yet he also insists that there are only three kinds of substances (*God*, *mind*, *body*) which suggests that *persons*, whatever they are, are not substances in their own right (Locke 1975, Book II, Chap. xxvii). Why focus on them at all then? Because persons are, among other things, the generators and bearers of *morality*. Whether or not this is Locke's view, it is one I take up in the next Chapter.

to identity as absolute, following Wiggins, it seems that the only way to entertain this possibility – in the notorious brain transplant thought experiments, for example – is to insist that, prior to any such transplant – so, for all of us right now – there is not one but *two* entities (at least) occupying a given space at a given time. *I* am sitting at my desk typing, but the first person pronoun used here is ambiguous. I the person, and I the K (human being, animal, living organism) are both sitting on the same chair typing on the same keyboard into the same computer. But the two referents of "I" are distinct precisely because they have different persistence conditions: if either the brain transplant or catastrophic (person-destroying) event were to occur, the person with this particular body would no longer be seated at my desk, while I, the K, would continue to do so. Here I share Olson's view that in this scenario, my office would be intolerably over-crowded, containing two individual entities who share not only the same body, but seem to think the same thoughts as well. Olson (2007) refers to this as "the thinking animal problem."

Am I setting up a "straw person" argument here, or even begging the question against the separate identity status of persons by insisting that persons, like the Ks to which they are closely related, must be material or spatio-temporal continuants? Might we not retreat to a more purely Cartesian conception of persons as *immaterial* objects whose associated identity criteria would, in turn, be immaterial (i.e. mental or psychological) as well? Such criteria would, presumably, involve the idea that we can track mental entities – thoughts, desires, etc. – in a way which allows for the possibility – no matter how difficult – of literal (numerical) identification and re-identification. But in speaking of re-identification, we must surely mean identity *over time*; after all, the so-called problems of personal identity assume, at the very least, that persons persist through time. So the question becomes whether or not the single dimension of time (in the absence of space) can combine with an appropriate concept of *person* to generate the desired identity criteria. I believe that the weight of argument should lead us to answer "No!" to this question; there is simply no non-circular way to "keep track of" whatever mental components are supposed to be constitutive of personal (psychological) identity which leaves room for claims of literal, or numerical identity. The arguments in question have a long history in philosophy, from whenever we human persons first evolved to the point where we could "look" inward and attempt to identify what we "found" there. I shall return to this issue below and in the next chapter, but even at the most intuitive level, it is surely not plausible to suppose that a given mental entity "belonging to" me – a particular thought or even feeling, etc. – has a literal identity, let alone any genuine persistence that would allow for its re-identification. Once we remove such potential points of reference as the human body, brain or collection of neurons, etc., how could we distinguish between a thought being mine (again) and it being yours albeit with the "same" content?

This brings me to the fourth and final option, namely that *person* is not the kind of concept that has, or requires, identity conditions. If we adhere to the notion that

identity and *entity* are conceptually linked, this option is tantamount to proclaiming that persons do not exist! Now before anyone reading this explodes in a fit of derisive laughter (whereby they truly will cease to exist), let us take a more sober look at what it might mean to deny the existence of something. At the level of individual objects, it certainly does make sense to assert that a particular object does not exist, although the very fact that we can, apparently, *refer to* – or at least *talk about* – such an object, whether we use a specific name (like "Sherlock Holmes") or a more descriptive term (like "The King of France in 2015" or "the bogeyman in the closet"), tempts us to think that it must exist *in some sense*. But this temptation should be resisted; one of the lessons of modern semantics is that language users can create and use all kinds of expressions in ways which may be judged meaningful to themselves and others, but which, whether in fact or by logic, do not actually *stand for* anything at all. With respect to the examples cited, it might be claimed that Sherlock Holmes, at least, does exist, albeit within the pages of fiction or as a movie character. As for the present King of France (an entity much beloved in Twentieth Century philosophy of language) and the feared bogeyman they are, at best, nothing more than figments of someone's imagination. Pursuing this issue further would require going into what it means to be a fictional character or an imaginary figment; suffice to say that once we make the separation between what makes sense and what exists in the world, we need not be tempted to think that such entities really do exist at all.

However, my claim that persons do not exist is neither a claim about any individual entity, nor one with any logical implications for such individuals (we cannot use it to infer that because I am a person, I do not exist!). Rather, my claim applies to the existence of entities of this or that *kind* or sort – which really means: of the kind or sort itself. As we shall see, it is quite consistent to assert that I exist, that I am a person, and that *person*, *qua kind or* sort, has no independent ontological (or existential) status. Extending the line of thought expressed above, contemporary semantics accommodates – indeed, elucidates – the distinction between talking *about* things that do exist and things that do not in a format which does not already assume their existence (thereby begging the key question). Wittgenstein, among many others, pointed out that we often use (and, by implication, make sense of) nouns and noun phrases – "thing" words – which do not actually pick out anything in the real world (Wittgenstein 1955). Aside from fictional and imaginary characters, more pertinent examples may be found within semantics itself: words and sentences have *meanings*, but it does not follow that among the furniture of the universe are entities which *are* those meanings. Philosophy deals with *concepts* but, again, it does not follow that concepts actually exist, either in the head, or "out there" somewhere (needless to say, this is a matter of philosophical contention; Strawson, for example, in his eschewal of the ontological constraints of formal logic, was content to allow *universals* – like *wisdom* and *beauty* – into his ontology, along with wise folk and beautiful objects (which would be particulars)).

Anomalous Monism[7]

Closer to my interests here, the analytic philosopher Donald Davidson (2001) argued eloquently and persuasively for a thesis known as "Anomalous Monism", whereby the discourse employed to "talk about objects belonging to the realm of the mental" (as we might say) – including Strawsonian P-predicates – is: (i) indispensable to any linguistic community that seeks to make rational sense of the world and our place in it; (ii) not reducible (in terms of meaning) to the language of physics or any other law-governed domain; and (iii) referentially *opaque*, in the sense that in so far as that discourse carries any ontological commitments – that is, can be understood only by reference to actual real world entities – the ontology in question is part of physics, not some shadowy mental or subjective realm called "mind". Put more simply, Anomalous Monism asserts that particular mental events and states – beliefs, desires, intentions, hopes, etc. – must themselves be physical (this is the *monism* part), but that we cannot translate or reduce the language we ordinarily – and indispensably – use to describe such events ("belief", "desire", "intention", "hopes"…) into physical terms (the anomalous part). So, for example, when my *belief* that my house is on fire and my *desire* to survive combine to *cause* me to *run* outdoors, Anomalous Monism declares *both* that my action cannot be understood, explained or justified without appealing, irreducibly, to a network of mental attitudes which include the particular belief and desire just mentioned, *and* that there will be, whether known or not, a causal account of that action which can be given in entirely physical terms (there being no others when it comes to causality). There is no ontology of the mental – in particular, no entities such as minds, thoughts, etc. – yet we cannot make sense of the world – particularly those aspects of it which involve *us* – without talking "about" *it*. I shall have more to say about Davidson's influential views in subsequent chapters.

Anomalous Monism nicely complements the fourth option under consideration because where the latter implies that *person* does not define an ontological category (in contrast with such scientifically-warranted entities as Ks), the former rules out the possibility of *explaining* key personal (psychological) attributes by reference to any non-linguistic domain or ontology. And yet, throughout human history, our reflections, inquiries, concerns, even our very language – or a large fragment of it – have given at least as much prominence to the "category" of persons as to anything else in the known universe. *Being a person* matters to us in all sorts of ways. Furthermore, it would seem that *personal identity* – the familiar "Who am I?" enigma – also matters: that knowing that our literal identities are bound up with an altogether different kind of entity – an animal, or living organism, perhaps – utterly fails to satisfy the deep sense of curiosity, even yearning, that this question reflects. Many search for an answer in realms far removed from physics or biology – in nationhood, ethnicity, religion and culture or, even more precariously, in clans,

[7] Some of the material in this section is taken from my previously published journal article Splitter 2011. I am grateful to the publisher for permission to use this material here.

cults, gangs and other *supra-persons* which become more powerful – and often more dangerous – than all of their respective individual members taken together. But what happens to these *supra-persons* when the burden of finding our (numerical) identities in them is taken away? What remains of their status and hold over us? These are among the questions I wish to consider in the remaining sections of this book.

But I need, first, to say more about the key concept of *person*, partly because it may not be entirely clear what is left of this concept – or our conceptual and epistemic need for it – once we give up the idea that it defines the conditions for our identities – indeed, for our very existence (for, to repeat, those conditions will flow from our belonging to the kind(s) of thing that we are, as furnished by nature and its law-like structures); and partly because, as noted, our being persons remains, somewhat paradoxically, intimately bound up with our quest to know *who we are*. But the sense of paradox is an illusion: it is not the *answer* to the quest that matters to our being persons, but the very fact that it is a *quest* on which we feel the need to embark. Consider: as a way of amplifying my own self-awareness, I may think of myself as a person, a human being, a human person or, more starkly, just a living organism. I may also (mistakenly) think of myself as a bat.[8] It matters little, precisely because what marks my personhood is the fact that *I can think of myself as anything at all*. After all, it is not as if my cat thinks of itself as a cat; if it did, then whatever kind of thing it may turn out to be (and it is already like us in most biological respects), it will also be a person.

Before ending this Chapter, I acknowledge that many eminent philosophers, old and new, have contributed to the conceptual puzzles surrounding persons and their identities. One who warrants mention here is the Oxford philosopher Derek Parfit, whose views on persons may seem quite similar to the one I am espousing here and in the following chapters. Parfit adopts a version of what Strawson once disparagingly called the "no-subject view": that when we move beyond the purely physical components of our existence (brain, body, etc.) there really is nothing left (Strawson 1959, Chap. 3). Rejecting (with Strawson) the idea that there is some kind of unified ego – an immaterial entity which is the subject of all my experiences – Parfit embraces what he calls the "Bundle Theory" – roughly speaking, the idea that there is nothing to personhood over and above particular (bundles of) experiences (perceptions, sensations, beliefs, memories, etc.) which are causally connected. The fact that we do believe that persons exist in some stronger sense no more points to an underlying reality than does our use of a nominative term like "meaning" (as explained above); the existence of persons is "only a fact about our grammar, or our language" (Parfit 1987, p. 20; see also 1984, p. 341).

I will not undertake a detailed examination of Parfit's account, which relies more heavily than I should wish to on such phenomena, beloved of science fiction writers and philosophers, as brain transplants and tele-transportation a là *Star Trek*. But it is

[8] See "What is it like to be a bat?" by Thomas Nagel (1974). My point here is reminiscent of MacIntyre's (2007) claim that the good life for human beings consists in a *quest* which is undertaken by contemplating the good life for human beings; see Chap. 7 below.

worth comparing his view to those of Wiggins and Olson, discussed earlier. The former is reluctant to divorce personhood from its physical and biological anchors (which is why, on his view, "human being" provides the answer to the basic question "Who/what am I?"), and ultimately rejects the coherence of the kind of thought experiment used by Parfit and others (somewhat ironically, one of his own early examples, involving brain-splitting, was subsequently drawn on by Parfit). The latter professes to be uninterested in the concept of *person* although, like both Wiggins and Parfit, he rejects the Cartesian view whereby our identity as persons can be given in wholly psychological terms. But there are several aspects of Parfit's account which I do find interesting in the broader context of identity-related questions. The first is his reference to what he describes as *actual* cases of consciousness splitting – whereby one stream of consciousness is divided into two separate streams, each of which is "unaware" of the other. As with cases of symmetrical fission generally – including the fictional brain-splitting examples – the continued existence (identity) of the original entity (be it a person or something else) is, at the very least, ruled out by the logical requirements of transitivity, but as I explained earlier (following Wiggins), the failure of transitivity should not be the only ground for such a ruling. The more important question to ask is what has happened to the original that makes it plausible to conclude that it has ceased to exist. Parfit appears to take the view that it is altogether much simpler, conceptually speaking, to say that there *is no* underlying person there in the first place, and so questions about its continuing existence or identity become moot. I am not sure what to make of the actual scientific evidence in such cases, but it is consistent with my own view that while persons do, indeed, exist, the conditions of their existence and identity are given by whatever kind of entity a particular person happens to be (this is why I used the general term "K" above). At least in terms of identity, *person* functions as a Wigginsean type of *phase sortal*, which implies that while a member of K can cease to be a person (when, for example, it loses those properties constituent of personhood – I take up this issue in the next chapter), one and the same person cannot cease to be a K (so, in the most familiar case, you and I could not persist as non-human, or non-organismic, persons). With reference to the four options discussed in this Chapter, it seems that options 2 and 4 are really rather similar.

The second aspect of Parfit's analysis to which I wish to refer has specific relevance to my own discussion of such *supra-persons* as nations, ethnicities, gangs and the like. However, since these dubious entities are the subject of Chap. 7, I shall defer further discussion until then.

Returning to the four options considered above, I conclude that only the second and fourth have any real plausibility. Both of these reject the idea that the concept of *person* generates substantive identity – and, therefore, existence – conditions of its own, whether alongside or independent of the appropriate concept *K* which specifies what the object in question most fundamentally is. Since, notwithstanding the possibility of non-human persons, my interest in what follows is with those persons who happen to be human beings, I shall take it, henceforth, that *K* will be something like the concept of a living organism. You and I are, indeed, both Ks and persons, but once we understand the conditions of identity for *K*, there is nothing further

that our personhood contributes in terms of our identities. This conclusion leads immediately to three further questions: "In what does being a person consist?", "Why should we be concerned with the answer to the first question?" and "How should we respond to those – in the social sciences, for example – who see identity as crucially relevant to personhood?". I explore these questions in the following chapters.

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Chapter 6
The World of Persons and the Principle of Personal Worth I

Introduction

The previous chapter concluded that there is no ontological category of persons per se; that is, no kind or grouping of entities whose characteristic identity conditions mark them out as persons. But, as I have observed, it does not follow that individual persons do not exist, or even that they have no conditions of identity. Rather, each person is also a member of some kind K which specifies the identity conditions for that person. My path through space-time is conditioned by the kind of thing I am, irrespective of the answer to the largely empirical question of what that kind happens to be (human being, living organism, etc.). So while all human persons are members of this kind, the converse does not follow. What this suggests is that persons are Ks with certain – familiar – characteristics: rationality, self-awareness, tool-making, seekers of knowledge and meaning, moral and aesthetic sensibilities, propositional attitudes such as beliefs, desires, intentions, goals, among others. There are good reasons for holding that once a creature has any of these features, it has them all; further, that the key feature– the one which generates and unites all the rest – is one which can be observed– and explained– scientifically, thereby providing the essential link between my personhood and the (natural) kind of creature that I am and that defines my identity.

From a strict semantic or conceptual perspective, it seems that, henceforth, questions about persons and questions about identity will proceed along divergent lines and have little to do with each other. But it is hard to give up the idea that persons have identities not just in the sense that they are members of kinds which specify identity conditions for them, but in the sense that we do seriously ponder questions of identity for ourselves *as persons*. Since I do not believe that this sense of identity actually *makes* sense, I am very interested to explore why it is that so many not only believe that it does, but that it is worth standing up and

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fighting – sometimes literally – for "who we are". At the end of the day, I hold that while *person* does not serve as a fundamental ontological category of being in any scientific sense, the concept of *person* remains of the utmost importance. At the very core of this concept is the idea of *interpersonal relationships*: our personhood depends on the nature and strength of those relationships. This may not have anything to do with our literal identities, but it has everything to do with who we are (qualitatively speaking), how we know, and how we ought to treat one another.

In this chapter, I examine the question of why the concept of *person* still matters, on the assumption that it does not define the conditions of our existence or identities. I indicated at the end of the previous chapter that an important clue here resides in both our capacity and our need to *ask* such questions. The capacity – which is one example of our *self-awareness* – may be explained largely in physical (and neurological) terms, in involving such factors as the evolved size and complexity of the human brain. The need, on the other hand, reflects aspects of our personhood which are not so easily captured, and certainly not by science (although it may have been generated by the corresponding capacity: beings with brains large enough to question their own existence will, inevitably, do so). As I learn more about the world through my senses and my developing mental and conceptual capacities, I become aware that among those objects in my field of awareness are some which appear to be much like *me* and yet are not actually me – notably, my parents and others close to me (our realization of this distinction can be analyzed in physical terms: even those closest to me have bodies of their own; the only possible exception here might be a rare phenomenon such as conjoined ("Siamese") twins). We must proceed cautiously here, for this apparently innocuous way of putting things seems to have left out a step, namely, my awareness of the *me* which then stands in various relations of proximity to others. And this, in turn, suggests a scenario in which my own self-awareness somehow precedes my awareness of others.

Tempting and familiar as this scenario may be – fed by the forces of Modernism since the time of the Enlightenment, culminating in the "me, me, me" mentality of free market and libertarian thinking– it should be resisted. What fits our understanding of ourselves much better, as we shall see, is a *symmetric* conceptual framework in which my own self-awareness and my awareness of others, along with *their* self-awareness and their awareness of others – including me – are given equal (conceptual and moral) prominence. Granted, our core concerns might be about ourselves – i.e. for each of us, about *me* – but a more enduring and, ultimately, more satisfying account of our personhood is one which gives pride of place, not to *me*, you or anyone in particular, and not to the collective of persons taken as a whole either, but to the *relationships* in which we are necessarily bound up. To repeat a phrase used earlier, I am who I am (*qua* person) because I am *one among others*.

Persons and Perspectives[1]

Being a person matters, not because it is an important indicator of our actual identities, and not because it sanctions the kind of self-centered view of the world that some would defend, but because persons, whatever their underlying form or kind, are both aware of, and *aware of being aware* of, the complex networks of relationships which they construct and observe, and in which they participate and respond cognitively and affectively – we admire, approve or disapprove of, respect, critique, and seek to improve ourselves. Of course, many of nature's creations participate in relational networks of one sort or another, from the smallest of entities to the largest. But only persons have a *perspective* or point of view with respect to what they can observe, and each person's perspective is both unique and informed by the perspectives of those with whom they come into contact. Indeed, when I observe – whether intellectually or experientially – the perspectives of others, I enlarge and enrich my perspective of those others (for example, when I understand your point of view, I understand something new about you).

The idea that the development of personhood – *becoming a person* – is, in part, a matter of forming and shifting perspectives, was advocated by the Pragmatist philosopher G. H. Mead, whose work on social theory and education has not always received the attention it deserves. In several illuminating papers, psychologist Jack Martin (2007a, b) explains the role of Mead's theory of *Perspectival Realism* in both personal development and education. From an early age, we learn to shift perspectives between our own and those of others with whom we interact – typically, in play, but later, in more sophisticated social and educational contexts. Beginning pre-linguistically, pre-reflectively, and in such familiar concrete situations as game playing, and evolving over time to language-dependent, reflective and deliberative activities like seeing an issue from a range of perspectives and displaying empathy, children construct and participate in relational networks in which their personhood is defined and developed.

What is it about us persons that impels us to develop a perspective on the world – including, as a central component, a perspective on others who also have perspectives? Is it merely a kind of self-absorption: the urge to look both inward to our own perspectives, and outward to others only for the purpose of enhancing our own? This would be disappointing, as it drags us back to a narrow, self-centered notion of personhood, reminiscent of Jean Jacques Rousseau's *amour propre* (my sense of self as prideful and vain, feeding on the assessment of others).[2] As already indicated,

[1] Some of the material in this section and the two sections following is taken from my previously published journal article (Splitter 2011). I am grateful to the publisher for permission to use this material here.

[2] Rousseau (1974).

I opt for a more symmetric framework here, based on a realization of the inter-dependence of inward-looking and outward-looking perspectives. But this opens up a new charge akin to *amour propre*, one grounded on the asymmetric preference for persons over non-persons – like the patriot who insists that he is altruistic and not selfish because he regards *all* his compatriots, not just himself, as superior to outsiders.

The Principle of Personal Worth

My response to this charge is to admit to it, indeed, to embrace it (albeit not the patriotic analogy). Persons *are* more valuable, morally speaking, than non-persons. I shall register this claim in what I call "the Principle of Personal Worth (PPW)", as follows. PPW states:

> (A) that persons of whatever kind have a unique moral value or worth which, simply put, places them above non-persons, irrespective of how the latter may be characterised or categorised; and (B) that with respect to this moral value, *all* persons are equal – i.e. of equal value and worth.

I see PPW as part of a cluster of claims relating to persons, namely:

(1) Persons are those familiar entities of which you, I, and all human persons are typical exemplars; but;
(2) There is no reason to insist either that only humans can be persons or that all humans are (human) persons; indeed:
(3) Personhood, as a classification among existents, does not compete or clash with those concepts – whatever they may be – which demarcate particular *kinds* of entity, where a primary function of a kind is to supply criteria of identity and existence for those objects which belong to it; i.e. personhood is not a kind in this sense;
(4) *Being a person*, however, remains a classification of the utmost importance because of the specific moral, aesthetic, semantic, epistemological and metaphysical dimensions of this concept;
(5) (PPW A) Non-persons – entities that are not persons – are less valuable than persons. In referring to non-persons, I have in mind two types of entity:

    (a) Ordinary objects such as rocks, i-phones, snakes, insects, birds, fish, most mammals, and such fictional entities as marauding spiders, and (more contentiously) zombies (the "walking dead"); *and*:
    (b) "Supra-personal" entities such as nations, religions, ethnicities (or ethnic groups), cultures, corporations, clubs, cults, castes, clans, traditions, roles, gangs, tribes, the family, the budgetary deficit, the economy, … some of which are more abstract than others;

    with one key difference between objects in these two groups being that the latter are, in some sense, *composed of* or *constituted by* persons, whereas the former are not;

(6) (PPW B) No one person is more valuable than any other;
(7) Persons are not more valuable than *simple groups* of, or *networks of relationships among*, persons, where these are understood as collections which are *no greater than the sums of their parts* (i.e. individual persons); groups in this purely additive sense are quite different from the "supra-persons" referred to above;
(8) Despite initial appearances, neither the strong individualism of the neo-liberal ("Western") stereotype, nor the collectivism of the neo-socialist ("Eastern") stereotype finds any support in the PPW;
(9) Formal education should be focused on nurturing and assisting the development or emergence of what I cautiously term "full personhood", rather than on such instrumental goals as vocational training, becoming literate or good citizens, socialization, etc.

Of these more specific claims, I take it that the first three have been more or less established; claims (4), (5a) and (6) are the subjects of the present chapter; and the remaining claims belong to the chapters which follow.

My defence of PPW relies on a particular understanding of what *being a person* means. As I have already noted, there is no shortage of candidates when it comes to identifying properties which are distinctive of persons. Still, it is worth asking if there are some specific features associated with personhood which warrant being described as particularly – even uniquely – valuable. I think that there are and to bring this out I turn, once again, to the work of Donald Davidson. Davidson conveys a powerful holistic understanding of the relationship between persons – as causal agents, as bearers of both mental and physical attributes, and as inquirers into meaning, truth and knowledge – and the world in which they are situated, act and are acted upon (a world which also contains other persons). Granted, Strawson, among many others, was also concerned with this relationship, but Davidson's focus on the relationships forged by those who seek to *interpret* – i.e. make sense of – the linguistic utterances of their fellows is an important point of difference. In broad schematic terms, this relationship is one of *triangulation*:

> … the basic triangle of two people and a common world is one of which we must be aware if we have any thoughts at all. If I can think, I know that there are others with minds like my own, and that we inhabit a public time and space filled with objects and events many of which are … known to others. In particular I, like every other rational creature, have three kinds of knowledge: knowledge of the objective world…; knowledge of the minds of others; and knowledge of the contents of my own mind. None of these three sorts of knowledge is reducible to either of the other two, or to any other two in combination. (Davidson 1998/2001c, pp. 86–87)

The concept of *triangulation* plays an increasingly key role in Davidson's writings (1982, 1999/2001a, 1991/2001b, 1970/2001d). It is designed, in part, to block the Cartesian sceptic's attempt to restrict – or otherwise prioritize – knowledge to the first person; but Davidson also uses it to account, conceptually, for what we already know to be the case, namely, that we interpret one another's responses to certain stimuli as confirmation that we share, and can communicate about, a

common (i.e. objective) world; indeed, our capacity so to interpret one another – to behave inter-subjectively – constitutes what we *mean* by commonality or objectivity.

Davidson asks: "…concealed behind the epistemological problem, and conceptually prior to it, is: how did we come by the concept of an objective reality in the first place?" (Davidson 1995/2004, p. 3). It is to this question which he claims the principle of triangulation provides an answer.[3] Claims to propositional knowledge ("knowing *that*") involve assertions of belief.[4] But, following Davidson, one cannot be a believer unless one has the concept of belief which, in turn, involves grasping the distinction between what is claimed to be true and what is actually true (i.e. the concept of *error*). Where, Davidson asks, "do we get the idea that we may be mistaken, that things may not be as we think they are?" (Davidson 1999/2001a, p. 129). Drawing on Wittgenstein's interpretation of *following a rule*, Davidson proposes "that we would not have the concept of getting things wrong or right if it were not for our interactions with other people." Such interaction is, first and foremost, through *language*; we share our observations and beliefs about the world with others, and we note that from time to time, these do not correlate; therefore, one of us must be mistaken.[5]

Davidson's triangulation model provides a crucial element of *reciprocity*. My awareness of myself as a believer, knower and agent in the world goes hand-in-hand both with my awareness of you having (and utilizing) these same capacities, and your awareness of me. *We are in a relational and reciprocal network of mutual awareness*.

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[3] See Davidson (1992/2001e). Avramides provides a succinct statement of Davidson's position here: "So, while we find that our knowledge of the world depends on the communication between persons, we also find that the communication between persons depends on our recognition that we occupy a shared world" (Avramides 1999, p. 148). This summary comment nicely captures the relationship between worldly knowledge and inter-personal dialogue, something to which I shall return in the final Chapter.

[4] The involvement of belief in claims to knowledge has been prominent since Plato first outlined his theory of knowledge as *justified, true belief* (or what Pragmatist philosophers call "warranted assertability"). This theory remains controversial but it does, at least, serve as a reminder that learners – as seekers of knowledge – have a genuine commitment to what they claim to know.

[5] The feminist philosopher Barbara Thayer-Bacon defends a *relational epistemology* which shares many features with Davidson's triangular view of awareness and knowledge; including: seeing oneself bound up in relationships with others as a condition of *seeing oneself* at all; and acknowledging each child's experience as "an experience of a common world" from the very beginning (citing D. W. Hamlyn). While she does not emphasize the crucial link to language, she does focus on a component not discussed by Davidson – the importance of being in *caring* and nurturing relationships (so that, for example, we will be moved to listen to one another) as a condition of becoming persons. Such virtues as *care*, as Thayer-Bacon points out, are social, not individualistic (and not *socialistic* either). Thayer-Bacon draws support from a number of feminist philosophers, including Nel Noddings, Sara Ruddick, Sandra Harding, and Seyla Benhabib. She also offers a balanced interpretation of Piaget – so often cast in opposition to his rival Vygokstky – in relation to such concepts as the egocentric self; for example, pointing out the fallacy of moving from appropriately regarding individual perception as involving a point of view (perspective) to regarding that perception as necessarily *private* or subjective (Thayer-Bacon 1997).

The Primacy of Language

I have taken the long way round to arrive at a familiar, but central, idea: that among the various properties that demarcate personhood, regardless of whatever underlying kind conveys identity and persistence on those entities that are actually persons, the presence and shared use of *language* is especially distinctive. Language is an observable and naturally explainable phenomenon that applies to those members of K (in the familiar case, human beings) whose brains are sufficiently large and complex. More specifically, I follow Davidson (and Socrates) in highlighting the importance of *speech* which, when located in a community of interpreters, becomes *dialogue*:

> Writing may portray, but cannot *constitute*, the inter-subjective exchanges in which meanings are created and firmed. Socrates was right: reading is [also] not enough. If we want to approach the harder wisdom we must *talk* and, of course, listen. (Davidson 1994, p. 432, emphasis added)[6]

Persons, then, are those creatures which populate language communities. Returning to the PPW, I am claiming that the distinctive moral status bestowed upon persons is based on the deceptively simple idea that those entities which possess and utilize language are valuable in ways which non-language users are not. While this claim may seem blatantly self-serving on behalf of us persons, it is, I think irresistible. I'll say why shortly but notice that any charge of moral selfishness is somewhat mitigated by recalling that *person* does not characterise or define any particular *kind* of entity. You and I are human persons, but there *might* be Martian persons, robot persons, computer persons, even dolphin persons, and so on. I contend that what these groups have in common (whether actually or hypothetically), both among their own members and, in principle, between one group and others, is *language*.[7]

There is a clear affinity between Davidson's notion of triangulation, and that of shifting among the different perspectives we each have of ourselves, others, and the world (as noted above). Perspective-taking is a non-reductive, relational exercise which calls upon both our cognitive and imaginative capacities (while strengthening both) to grasp, share and manipulate "significant symbols" – specifically, language

[6] Still, as various commentators have noted, gleaning the full significance of Socrates' contribution became possible only because his student, Plato, had the foresight to create a written record. Hannah Arendt and Alasdair MacIntyre – both of whom are discussed in the following chapter – are among those who extolled the power of narrative – written as well as oral. Given my own interest in stimulating children's thinking through stories, I am sympathetic to this perspective. But it remains the case that their thinking is enacted, in the first place, through dialogue. I take up this point in Chap. 8.

[7] Which syntactic and semantic characteristics various noises and other signs must possess in order to constitute a language has been a major topic of concern among philosophers of language and linguists. Including such structural requirements acts as a deterrent to those who would attribute language to any creatures that (appear to) communicate with one another and/or make specific sounds.

(Martin 2007a, p. 439). Importantly, the relations in question are *triangular* in nature, suggesting a clear sense of continuity between Davidson and Mead/Martin:

> …all perspectives have their origins in our social interactivity with others. They arise and are maintained within social, collective acts involving two or more individuals, and they focus on social, collective objects…whose meanings are shared by the participating individuals. (Martin 2007a, p. 439)

While I share Davidson's insistence that the three vertices of the epistemological triangle are mutually irreducible and inter-dependent, it is worth dwelling for a moment on the first-person case; in particular, on the familiar idea that I have privileged knowledge and awareness of (the contents of) my own mind. To be aware of my own mind is to be *self-aware*, which is commonly taken to be a key defining feature of persons. So far, so acceptable. But suppose, now, that we follow Hume's sceptical way of thinking and ask: What is this *self* of which I am thereby aware? Hume's answer, which left both his readers and himself somewhat dissatisfied, is that when we look for the abiding self, we find, instead, just this or that fleeting perception, thought, feeling, sensation, etc. I "see" myself as cheerful or depressed, wondering if I will be late for the meeting, feeling uncomfortably warm, and so on, in endless succession. The problem is that either these mental "objects" are just parts – in some mysterious sense – of some equally mysterious mental whole, or they are properties of that which we are really seeking, viz. the *subject* of these properties. Neither option offers any clues as to the nature of this subject, for it is a fundamental conceptual error (category mistake) to look for the subject of properties (or the whole) among (any combination of) the properties (parts) themselves. The importance of this point will become clear in the next chapter, when I critique the idea that, in order to "find ourselves" – i.e. establish our *identities* – we persons must *identify with* one or more collectives, affiliations or associations – be they our nation, our religion, our ethnicity, our sexuality, our cultural tradition (or even our local sports club or choral society). I grant that each of us needs to see her/himself as *one among others*, but this is a relational dependence, not a group or collectivist one, and the difference is important. When it comes to our literal identities, as I have already claimed, there is nothing to establish: as both living organisms and persons, our identities are constituted by the kind of thing that we are, together with our continuing existence in space and time (the *this-such* conception). In particular, my actual identity is merely the outcome of a series of historical and biological events beginning, presumably, with certain physical activities involving my parents, continuing to this day and, hopefully, beyond. Hume's problem, amply resolved by the triangular model of awareness, lies with the very idea of an inner self of which I am somehow aware. Self-awareness may be construed simply as my awareness *that I am a person* among others who are (i) self-aware in the same sense, (ii) aware of each other as persons, and (iii) aware of a common world.[8]

[8] In the words of the Oxford philosopher Anthony Kenny, "The self … is a mythical entity. … It is a philosophical muddle to allow the space which differentiates 'my self' from 'myself' to generate the illusion of a mysterious entity distinct from … the human being" (Kenny 1988, p. 4).

Why, then, is my claim about persons (that is, language users) being more valuable than other creatures irresistible? For one thing, it is hard to imagine any functioning society not adhering to it: I hate the idea of killing any animal but first, if we remember that flies, worms and other small creatures are animals, I do so regularly and often deliberately and, secondly, if faced with the unpleasant choice of running over a dog – even my child's pet – and running over a child – even one who is a notorious bully – my moral obligation here is clear. Further, it is no accident that much of our language – arguably, of *any* language with a sufficiently rich syntax and semantic structure – applies to those aspects of ourselves which are not (entirely) physical. The point is not just that we have an endless supply of terms and phrases to describe how we feel, what we think, intend, desire, etc. (Strawson's *P-predicates*), but that in uttering them, we describe and discriminate among aspects of our own lives and those of others that would, otherwise, remain not simply mysterious or hidden, but empty of all but the barest animalistic content. It may be true that some species of birds have sophisticated calls that enable them to communicate with their fellows – much as young infant humans do with their first cries and murmurings of "Mama" or "Dada" – but the degree of sophistication is relative here: it does not follow that birds – who, after all, have *bird-brains* – have much mental life to speak of. Indeed if Davidson is right, they have precisely as much mental life as they do language.

In the previous chapter, I summarised Davidson's thesis of *Anomalous Monism* (AM) in these words: "There is no ontology of the mental – in particular, no entities such as minds, thoughts, etc. – yet we cannot make sense of the world – particularly those aspects of it which involve *us* as persons [including the processes of perspective-sharing, as discussed above] without talking 'about' *it*." Once we embark on the task of explaining, or even describing, what we do in terms of *any of* our motives, beliefs, desires, hopes, fears, goals, intentions, and so on, we are committed, semantically, to an indefinite process in which our own mental states and activities – along with those of others – are bound together in ever-more encompassing networks (in simpler terms: our beliefs and other attitudes do not come one by one but in combinations that become more complex as we probe them further). This is Davidson's thesis of the *Holism of the Mental*, and it is the major component in his overall argument for AM.[9] But by the very terms of AM, these networks are

[9] (Davidson 1991/2001b). See also (Davidson 1995/2005a, 1993/2005b, 1992/2001e). Davidson's work produced a sea-change in thinking about the realm of the mental. Familiar phrases such as "a given mental event" or "mind-body identity" had now to be unpacked much more carefully, being ambiguous as to token or type status. Other writers have offered sympathetic variations on Davidson's original thesis; for example (McGinn and Hopkins 1978). A recent review article ends with these words:

> At present, non reductive physicalism is (probably still) the dominant position in Anglo-American philosophy of mind. Its proponents … have even called the nonidentity of mental content with any physical properties "practically received wisdom" among philosophers of mind. (Bickle 2013)

Still, the debate continues; see (Yalowitz 2014).

neither part of the physical world (whether of macro objects like ourselves, or micro objects like neuron firings), nor part of any mental world; the only domain in which they can exist and function is that of *language* itself (whose networks are both syntactic and semantic, structured by logic as well as grammar). But language – whether taken collectively or one by one – exists, in practice, through the actions of language speakers and interpreters, i.e. persons.

Persons and (Other) Animals

I have argued that persons are distinctive on account of their linguistic capacities, through which they have developed schemes for talking about their own inner lives, the inner lives of others, and the world itself. Even such qualities as rational agency – whereby we make and act on judgments based on connected systems of beliefs, goals, motives, etc., according to accepted norms of logic and rationality – are entirely dependent on language. But if the direction of the previous chapters is roughly correct, it is the broad concept of *living organism*, rather than the more specific *Homo sapiens*, that determines the natural kind to which we belong. Accordingly, we should not expect to find anything particularly theoretical – let alone *a priori* – behind the PPW, at least with respect to the comparison between human persons and other organisms. We might look, instead, for a rather more empirically-grounded component, based on the contingent truth that we humans have larger brains than other living organisms. One writer, Peter Carruthers, has made a strong case for that part of the PPW (5a above) which contrasts rational agents with other objects – most notably, animals – (i.e. not including those entities I have labeled as "supra-persons"), albeit without any specific reference to language.[10] The outcomes of agency are, needless to say, actions, i.e. intentionally caused events which have consequences of one kind or another. And it is "natural" to judge these consequences according to certain moral standards. In Carruthers' words, "moral rules are conceived to be constructed *by* rational agents *for* rational agents" (Carruthers 2011, p. 388). Drawing on the *contractualist* views about morality made famous by John Rawls (1971) and Thomas Scanlon (1998), Carruthers argues that all rational agents have the same moral standing (i.e. (6) above), because it is natural – in a non-moral sense, based on our basic emotional needs – to want to protect our own individual rights and interests, and because rational agency involves being committed to governing our behavior according to universal rules. Taken together, rules enshrining rights and interests will extend to all rational agents – thereby excluding (most) non-human animals, but potentially including other kinds of person – because of something called "the veil of ignorance" (also known as the "original position") – a device famously adopted by Rawls to ensure that even self-serving moral rules should always be extended to

[10] Over recent years, many analytic philosophers have written on the ethical, epistemological and metaphysical problems associated with animals. See, for example, Cavell et al. (2008).

others (simply put, the veil of ignorance compels rational agents to formulate general rules *without* the kind of knowledge about themselves – their abilities, tastes, social position, life goals, etc. – that would reveal how they would fare under such rules; so no individual who is party to the process knows the outcome once the veil is lifted). As Carruthers (2011, p. 385) explains. "The governing intuition behind this approach is that justice is fairness: since the situation behind the veil of ignorance is fair (all rational agents are equivalently placed), the resulting agreement must also be fair."[11]

Carruthers proceeds to defend two further theses which are indirectly relevant to the PPW: (i) that non-rational humans, notably human infants and "senile old people" (equivalent to those in a terminal vegetative state, as discussed in the previous chapter; I am not sure which label is less odious) should be accorded the same moral standing as other persons, and (ii) that non-human animals should be excluded (i.e. they do not have the same moral standing and do not make "direct moral claims" on us). The relevance of these claims is indirect because Carruthers avoids the use of the term "person" altogether preferring, instead, to refer to *rational agents*. As previously noted, human infants (and, presumably foetuses) are not yet rational agents, while the senile elderly once were, but are no longer. So if rational agency is an essential indicator of personhood, these two groups are excluded, irrespective of their moral standing. I am drawn to this view because the individuals in question are not full members of any language community. However, while I do not specifically disagree with Carruthers' claims about the moral standing of these two groups, his style of argument is somewhat disconcerting. Regarding infants and the senile elderly, his thesis is based on a primitive truth about *human nature*, namely, that people care as deeply for their immediate relatives as they do about anything or anyone else; accordingly, they would insist on the same moral treatment for them as for other rational agents. By contrast, the feelings that people hold toward animals – even their pets – are not as universally deep as those held toward close relatives. Even where the attachments are significant, they are simply less strong than those we hold toward other humans. Aware that someone might insist that a Rawlsian veil

[11] A disclaimer is required here. While I go on to emphasize the connection between morality and personhood – rejecting the relativistic idea that the former is intrinsically bound up with one or more *supra-persons* to which persons belong (Chap. 7), and insisting that moral education be regarded as one component of personal development (Chap. 8) – I steer clear of familiar philosophical debates in ethics and meta-ethics, as to which view of morality is correct. I admit to strong universalist tendencies with regards to ethics, but I have nothing useful to say about how to moderate among such theories as contractualism, consequentialism /utilitarianism, deontology and even virtue ethics (whether in its ancient or more contemporary incarnations). Apart from Rawls and Scanlon, readers may find such contemporary classics as Peter Singer's *Practical Ethics* (1979, especially Chaps. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in regard to the present Chapter), Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981), Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* (1989) and Christine Korskgaard's *Self-Constitution* (2009) to be of particular interest (although, these works, with the exception of Singer, are not easily accessible to the lay-person in philosophy). I will have something to say about MacIntyre's and Taylor's classic texts in the following chapter, in so far as they appear to make or rely upon some important assumptions about such *supra-persons* as roles, traditions and frameworks.

of ignorance should extend to the *species* of those involved when working out the boundaries of our moral "net", Carruthers states:

> Amongst the intuitions that a good moral theory should preserve is the belief that someone's moral standing shouldn't depend upon such factors as their age, or gender, or race. In contrast we don't (or don't all) think that species is morally irrelevant. On the contrary, this is highly disputed, with (I would guess) a clear majority believing that differences of species (e.g. between human and dog) *can* be used to ground differential moral treatment. (Carruthers 2011, p. 393)

This strikes me as a curious form of reasoning. After all, Carruthers emphasizes more than once that rational agents involved in such activities as determining the boundaries of their moral nets, must *not* take moral considerations into account, on pain of begging the question. This is why the basic thrust of his arguments relies on what agents would *actually* choose or prefer, based on assumptions about self-interest, not on what they *ought to* choose or prefer. Yet, in the case of species differences, he appears to revert either to a simplistic moral preference, or to the brute fact that non-human animals lack the capacity (the language?) to complain about or veto rules that would discriminate against them ("If and only if those millions of cattle – or even just a few 'spokes-cows' – could say 'Please don't kill and eat us!', then it would be wrong to do so!"). And here we see the depth of the conceptual difficulties in attempting to justify our most basic moral claims (such as the PPW with respect to human persons over animals). I am asking "What is it about us that makes us special, morally speaking?" If we answer in moral terms, we face the charge of question-begging. But if we answer – *à la* Carruthers, for the most part – in descriptive, non-moral terms, we seem destined to fall short of providing a sufficiently strong *moral* warrant for the point in question.

Before reflecting on how these considerations bear on the PPW, I should complete the argument put forward by Carruthers. He realizes that for most people (rational agents), the idea of, say, torturing a cat is morally repugnant. The problem is how to accommodate the moral component here – over and above a feeling of repugnance – since he has concluded that cats have no real moral standing. He might have appealed to the familiar utilitarian refrain which condemns causing unnecessary pain and suffering to any creature (as elucidated in Singer 1979, for example) but, again, the question is *why* this would be wrong (especially if the perpetrators benefited from their actions in some way). Ultimately, he retreats to a Kantian position which redirects the morality involved onto the agent, not the animal: "the action of torturing a cat is wrong because of what it shows about the moral character of the actor, not because it infringes any rights or is likely to cause distress to other people" (Carruthers 2011, p. 395). The cat-torturing case shows the torturers to be *cruel,* for example. He continues:

> …our duties towards animals are indirect in the following way. They derive from the good or bad qualities of moral character that the actions in question would display and encourage; where those qualities *are* good or bad in virtue of the role that they play in the agent's interactions with other human beings [persons]. (Carruthers 2011, p. 396)

Carruthers cites empirical evidence gathered by various animal protection associations which suggests that a primary reason for their prosecuting perpetrators is precisely the likelihood that they will, or would, also be cruel to other humans/persons.

Still, he is prepared to concede that most people develop such virtues as kindness and beneficence by which they classify all acts of torture as cruel or "inhumane", even though, morally speaking, there is an asymmetry: humans do, while other animals do not, have moral standing in their own right.

I note here that Carruthers does not refer to the moral status of (our actions toward) such entities as works of art, pristine forests, and the global environment. But we may infer from his comments regarding non-rational agents and animals that he would regard such entities as items of *private property* and, accordingly, to be acted upon in accordance with their *owners'* rights and wishes. Such an anthropocentric view of things that were in existence long before humans were is contentious. After all, it is not clear that anyone *owns* either the world or the environment.

I accept that non-human animals such as cats and cows do not count as persons – even if it should turn out that they are of the same fundamental natural kind as human beings – because they lack the physiological, neurological and, therefore, cognitive capacity to construct and use language. It is this lack which, I am suggesting, entails the absence of such dispositions as rational agency (which Carruthers uses to ground his arguments) and self-consciousness (indeed, I endorse the view – which I attribute to Davidson, among others – that these dispositions are, in the final analysis, linguistic in nature). Notice that I am not insisting that animals are less valuable than humans, but that non-persons are less valuable than persons. This allows for the possibility of making the case for classifying certain (non-human) animals as persons, subject to what empirical investigations reveal about them.[12,13]

[12] Recent empirical studies (See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBYU1eayaXs; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0FiM50Uhzc; etc.) have suggested that some animals, but not others, have a capacity for self-recognition or self-awareness that could make them candidates for personhood. Dolphins and elephants appear to recognize themselves in the mirror, e.g. when a distinctive sign is painted on their foreheads. For example, they will observe themselves displaying the sign and behave much as young children who begin to notice themselves in the mirror (performing in response to watching themselves, etc.). Fellow dolphins and elephants without the sign showed no such interest in themselves. Together with a growing understanding of the (relatively) large brains of these creatures, some scientists infer from such behavior that they (dolphins and elephants) are intelligent, self-aware and even have "personalities" and "minds". While these studies are clearly significant, we need to be cautious when it comes to interpreting them in conceptual terms. It is not clear why those creatures without the tell-tale painted mark do not also show signs of self-recognition. After all, I recognize myself in the mirror irrespective of what I am wearing at the time! More important is the question of what genuine self-recognition – like self-awareness – involves. If the analysis I am supporting is correct, then self-awareness is conceptually tied to the awareness of others like us, i.e. of others who are also aware of us. Further, all such awareness is, at some point, tied to *language*. As previously noted, it is far from clear that non-human animals display language with the syntactic and semantic sophistication that we do. It might be objected that we simply do not understand what they are "saying" to one another, but this is not the point. Language is an observable, physical phenomenon and we await scientific confirmation that its sophisticated use extends beyond *Homo sapiens* (Korsgaard 2011).

[13] Collective entities in nature, such as ant colonies and bee hives, have various non-linguistic modes of communication (chemical, etc.). This might raise a question about whether such objects – or their creature constituents – might qualify as persons, except that I have deliberately focused on *language* over (mere) communication. One quality which language brings is that of self- or meta

Still, if language is the salient trait behind the PPW, we may now feel challenged by the question: "What is it about language that attracts qualities of moral worth and value, especially when contrasted with entities that lack it?" Given the difficulties inherent in basing moral worth on differences which are not moral but empirical, it might move us forward to note that judgments of *value* and *worth* are not always ethical in nature. We also make judgments which are *aesthetic* ("What a cool movie!", "J.S. Bach is the greatest composer who ever lived!") as well as judgments which are, more literally, about matters of taste ("The food served there is delicious", "Crunchy peanut butter is disgusting!"). Indeed, it has been suggested that aesthetic judgments are actually of a higher order than, and may be taken as grounding, moral or ethical judgments; or, taking a more Platonic idealistic stance, that the two types of judgment are of equal importance (Kraut 2013). We may see this reflected in our use of such terms as "integrity", "harmony", "wholeness", and "elegance" to bridge the ethical and the aesthetic (murder and cheating are morally wrong – albeit of different degrees of wrongness – and both upset or violate the broader integrity or harmony of things in nature,…). Suppose, then, that we attempt to base the moral status of language-bearing creatures on the sheer *beauty* which is both an inherent feature of each particular language (on account of its interrelationships, if not also its sounds and shapes, etc., akin to poetry and music), and expressible through language. Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that persons are uniquely placed as both observers of, and reflective participants in, networks of relationships of various kinds. This comment may be understood in aesthetic as well as moral terms.

Granted, the difficulty raised above over the idea of an ultimate ground for morality – that it must be either question-begging or irrelevant – has its correlate in the aesthetic domain as well: unless the justification of such an aesthetic judgment as that language is inherently beautiful, wonderful, awesome, etc. is proclaimed by *fiat*, it would be either aesthetic in nature or grounded in some other field; which, once again, implies either circularity or irrelevance. The resolution of such fundamental questions is beyond the scope of both this book and my ability; suffice to say that the search for ultimate, fundamental or basic premises in any field of inquiry – including the philosophical realms of ethics and aesthetics – is bound to be philosophically contentious.[14,15]

Whatever we may take to be the precise connection between rational agency, morality and personhood, in terms of how we are to value and respect persons *vis-à-vis* non-persons, I take it that the *subjects* of such actions as valuing and respecting

level-awareness which I have yet to find attributed to insects, even those as highly organized as ants and bees.

[14] We also make judgments of intellectual value relating to the arguments and theories proposed by human persons – and even about persons directly – but we are faced with the same kind of question: What is the link between this value domain and that of morality?

[15] My disclaimer about ethics is repeated here, this time in relation to aesthetics. On the relationship of the aesthetic to the non-aesthetic, see Eagleton (1989); also, Zangwill (2013). The notion of the aesthetic is central in Sibley's (1959/2001a) classic paper. In his later work, Sibley (1965/2001b) explores the dependence of aesthetic features on non-aesthetic features.

must be persons. Specifically, *all* – and *only* – persons are *capable* of making ethical judgments (about what constitutes right and wrong, etc.) and, accordingly, are ethically bound to do so. Charles Taylor expresses this idea as follows: "…rationality imposes obligations on us. Because we have this status which is incomparably higher than anything else in nature, we have the obligation to live up to it." (Taylor 1989, p. 365).

Even the law does not automatically excuse the actions of someone who behaves in a drunken rage, for example, on the grounds that all but the most addicted individuals make choices (to drink or not to drink, etc.) whose consequences they should be able to foresee (because they are rational agents). One implication of this view is that (most) non-human animals, infants and those described earlier as "the senile elderly", are *not* persons (irrespective of their status as worthy of moral regard, or holders of certain rights, etc.). What I have suggested in this chapter is that persons, thus categorised, are also those who are participants in language communities and, thereby, in networks of relationships with other persons (as well as with non-persons, although in the latter cases, the relationships are necessarily asymmetric in various ways: I may talk to my cat or my doll, but it does not *really* talk back; ditto for infants, areas of pristine wilderness, etc.). It is no coincidence, then, that conceptions of both language and morality make sense only on the assumption that persons construct, participate in, and see themselves as participants in, *relationships* of one sort or another. Moreover, the boundaries of such relationships (or networks of relationships) are not defined by differences in language, culture, religion or anything else. The only relevant boundary is that between persons and non-persons.

Consider the case of language first, for I am claiming that its scope and limits prescribe the scope and limits of all aspects of our personhood, including rationality and morality. It is an empirical truth that we can and do (if we choose to) find ways to communicate successfully with *anyone* else (provided that we are both language users). In practical terms, language is both a unifier and a divider, but in referring to the concept of language *communities*, I am pointedly *not* intending to carve up such communities along the lines of our ordinary language differences (i.e. I am not referring to the community of English speakers, of French or Cantonese speakers, etc.). Granted, I cannot readily communicate with a native Hong Konger who does not speak English (since I not only cannot speak Cantonese, I cannot discern in it the familiar tones and tempi that characterize it as a language in the first place; this is a common defect among Westerners). But we can surmount this barrier via some mode of *translation*, be it a dictionary, a bilingual companion or a painstaking process of shared reflection on how each of us uses words ostensively to pick out objects that belong to the realm of our common experience. Still, going back to Davidson's triangulation model, according to which my understanding of my own words and concepts is tied up with my understanding of both your words and concepts and that of the external world of which we are part, we can see that the interdependence of the three sides of the triangle is required even *within* a particular language community; otherwise we could have no confidence at all that when you and I use the same words, we mean or refer to the same thing by them.

In this context, the notion of persons being in relation with one another is crucial to our understanding of what a person is, in a way in which it is not crucial to our understanding of what a human being is. Granted, biologists will insist that we humans, like every species to a greater or lesser degree, interact with our environments – including those around us who are also humans – but putting the point in this way suggests that the distinctive quality of our humanness is a matter of *degree* (in fact, there are other organisms which are, by their natures, much more interactive with one another; ants and bees, for example). But on the view of personhood which I hold, our interaction with others – paradigmatically, via language – is a difference in *kind*.

As with language, so with morality. Once we accept both that the framework defined by the concept of a person is appropriate for prescribing the boundaries of those characteristics that we ascribe to persons, and that these boundaries are determined by the limits of language and communication, then we can – indeed, we *must* – accept that the limits of our morality, likewise, extend to include all persons. The notion that specific moral rules, norms or values apply to one specific group of persons – terms like "Asian values" and "Western values" come to mind here – may be challenged by the transcendent and unifying power of language. When we find ways to communicate with those who are, in some ways, *different*, we join in a dialogue in which all sides may participate; a dialogue which enables each person, in principle, to *empathise* with each other person (or, using terminology from earlier in this chapter, to attempt, at least, to see things from the *perspective* of the other). We may or may not come to agree on points of difference, ethically speaking (concerning the rights of a fetus or the terminally ill, the moral status of same-sex marriage, the inherent rights of asylum seekers, etc.); after all, over and above any factual disagreement which could, in principle, be ironed out, we may hold different ethical perspectives or understand key concepts quite differently. But you have the right to ask me to explain and/or justify my beliefs or traditions, and I, as a participant in the broad community of persons, am obliged to respond.

The idea of an interconnected network of interpersonal relationships – a network of networks – begins with the most intimate of relationships (parents, family, close friends, etc.) and extends, to and beyond barriers of local community, nationhood, ethnicity, culture, religion, and all the other classifications which we apply to persons – to embrace, again in principle, *all* persons, even those – if there are such – of different natural kinds from ourselves. It follows that whatever theoretical basis one opts for in order to ground our views on morality – e.g. consequentialist, deontological or virtue-based theories – we can expect common agreement about the domain to which such theories apply. We may even take a religious perspective, noting that something like the Christian "Golden Rule" of interpersonal reciprocity ("Do unto others…") is part of the bedrock of most of the world's religions. Once again, such a rule applies to *all* (and only) persons, but does not, in itself, circumscribe the actual limits of the underlying prescription. I should not do to others that which I would not have them do to me (to paraphrase the Jewish and Confucian versions of the principle). It follows, presumably, that I may not eat you (certainly not while you are still alive), but what about other animals? I am, for better or worse,

a meat-eater, but I do not thereby bestow upon chickens, cows and fish the right to eat me. This is because I do not bestow *any* rights on them, since they are not persons. Accordingly, if I should be attacked and consumed by a chicken (a very large and angry one, presumably), I should be appropriately unhappy about it, but I could not be critical of its behaviour from a moral point of view.

With an eye on the next chapter, history has repeatedly shown that the luring power of "the group" to persuade some persons that they are not merely different from, but superior to, others, is strong. By "group" here, I mean more than a collection of individual persons; rather, a group in this strong sense (which I term a *supra-person*) is characterized by forces which imbue it with a power and status that go beyond the sum of its individual members. It may be defined by a set of specific properties or features (as with religion, ethnicity, and so on), but not necessarily so (I will elaborate on these points in the next chapter). Either way, the outcome is strict lines of inclusion and exclusion, often with depressingly familiar consequences. Once the Nazis convinced themselves and others that Jews, Gypsies, Slavs and homosexuals were not members of the "Master Race" of "pure-blooded Aryans", the next step was to rule that they were also outside the realm of *persons* altogether and, as such, could be treated as mere objects, as dispensable means to the glorification of the Third Reich. If we needed an empirically-grounded argument to reveal why such a move is nonsensical, we could point out that as members of a language community, these individuals qualify as persons in the richest sense possible and must, thereby, be included in the moral domain.

I have said little about the second part of PPW (listed as (6) above), namely the thesis – which is basically Kantian in other words – that no one person is more valuable than any other. It follows from the idea that the bonds of language and, thereby, rationality, intentionality, etc., are what all and only persons have in common. Although not stated explicitly, this claim is (surely) what is intended by the slogan "All men are equal". Given that my over-arching topic is identity, readers may wonder why I did not use this more familiar rendering. But if I had used this form of words, I would have had to include an explanation covering at least three points: (i) that irrespective of the origins of the slogan, the only respectable interpretation of "men" here is "persons" (*not* human beings, for reasons which, ought, by now, to be familiar); (ii) that the word "equal" does not mean "identical" but, rather, "equal in respect of X", where "X" *could* be filled out by "treatment", "opportunities", "rights" "consideration of interests" (Singer 1979), etc.; and (iii) notwithstanding the use of the usual copula "are" in the statement, the latter has normative or moral import; it is about what *should* be the case, not what actually *is*; hence my preferred rendering, which, in referring to value or worth, is already a transparently normative claim.

There is a certain tension – even irony – in my account which, while not problematic, warrants acknowledgment. PPW claims that persons have a distinctive moral worth in relation to non-persons, but also that persons do not constitute a natural kind or any kind of entity that generates its own characteristic identity conditions. Even noting that every person – assuming that she/he/it can be individuated and re-identified over time – will belong to some such kind or other, it may seem

that having an exalted moral status and lacking characteristic identity conditions make uneasy bed-fellows. However, there is another way of looking at things here. Personhood is a thoroughly relational construct which is continually shaped and reshaped by these very relationships in question. The person I become – which may be interpreted both qualitatively and quantitatively, noting that the conceptual guarantees regarding quantitative (or numerical) identity are the proper business of the kinds to which persons also belong – very much depends on those with whom I interact (and the same goes for each of them). The question of our actual identities is, in comparison, a minor technical one that recedes into the background, allowing us to give the more pressing moral issues the attention they require and deserve. To put this point in Kantian terms, we persons are *ends-in-ourselve*s; we are not mere objects for which questions of identity may well be prominent. We are, so to speak, *above all that*. When it comes to our own personal development, such a view may be seen as *liberating*: whatever it is that truly matters to us as persons, struggling to preserve our own sense of who we each are is not as important as other tasks and challenges (such as making the world a better, fairer place, etc.). Since I construe such personal development in educational terms, I shall defer any further elaboration of the ideas gestured at here.[16]

Finally, I should acknowledge a natural extension of Davidson's model here, one which he, himself, points to but does not follow up. It may be that one side of the triangle – viz. the link between myself and others – requires merely the existence of one other speaker with whom I can communicate (as Davidson sometimes suggests). But a more reliable base for knowledge involves a larger number of such speakers. In practice, we play off a range of assertions and beliefs as we work out which ones stand up to standards of reason, evidence, and justification. Such a range is provided within a cooperative *community* of thinkers, all of whom are inquiring after truth by way of determining, interpreting, and evaluating what is presented to them. Interestingly, while it is not clear that he intended to make the shift from a single interlocutor to a community, Davidson writes: "A community of minds is the basis of knowledge; it provides the measure of all things" (Davidson 1991/2001f, p. 218). Here, I suggest, is a link, hitherto unremarked upon, between Davidson's holistic views on mind, language and the world, on the one hand, and a distinctive concept of *community* which has important implications for how we think about such key aspects of education as classroom organisation and pedagogy, on the other. I used the term "community of persons" above but, in practice, we need a more localised, accessible notion of community to work with. We do not, in fact, interact with *all* persons, whether we are learning a language, communicating with others, or developing as moral beings, although such cosmopolitan interaction can, if we

[16] Any group of persons – including, presumably, all persons taken together – can be classified into a group or class, but it does not follow that this larger entity has moral value *per se* (i.e. in my terms, it is not larger than the sum of its parts). While I prefer not to come down on the side of any particular moral theory or meta-theory here, we must be careful not to violate the PPW by postulating, say, that a particular moral principle takes precedence over individual persons (as discussed in Chap. 7). Whether or not this constitutes a significant objection to deontological theories of ethics is something I shall not attempt to resolve.

are cautious, be regarded as a kind of normative ideal. The question of what type of community underlies our actual linguistic, semantic and ethical practices, is a crucial one, which I shall take up below (Chap. 8). In keeping with the PPW, which bestows ethical priority on persons over what I term "supra-persons", I need to defend a notion of community which extends beyond that of individual personhood, while falling short of *supra-person* pretensions.

Articulating a notion of community that supports personhood in the manner suggested will be the primary topic of Chap. 8, where I shall argue that such articulation amounts to no less than a way of describing the process of *education*. If we take seriously the ideas of perspective-taking and triangulation that have been discussed in the present chapter, we realize that there is no contradiction between the "traditional" view of education as a process of *learning about the world*, and the "progressive" view of education as a form of *personal (and interpersonal) development*. Indeed, they merely reflect, if I may put it so, different *perspectives* on the same holistic enterprise of *being* – or better, *flourishing* – in the world.

Of God and Sauron: The Ontological, Moral and Linguistic Status of Entities Which Are *Sui Generis*

What can we say about the identities and personal/moral status – remembering that these are distinct qualities – of entities which, if they exist, are in a special category of their own? The most obvious – but perhaps the most contentious – example is that of God – as in the One God proclaimed by Abraham, and which (who?) forms the basis of at least three world religions – but there are others, especially prevalent in the fictional realm. Consider, for example, J.R.R. Tolkien's classic tale of good and evil *The Lord of the Rings*, in which Sauron (*aka* "The Dark Lord") represents the epitome of evil but is portrayed as *sui generis (one of a kind)*, in that Tolkien shrewdly avoids classifying "him" as a member of any specific kind. Indeed, while we learn much about Sauron's designs, goals and impact, we know almost nothing about *what kind of thing* Sauron is, except that he sometimes appears in the form of a great *eye* and must, in some incarnations, possess a finger since he wore and lost the *One Ring* which lies at the centre of the story.[17] But the rarified status of these unique entities presents some problems, as I shall try to elucidate.

First, there is something conceptually odd about the idea that an object exists totally *sui generis* because it would not, by definition, be a member of any signifi-

[17] The makers of *The Lord of the Rings* movies have acknowledged that they (wisely) edited out from the final cut scenes depicting Sauron as a "super-warrior" in battle with *Aragorn*. On the other hand, in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Director's Cut), the aliens are depicted, all too predictably, as being of vaguely human shape. To many, this was something of a let-down. More amusingly, there is a scene in the early *Star Wars* movies in which the character Han Solo enters a "men's" washroom, to be confronted by a wall of urinals of every conceivable size, shape and height. Viewers are left to imagine the physical dimensions of the kinds of organisms that use such facilities.

cant *kind* of object and, accordingly, could not be aligned with conditions of identity or persistence which are necessarily *kind-dependent*, where the kind in question answers the fundamental question: "What is it?". This might not matter much in the realm of fiction where things can be pretty much as the author – and, arguably, the reader – imagines them to be, but it becomes a genuine issue when considering God who, according to the beliefs of billions past and present, is not only *sui generis* but very much connected to the real world in general, and to we human persons, in particular.

There is no shortage of descriptors which could, in theory, be used to designate the kind of entity that God is: "Creator of the universe", "Supreme Being", and so on, come readily to mind. However, as I have previously explained, the conceptual point of being a *kind* of entity, especially with respect to generating criteria of identity, entails envisaging a *range* of objects which do, or might, belong to it. But, by definition, the deity in question is absolutely unique. When Abram (as he was originally named) cast aside his father's idols and proclaimed the absolute unity of God, he thereby placed this particular entity beyond both the physical and the conceptual reach of mere mortals. This is duly registered in Jewish tradition which declares that while we may, to the best of our finite capacities, attempt to *describe* the Almighty, we cannot *name* it.

Still, the absence of a taxonomy which generates appropriate identity conditions may seem a relatively esoteric concern, one which simply reinforces a popular view among religious folk that logic, semantics and philosophy itself have little to do with the essence of their beliefs, which are based, rather, on *faith*. Of greater interest, I suggest, is the correlative issue of whether it makes sense to think of God as a *person* which, as I have tried to explain, is quite different from the issue of kind membership and identity, having to do with God's relationship to the world – including us human persons – in linguistic and moral terms. On one hand, personifying the deity may be seen as a child-like attempt to understand it in our own terms– hence, the quaint but seemingly irresistible temptation to anthropomorphize it in language, art and other symbolic forms (I still remember the cover of my first Bible, with its graphic depiction of God as a kindly old (white) man with a long beard). On the other hand, the account of personhood I have defended should allow us to relate to and communicate with beings which are otherwise completely alien to us, as long as those beings can be said to possess language, i.e. be members of a language community. From the perspective of the religion I know most about, (Judaism), attitudes to God are neither fixed nor prescribed; indeed, while it is, as in most theistic religions, God's imprimatur or signature which provides the ultimate basis for law and ethics, it was Judaism which (in Western tradition) first understood that legal and moral codes were directed most centrally at regulating relationships *between one person and another* within particular communities. Furthermore, while the careful examination of Biblical, Talmudic and other *Responsa* texts (which are still being written today) was deemed essential, the point of such study was not to justify conservative moral positions by appealing to bits of decontextualized Biblical text, but to use our "God-given" gift of reason to formulate our best judgments based on sound thinking. In other words, as classically theistic as Judaism is, it is also strongly

humanistic, relying much less on divine revelation than (some) other religions. Still, there is a tacit assumption that both directly – through prayer – and indirectly – through the way we live our lives – we are in communication with God. And this brings us back to the issue of language: on my terms, if one believes that God speaks or, at least, listens to us, then God is, like us, a person. Remembering that this says nothing about the existential kind of being that God is, such a conclusion may seem more than acceptable. After all, according to the PPW, persons sit at the top of the ethical tree.

But now we come up against the other half of the PPW: that not only do persons possess a moral value which places them above non-persons, but this value is shared *equally* among all persons. Is it consistent with the tenets of theism that the moral status of God is *no greater* than that of those over whom God has moral authority? After all, we regularly bestow authority – whether legal, moral, or in other terms – on some in relation to others (parents, police, teachers, etc.), without thereby imputing any privileged moral status to them. However, the analogy seems less than compelling, for in the case in question, God is not merely *an* authority who is appointed to oversee our behavior; God is the ultimate authority whose word *is* the Law. Christianity attempts to resolve the issue by acknowledging the quasi-paradoxical nature of the Holy Trinity which depicts God as being, at one and the same time, above and beyond, a creature of flesh and blood living among us, and a mysterious power that constitutes a link between the divine and the worldly. The following commentary nicely – albeit problematically – reflects some of the distinctions I have been suggesting here:

> The Trinity tells us that there are three Persons in one Divine Nature. The names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are names of *persons*. "God" can serve as either a name for the Father or a name for the Divine Nature. Before delving into the relative meaning of Persons and Natures it will be useful to make it clear that these terms refer to distinctly different things.[18]

Finally, with tongue placed firmly in cheek, I note that even in fiction, we may make some distinctions with respect to personal and moral status. The most evil of creatures may be classified as morally beyond the pale but only on the assumption that they belong to the moral domain in the first place – i.e. that they qualify as persons. By my lights, this comes down to their possession and use of language. Vampires and evil scientists qualify because (at least in the movies I watch) they can and do communicate, both among themselves and with us, their intended victims. Marauding spiders, like "The Thing" and "The Blob", on the other hand, are more dubious.[19] Similarly, it is unlikely that zombies qualify either; as the "living dead", they do not appear capable of uttering more than the occasional grunt or snarl. We may loathe and fear them, but we should not condemn them, for they know not what they do.

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[18] http://www.columbia.edu/cu/augustine/arch/sbrandt/trinity.htm. Retrieved from http://www.archive.org/ (July 17, 2013).

[19] Borderline cases include: the giant insects in the satirical *Starship Trooper* movies; there is no evidence of direct communication on their part but, as it turns out, their high level of organization and planning is explained by the existence of a single "Master Insect" which, presumably, communicates with its followers in some manner.

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Chapter 7
Religions, Nations, Cultures, Traditions, Roles and Other *Supra-Persons*: The Principle of Personal Worth II

Introduction

In this chapter, I settle three of the remaining claims listed in the previous chapter, as elaborations of the Principle of Personal Worth (with the last – (9) – to be dealt with in the following chapter). Recalling the original list from the previous chapter, the claims in question are **highlighted** as follows:

(1) Persons are those familiar entities of which you, I, and all human persons are typical exemplars; but;
(2) There is no reason to insist either that only humans can be persons or that all humans are (human) persons; indeed:
(3) Personhood, as a classification among existents, does not compete or clash with those concepts – whatever they may be – which demarcate particular *kinds* of entity, where the primary function of a kind is to supply criteria of identity and existence for those objects which belong to it; i.e. personhood is not a kind in this sense;
(4) *Being a person*, however, remains a classification of the utmost importance because of the specific moral, aesthetic, semantic, epistemological and metaphysical dimensions of this concept;
(5) (**PPW A**) **Non-persons – entities that are not persons – are less valuable than persons. In referring to non-persons**, **I have in mind** two types of entity:

   (a) Ordinary objects such as rocks, hi fi systems, snakes, insects, birds, fish, most mammals, and such fictional entities as marauding spiders of whatever kind, and (more contentiously) zombies (the "walking dead"); *and*:
   (b) "**Supra-personal**" **entities such as nations**, **religions**, **ethnicities** (**or ethnic groups**), **cultures**, **corporations**, **clubs**, **cults**, **castes**, **clans**, **traditions**,

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roles, **gangs**, **tribes**, **the family**, **the budgetary deficit**, **the economy**, … **some of which are more abstract than others**;
with one key difference between objects in these two groups being that the latter are, in some sense, *composed of* or *constituted by* persons, whereas the former are not[1];

(6) (PPW B) No one person is more valuable than any other;
(7) **Persons are not more valuable than *simple groups* of, or *networks of relationships among*, persons, where these are understood as collections which are *no greater than the sums of their parts* (i.e. individual persons); groups in this purely additive sense are quite different from the "supra-persons" referred to above**;
(8) **Despite initial appearances, neither the strong individualism of the neo-liberal ("Western") stereotype, nor the collectivism of the neo-socialist ("Eastern") stereotype finds any support in the PPW**;
(9) Formal education should be focused on nurturing and assisting the development or emergence of what I cautiously term "full personhood", rather than on such instrumental goals as vocational training, becoming literate or good citizens, socialization, etc.

Along the way, I will clarify some key identity-related issues in relation to such notable *supra-persons* as religions, nations, cultures, and traditions.

In introducing the concept of a *supra*-person, my intention is to critique a raft of claims which, taken together, form the basis of what is sometimes referred to as "identity politics", i.e. the moves made by, or on behalf of specific groups of individuals – usually, but not always, those who have suffered from some form of injustice – in order to attain greater acceptance or recognition in the broader society. The use of the term "identity" in such contexts is double-edged: on the one hand, the group in question will often seek affirmation of that which makes it *distinctive*; on the other hand, it seeks to *unify* its members through their own identification with the group and, thereby, attain a kind of equality (identity) in society. I am interested in how these complementary drives relate to the concept of identity and, more specifically, to the identity of those members. Briefly stated, my view is that while the concepts which designate these groups may well generate criteria of identity for the groups themselves, they have nothing to do with the actual identities of the individuals which belong to these groups. *Their* identities cannot be destroyed, or even significantly disrupted, by the loss of, or change in, their group affiliations and associations – both those that they join and leave voluntarily, and those that are imposed on them. To realize that neither our personhood nor our identity can be destroyed in these ways is itself a key liberating step in our own personal development.

[1] Examples of more abstract *supra-persons* are *the family*, *the budget deficit* and *the economy*. Where actual families, like nations and religions, are directly constituted by persons, the relationship between the former and actual persons is less direct, albeit still present.

In relation to PPW more specifically, I contend that any normative or moral claims made on behalf of either the groups themselves or their members can only derive from the moral status of those members as persons.

There are actually two underlying "meta-ethical" claims here, both of which I hold:

(I) The moral status of individual persons is greater than that of such *supra-persons* as nations, religions, cultures, "the family", etc.;
(II) The moral status of individual persons depends on their being persons, not on their being Australians, Chinese, Caucasians, Christians, right-handed, intellectuals, or any combination of these.

Within the domain of identity politics, we frequently find claims which run counter to (5b), in maintaining that such entities as nations, religions, and economies have a moral value or worth which is, in some sense, greater than the persons who belong to them. In advocating against this claim and in favour of (5b), I do not insist that these entities have *no* value to us (since they clearly do); rather, I maintain that the value of being an Australian/Chinese, or Jewish/Muslim, and the value of certain social and economic ideals – the family, a balanced Budget, a welfare state, etc. – are, at best, *derivative* upon the value – the well-being and worthiness – of those ordinary persons who are Australian or Chinese, Jewish or Muslim, members of families or not, the beneficiaries of a balanced Budget, and so on.

The claim made in (7), while also having a moral dimension, makes an important distinction between groups that are, as I put it, no greater than the sums of their parts (or, in some cases, no greater than the network of *relationships* among those parts) and groups – including nations, religions, ethnicities, cultures, gangs, tribes and so on – which commonly *are seen as* greater than the sums of their parts. Adopting a different terminology, this is the distinction between classes, which are defined *extensionally* (i.e. entirely in terms of the members that they happen to have at a given time), and groups, affiliations and associations whose definitions are more *intensional* or abstract, in that they appeal to certain (sometimes unclear) properties and characteristics that their members *must* possess. Such properties are often assumed – falsely, I shall argue – to have two meta-features which imbue the groups in question with a special status: (i) the properties are *morally* significant, so that, for example, being of a particular nationality, or ethnicity, or culture, implies a moral status in relation to the members of other nationalities, ethnicities and cultures; and (ii) the properties are *existentially* or *ontologically* significant, being relevant, in some sense, to the very *identities* of those individuals who belong to such groups. So, according to (ii), for example, my being Australian, or Jewish, etc., is a key component of *who* I am, in the strong sense that were I of another nationality or religion, I would *not be the individual that I actually am*. In rejecting both of these meta-properties, I am, in effect, calling into question the common or popular view that nationality, religion, culture, and the like, are essential to our existence as individuals and/or our moral status as persons. We do not need to rely on any of the associations, collectives or affiliations that form an inevitable part of living in a multi-faceted society, in order to know "who we are", *either* as biological organisms

or as human persons. Getting clear on this point is of vital importance when considering the nature of teaching and learning environments in general, and of such contentious educational programmes as moral, national and citizenship education, in particular.

Belonging To *Versus* Identifying With/As

It is a natural tendency of people everywhere and throughout history to seek out the company of those who are, in some sense or another, *like* them (birds of a feather do tend to flock together). Since, for any two individuals, there is an indefinite number of ways in which they are alike (similar), as well as an indefinite number of ways in which they are different, it follows, at least in theory, that there is virtually no limit on the kinds of groups that may bring and bind people together. Still, not all of the groups to which we *belong* are particularly significant or interesting. But among those which are, we may (choose to) *identify* with one or more. I find it useful to classify the groups to which I belong (or with which I am indirectly associated) along the following lines: (i) those which I regard as significant, such as my group of close friends, my immediate family, my university, my choir, the "community" of professional philosophers and (depending on my frame of mind) my religion, etc.; (ii) those which are regarded as significant in a more socio-cultural sense, irrespective of whether they are taken as such by me – I am thinking here of my nation, my religion, my ethnicity, my gender and sexuality, my socio-economic ranking, even the economy of which I am a part – i.e. the *supra-persons* referred to earlier; and (iii) those which most of us would regard as fairly trivial, incidental or ephemeral, such as the group of people in the same train carriage as me last Wednesday morning, or all people born on July 8 1960, and so on.[2]

Identification is a special case of belonging, involving a particular *salience* or *significance* accorded, primarily, by individual persons on the basis of what they judge to be of most significance in their lives (in the above classification, examples from (i) are likely to feature here). Further, the issue of which groups I identify with cannot be mandated. Speaking personally, I do not actually identify in any strong sense with my fellow Australians – still less with the nation Australia (although I acknowledge the sheer luck of having been born in, and therefore automatically a citizen of, such a privileged country), whereas I do identify quite closely with the group comprising my close friends (which has no name *per se* and is barely even recognised as an entity in its own right). More generally, I am hesitant to declare any relation of identification with such entities as nations, cultures and other collectives noted under (ii) above, mainly because it is unclear in what such identification consists and, therefore, what it entails. Nations, cultures and religions, like gangs, tribes

[2] The groups classified under (ii) are not fixed or rigidly determined. Some that used to be regarded as (ethically) significant – race, gender and sexuality come readily to mind here – become more or less irrelevant, while others – nationality, ethnicity and religion, for example – seem to become more prominent.

and cults, have their own histories and agendas which may or may not be consistent with my own. I express this by saying that they are not merely larger than each of their members (which is obviously the case), but *larger than the sum or totality of those members*. By contrast, the groups with which I prefer to identify, as exemplified under (i) are, by and large, *no larger than the sums of their parts or members*: they do not have inviolate traditions or agendas of their own other than those that are wholly determined by their members.

The qualifiers "inviolate" and "other than those that are wholly determined by their members" matter here. I have studied, taught and sung in a number of notable universities and choirs with respect to which my sense of pride and attachment would probably constitute a form of identification: I identify *as* a (past or present) member, and I identify *with* others who also so identify. Further, these institutions have their own reputations, histories, traditions, rules and agendas with which I also, and thereby, identify. But imagine a situation in which I feel confronted or offended by a particular phenomenon – say, a history of discrimination against Jewish students, or a concert programme which includes music I loathe. I might then respond by giving up my sense of identification with – or, even more strongly, my membership of – that institution, but I might also retain it and argue the case among my fellow members for critiquing the tradition or changing the concert programme.

Such hypothetical examples reflect something about me, namely, that my own sense of *who I am* as a person is in no way determined by these groups or the "baggage" which they may carry in the form of traditions, agendas, etc. Irrespective of what I choose to identify with or as, I do not regard either my own identity or moral sense as being determined by them – hence, my conviction that I have the power to choose how – if at all – I wish to continue my affiliations with them in the future. However, many people do not share this conviction in regard to themselves; they may feel either existentially or morally bound to one or more of the groups to which they belong. Therein lies the potential for what some see as "identity" conflict – even loss of identity– and the oppression and manipulation wrought by states, religions and other *supra-persons* with respect to their members.

Striking examples of *supra-persons*, i.e. groups which are definitely perceived to be greater than the sums of their respective parts, are gangs and cults, which so often have a destructive influence on their members (and on others), precisely because the latter appear to give up – whether or not voluntarily or even knowingly – their own autonomy in favour of the collective will (or that of a charismatic leader). Again, the dimensions of this phenomenon may be both moral and/or ontological. Such collectives have the power to compel their members to perform the most extreme acts (suicide bombings, for example), as we have seen all too often throughout history. Consider the following commentary:

> In some ways, terrorism is an outgrowth of collectivism taken to its extreme. For collectivist-oriented individuals, the group (e.g., family, nation, religion) takes precedence over the individual… The terrorist becomes fused with the group he represents, so much so that he is willing to sacrifice his own life to advance the group's agenda and purposes. (Schwartz 2005, p. 304)

We see here how the two dimensions I have identified – the moral and the ontological – operate together: in taking his own identity to be inextricably linked ("fused") to that of the group, the terrorist gives up his own (moral) autonomy – not because he is willing to sacrifice himself for the benefit of others (i.e. other persons), but because he is willing to sacrifice himself for something much less tangible, viz. the group itself, i.e. in Schwartz's terms, its agenda and purposes. There is an important difference here which is highlighted by PPW: whatever the merits of self-sacrifice in favour of one or more other persons, such action does not violate the PPW; by contrast, self-sacrifice in the name of an agenda, purpose or cause – none of which constitutes a person – does.

Less extreme but still worrying examples of group influence are easy to find. In the world of fashion, there is not much that is personally liberating or empowering for young women who endure both short-term discomfort and long-term structural problems in order to wear the latest fashion shoes which happen to have pencil-thin 20 cm long high heels; likewise with the mixed blessing of peer pressure which, on the one hand, is often taken as an essential step on the road to personal autonomy, but, on the other, as the driving force behind clone-like appearance and behaviour.

To speak of giving up one's autonomy (above) is to assume that one had it in the first place. But if we characterise autonomy in terms of a capacity – along with a determination – to *think for oneself* about matters of significance (including morality), this assumption should not be taken for granted. Since this issue relates directly to education, I shall put it on hold until the next chapter, except to note that although I am critical of scenarios in which PPW is violated, or even put at risk, it is unrealistic to place the blame entirely on the power and actions of the offending groups involved. While gangs and cults, along with such allegedly more respectable collectives and associations as nations, cultures (and sub-cultures), religions, families, and traditions are all too often imbued with a power over individuals which is unhealthy, even dangerous, that power is exacerbated by the relative vulnerability of those individuals, and the contexts in which many find themselves. Needless to say there are complex causal issues here which are beyond the scope of this discussion – including cycles of poverty and violence which ensnare many individuals throughout their lives. There are also issues of gender – with males much more likely to be caught up in the violence associated with gangs, nation states, religions, and tribes – ready access to weapons, an overwhelming sense of alienation, lack of viable options, and so on. In the face of such complexities I am, nevertheless, interested in the question of what might be done to immunize or shield young people from the worst effects of their affiliation with such groups.

There is an important caveat to make here. The idea that we associate with others who are like us in specific aspects suggests that the procedural order here is: identification of common or similar traits first, formation of groups based on these traits second. However, the very existence of separate groups can suffice to generate degrees of similarity and difference – often based on feelings rather than realities – that subsequently take on a life of their own. Kwame Anthony Appiah and David Berreby[3] provide a telling illustration of this point, with each citing a 1950s social

[3] See Appiah (2005, pp. 62ff) and Berreby (2005, pp. 167ff).

experiment in which 22 young adolescent boys from fairly homogenous backgrounds in Oklahoma, USA were divided randomly into two groups, and instructed to set up camp in close proximity to each other, within the Oklahoma Robbers Cave State Park. After a few days, each group became aware of the other's existence. They promptly challenged each other in competitive games but within 2 weeks, had developed an enmity which threatened to result in outright violence, until the staff intervened by manufacturing ways to bring the two groups together (the story ends happily, with good interpersonal relations restored, notably *not* on the basis of the original groups' lines). As Appiah and Berreby both describe this scenario, the two groups not only gave themselves names ("The Rattlers" and "The Eagles") but developed separate and complementary tribal characteristics (the Rattlers seeing themselves as tough and the Eagles as civilized, etc.). Indeed, these characteristics became more pronounced as a result of their interactions. In this example, the development of separate "identity allegiances" and, in turn, a correspondingly negative sense of "The Other", based on a succession of incidental events that led to more and more "differences" between the two groups, was as rapid as it was baseless (on the other hand, the breakdown of the tribal divisions was equally rapid). Here we see a particularly striking instance of the violation of PPW in which the very existence of separate groups can give rise to misguided moral and existential perspectives.[4] However, neither Appiah nor Berreby appears to regard the tensions which arose in response to the separation of the two groups of boys as constituting a moral or social problem worthy of solution. I disagree: even "controlled" scenarios involving group differences – let alone those over which no one has control (I am thinking particularly of such tragedies as the near-spontaneous tribal slaughtering of Tutsis by neighbouring Hutus during the 1990s) – should sound a warning that something is lacking in the way that those involved view themselves in relation to others. Berreby, in particular, maintains that the boys were guided by their own feelings and experiences to manufacture and, in turn, dissolve, divisions between the two groups; if one division turned out to be fallacious – e.g. a "feeling" that the boys from the other camp must be "niggers" or "Communists" – then it would be replaced by another, until circumstances – manufactured by the researchers in this case – contrived to bring them together.[5] But it seems reasonable to ask, what is, or might be, the role of reason and reasonableness here, in bringing the two groups together in dialogue, for example? I will argue in the next chapter that schools and classrooms have a vital role to play here (just as in cases where group divisions are based on real similarities and differences), one that seems quite obvious once we recognise that personal development lies at the heart of education.

[4] As I hope to establish, the reference to *identity* in such contexts is neither necessary nor helpful (a point not made by either Appiah or Berreby).

[5] The idea that quite specific experiences can generate feelings which, in turn, lead to beliefs (usually negative) about an entire group has a familiar name: "*stereotyping*". Stereotypes are a type of *supra-person* which have little validity and often lead to moral conclusions which violate the PPW.

Identification and Identity

I do not reject the idea that individuals may *identify* with such *supra-persons* as nations, cultures, etc., although I am inclined to regard the value or significance of such identification as psychological or affective at best (put somewhat crudely, they make us feel good, like sporting enthusiasts who passionately support their local, state or national team; sentiment may run high in both cases, although the consequences of identifying with a sports team are usually – albeit not always – innocuous). There is nothing *wrong* with my identifying (affiliating) with other Australian citizens, other Jews, etc., provided that I understand that:

(i) There will be other individuals who do *not* so identify;
(ii) One kind of affiliation or self-identification does not exclude others;
(iii) These affiliations do not define or prescribe the *very individual* that I am; and
(iv) These groupings do not imply or signify any specific *moral* or ethical characteristics over and above my *being a person* ((iv) is basically a restatement of my core thesis in PPW, reiterated in I and II above, and will be dealt with as the chapter proceeds).

Concerning the first three conditions, (i) is fairly obvious: from a semantic perspective, the familiar practice of using group terms to classify items makes sense only because such terms serve to distinguish individuals who belong from those who don't. When it comes to terms which classify along social, cultural, political, or religious lines, we understand them to be literally divisive, in the sense that where some individuals will belong to, say, a particular nation, others will not. This sense of divisiveness has wrought centuries of violence and harm, not because of the divisions *per se*, but because of the irresistible temptation to judge one's own group – e.g. nation or religion – as morally superior to others or, at least, as warranting special privileges or treatment (territorial, for example). It is primarily for this reason that I reject any account of morality which attempts to construct or entrench divisions among persons (i.e. (iv) above).

Regarding (ii), it is a mark of my membership of a multi-faceted and diverse society that I may choose to identify as an Australian citizen, but also as an academic, a gay man, a Jew, an eldest son, a member of the Hong Kong Chamber Singers, etc. Even if some of our group memberships are compulsory or involuntary, others are not. To insist that one such association is overriding or exclusive, is to commit what Amartya Sen calls the "Fallacy of Singular Affiliation" which he locates at the heart of much of the intolerance and discord to which we bear witness around the world today.[6] The very idea of relegating others to a morally inferior status on the basis of their affiliation with a particular group or association begins to look decidedly shaky when we consider the many kinds of affiliation that make up a community of persons, and that those who are regarded as *other* from one perspective are increasingly likely to be grouped together under another.

Condition (iii) restates a point which I have articulated earlier in various ways (that qualitative ("type") identity or identification does not constitute numerical

[6] Sen (2006, pp. 20ff).

("token") identity or identification, and that no amount of conceptual description can replace the *deictic* or referential imperative to locate the objects that we (numerically) identify and re-identify in the same spatio-temporal framework that we ourselves occupy: recall the idea that every particular is a *this-such*). Imagine someone insisting that they *are* not just gay, but also intellectual, left-handed, Caucasian, Jewish, etc., with the implication that if we list enough such traits (i.e. traits designating "suchness"), we will, eventually, pin down the very individual that *is* that person (in the sense of "is numerically identical to"), i.e. the "this" within the "this-such". However, such an inference is fallacious for the same reason: semantically speaking, *no amount of qualitative sameness can yield numerical sameness*. No matter how strongly Chinese citizens identify with China, neither this nor any other affiliation provides a criterion of identity that can serve to define them as individuals. It provides, at best, the identity conditions for the class of Chinese citizens or, more contentiously, the nation-state of China *per se*. Further, no combination of affiliations (such as Chinese citizen of Hong Kong, Asian-American, etc.) can do this job either. Suppose that, as a matter of fact, there is one and only one person who is ethnically Chinese, linguistically Cantonese, religiously Jewish, female, and left-handed. These groupings, whether considered separately or together, *still do not define who that person is*, in the manner of literal identity (though they doubtless play their part in her own life-project of working out her place in the world, and what matters to her).

Identification is an interesting concept in its own right. I have already noted (Chap. 3) that the distinction between numerical and qualitative identity correlates with a distinction between (what I am calling) numerical and qualitative identification. Both qualitative identity and qualitative identification make sense only on the presumption that there is one or more trait, characteristic or quality that is (literally) identified as salient in a particular context. When we speak about identifying *with* a larger collective or association – which, I shall assume, means the same as both identifying *with others* who so identify, and identifying *as* a member or part of that larger group – the quality in question is precisely that which defines or, at least, distinguishes the group in question, from the perspective of the person(s) doing the identifying. To identify with Australia or as Australian, qualitatively speaking, is to identify (numerically) that nation or that quality as having special significance for me. But neither salience nor significance has anything to do with *my* actual (numerical) identity.

Numerical identification is implicated in acts of *referring*; for example, when a botanist *identifies* a type of flower as a new species in the genus *Chrysanthemum*; or a witness in a courtroom *identifies* the defendant as the (same) person he saw shoot the victim. Further, these two types of identification are themselves distinct. The botanist is, presumably, examining an actual physical plant (or a photograph of one) and declaring it to be a member of a new species of *Chrysanthemum* and, hence, a member of a kind which has many other members. Here we have identification performing a fundamental semantic function: providing an answer to the basic question "What is it?" by reference to a type or kind of object: the plant itself is literally a *this-such*. The courtroom example is somewhat different, albeit related. When the attorney asks the witness if he can identify the person who fired the gun,

and the forensic expert if she can identify the gun present in the courtroom, they will not say "Yes, that is a person", or "Yes, that is a gun", since the judge and jury already know that. But they may well say: "Yes, *that* person – pointing to the defendant – is *the* (*same*) *person* I saw fire the gun and shoot the victim", and "Yes, *this* gun is *the* (*same*) *gun* that was used to shoot the victim".[7] The implicit term "same" here indicates not just identification, but *re*-identification (or *recognition*). In using the word "same" correctly here, the witnesses reveal their tacit understanding of two basic truths: (i) the answers to the basic questions "What is a person?" and "What is a gun?"; and (ii) the conditions or *criteria of identity* that make re-identification possible. They know – or claim to know – both how to pick out objects of a certain kind, and how to track them over time (and space) in order to pick out *the same* objects in the courtroom (even though a more specific level of expertise is required in the case of the gun). In short, identification and re-identification in this sense presuppose that the objects in question have their own identities; conversely, declaring "two" objects to be identical (e.g. the defendant and the shooter, or the gun present and the gun used to shoot the victim), involves *two* separate acts or events of identification, usually occurring at two different times. In the case of ordinary material objects, an assertion of identity is akin to an act of recognition, as noted earlier. I need to believe, with justification, that object **a**, identified at time t_1, is the same object as object **b**, identified at a later time t_2. This belief may be amplified as follows: imagine that I physically accompany **a** on its journey through space and time, from t_1 to t_2, ensuring that I do not lose direct contact with this object by literally clinging to it. At time t_2, I identify the object around which my arms are wrapped as **b** and confidently declare that **a**=**b**. Of course, in real life, we do not literally cling to the objects that we identify and re-identify (unless we are 2 years old and cannot bear to be parted from a favourite toy). Instead, as can be seen in the courtroom example, we rely on a combination of evidence, common sense and inference, e.g. object **b** has the same (qualitative) markings as **a**, there was no opportunity for anyone to replace **a** with a different gun, etc. (the gun might be a more dubious example than the defendant just because one gun could relatively easily be substituted for another gun that looked exactly similar, whereas persons are not so easily substituted). This may not be literal clinging, but the possibility of inferring identity rests on a kind of *conceptual clinging*. We are able to identify and re-identify ordinary objects because we understand them as being of a certain *kind* (gun, human being or organism, etc.), and the path which allows us to track such objects over time is determined by the nature of that kind. Once again, we see the interplay of conceptual and perceptual components (*this-such*) at work here.

Coming back to the case that concerns us, is there a similar conceptual dependence of identification on identity, in such situations as when I identify (qualitatively) *with* my country (or fellow compatriots), or *as* a citizen of my country (an Australian, a Hong Kong Chinese, etc.)? Such questions may seem similar to the earlier example

[7] Granted, in the courtroom an expert on guns may also be called to identify the gun as being of a particular type or kind, akin to the botanist identifying the plant as (a member of) a particular species.

involving the botanist, who provides an answer to the basic "*What is it*?" question – an answer which makes further acts of identification and re-identification possible by way of applying an appropriate *identity criterion* – by specifying the name of a kind or type. But the slightest reflection should reveal that such acts as identifying a new plant according to its kind, and identifying as (a) Chinese are quite different in kind. No matter how important being Chinese may seem to some individuals, it does not provide the most basic answer to the "*What is it*?" question, for the simple reason that being Chinese does *not* constitute or carve out a specific track or pathway for identifying and re-identifying individual human persons over time. In short, being Chinese may be important to some, but it is not one of the conceptual conditions for *being the very person or individual that one is* (whereas, being of a particular species or, more generally, a living organism, constitutes the conceptual part of what it means for the flower to be the very object that it is). The difference may be brought out by considering the following: (i) On one hand, the identities of individual citizens – who, after all, are also persons – do not depend on, or require, the continuing existence or identity of a particular state, nation, people, culture, or whatever. People can, and often do, cease to be citizens of one state or adherents of a particular culture without thereby ceasing to exist. The only condition that could block something's continuing existence is its ceasing to be a member of its own underlying kind, according to the criterion of identity associated with that kind. In the case of human persons, we know more or less what has to happen in order for one to cease to be human: it must cease to function as a living organism, i.e. it must *die*. (ii) Conversely, the continuing existence and identity of a collective such as a state or "people" by no means guarantees or requires the continuing existence and identity of its constituent members. This is rather obvious when the collective is a nation, culture, religious grouping, etc. Individual citizens come and go – through birth and death, migration, etc. – without necessarily impacting on the larger entity in any appreciable way. (ii) also holds when the collective in question is an object's underlying kind (the answer to the basic "*What is it*?" question); i.e. the ongoing existence of the kind does not guarantee the continuation of objects which are of that kind. This, too, may seem obvious upon reflection; after all, a natural kind such as *human being* or *human organism* happily survives the death or destruction of some, even many, of its members (but, arguably, not *all* of them which, in the case of living things, would amount to extinction of the kind itself). Indeed, it is the nature of such members that they will one day cease to be. However, unlike nations, cultures and other such collectives, the connection between an individual and its underlying kind is, indeed, *necessary* for the continuing existence of the former, which is another way of saying that condition (i) above, while it applies to such collectives as nations, does *not* apply to an object's underlying kind: cease to be a living organism or a member of a particular species and you cease to be, period! What is it, then, over and above the existence of a thing's underlying kind that suffices to determine the ongoing identity of that thing? To repeat, while kinds, like all groups, classes and collectives, are pluralities, and because a kind defines or specifies the characteristic path through space and time that objects of that kind will take, in order actually to identify – to pick out – an object, we have to pick *it* out, i.e.

we have to identify it in relation to our own location and proximity in the same spatial and temporal framework. The witness in the courtroom can pick out the gun because she is standing nearby and can point directly to it. Knowing what a gun is helps, of course, but nothing replaces the physical (deictic) connection between us, as identifiers, and the object, as identified.

I am saying that something like an actual physical connection is a necessary part of what occurs when we identify an object as being of a certain kind. I am also saying that *nothing* like this occurs if I identify as Australian, or when my colleague identifies with his fellow Chinese. Part of one's identification in the latter sense is the acceptance of a particular quality or property: I have the property of being (an) Australian, while he has the property of being (a) (Hong Kong) Chinese. This, as we saw, has little to do with the identity of either myself or the larger entity in question, but it has a lot to do with those properties or features that we regard as salient or significant in our lives. Such salience is a matter of degree (as well as personal preference): I could provide a list of features that may be truly associated with me, in decreasing order of their significance to me (e.g. having relationships of various kinds with specific others, being an academic, loving the choral music of J. S. Bach, being Jewish, being Australian, being Caucasian, being left-handed, being 181 cm tall, having greying hair, and on and on). But *none* of these features, whether considered individually or together, constitutes my actual *identity*. My identity is hard to specify in words, precisely because it is constituted both by my being a particular kind of object (living organism, say) and by my being part of a network or framework in space-time that allows myself and others to identify me as and when desired.[8]

I indicated above that my *identifying with* a nation or similar collective has little to do with the *identity of* the latter, the more so the extent to which it is conceptualised as being *larger than the sum of its parts*. To see this, compare the nation as an entity with its own history, culture and political status (i.e. those features which extend beyond its actual members) – call such a nation $\mathbf{N_1}$ – to the collection of those individuals who happen – either at one time or over time – to be members (citizens) of this nation ($\mathbf{N_2}$). Since $\mathbf{N_2}$ is defined *extensionally* – i.e. in terms of its actual members (like a class in the mathematical sense) – its *identity* may be characterised by the relation "belongs to the same nation as" (or "are co-nationals, compatriots", etc.) which relate individual citizens. Such a relationship is an "*equivalence* relation" (see Chap. 2) because it specifies a degree of *similarity* (not strict identity) among co-nationals which, in turn, implies a corresponding *difference* between the members of one nation and those of another nation (call it $\mathbf{N_3}$). An equivalence relation gives rise to a number of *equivalence classes* whose members are individual citizens of $\mathbf{N_2}$, $\mathbf{N_3}$ and so on. In this extensional sense, nations might be thought of

[8] In view of these comments, how should we understand the concept of *identity theft*, referring to the Internet-enabled process of (illegally) posing as a particular person in order to take financial advantage of her? A Wikipedia entry on this topic neatly points out that since it is not possible literally to steal someone's identity, it might be more accurate to speak of identity *fraud* or *impersonation*. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_theft).

as equivalence classes, each of which contains similar individuals in the prescribed sense (i.e. similar in that they are co-nationals), and each of which is *different* from other nations or equivalence classes (because the members of two different nations are not similar in the prescribed sense; they are not co-nationals). In other words, strict identity and difference do exist here, *but at the level of the nation*, *not that of the individuals who constitute it*.

However, in reality, we do not identify nations merely as equivalence classes defined by the similarity relation "co-national". Actual nations are of type $\mathbf{N_1}$, not $\mathbf{N_2}$, which means that they cannot be defined purely extensionally: nations, in this sense, are precisely, *more than the sums of their parts or members*. Accordingly, the actual identity conditions of nations are somewhat opaque which ought, in turn, to raise even louder warning signals when individuals claim to *identify* with them.[9]

I remarked earlier that groups and the individuals that populate them should not be confused. If an individual **p** identifies himself as a member of a class or group (kind) **G**, then there are two conceptually distinct entities here, each with its own numerical identity conditions or criteria. We need, then, to specify such conditions for both **p** and **G**. Notice that the identity conditions for individuals like you and me must allow for several possibilities, including: my identification with others who belong to the same sort or kind, my distinctness from those who do not, and my distinctness from others who are also of the same kind. Stating the identity conditions for G involves completing a statement such as the following: "For x to be a member of **G** requires that x…" For example, "For **p** to be an Australian citizen, **p** must either have been born in Australia or been naturalized"; "To be a Jew (in strict orthodox terms) is to be born of a Jewish mother or to have been converted according to Jewish law"; etc.

There is no reason to deny that groups of individuals exist just as the individuals themselves do. But this might be a somewhat empty or pointless classification, depending on what kind of entity **G** is supposed to be, and whether it serves any particular interests – whether of a theoretical kind (as with scientific kinds) or more practically (like a nation, or a book-club). Scientific or natural kinds (discussed in Chap. 4) are associated with properties or characteristics that are bound together in law-like frameworks, where the laws – and therefore, the properties – in question are woven into the fabric of nature itself. With respect to human persons, whatever

[9] In the lead-up to the 2014 Football World Cup (when writing these words), some media organizations were asking *what it means to be Brazilian* – which, as I see it, is more or less the same as asking what it means to be (the nation) Brazil. I see only two types of answer here: *either* a Brazilian is someone born in Brazil or a child of someone born in Brazil or a naturalized citizen of Brazil; *or* being Brazilian means more or less whatever anyone who is Brazilian (and perhaps, more worryingly, anyone else as well) *wants* it to mean. We could shift the spotlight onto Brazilian *culture*, but cultures, I suggest, are dubious entities on which to pin identifying qualities. They change continually, according to the actual behavior of those who identify as Brazilian! In short, I am not convinced that in our times, being of a particular nationality really means much at all, despite the pressure that is occasionally exerted on citizens to conform to a particular vision or stereotype. Conversely, the idea that a particular activity or attitude is "Un-Australian" (referring to my own national origin) lacks coherence unless it means simply "Not very nice". I say more about the conceptual implications of citizenship below.

groups or kinds nature uncovers, they will *not* be those I am currently considering under the term "supra-person". Notwithstanding the practice of some writers to refer to the latter as *human* kinds,[10] we should not simply assume that the theories and "law-like" regularities that may be associated with these collectives have any genuine explanatory, causal or predictive power (any more than the group of people travelling in a particular train carriage at a particular time). I suggested earlier that the more innocuous the group or collective, the more it depends, for its ongoing existence, on the very members it has; conversely when a group such as a nation, religion or gang takes on an existential status of its own and becomes something which is "greater than the sum of its parts/members", then we need to be more wary of the claims that are made on its behalf.

If we pay attention to the semantic structure of ordinary language, it is clear that when I say "I am (an) Australian (a Jew, a Caucasian, etc.)", I am *predicating* the property of being Australian of myself. As noted, this is a case of qualitative *identification* not strict identity, because (i) this property is only one among many that apply to me, and (ii) the same property applies to others as well (viz. all Australian citizens; however this is defined). By contrast, if I declare that I am Laurance Splitter (in a situation where someone is either asking for me in a crowded room, or seeking to know my name), then I am, indeed, declaring myself to be *identical to*/*with* that person (in the same sense that 2+3 is identical to 5). (This distinction between predication and identity was discussed in Chap. 2.)

The idea that one particular association or affiliation pinpoints *the* defining characteristic of individuals who have it is one form of *essentialist* thinking in identity politics (Heyes 2012; another, as Heyes points out, is the practice of excluding or alienating some individuals from an oppressed sub-group on the grounds that they do not fit the ideal or dominant image of that group). It is not difficult to understand why those who react against long-standing oppression on the basis of their sexual, ethnic, religious or other associations may, perhaps unwittingly, *define* themselves in terms of those very features since, presumably, the perpetrators of the oppression are guilty of having done precisely the same thing. The temptation to do so is exacerbated by a determination, on the part of many of those in the oppressed group, to reject what they deem as the easy way out, namely, *down-playing* the targeted features (being gay, African-American, Muslim, etc.) in favour of accepting the fundamental sameness of all persons.[11] Somewhat ironically, such sameness is a characteristic of the very liberal individualism that gave birth to the notion of identity politics in the first place, as the following comment indicates:

> The social ontology of most liberal political theories consists of citizens conceptualized as essentially similar individuals, as for example in John Rawls' famous thought experiment using the "original position", in which representatives of the citizenry are conceptually divested of all specific identities or affiliations in order to make rational decisions about the social contract (Rawls 1971). (Heyes 2012; on Rawls, see Chap. 6)

[10] See Berreby (2005) and Hacking (1995, 1999).

[11] Also known as *covering*. See Yoshino (2006).

Speaking from experience, it is deeply frustrating to be accused (often by those with little understanding of oppression and injustice, even if they are one's own close friends or loved ones) of being obsessed with one's sexual orientation, religion, or ethnicity, as evidenced by dressing provocatively, regularly drawing attention to issues of prejudice or discrimination against the group in question, participating in noisy demonstrations, or otherwise refusing simply to fade into the background. I once cited in one of my classes in the USA an autobiography by a female African-American teacher who scornfully rejected the notion that a good teacher should be "color-blind", insisting that since she was proud of who she is, her students should be proud of who they are as well.[12] "Pride" marches and "LGBTQ" film festivals, for example may, one day, become unnecessary, but as long as various forms of unjustified discrimination are perceived and experienced, that day has not yet arrived.

On Desiring to Be Unique

For most of us, those occasions on which we stand out as *special* – even unique – invoke strong feelings of one sort or another. I win a race or get the best mark in a test, and I feel – if only for a little while – pleased, proud, etc. Conversely, I say something particularly stupid, or I have what my peers judge to be an unattractive physical feature, and I feel – often for much longer – ashamed, embarrassed and distressed. There is a kind of uniqueness here, but it is *qualitative* rather than *quantitative*. In other words, it is my possessing a particular quality at a particular time that is unique, rather than me *per se*. Quantitatively or numerically, each of us is necessarily unique on account of two conditions previously discussed: the *kind* of object that I am, which specifies my identity conditions (along with those for other members of my kind), and the unique path that I follow, as a member of that kind, over the course of my existence. Since each of us is unique, there is nothing special about uniqueness in this literal sense, and it makes no sense to yearn for it. From the qualitative perspective, there are any number of qualities and contexts that marks each of us as unique or special; whether or not we feel the need to acquire or achieve them has a lot to do with our sense of self – more specifically, our sense of self in relation to others. In the following chapter, I promote the idea of seeing oneself as *one among others* to be more or less equivalent to seeing oneself as a person. But this is already a significant achievement, one which, sadly, not all individuals attain (either because they are too "full of themselves" to allow any room for others, or because their sense of self is too impoverished, too dependent on others, to allow any room for themselves). Playing the role of amateur psychologist here, I might speculate that those who are comfortable with being *one among others* do not feel a strong urge to be still more special. In this context I would target the commonly-expressed idea that it is not enough to see or identify myself as an Australian, an

[12] See Codell (1999).

academic, a Jew…; I need to construct my own unique identity *within* one or more of these categories.[13] Not only does such an obsession with uniqueness run the risk of producing a limited or fragmented sense of self (reminiscent of Sen's Fallacy of Singular Affiliation), but it will always remain unfulfilled because it implies a qualitative search for something numerically unique and this, as I have reiterated, is impossible. I may see myself as an academic with certain specific traits, but this is to see myself as one of a particular kind of academic thence, in turn, as a particular kind of person and human being.

Those speaking on behalf of the collective entities I am calling *supra-persons* may also have a desire for the latter to feel, or be, special or unique. Isn't this why we sometimes hear politicians taking ownership of specific traits or qualities on behalf of "their" country? They want to unify citizens under the banner of such qualities and, thereby, presumably, win their vote or support as true patriots. But the unclear ontological status of *supra-persons* can make such aspirations appear rather shallow, even manipulative. After all, such affective traits as desires, yearnings and motivations are features of *persons*, first and foremost; it is not my country or my university which wants to be unique or special; at best, these are desires felt by the members of such entities although, in practice, they are more likely the desires and aspirations of a select few who have a specific interest in *branding* or promoting the *supra-person* in question. I grant that there may be sound strategic or political reasons for such desires, but we should be mindful of the distinction between wanting to be special in order to satisfy some ulterior psychological motive (overcoming a sense of inferiority, for example), and wanting to be *good enough* by the standards of the type of entity in question. We do not need our school, country, religion or culture to be "the best", whatever that means, but we may justifiably call upon it to be sufficiently democratic, committed to the well-being of its members, respectful toward those who belong as well as those who do not, and so on.[14]

Supra-Persons as Threats to the Principle of Personal Worth

It is not difficult to find examples in popular discourse where PPW is denied, whether explicitly or not. I shall first discuss some of these, then offer more detailed critiques of the moral pretensions of such influential *supra-persons* as the family, religion, nations, the economy, culture(s) and tradition(s).

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[13] Such a misguided need or goal is one symptom of an unhealthy *narcissism* which is evident in our time.

[14] Subjugation and oppression apply not only to those who are not members of one's own collective or group. Those who belong are also harmed precisely because they are not treated as genuine individuals, each in its own right. From the perspective of the tribe, gang, or collectivist nation state, the traits that distinguish individuals are suppressed in favour of the sameness that the group itself projects. Examples throughout history – and, sadly, in our own day – are sufficiently well known as not to need elaboration here.

Consider the following statements (where the *supra-persons* involved are highlighted):

1. "Same sex marriage would destroy *the* (sanctity of the) *family* and/or the moral autonomy of *religion*";
2. "The (harmony of *the*) *State* is more important than the (well-being of the) individuals in it";
3. "Fiscal austerity is the only way to restore the national *Budget* to a surplus";
4. "It is wrong for Western families to adopt orphans from impoverished countries because it violates their *cultural integrity/identity*".
5. "I want to work with the communities of our country as *team Australia*".[15]

Each of these examples indicates a violation of PPW, whereby the rights and well-being of one or more actual persons are subjugated to those of the broader collective. Part of the problem here is that it is often unclear exactly *what* the larger entity (supra-person) is. For example, does "the family" in (1) refer to an abstract institution – in which case it is hard to see how the claim could be justified other than by fiat or some kind of historical distortion (e.g. ignoring the many types of family that have existed throughout human history) – or to a majority/large/significant number of actual families – in which case the claim may, at least, submit to empirical testing, but (i) I know of no such tests which provide any empirical support for (1), and (ii) if *the family* here is merely a collection of individual families, then (1) is no longer a counter-example to PPW. It is just an implausible claim that pits the well-being of one entity against others of the same type. Much the same can be said in respect of the alleged threat to that abstract entity described here as "the moral autonomy of religion". It is commonplace in many so-called democracies (including Australia and the USA) for blatant discrimination in employment, group membership, etc. (on whatever grounds, but usually relating to sexual orientation, marriage status of women with children, etc.) to be overlooked by the law if the discriminator is a religious institution. For example, where a public school may not refuse employment to a qualified teacher because s/he is homosexual or transgender, a parochial or religious school may do just that. If pressed, the employer may cite cases of alleged harm caused by previous such hirings, but such empirical evidence is rarely required. It is enough, in the eyes of the law, that the religion in question proscribes homosexuality or sex outside marriage, so that actual individuals suffer in the name of safe-guarding the freedom of an institution or tradition. It seems clear that in such situations, the ordinary meanings of terms like "harm" "threat", "autonomy" and "freedom" are in danger of being lost, because in their most familiar usage, they apply to relationships between or among persons.

The kind of thinking behind (1) is especially potent when the combined authority of two *supra-persons* – in this case, family and religion – is brought to bear on the moral well-being of individuals. In a recent news report, a gay Palestinian explained that *Islam* held the *family* in such esteem that gays (among others, including women

[15] Comment by Tony Abbott, Australian Prime Minister, quoted in "Abbott backflip on race laws", *The Age* Newspaper, August 6, 2014, p. 5. The first four statements here, while familiar, are hypothetical in the sense that they are not attributed to anyone in particular.

who commit adultery) must be condemned, not just because their actions – if not their very existence – violates the religious code, but because they bring shame and dishonour on their families. Critiques of such a perspective face the double burden of challenging the laws and traditions of two powerful *supra-persons* while, ideally, avoiding direct criticism of those institutions themselves. It is not the existence of such groups, *per se*, which is damaging, but the assumption that their existence, laws and traditions are somehow more important than the individuals who belong to them. There are numerous instances in which *supra-persons* have adapted or modified their stance on such moral issues in response to new understandings and exposing old myths and prejudices. That the changes are often initiated by those members who are marginalised or oppressed but who refuse to give up that membership is a regrettable but familiar phenomenon. Faced with what is often a terrible dilemma or conflict, they realize all too well that "something" has to give way. But real and lasting change is more likely when the "mainstream" group members become sufficiently informed, open-minded and empathetic to accept its desirability, even though they, themselves, are not trapped by the dilemma or torn apart by the conflict.[16]

Regarding (2) ("The (harmony of *the*) *State* is more important than the (well-being of the) individuals in it"): While the individual which is the State (or nation) may be somewhat more well-defined than "the family", it is again possible, albeit in theory rather than in practice, to interpret the statement in question in terms of a comparison between large and small, ruling in favour of the former. A socialist state might be defended in terms of what is best – albeit in the long term – for all (or, at least, most) of its members ("It is only a common concern for the harmony and well-being of the Motherland that stands in the way of social disintegration and a much worse situation for many more individuals", etc.). While not ruling out such a minimalist interpretation of what the group or collective stands for, the rhetoric of governments often refers to the state as an entity whose existence and value stand apart from, or over and above (if not contrary to) those of its members, irrespective of whether the latter are taken singly or all together. Sentiments such as pride, which fuel strong patriotic and/or nationalist feeling (and action) are rarely directed at – or merely at – the population which comprises a state at or even over time. It is precisely at this point that the PPW sounds a cautionary note: when strong sentiments like pride shift their focus from persons to non-persons, moral preferences may do likewise. We do not need to deny the coherence, or even appropriateness, of values being applied at the state or national level, in order to stress that such values should not override those which apply to real people (both those inside the state and those beyond its borders).

(3) ("Fiscal austerity is the only way to restore the national *Budget* to a surplus") is a familiar battle cry of "dry" market-driven economists and politicians who claim to value individual initiative but, as history has repeatedly shown, are prepared to sacrifice the well-being of those who cannot make it to the top, on the altar of the "free" market. Such thinking is enabled by allowing several key assumptions to go unquestioned; for example, that *markets* and *budget surpluses* have a value or worth

[16] In the kind of community I propose as ideal for personal development (Chap. 8), the degree of empathy can be strong enough to prompt even the mainstream members to insist that *they*, *too*, are oppressed or persecuted whenever any one member suffers.

that outweighs that of individuals; and that these entities are given status and respectability within a discipline – in this case Economics – whose occasional pretensions to be a genuine *science* reduces persons to statistics and quantities, much as they might be reduced to micro-particles within physics.[17]

My interest in (4) ("It is wrong for Western families to adopt orphans from impoverished countries because it violates their *cultural integrity/identity*") was sparked by a recent conversation with a friend who expressed the view that Westerners who adopt orphans from Africa or Asia are behaving imperialistically, notwithstanding their noble intentions. But however we characterise imperialism – usually defined in terms of a desire, policy or practice of extending the authority of one nation, culture or even religion, over that of another – the core issue here is not whether these potential parents are being imperialistic (for most, this would be furthest from their minds), but whether by their actions, real persons would be better off in some clear sense. When my cousin and her partner adopted an Ethiopian infant and proceeded to raise him as an American Jew along with his siblings who were their biological offspring, there is little doubt that they saved him from, at best, a short and impoverished life. Regardless of his subsequent desires – for example, to find his birth parents, learn about his indigenous culture, even to spurn his acquired family and/or culture –*that* he survives to want to do these things sufficiently justifies their actions.

Finally, (5) ("I want to work with the communities of our country as *team Australia*"), was expressed by the Australian Prime Minister in an attempt to explain why his Government had backed down on a proposed change to the Racial Discrimination Act.[18] His comment was widely and, perhaps rightly, ridiculed as reminiscent of the post-"9/11" movie "Team America", a satirical critique of the then-US President's proclamation that "You are either with us or against us".[19] Still, we do not need to focus on contextual specifics to discern two quite different ways of reading the Prime Minister's call. On the one hand, as popularly construed, it could be seen as a call to be part of a larger entity – a *supra-person* in my terms – and thereby to subscribe to the assumed values and ideology of that entity; in this case, the entity is Australia and the respective values are seen as specifically determining who is "in" and who is "left out". Here we see the moral dominance of *supra-persons* at its worst: the association of positive values with the nation and the clear implication that if you want to be part of that nation – i.e. to be Australian – then you need to subordinate your own values to its values (however selectively they might be determined). Further, as a corollary to the main thesis, if you do not subscribe to the national ideology, you are "other": a *foreigner* who has no right to call Australia "home". On the other hand,

[17] One media commentator, in response to the Australian Government's 2014 Budget statement, remarked: "Ordinary people are lashed to the wheels of 'the market' and conscripted to serve an economy which should be serving them" (Carlton 2014).

[18] The change in question would have removed restrictions on the freedom of speech when applied specifically to matters of race, thereby bringing such speech into line with similar comments about gender, sexuality, etc. The still broader context was the Government's attempts to persuade the electorate of the need for more stringent security measures in the face of growing terrorist threats.

[19] This comment is commonly attributed to George W. Bush in his response to the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001.

the Prime Minister might have been asking all Australians – via their respective communities – to function as a *community of persons* (who happen to be Australian) who are willing to care for and respect one another in order to transcend their (morally irrelevant) differences. On this inclusive interpretation, the fact that he was addressing fellow Australians is more or less immaterial: the concepts of community and personhood, along with whatever values are associated with them, also transcend national borders. As we shall see, transcendence in this sense does not necessarily lead to all persons seeing themselves as members of a still larger "team" (e.g. global community, cosmos, world); instead, it can lead to discarding all reference to a team or any other collective, in favour of expanding networks of inter-personal relationships.

To clarify, (1)–(5) and my responses to them are not intended as arguments or even evidence, merely as examples of how easily both rhetoric and action can supplant the Principle of Personal Worth.

Supra-Persons as Self-Serving

Hanna Arendt, who reported for the *New Yorker* on the trial of Adolph Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961, coined the phrase "the banality of evil" to capture the idea, repugnant to many at the time, that Eichmann did not commit and authorize horrendous deeds against Jews in the Holocaust during World War II out of any personal conviction or emotion (such as anti-Semitism), but as a bureaucrat or civil servant who saw himself, if not as simply *following orders*, then at least as having unquestioningly internalized the Nazi ideology. Whether intentionally or not, Eichmann surrendered his own autonomy, his *personhood*, to a larger, more powerful entity – a *supra-person* in my terms – be it the Third Reich, or even the will of the *Führer*. Accordingly, his defence rested on the notion that he was not personally responsible for any crimes, because the decisions and judgments surrounding the murder of six million Jews in Europe were not his to make. As explained by Arendt, Eichmann claimed always to abide by the Kantian principle of the Categorical Imperative, but appeared to grasp only one part of that principle, viz. that one's actions should be generalizable or universalizable, ignoring the central idea of reciprocity that comes from seeing oneself as, literally, self-governing. In ultimately rejecting this defence, the court was effectively ruling that one cannot simply opt out of being a person (in Arendt's terms, a thinking being capable of understanding right from wrong and beauty from ugliness) and, thereby, of accepting moral responsibility for one's actions, irrespective of the merits or value attached to some associated *supra-person*. In my terms, what we have here is still a violation of PPW, even when the instigator and/or beneficiary of existential and moral subservience to a *supra-person* is the very person who thereby becomes subservient (Arendt 1963).[20]

[20] Arendt's description of Eichmann remains somewhat controversial. One critic has alleged that she missed that part of the trial in which his true moral character became evident (Cesarani 2006). And many fellow Jews reacted angrily to the slightest suggestion that the victims of the Nazi Holocaust were anything other than the innocent targets of pure evil.

Moral Relativism and *Supra-Persons*

We may legitimately feel great affection – to the point of love and even (more curiously) pride – toward the land of our birth or adopted citizenship, our religion, our ethnicity, our family name, our sexuality, our school, and so on, but it does not follow that our moral sensibility (of what is right or wrong, better or worse, etc.) is somehow *relative* to any of these affiliations. In the previous chapter, I endorsed the notion that morality is a feature of our *personhood* and is, thereby, universal over the domain of persons. An important corollary here is that in order to work out the details of what is right or wrong in particular contexts, we must draw on those features which are also characteristic of persons; most especially our capacity to engage in reasoned – and reasonable – dialogue with others. In practice, these others are likely to be persons within our local spheres of interaction (those we grow up and interact with, are taught by, etc., and importantly, our friends), but to suggest that such familiar demographic facts imply any kind of moral relativism is like suggesting that because I learned arithmetic at a particular primary school, such truths as "2 + 3 = 5" are not guaranteed beyond the gates of that school. And the reference to schooling here is not merely analogical: to the extent that I have learned to think for myself in moral and other matters, I am well-protected or shielded from any attempts to distort or relativize my ideals, morals and values in favour of one particular group – be it my country, my religion, my culture or whatever.

The broad thesis of moral relativism may take several forms, including (a) the innocuous claim that what is right in one particular set of circumstances may not be so in another; and (b) the much stronger claim that moral judgments cannot be coherently made beyond the particular circumstances (including time and place) in which they are, in fact, made. (b) is inconsistent with that part of PPW which asserts that all persons (i.e. irrespective of time, place or other contextual factors) are of equal value. PPW places all persons in the same basket, morally speaking. We may judge that some actions are better or worse than others, even that while some persons deserve praise for what they do, others deserve condemnation. Being in the "same basket" means that there is some set of moral rules, values or norms, be they based in utilitarianism, deontology, virtue theory, or some other ethical framework, against which *all* may be judged and held to account. This form of universalism comes under challenge from those who insist that the rules and values which govern our behavior have their source in a religious, nationalistic or cultural framework, just because these affiliations carve up the domain of persons into different groups. Some actions – murder, for example – may be universally condemned (although with wars, terrorism, capital punishment, abortion and other value-fraught phenomena, even this is not clear; what constitutes murder in one context may not in another), but others are not. Jews are, at least traditionally, forbidden to mix dairy and meat products, and are commanded to circumcise their sons 8 days after birth. Further, the supporting texts make it clear that these requirements are designed, in part, to keep the Jewish people *separate* from other peoples (historically, this was about the survival of the tribe). However, it is not clear that

these strictures ought to be considered as *moral* in the first place. Perhaps they should be viewed as being among the "rules of membership": as a Jew, *this* is what one needs to do, just as on the tennis court, one is expected to serve in a particular way, hit the ball inside the lines, use a racket not a bat, etc. True, this issue may be obscured by characterising those who do the "right" thing as "good" or "eligible" members, but used in such contexts, the word "good" is no more a *moral* accolade than when it is used to describe a tennis champion or a master thief as *good* at his/her craft.[21]

This kind of response is not readily available to all religious followers. Christianity and Islam are more universalistic in tone (and more missionary in practice, because it is only those who are "saved" through conversion to one faith or the other – depending on whose perspective is being considered – who will be allowed to pass through the gates of Paradise or into the Kingdom of Heaven). After all, the "Golden Rule" ("Do unto others…") is supposed to apply to everyone, just like, until relatively recently (and still in many places), the proscription against homosexuality. Such imperatives may be regarded as *moral* precisely because they were/are intended for everyone (at all times).[22] The issue here is not whether we agree with them, but whether they warrant the description "moral". However, in so far as they do have this warrant, we would be justified in inquiring into the source of such rules and the rationale behind them. If we are serious about linking morality to personhood – i.e. *all* persons – such justification is not to be found among the credentials of the texts which cite these rules. Mindful of the familiar puzzle posed by Socrates, we might hope that the texts, even if they truly represent the divine word, contain such prescriptions *because* they are right; and

[21] Male circumcision on cultural or religious grounds has become a contentious issue, partly because of health concerns (with each side attempting to counter the other), but also on moral grounds (circumcision is involuntary mutilation, etc.). While the particular tradition is unlikely to change among Jews (and Muslims), because it symbolizes the covenant made between Abraham (the first Jew) and God, it is not clear how contemporary religion would respond if a broad societal moral consensus against circumcision were to be reached. By contrast, female circumcision – still widely practiced, even in some Western countries, depending on cultural and tribal factors – is more universally condemned as misogynistic and brutal by Western standards. Yet questions remain about the different moral and social responses to the two acts; are they based on physiological impact, cultural factors, or both?

[22] According to Jewish tradition, the proscription against what is now known as homosexual conduct between males dates back to the pre-Jewish era of Noah – hence the idea that it carries a stronger sense of universality as compared with laws of *kashrut* (keeping kosher), for example. The so-called "Golden Rule" of Christianity ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you") restates the earlier Jewish version ("What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor"). Interestingly, while most established religious traditions use the negative formulation, the two world religions which, in historical terms, have always been more aggressively missionary in nature – Christianity and Islam – use the positive formulation. The latter, but not the former, calls for followers to go out and *act* in certain ways, which can presumably be interpreted as a call to change the world in line with their own particular prescriptions. However, matters are not quite so straightforward: as my friend Rabbi Danny Schiff recently reminded me, the commandment to "love thy neighbor as thyself" – a positive prescription if ever there were one! – is distinctively Jewish in origin.

are not *made* right because they are contained therein.[23] Of course, there remains the onus to provide some kind of independent justification, but this is just what ethics (whether explored by adult philosophers or children in classrooms), rather than religion, is supposed to be about. Getting the direction of the argument right matters here: no reasonable person should rest content with finding the source of one's moral code in a text or tradition, for at least two reasons: such appeal to authority is, invariably, a poor substitute for thinking about the issues themselves; and it could not carry the power of universal authority if, as is the case in fact, there is no single text, tradition, or religion to which all persons subscribe.

Whatever one's religious views – including one's views *about* the place and relevance of religion – it seems hard to deny that the impact of the world's most powerful religions has been mixed, at best. Indeed, we may draw a connection between the positive and the negative components of that impact, in that those religions which make universalist claims of goodwill to all, peace on earth, the abolition of poverty, slavery and so on have, historically, prescribed as a condition of reaping these rewards, the wholesale conversion of those on whom they are to be bestowed. Not only is this a violation of PPW – in that the well-being of individual persons is made conditional upon their accepting a particular set of beliefs and values even though, by my lights, their personhood (and therefore their moral status) was never in doubt – but it raises the stakes in the battle between moral relativism and absolutism to an intolerable degree. It seems *either* that everyone who claims to live a moral life – i.e. every person – must come to accept one particular religious perspective, on pain of death or worse, *or* that those who do not wish to accept that perspective concede the relativist's position that what is morally prescribed for some is not prescribed for others. However, I submit that the real culprit here is the assumption that there can be no moral framework independently of a religious perspective. Once liberated from this assumption, we may proceed to inquire into both the meta-theoretic and the normative dimensions of morality, without any pressure to accept one particular moral framework over another as a condition of such an inquiry. I use the term "inquiry" advisedly here, for inquiry in any domain is a form of *self-correcting* practice, which is not compatible with confining ethics to the framework of any one particular religious framework.[24]

At a recent Jewish service, I was reminded of the moral imperative of *Tikkun Olam*, i.e. "Repairing the World", which exhorts Jews to go out into the world and

[23] The puzzle posed by Socrates is in Plato's Dialogue *Euthyphro*: "Is the pious (τὸ ὅσιον) loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?" (10a).

[24] It is claimed by some religious authorities that the imperative to empathize with others, and to act, not just out of self-interest, but in the interest of the larger group, owes much to the influence of religion throughout human history, not just in moral, but also in biological or evolutionary terms. See "The Moral Animal" by Jonathan Sacks (2012). Sacks cites approvingly Robert Putnam (of *Bowling Alone* fame) who "showed that there was one place where social capital could still be found: religious communities." "Religion," claims Sacks, "is the best antidote to the individualism of the consumer age." It might have been wiser to conclude more generally that *communities* are the antidote here, leaving open the question of *which* (kinds of) communities. History reveals most religions as *supra-persons* whose moral authority is often compromised in one way or another.

perform good deeds, not because it is a Biblical law or commandment, but because it helps to minimise social disharmony.[25] Even though the original context of *Tikkun Olam* makes clear that its underlying rationale is about "bringing honour to God's sovereignty", it provides a nice example of the other side of the coin, so to speak, whereby the moral implications of group membership have to do with the well-being of all persons. There are doubtless similar examples which apply to other religious groupings. Wholesale condemnation of all religion is not what I am advocating.

Anticipating the discussion to follow, looking to other powerful affiliations such as nationality (state-hood, citizenship) and cultural traditions in order to secure a basis for our moral claims and values, is an equally dubious strategy, and for much the same reasons. In brief, if different nations and traditions come up with their own specific moral rules for their citizens ("This is the [Chinese/American/African…] way!"), then they should not, for that reason, be termed "moral" (because they reflect divisions among persons rather than the universal quality of being a person); but conversely, in so far as different nations and traditions end up with very similar rules and values, we ought to suspect, as before, that their normative origins (i.e. their justifications, rather than their historical positioning) go beyond anything which characterizes those differences.

A powerful contemporary illustration of how national allegiance and culture are combined to defend the morality of certain deep-rooted traditions is found in the stubborn refusal on the part of the United States to bring its federal gun ownership laws into line with those of most other (developed) societies (a refusal which survives even the most horrifying of mass shootings, such as occurred in Connecticut in November 2012). In addition to resorting to such lame clichés as "It is people, not weapons, which are dangerous" (a claim challenged by pointing out that in *all* countries where the relevant laws are more stringent, the incidence of death and violence by gunfire is minuscule in comparison with the USA), we hear such claims as that "Gun ownership is part of the very DNA of America". It goes without saying that this assertion has nothing to do with nature, genetics or evolution, and everything to do with culture and history, but once we see this, we also see one appropriate response: "Granted, Americans (whether all, most, or just many) have always owned and used guns, starting from the time of the American War of Independence (if not earlier), but they do not need to, indeed should not, *continue* to do so."

As several commentators have pointed out, the notion that dominant groups (nations, religions, cultures), may have their own moral rules for determining membership and/or participation is sometimes echoed *within* the very sub-groups that have borne the brunt of past persecution and discrimination. We see this when, for example, the dominant members of a marginalized group, exclude – whether consciously and explicitly or not – certain sub-groups from participation or membership. Appiah (1994, p. 163) speaks of replacing "one kind of tyranny with another" (as cited in Heyes 2012), for example, when African-Americans exclude or persecute women or gays, or when orthodox Jews rally against accepting Jewish homosexuals. Faced with such apparent anomalies, one wants to ask, if only rhetorically: "How

[25] Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tikkun_olam

can *you*, who have experienced exactly this kind of persecution and oppression, behave like this toward others?"

Citizenship and Morality[26]

At least one reliable source has reported that studies on Civics and/or Citizenship Education have *tripled* in number since 2001.[27] What is the reason for such an explosion of interest in concepts that have been around, in one form or another, for 2,000 years or more? One plausible explanation reflects the enormous political, demographic and social changes wrought over the past 50 years across the globe. Nations have been divided, sometimes peacefully (e.g. Czechoslovakia), sometimes not (e.g. Yugoslavia and South Sudan); unions of nations have been formed (most notably the European Union); and there is a growing global consciousness as a consequence of technological advances – which have made such growth possible – and perceived threats to the world as a whole (terrorism, increasing numbers of refugees, global warming) – which have made it essential. Yet, the collectivist mentality of the nation-state has proven surprisingly resilient. Even that bastion of individualism, the USA, continues to radiate an extraordinary degree of national pride, while countries across the political spectrum have urged their societies – including educators – to focus on the political, moral and social benefits of national citizenship.[28] "What does it mean to be British, or Chinese, or …?" are questions whose serious consideration is increasingly urged upon ordinary citizens (but whose answers are often supplied by those in charge!). In the face of such challenges and changes, it is easy to understand why research into citizenship-related issues continues to thrive and expand, particularly when the assumption that citizenship can address key concerns relating to identity and morality remains more or less unquestioned. However, if, as I contend, these concerns are either confused, misplaced, or both, we might take a more sceptical look at the growing prominence of citizenship-related studies.

Consider a somewhat extreme analogy. "Phlogiston" was the name given to a fire-like element whose existence was posited in order to explain the process of combustion in certain substances. However, it is now universally accepted that there is not, and never was, any such substance, and that the theory positing its behaviour was mistaken (and, subsequently, considered redundant in light of such verifiable

[26] Some of the material in this section and the section following is taken from my previously published journal article (Splitter 2012). I am grateful to the publisher for permission to use this material here.

[27] The search engine: *Education Research Complete* reports that in the period 2001–2010, the number of journal articles with titles containing "citizenship" was 1194, up from 234 a decade earlier. The corresponding figures for the term "civic" were 813 and 166. The search engine *ERIC* reports somewhat more modest figures, but also shows a sharp increase.

[28] The combination of strong patriotic and individualistic sentiments inevitably leads to the conviction that one's own (individual) nation is, in some senses, superior to others.

processes as oxidation). In short, phlogiston does not exist and the name "Phlogiston" refers to nothing at all. Now consider two types of questions:

(1) What is phlogiston? What does it do? How useful is it?
(2) Does anyone still believe that phlogiston exists? If so, why? What do they think it is and what role do they think it plays in nature?

Type (1) questions are either vacuous or meaningless, because they purport to refer to something which does not exist. By contrast, Type (2) questions are quite meaningful because, although they are still "about" phlogiston (and therefore about nothing at all), their primary reference or subjects are individuals and their beliefs which, we may assume, certainly do exist.[29] Further, we can imagine circumstances in which Type (2) questions and their answers are significant precisely because they seek to determine the origins and implications of people's false or confused beliefs.

By analogy, questions (and responses) about, and research studies into, *what people believe and value* about citizenship are coherent and potentially useful, regardless of whether the concept of citizenship is coherent or not. If, as I maintain, this concept does not play the role that many – whether students, teachers, researchers or politicians – believe it does play (in identity formation and moral education, in particular), it would indeed be quite important to find out why it continues to be held in such esteem.

At best, this line of argument supports research programmes which examine what it is that people believe, feel and value about citizenship and related issues. Investigating shifting interests in political activism among citizens in an emerging democracy, for example, may be of considerable interest but, again, such studies need not make any assumptions about the value or coherence of the concept of citizenship, other than as a catch-all term for certain groups of people. But empirical researchers ought, at the least, to consider questions like "Do nationalistic or global conceptions of citizenship make sense?" which challenge the very context in which their research is conceptualised and justified. In the absence of such scrutiny, researchers unwittingly give credibility to concepts, values and agendas which may be morally or socially unacceptable, confused, or simply vacuous.[30]

When we move from the research context to the issue of citizenship *education*, the analogy with phlogiston is even more poignant. It would be immoral for teachers, text books and syllabi to treat phlogiston as a legitimate entity, even – indeed, *especially* – if students continued to believe, falsely, that it is. There may well be

[29] The key verbs in (2), viz. "believe" and "think" generate semantically *opaque* referential contexts because their apparent objects – including phlogiston, in this case – are not their actual objects. I can imagine eating a chocolate cake which weighs 100 kg, but I cannot actually eat it because I cannot eat things that do not exist.

[30] As part of her dissertation defence, a recent doctoral candidate presented data indicating that students' knowledge of, and interest in, their nation and its history had declined over the last decade. The candidate concluded that boosting national education in schools is a "must". But such a strongly normative conclusion requires an additional (normative) premise, to the effect that a knowledge of and interest in one's nation and its history are essential. Nowhere in the research presented was this claim articulated, let alone defended.

citizenship- and civics-related issues which legitimately belong in the curriculum, including empirical matters concerning how nations and states are (and were) organised, what rights and expectations are placed upon us as citizens, and critical questions which challenge the very coherence of the key concepts. However, the legitimacy issue is less clear when it comes to the broad domain of moral and values education where the concept of citizenship has little to offer – or so I contend.

Philosophers are trained to ask awkward questions about concepts whose meanings are often taken for granted. I suggest that *citizenship* is one such concept and, moreover, that in the absence of a broad-based dialogue about what citizenship constitutes, there is a real risk that the best efforts of both researchers and educators will be subverted by governments and other stake-holders with agendas of their own. For example if, as seems to be the case, some leaders in East Asia continue to equate citizenship education with moral education on the one hand, and nationalistic or patriotic education on the other, then it is naïve of Western theorists to imagine that a more critical, deliberative and cosmopolitan conception of citizenship – such as may (or may not) fit their own political environments – will be universally accepted.

In line with my commitment to PPW, I maintain that *citizenship* has little, if anything, to contribute to conceptions of morality and moral education that is not already covered by reference to persons who are the key players in moral transactions. Before proceeding, I need to make two disclaimers. First, I do not question the validity of such phrases as "good citizen", nor mean to imply that if someone is a good person and a citizen, they are thereby a good citizen. I am open to the notion that citizenship imposes its own (additional) standards of what is "good" or otherwise; but I do not accept that in so doing, it adds anything substantive to our understanding of "good" *in a moral sense* (recall the examples of the good tennis player and good thief). My second disclaimer – to be followed up in the next chapter – is that I am not questioning the right of the state, nation, society (even religion) to articulate and implement the kind of education – including moral education – that it deems appropriate (although I have strong views about what form this should take if it is worthy of being called "education"). After all, most governments take their commitment to education seriously.[31] However, from the premise that moral education is provided by the state, it does not follow that the state is justified in inserting itself as a specific beneficiary or even a stake-holder when it comes to the moral commitments of its citizens. This would be akin to a teacher of ethics insisting that her students hold her in special regard, morally speaking, simply because of her role as their teacher.

One commentator who has taken a more nuanced stance on the relationship between citizenship and morality is J. Mark Halstead. Halstead has proposed several models of what citizenship education might look like, within a broadly liberal moral and political framework, but rejects the thesis – which, he saw as gaining

[31] This commitment is somewhat blurred in the context of the growth of private and home schooling. Such non-public institutions often impose or reflect moral viewpoints that are at odds with those advocated by the state. See also Footnote 63 below, and Chap. 8.

ground in the UK – that citizenship education, properly construed, would make moral education redundant (Halstead 2006; Halstead and Pike 2006; I refer to this henceforth as the "redundancy thesis"). I agree with his conclusion here, but would go further and suggest that it is moral education, when properly conceived and implemented, which challenges the idea that citizenship education "adds value" to this conception.

In line with what has become a familiar template in discussions on citizenship education, Halstead proposes three models whose key aims may be summarised as follows: (1) to produce informed citizens (Halstead and Pike 2006, p. 34) – specifically citizens (i.e. adult persons who are part of the nation in question) who are knowledgeable *about* citizenship, governance and the law (Halstead 2006, p. 203); (2) to socialize students into the dominant values of the society, with an emphasis on obedience, commitment, patriotism and authority; this is also called "Education for *good* citizenship" (2006, p. 204, emphasis added); (3) "to prepare children for active participation in the political, civil and social life of the community"; also called "Education for *active* citizenship" (2006, p. 206, emphasis added). As Halstead explains, while (1) is basically descriptive, (2) and (3) are clearly prescriptive; and where (3) has a strong critical component – reflecting the value of autonomy in liberal society – (2) deliberately presents values and moral issues as uncontroversial because it values conformity and passivity over autonomy.[32]

In the context of the question which forms the title of his 2006 paper ("Does citizenship education make moral education redundant?"), Halstead favours (3) over the other two models – which is to be expected given his preference for a liberal democratic value framework (Halstead and Pike 2006, Ch. 2). I endorse his preference, but not because of anything specific to citizenship education; rather, the point is that *every* subject should be taught in a critical and reflective spirit, allowing – indeed, encouraging – students to question what is presented to them. It is a cliché that nothing in education (or schooling) is value-free. Every subject that is taught – or not taught – carries prescriptive baggage which is more often implicit than explicit. The muddled idea of "moral neutrality", while pretending to offer protection to vulnerable youngsters, actually threatens to impose on them – if only by default – the moral agendas of the dominant *status quo* and other interest groups. Accordingly, one key goal of moral education must be to provide students with the wherewithal to "sniff out" and critique such agendas whenever and wherever they occur. In so far as citizenship education does embrace or reflect certain values (and I shall say more about this below), these, too, along with other aspects of civic "knowledge", should be open to question.

[32] McLaughlin (1992) sees (1), (2) and (3) in terms of a continuum, ranging from "minimal" to "maximal" conceptions of citizenship. He criticizes British Government policy of the day – and, one can infer, of much contemporary government policy today as well – for working with and promoting a muddled conception of citizenship, one whose educational implications in terms of such components as morality and critical thinking are quite unclear.

In rejecting the redundancy thesis, Halstead maintains that citizenship education is, and should be treated as, a separate domain from moral education. He holds that a proper conceptual framework for citizenship will include values that are not moral values but, rather, political, civic, economic and legal values. In particular, given his commitment to a liberal socio-economic framework, he proposes three core liberal values, viz. *freedom*, *equality and rationality*, where the third-mentioned acts as a normative safeguard between the first two, which are often in conflict (Halstead and Pike 2006, p. 28). What are we to make of these claims?

Much depends here on an appropriate understanding of *values*, for they will be key substantive components in citizenship education, over and above civic knowledge (which, presumably, is largely factual and informative in nature). Halstead offers the following definition:

> Values are principles and fundamental convictions which act as justifications for activity in the *public* domain and as general guides to *private* behaviour; they are enduring beliefs about what is worthwhile, ideals for which people strive and broad standards by which particular practices are judged to be good, right, desirable or worthy of respect. (Halstead and Pike 2006, p. 24; emphasis added)

There is much to like about this definition, particularly its focus on values as ideals and standards (criteria) for making good judgments.[33] Still, whether or not we classify *freedom and equality*, (along with other values such as *democracy*, *pluralism*, etc.,), as underpinning citizenship, they are, surely, *moral* values. From Halstead's discussion of these values, it is clear that they are justified in terms of their contribution to *personal and interpersonal well-being*. Democracy, for example, "is seen by liberals as the most rational safeguard against tyranny and the best way of guaranteeing the equal right of citizens to determine for themselves what is in their own best interests" (Halstead and Pike 2006, p. 29). I grant that the concept of democracy might best be accommodated in a course on civics, or politics, etc.; my point is that as a value, it is justified, ultimately, in *moral* terms. Here I agree with Kiwan who questions the link between citizenship and values on the grounds that "human rights are rights of an individual, underpinned by common values for *all* human beings [read: human persons], rather than rights inherently based on or derived from being a member of a political community or nation-state" (Kiwan 2008, p. 55).

Why, then, do Halstead and other writers on citizenship education persist in the view that there are values which are tied to citizenship (perhaps via politics or the law) rather than morality? The answer, I believe, lies in the so-called distinction between *private* and *public* values, the idea being that whereas the former belong to the sphere of (personal) morality – and are, by implication, subjective and contestable – the latter are the common (shared) threads that hold a citizenry together – and,

[33] Not all values "act as justifications for activity". *Aesthetic* values (not acknowledged by Halstead), as noted in the previous chapter, are not directly linked to any specific actions. Beauty and integrity, for example, are values in so far as they are the outcomes of aesthetic *judgments*. Moreover, rationality, highlighted by Halstead, is not an exclusively *moral* value; but it is not a civic value either. It is a core intellectual or cognitive value attaching to the concept of *person*.

accordingly, must be relatively objective and uncontroversial (this idea is quite common in the literature on citizenship education; Halstead 2006, p. 207; Halstead and Pike 2006, p. 37; also McLaughlin 1992). However, even noting Halstead's own reservations about the private/public distinction (which he regards, upon further analysis, as highly questionable, Halstead 2006, p. 207; Halstead and Pike 2006, p. 37), I maintain that on a relational view of personhood, this distinction does not stand up to scrutiny.

I am sympathetic to Halstead's project of locating values between the extremes of subjectivism and objectivism (Halstead and Pike 2006, p. 25). But I would go further and assert that values, like concepts generally, fit precisely into the "middle domain" which prevents these extremes from gaining purchase in the first place. To take as given the distinction between subjectivist (purely private) and objectivist (public) domains (as in both the Cartesian and classical Empiricist traditions, but also in much contemporary social sciences discourse) is to court semantic and epistemological disaster. On the one hand, the private realm of the subjective must necessarily be separate for each individual thinker; indeed, it could, at best, be known only in the first person, thereby rendering shared communication and interpretation intrinsically impossible. In short, if we begin with "private" knowledge, we will never move beyond it.[34] On the other hand, the idea that values are *given* objectively, i.e. as objects independently of our own perceptions and conceptions, leads to the exclusion of any individual interpretation or construction, and to wondering how it is possible for values to be internalized, on the one hand, or challenged, on the other. Elsewhere, I have argued that the key concepts of *inquiry* and *judgment* are also to be located between these same extremes, and for the same reason, viz. to remind us that the subjective and objective realms of experience are conceptually interwoven (Chap. 6; also Splitter 2009, 2011). This, it will be recalled, was the main point of Davidson's model of triangulation. It is in this context that I question the viability of the private-public distinction.[35]

In putting moral values back into the framework of persons, where it belongs, I am thereby implying that notions of citizenship are simply not needed in order to articulate and deliver a sound moral education curriculum. Moreover, since citizenship is, almost always, a concept which divides as much as it unites ("May God bless America!" we so often hear from American politicians, leaving one to wonder

[34] Many philosophers have been critical of both classical dualism and empiricism. See, for example, Wittgenstein's argument against the idea of a "private language" (Wittgenstein 1968, §§243ff). My thinking here follows P. F. Strawson, in his celebrated account of the concept *person* as *primitive* with respect to, and preempting, any conceptual gap between, mind and body (Strawson 1959, Ch. 3). For Strawson's final statement on this issue, see Magdalen College (2008, pp. 83ff). My views on the subject/predicate distinction, and on the relational nature of *person*, are also strongly influenced by Strawson, although I am not sure that he would agree with the former.

[35] McLaughlin, while endorsing the "private/public" distinction with respect to morality, points out some of the difficulties in maintaining that autonomy and other values should be classified as public – hence, uniformly accepted – in the absence of a broad-ranging and comprehensive public debate. See also Chap. 8.

first, about the rest of us, and secondly, whether God's blessing extends to Canada, Mexico and Latin Americans and, indeed, to *all* Americans including Al Capone and Ted Bundy), we ought to regard normative claims about citizens with a degree of suspicion.[36] Morality, I have insisted, is intrinsic to personhood and cuts across all divisions within that category.

The kind of universalist – perhaps, *holistic* is a better term – moral framework which I am implicitly endorsing – a risky move in these post-structuralist times – is entirely consistent with a *fallibilistic* perspective (or, in different terms, one of intellectual *humility*) on (moral) knowledge, truth and certainty, which I also endorse. Just as in science, we may claim to know, even to be certain (based on appropriate arguments and evidence) about what is (morally) correct, but we should always allow for the *possibility* of being mistaken. Not only does the merest reflection on the history of science remind us that even that which was most certain was often subsequently overthrown – or, at least, modified – in light of further evidence, but the very idea that good scientists continue to seek for evidence – *especially* evidence which might disprove their theories – presupposes a certain attitude or disposition to their work, one well captured by the philosopher Karl Popper's epistemology which has at its heart the attempt to *falsify*, rather than to verify.[37] Indeed, it is (moral) relativism which leaves little room for a fallibilistic or intellectually humble mindset. Like those who, when their opinions are challenged, opt out of any further inquiry with such comments as "Well, I am entitled to my opinion" or, simply, "Whatever!", the relativist sees no reason to defend himself against those with different views, because his own relativistic framework is unassailable. Of course, epistemological absolutism also has no room for fallibilism; someone who claims access to the *absolute truth* is not open to rethinking his view, entertaining alternative perspectives, etc. I remain open-minded on the question of whether there are, at the end of the day, final or absolute truths, of a moral, scientific or any other kind. We may, to adapt a term from John Dewey, reach *plateaus* of certainty – tentative resting places from which we can look back and reflect, review, reappraise, etc. (for Dewey, this is what good judgment amounts to).[38] However, at least in philosophy and, perhaps, for all of life's "big" questions, we are bound to come upon a new path, be it the uncovering of a previous error, or the realization that we have not, yet, grasped the "whole

[36] Martha Nussbaum begins her 2012 paper with a tale of how the US "Pledge of Allegiance" came into being in 1892, namely, as an attempt to challenge the "unfettered greed and egoism" that would be on display at the coming World's Fair in Chicago. The idea was to shift the spotlight from rampant individualism to something more inclusive and caring. But as she points out, patriotic inclusion entails exclusion, both of those within the country who, for whatever reason, cannot identify with the Pledge (some religious groups regard it as a form of idolatry), and of those who happen to reside elsewhere. In her words, "Patriotism is Janus-faced" (Nussbaum 2012).

[37] See Thornton (2014).

[38] See Dewey (1910).

picture". A key question here is how we respond when this occurs. I shall pick up this question in the following chapter.

Identity as a "Moveable Feast": The Deceptive Lure of Postmodernism

The distinction between statements asserting identity and those of predication or quality can help to make sense of scenarios relating to citizenship or other collectivist conceptions which may seem problematic or even contradictory. Given the types of issues and problems with which identity politics has been concerned – including social equality, culture, exclusion, discrimination, etc. – it is not surprising that much of the literature has focused on groups or collectives, rather than individuals. But in so doing, some writers have equivocated on the concept of identity, shifting between individual (numerical or "token") identity, and collective (qualitative or "type") identity in their commentaries. Consider, for example, a recent study of Chinese college students who grew up in China but who also developed a strong affinity for Western culture in the form of movies, music, etc. (Gu 2009). One student, Helena, compared English and Chinese movies, expressing great affection for the former and wondering why local film makers "could not produce good work that could move Chinese" (Gu 2009, pp. 158–159). The author interprets this as follows:

> Helena's *identities* are multiple and *contradictory* in the above text in that, on one hand she constructs her identity through difference between English and Chinese movies and her stated appreciation of the former, which indicates *identification* with the former; but on the other hand, she constructs an us/other relationship between Chinese and Westerners by referring to Western directors as "they", and Chinese directors as "our". (Gu 2009, pp. 158–159, emphasis added)

The author goes on to demonstrate that this student changed her views about national and global identity over time, but where, precisely, is the alleged contradiction in the first place? I suggest that the problem here is one of equivocation over the term "identity". If the statements "I am a Chinese citizen" and "I am an English person" are interpreted as statements of *numerical* identity, then we do, indeed, have a problem, for this student will be saying that she is identical to two things which are, themselves, distinct, thereby violating the principle of the transitivity of identity. Is this problem resolved by using "identification" instead of "identity", as in: "I identify with China (or as Chinese)" and "I identify as English"? The answer, as we have seen, depends on how we are to interpret "identify" here, but with the problem of transitivity failure lurking in the background, it is important that whatever terms are employed, the underlying logic be seen in terms of qualitative identity (which is a form of predication) rather than strict (numerical) identity. *Being Chinese* and *being* (*a lover of things*) *English* are properly seen as two ways of *describing* someone, rather than as two ways of numerically *identifying* them.

Isin and Wood take on the challenge of reconciling the concepts of citizenship and identity, stating (correctly) that "while citizenship has been associated with the universal, identity is associated with the particular" (Isin and Wood 1999, p. 14). However, later, they assert that:

> 'Identity' is a concept that presupposes a dialogical recognition of the other; it is a relational concept. But it is also a concept that presupposes identification in the sense that individuals recognize attributes or properties in each other that are construed as identical or at least similar. These properties, then, are used as an index of individual position and disposition. Identity is therefore a concept not so much of uniqueness or distinction as of resemblance and repetition. (Isin and Wood 1999, p. 19)

In shifting the focus from distinctness to resemblance, they thereby move irrevocably in the direction of the universal, away from the particular – despite their claims to the contrary. As I have repeatedly emphasized, the criteria grounding judgments relating to identity necessarily include both resemblance *and* distinctness. As long as we restrict considerations of identity to what binds individuals together (and, thereby, to what makes them different from other individuals who are not part of the group) we are, strictly speaking, referring to the identity of the group, not to that of its actual members (except in a qualitative sense).

For another example, consider the following comments from the respected civics commentator Stuart Hall, who traces the concept of identity from the "individualist" subject of the Enlightenment, through the "sociological" subject where "identity is formed in the 'interaction' between self and society", to:

> …the post-modern subject, conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us…the subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'. (Hall 1992, p. 277)

Hall, too, equivocates on the identity question, by sliding from an individualist conception to a socialized one. He also claims that the fragmentation, displacement and pluralisation characteristic of post-modernist thinking threatens to destroy the individual subject and its identity. I concede that the project of aligning myself with various groups and collectives has become muddied by an emerging consensus that *their* identities are no longer fixed or determinate; but this no more destroys my own identity than the empirical fact that over time, each of us changes in ways that may make the actual task of re-identification extremely difficult (witness the familiar example of asking one's friends to "find me" in an old school photograph, as discussed in Chap. 2. Changes notwithstanding, it is, indeed, still *me*, then and now. In a Strawsonian spirit, without such an assumption, the request I address to my friends does not make sense). Indeed, Hall himself, in a review of Postmodernist perspectives on persons – specifically, on the challenge of bridging our social and psychological conceptions of the self – remarks on the influence of Paul Hirst's critique, which is essentially a charge of *question-begging* (Hall 1996, p. 7): the construction

of the self within and through discourse assumes that the self is already constituted as subject. My argument, based primarily on semantic considerations, is along similar lines.[39]

In view of the intrinsic connection between identity and existence and, hence, with the underlying concepts which specify the kind of object in question, we should not be surprised to see the equivocation noted above echoed within the corresponding concepts themselves. The above scenario from Gu involves the concepts of nationality, ethnicity and/or culture (arguably more so the latter two since nationality, strictly speaking, is a legal concept which does not leave much room for the kind of "identity confusion" in which I am most interested). I suspect that whether or not those who find themselves in "mixed ethnic/cultural" situations experience some kind of "identity" crisis depends more on their own subjective (and intersubjective) responses to the changes that have affected them, than on these changes themselves. Two contrasting examples, both covered in recent BBC radio reports, illustrate this point. In the first, a group of Chinese adolescent girls adopted by Americans and growing up in the USA did express some "identity" uncertainty, even confusion, with one speculating that she is "white on the outside only" and another that she feels like a scrambled egg (to which she added, poignantly, "And I don't like scrambled eggs!") (BBC recording of *Boston Calling*, November 25, 2012). Contrast such reactions with those expressed by a number of "Iranian-Americans" living in a part of Los Angeles colloquially known as "Tehran-angeles" (also reported by the BBC). Speaking candidly about their life-styles and attitudes, they described amusing blends of Iranian and American "culture", with some – but not all – expressing the strong desire to visit Iran, see their ancestors' graves (which, presumably, involves a search for one's natural *origins*, which is actually a matter of biology), and so on. The commentator, an Iranian-American comedian, offered examples of the kinds of jokes which are told by, to and about his fellow "misfits", much as other groups have done for millennia (the Jews, for example): "So, you are Iranian; does that mean you are planning to bomb our buses and schools?"; "Actually, I'm a doctor"; "Ah, so it's the hospitals you'll be targeting then". For whatever reasons (which do not matter here), these Iranian-Americans clearly felt more secure about "who they are" than the young Chinese-Americans which, I suggest, reflects

[39] Elsewhere Hall expresses a preference for the concept of *identification* over *identity*, suggesting that identification is an ongoing "construction, a process never completed". I prefer to characterize this project in terms of a shifting or evolving set of identifications and differences but – for reasons which I have tried to make clear – my literal and continuing identity is not in question. Hall again:

> In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. (Hall 1996, p. 2)

Once again, however, in so far as identification is a relation of alignment rather than distinction – we identify with something or someone – it is qualitative rather than quantitative, and cannot capture the full conditions of identity that apply to individual objects, including ourselves, based on the kind of object – say, living organism – that I – the person – am.

the reality that identity-related concepts relating to culture are simply not clear, particularly at the "boundaries", when different cultures come together.

I foresee a potential criticism along the following lines. *Of course* the key concepts in this domain – including identity, ethnicity and culture – are subjective and equivocal. They are, after all, personal (and interpersonal) *constructs* which carve out, rather than describe, reality. And we have only to look around us to realize that the reality in question is anything but cohesive, stable, unified, and reassuringly predictable. Since we rely, in turn, on this fragmented, contradictory, uncertain reality to find, or construct, a sense of self, it is also not surprising that our very existence as persons is marked by these same traits "creating men and women alienated, anxious, emasculated and solitary, stripped of vitality, fearing to ask Erikson's questions of 'Who am I?' and 'How do I fit into an adult world?'" (Schachter 2005, p. 8). Such stark appraisals are commonplace in the literature (recall Hall's comment from his 1992 work, cited above). Here are some further examples:

> At the level of the individual, there abides a sense of uncertainty about how to understand oneself; most people consciously search for a sense of identity – for who and what they are and for what significance and worth they have. Our media-generated, consumer culture daily offers us a thousand choices for who we should be like, what we should value, and how we can attain worth and significance. And we take these images for what is real. (Hurd 1998)

> …the characteristic of the postmodern individual's being embedded in multiple contexts with multiple affiliations to different, sometimes contradicting, social groups (Schachter 2005, p. 6)

> For various economic reasons, a social condition has arisen in which people are living "ever more secluded and secular lives" together with the creation of the ideal of an individualized self who is supposed to be "self-sufficient and self-satisfied". As this is a near impossible task, the self is experienced as empty, breeding special forms of psychopathology for some individuals while also creating the need of self-soothing through consumerism for others. (Schachter 2005, p. 8)

The voices behind this imagined criticism are, needless to say, that of *Postmodernism*, that cluster of "doctrines without a doctrine" which, in sharp reaction to the alleged certainties issuing from the Enlightenment, proclaims both the chaotic state of the world and the state of personal dissolution which seems inevitably to accompany it. Whichever postmodernist strand or writer we choose, it is difficult to find any room for the key analytic themes in this book, particularly those involving essentialist-like commitments to natural kinds, literal identity and universal moral principles (notably, my PPW). It would take a bolder writer than I simply to respond: "So much the worse for postmodernism!"; if nothing else, such a response seems rather churlish in the face of the sense of personal loss, despair, bewilderment, and/or fragmentation to which we bear witness in many parts of the world today, and which may be tied directly to some kind of corresponding loss, fragmentation or even disintegration at a higher social level (the breakdown of communities, forced migration, sexual alienation and other kinds of persecution and discrimination that threaten self-integrity or even, we are sometimes told, self-existence). Given that all of us are, in fact if not of necessity, born and cultivated into a broad range of affiliations and associations, how can I take the moral

high ground and insist that the relatively austere concept of a person (whose identity is linked to nothing more than some kind of uncaring and unfeeling biological natural kind) is all we need when these familiar *supra-persons* are challenged or threatened?

From an analytic standpoint, it is often difficult to take postmodernism seriously. Once notions of truth and objectivity/reality are sufficiently relativized or otherwise weakened, how should one evaluate any claims and theories that are promoted – or attacked? Nevertheless, I shall attempt here to take a stand on some key issues involving, specifically, identity and personhood, if only to advance the idea that there are alternative perspectives on offer that do not, as far as I can determine, find voice within the postmodernist literature.

First, to pick up one of my central themes, the logic of identity prescribes a complementary relationship between quantitative – or numerical – identity and qualitative identity: the very idea that the qualities (properties, characteristics) of an object x can change over time presupposes that x remains numerically the same object through those qualitative changes. Conversely, the idea that we may classify objects together – including persons – according to their shared qualities or properties presupposes that these objects are numerically distinct from one another. Thus one or more individuals may suffer a loss of qualitative identity with respect to certain qualities – even ones deemed to be significant, such as those which give rise to the various *supra-persons* I have been considering – but they cannot lose *all* of their qualities, because that would be tantamount to losing their numerical identity or, in other words, ceasing to exist. I may cease to exist *as* this or that, but this, as I have previously pointed out, should be understood semantically as a qualitative or predicative change. The subject – I – continues.

I shall resist drawing any radical conclusions about the impact of the numerical/qualitative distinction on identity-related discussions among postmodernists. I merely submit that in the vast body of literature which constitutes the social sciences – much of which has been written by philosophers – there is virtually no recognition of this distinction at all.

At this point our imagined critic may concede that the distinction in question – specifically the concept of numerical identity – is of some semantic or logical interest, but insist that it is of little relevance to the key psycho-social issue of how individuals depend on various social institutions and affiliations (my *supra-persons*) for a coherent *sense* of their own identities (who they are). Granted, we are not literally (i.e. physically) destroyed by the multiplicity, instability, fragmentation and even loss of (some of) our qualitative identities, but our *sense of self* is characterized by such traits and is thus impacted in the same way. Wary of straying any further into domains which are largely alien to me – psychology, for example – I can only postulate that since sense is linked to meaning (understanding) – and thence to the idea of *connectedness* – it cannot be wholly divorced from that indispensable vehicle and generator of meaning, namely, *language*. If, as I have argued, a coherent concept of the self (personhood) is grounded in the *relationships* we have with others like us and with the world itself (recall Davidson's triangulation model), and if these relationships come alive through – and only through – language, then even in the qualitative chaos of the most extreme postmodernist world-view, I survive – and

see myself as surviving – if and only if I remain part of a language community, along with at least some others like me, i.e. other persons. I make no comment on the psychological disruption or fragmentation that individuals may encounter in the face of what I am calling "qualitative chaos". What I am saying is that unless such chaos extends to the long-term separation or isolation of individual persons from one another – or, more clearly, to extreme situations in which individuals are in complete isolation (witness the fictional Tarzan and the very real cases of Kasper Hauser and Victor, the "Wild Boy" of Aveyron, not to mention such pathologies as schizophrenia, Alzheimer's, and acute autism) – their sense of who they are as *one among others* – though changed, remains intact. Carrying the "baggage" (histories, traditions, etc.) that they do, the fragmentation or loss of *supra-persons* may be significant indeed, but individuals can and often do survive it.

The affiliations and associations to which we attach (or which attach to us) are, to be sure, elaborations of the kind of person that I am (being among the many answers to the "Who am I?" question), but *they presuppose*, *rather than constitute*, both my personhood and my continuing identity as an individual with a life through space and time conditioned by the kind of thing that I am. A strict dichotomy between persons as isolated individuals and persons as classified or categorised according to various groupings, associations and affiliations, misses the crucial defining feature of being a person, namely, being a *language user* (and interpreter of the speech of others). Whatever else we may say about language, it is, essentially, *relational*: our capacity to use language in its simplest form (i.e. ordinary predication) depends on what Strawson referred to as the "purely logical" truth that "the idea of a predicate is correlative with that of a *range* of distinguishable individuals of which the predicate can be significantly, though not necessarily truly, affirmed" (Strawson 1959, p. 99).[40] Accordingly, persons are relational entities. The necessity of *seeing ourselves in relation to others* supplies an image of what it is to be a person which, in turn, supports a moral framework as universal as personhood itself, against which the hackneyed stereotypes of individualism and collectivism fade into insignificance.

Furthermore, personhood, as an essentially *relational* construct, does not (fortunately) respect the boundaries of the various groups and associations to which we belong. Again, I defer to the next chapter the issue of how and when we actually develop these interpersonal relationships, if it is not via those very groups and associations. The point I wish to underscore here is that if, but only if, young people develop what I shall describe as a strong sense of personhood, then they will not only be empowered to *think for themselves*; they will be inoculated against the presumption that their identities can be destroyed, or even significantly disrupted, by the loss of, or change in, their group affiliations and associations – both those that they join and leave voluntarily, and those that are imposed on them. To reiterate, realizing that neither one's personhood nor one's identity can be destroyed in these ways is itself a key liberating step in our own personal development.

[40] Strawson's "purely logical" truth is really one of a pair, the second of which may be stated thus: No (non-trivial) concept can be truly applied to *all* objects; in other words, for a given concept C, if we can truly predicate "C" of some object x, then there must be – conceivably if not actually – a distinct object y of which C can be meaningfully but falsely predicated.

I submit that just as vast bodies of literature on the subject of "identity" have ignored the numerical/qualitative distinction with respect to identity, the same may be said for the idea that a Cartesian-like model of the isolated individual and a collectivist model built around one or more *supra-persons* (i.e. the various associations, affiliations and institutions in which we are involved) are not the only available options. Being a person depends on seeing oneself as *one among others*, that is, as part of a shifting network of persons related to one another in various significant ways. Such a network, being "no larger than the sum of its parts", is, in turn, utterly dependent on those parts; it has no independent history, identity or moral status. It is not a *supra-person*.

Needless to say, not all commentators on postmodernism and identity politics have assumed a bipolarity which sees individuals searching for both their identities and their moral sense among the *supra-persons* which claim them. Indeed, the relational conception of persons has many adherents, as we shall see. But it is not difficult to find evidence of such bipolarity, and in the remainder of the chapter, I shall highlight several of these. Consider, for instance, the following remark from the acclaimed philosopher and social commentator Kwame Anthony Appiah early on in his book *The Ethics of Identity*:

> Identities make ethical claims… we make our lives *as* men and *as* women, *as* gay and *as* straight people, *as* Ghanaians and *as* Americans, *as* blacks and *as* whites. (Appiah 2005, p. *xiv*)

It is difficult to interpret Appiah's words in terms other than asserting that both identity and ethics are, in some sense, relative to such categorizations – *supra-persons* – as those I have been considering. Yet, shortly after, Appiah sensibly cautions against what he calls the "reifying tendencies" of identity-related discourse (2005, p. xvi), so finding a single interpretation of his ideas may not be easy. I shall have more to say about Appiah's insightful analysis, particularly when discussing the importance of dialogue and the role of culture in identity theory, but suggest that one reason for a certain lack of clarity on these issues is his apparent failure to make and utilize the numerical/qualitative distinction with regard to identity. After describing the "Robbers Cave" experiment (see above), he writes:

> The contemporary use of "identity" to refer to such features of people as their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, or sexuality first achieved prominence in the social psychology of the 1950s…This use of the term reflects the conviction that each person's identity – in the older sense of who he or she truly is – is deeply inflected by such social features. (Appiah 2005, p. 65)[41]

The only relationships referred to here are those between the individual and her respective *supra-persons* (race, ethnicity, nationality…), so it is not surprising that

[41] In a footnote, Appiah credits this use of the term "identity" to Erikson, noting that Erikson himself moved between psychological (private, inner) and social understandings of identity. For a detailed account of Erikson's contribution to the "identity" debate in postmodernism, see Schachter (2005). Schachter maintains that Erikson's view of the harmonious interplay of the individual and society seems somewhat quaint in the context of more recent postmodernist narratives which focus on fragmentation and dissolution. I am less interested in the details of this debate than in pointing out that here, as elsewhere, the logic of identity as a formal relation first and foremost does not rate a mention.

Appiah should be less than clear with respect to what role such collectives and associations play when considering the question of *who we truly are*. But if "identity" also stands for a numerical relation between entities – as I have argued – then we may embrace the idea that such entities are related in ways that do not automatically give rise to *supra-persons*.

Another example of regarding the person/*supra-person* link as the *de facto* alternative to individualism, comes from Berreby, in his study of the phenomenon of group affiliations. He writes: "…human kinds [including my supra-persons] offer the joy of belonging to something larger than the little self" (Berreby 2005, p. 20). He then adds: "That consistency [which characterises much of the behaviour of members of a given "kind"] makes it easy to think of this sort of human kind as if it were a person itself – a being with thoughts, plans and feelings of its own." Yet he does not seem to be aware of the dangers inherent in such "as if" assertions. To classify human kinds or *supra-persons as* persons is to run the risk of accepting entities which, by definition, must always be more powerful, and more influential, than other persons. I prefer the sentiment echoed by the teenager who, when asked if her "Goth" all-black attire and accoutrements (hair, jewellery, etc.) reflected a problem of identity, retorted: "Not at all: I know who I am, and it is not defined by any of this stuff which I could give up tomorrow if I chose to". In so far as she identifies with a particular collective, this person believes (correctly, one trusts) that she controls her association with it, not the other way round.

I grant that, to borrow Berreby's own words, we persons need to be connected to something "larger than the little self". But, to repeat, this larger thing can be just a relational network of two or more persons, i.e. a group or class in precisely the *non supra-personal* sense of the term. There is nothing wrong with *identifying with* one's nation, ethnic group, tribe, religion, and so on, *as long as* one has a prior and independent understanding of *who one is* in terms of one's relationships with others (or even an understanding *that* one is – i.e. exists – in terms of such relationships). We may, from time to time, change our memberships of and affiliations with such groups (through migration, conversion, leaving the tribe, etc.), without either the loss of identity (which I have suggested is conceptually impossible unless we cease to exist), or the sense or *fear* of such a loss. The latter, in so far as it is linked to our reflective awareness of our sense of self, is allayed by the realization that (i) our qualitative identities are always in flux, and (ii) each of us is "one among others", i.e. a member of various interpersonal networks which define the course of our lives as persons.

The renowned philosopher and literary scholar Martha Nussbaum is also not above criticism in this regard. In a recent article, in which she attempts to construct a form of "purified patriotism" after many years of defending a strongly cosmopolitan position, Nussbaum attempts to reposition the nation and at least some of the sentiments historically attached to it as constituting a coherent middle ground between the individual (Berreby's "little self") and the entire cosmos (Nussbaum 2008, p. 83). She agrees that appealing to such vast concepts as *the love of all humanity* is unlikely to "motivate people deeply sunk in greed" but insists that "national sentiment can [after all] play a valuable role in creating a decent world

culture" (p. 81). Drawing on some notable historical events and figures, Nussbaum devotes much of her paper to defending the idea that a "purified" patriotism can justly "require sacrifice of self-interest" while eschewing claims to moral superiority and educating citizens to reject all forms of xenophobia, by drawing on "symbol and rhetoric, emotional memory and history – as Lincoln, King, Gandhi, and Nehru all successfully did" (p. 93). As part of her argument, she maintains that neither "smaller units, such as families; cities; regions; and ethnic, racial and gender groups" (p. 81) nor larger ones leading, ultimately, to the entire universe, are able to meet these requirements.

As before, my interest here is not to offer a detailed analysis or critique of Nussbaum's work (although I shall have something to say about the concept of cosmopolitanism shortly); rather it is to point out that she, as with others writing on these themes, assumes that the only way to position individuals (selves) in a broader moral and ontological framework is by invoking those historically, culturally, and politically constrained entities that I have been calling "*supra-persons*". I contend that whatever the power to attract adherents such entities may possess, they should be kept at arm's length, conceptually speaking, from what really is required in order to move beyond the idea of the "little self" – namely, the relational conception of seeing ourselves as *one among others*. I have already positioned this conception as emerging from an epistemological model of triangulated awareness; in the next and final chapter, I shall indicate how this model could and should play out in schools and classrooms. Suffice here to say, one more time, that to see ourselves as belonging to or affiliating with one or more *supra-persons* requires a prior understanding (in both conceptual and temporal terms) of *who I am as a person*.[42]

Toward a Cosmopolitan Conception of Citizenship – Both More Grounded and More Transcendent

I acknowledge the good intentions of those who have argued in favour of a *cosmopolitan or global* conception of citizenship. At first glance, it might seem that such a conception fits nicely with the universalist framework which I associate with the concept of *person* but, on closer examination, things are not so clear.

Cosmopolitanism as either complementary to, or in place of, citizenship, is not new (its roots go back at least to Diogenes in the fourth century BCE). Its key elements include the idea of the whole world as a single (moral) community in which, citing David Hansen, "there are no foreigners" (implying, not that we are all

[42] One point on which I completely agree with Nussbaum: whatever else may be said on behalf of a "purified patriotism", it requires a "vigorous critical culture" which schools need to foster. By this indicator alone, most examples of patriotism past and present would not count as purified. I take up the question of what schools need to do for persons in the next chapter.

somehow "the same", but that our very differences help to make us humans or, as I prefer to say, persons; Hansen 2010, p. 12). Among contemporary philosophers who have defended versions of cosmopolitanism (whether by that name or not), two of the most eminent are Hansen (2010) and Nussbaum et al. (1996). As sympathetic critics have pointed out, Nussbaum's case against nationalism and patriotism – which, as noted above, she has recast in terms of a "purified patriotism" – can be restated without recourse to any strongly collectivist or "supra-personal" commitments. For example, the eminent philosopher Hilary Putnam, replying to Nussbaum, says: "That someone is a fellow being [person], a fellow passenger to the grave, has moral weight for me; 'citizen of the world does not'" (Nussbaum et al. 1996, p. 95). The term "fellow passenger" is important because it connotes someone to whom I am closely *related*, rather than someone who shares my membership of a larger entity.[43] I agree also with another critic of Nussbaum, Amy Gutmann, who points out that such phrases as "the community of human beings in the entire world" and "citizens of the world" reflect "another parochial form of nationalism, albeit on a global scale" (Nussbaum et al. 1996, p. 70). I would view the more contemporary term "global citizenship" in the same light. *Person*, by contrast, is fundamentally a *relational* construct which has neither the need nor the place for any larger, more comprehensive entity, even one as all-encompassing as the community of human beings or the entire world (globe, cosmos).

Both Nussbaum's defence of cosmopolitan and the views of her critics may be regarded as somewhat moot in the light of her more recent switch to a form of "purified patriotism", as we have seen. Still, it is noteworthy that even this "Wittgensteinian" about-face is silent on the possibility of construing persons as relationally-bound together, rather than – or as well as – members of some larger *supra-personal* entity, be it the nation or – by infinite extrapolation, as it were – the cosmos. This possibility may be accommodated by a "bottom-up" rather than a "top down" view of cosmopolitanism, based on just such a relational perspective.[44] *Cosmopolitanism* "*on the ground*" – a concept articulated by Hansen – affords a paradigmatic place to our intimate relationships while avoiding the temptation to give them moral priority. We learn about relationships by engaging with those around us, but there are no pre-set limits to who "those" might include in the future. Conversely, it serves to caution us against the casual presumption that we do, in fact, care equally about every person on the planet. "Every" is simply unrealistic, whereas "any" reminds us that our relationships with others may extend far and wide.

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[43] Jürgen Habermas adopts a somewhat different stance in this regard, preferring to preserve the value of citizenship but sever it from its usual nationalistic associations. Habermas points out that freedom in the name of national independence is quite different from the freedom enjoyed (or not) by citizens within a nation: "Citizenship was never conceptually tied to national identity" (Habermas 1994, p. 23).

[44] Hansen (2010) maintains that while scholars in many fields have rediscovered the significance of the concept of *cosmopolitanism*, little work on this concept in the theory or practice of education has been done (to date). See also Hansen (2008).

Hansen offers a more nuanced view – a way of thinking which accommodates the local and the global, and everything in between, and distinguishes it from other "isms" that give an unwarranted status to "*supra-personal*" groups or collectives (including nationalism, internationalism, pluralism and multiculturalism, Hansen 2008, p. 294, 2010, 2011). Arguing both conceptually and from a number of reported case studies, he offers a perspective which bears much in common with the views I have expressed here. At the risk of over-simplification, I shall summarise the main features of this perspective, as follows:

- For many, if not most, people their familiar affiliations, loyalties, associations, and commitments have fluid and shifting intensities and boundaries, subject to judgments of salience which they are often quite adept at making; this is a welcome counter to the single-mindedness targeted by Sen in his *Fallacy of Singular Affiliation*;
- In the course of our lives, tensions between and among these groupings and connections will inevitably arise, but we can (learn to) deal with them;
- We need to move beyond such dualisms as: self/other, us/them, near/far, familiar/unknown, local/global,…If there are disjunctions here, they are inclusive rather than exclusive;
- The familiar issues facing people are not about personal identity *per se*; they are about each of us (whether alone or collaboratively) searching for what makes life meaningful and worthwhile (which might be viewed as an ethical, aesthetic, metaphysical, and/or spiritual enterprise);
- Empirical research suggests that "ordinary" folk (not just an elite sub-class), understand and live this balanced idea of a grounded or local (but not parochial) cosmopolitanism.

Bringing together the central concept of personhood and Hansen's notion of grounded cosmopolitan embeds the philosophical and ethical understanding of who each of us is in relation to others in a "real world" framework which is at once practical, accessible and contemporary. This framework acknowledges that:

- People live together and relate to one another not just in spite of, but through, their differences;
- We live in perilous times when genuine cooperation, empathy and a grasp of the tensions inherent in the local/global dialectic are crucial;
- We need to understand and appreciate our relationships with others and the world.[45]

In summary, if cosmopolitanism is to be a viable construct, I suggest it is best construed in terms of networks of interpersonal relationships that extend increasingly

[45] I am not, however, convinced by Hansen's insistence that "cosmopolitan education … does not project a wholesale revision of curriculum and pedagogy" (Hansen 2010, p. 13). Elsewhere he states, more specifically, that "a cosmopolitan education does not necessitate a radical curricular overhaul of what is taught in elementary, secondary, or university settings…[and] does not depend on or require a formal program such as those featuring what is called civic education, global education, or moral education" (Hansen 2008, p. 296). I share Hansen's view that such special programs ought not be necessary, but contend that something like a "radical curricular overhaul of what is taught…" may well be. I take up this point in the following chapter.

out from – but always involving – ourselves, rather than as either an artificially expanded form of citizenship or some kind of obscure connection to "the world as a whole".[46]

Identity, Morality, and Culture

In contrast to the dubious moral authority wielded by such *supra-persons* as religions and nation-states, things may seem somewhat different in the case of ethnicities or cultures, because these affiliations are both part of our inheritance and, arguably, aspects of our lives that cannot be given up. Nevertheless, I maintain that these features, too, are not integral to our individual identities. One problem is that such concepts as ethnicity and culture are inherently *vague*, which makes issues of classification almost impossible to settle without an element of arbitrariness. Notwithstanding my scepticism about both the power and the value of classifications based on citizenship, such classifications are, by and large, not difficult to make because citizenship is seen as a matter of legality or politics. In other words, the identity conditions for citizenship – specifying what it is to be a citizen of x – are *not* inherently vague. But what are the precise criteria by which we specify that individuals share their culture, where in contemporary terms (for the past 100 years or so), culture is taken to represent all those non-genetic aspects of the human condition that we have in common with at least some others? I like the idea of viewing cultures as historical or narrative entities, rather than in terms of shared properties (akin to a phylogenetic rather than morphological view of species, as described in Chap. 4), in part because I reject the notion that being members of a particular culture – especially if such membership is taken to be involuntary – *binds* or limits individuals in terms of what they do, or *may* do; in other words, cultures, so defined, violate PPW. But if cultures are, by definition, shaped by the actual practices and experiences of their members, then this problem simply disappears. Rebellious teenagers who refuse to follow the traditions and customs of their parents' generation have not necessarily *left* the culture, but they have *changed* it. However, just as relations of genealogy or ancestry do not yield a viable concept of species (as explained in Chap. 4), so viewing cultures (or races) in purely historical terms is bound to leave us with an impoverished conception of them.

Conceptual vagueness is not necessarily a fatal flaw. But it does place an onus on those who persist in using the concept in question to justify and clarify that usage.

[46] Taking a cosmopolitan perspective requires meeting the practical challenge of reaching out to others who are *not* in our immediate circle of contacts and relationships, including those who are quite different in various respects (living in distant locations, having unfamiliar customs and lifestyles, etc.). Citing the work of fellow feminist writer Sandra Harding, Barbara Thayer-Bacon supports the strategy of bridging the gap between what is culturally distant from our own perspectives and the everyday context of our daily experience, by both ensuring that the voices of those "on the margins" are incorporated into our own discourse, and acknowledging that many aspects of our own lives are "problematic" (Thayer-Bacon 1997, pp. 254–255).

With traditional views of culture severely challenged by such phenomena as mass migration and communication, not to mention the temptation to regard material success as a *universal* norm of living well, I suspect that the concept of culture – along with such derivative concepts as *multicultural* – is destined to follow that of *race* – as one of increasingly vestigial or historical interest only. While it would be presumptuous to declare that the concept has no further value as long as there are those who believe that it does, we need to be aware of the pitfalls of maintaining such potentially divisive classifications. If we banish from the realm of cultural differences those that are properly moral in character, as I suggest that we should, it is not clear what we are left with, other than interesting but innocuous variations in dress, cooking, and what may be termed "minor morals" relating to manners, etiquette, etc. I am always uncomfortable when I hear national or cultural leaders taking ownership of one or more specific characteristics that are intended to bestow favor on the members they represent, because such characteristics inevitably translate into more universal ones (just as in the case of religion). The great Australian traditions of *mateship*, of giving others *a fair go*, etc., while they no doubt have their own distinctive historical and linguistic features, point to characteristics that most people would identify with, *mutatis mutandis*.

The complex issues surrounding the concept of *culture* are deftly explored by Appiah (2005, especially Ch. 5).[47] There are several aspects of his analysis which resonate with claims I have been defending here (or perhaps it is my claims which resonate with his?). One is the similarity between *culture* and *race* noted above, together with the futility of defining these entities in purely historical or genealogical terms (p. 137); another is the notion that if (according to PPW) we place the well-being of individual persons ahead of that of collectives which claim to be more than the sums of their parts, then the value residing in culture may just be that it offers resources to benefit the *individuals* who belong to it. This is reminiscent of the Chinese example, noted above, whereby cherishing the Motherland is seen as a benefit to actual individuals (a somewhat charitable interpretation of the underlying agenda of the ruling Chinese Communist Party!). At one point, Appiah challenges the claim made by Joseph Raz (also Charles Taylor who makes a similar claim) that "it is in the interest of every person to be fully integrated in a cultural group", asking, appropriately in my view, what value does the word "culture" add to that which is inherent in the notion of *group* (2005, p. 125; also p. *xv*). I take Appiah's point here to be similar to one I have urged: that groups, conceived simply as collections of individuals, may be thought of in *relational* terms; in contrast to the *supra-persons* which cultures in the deeper sense would constitute, relational groups have a value which does not threaten that of its members (this is the difference between claims 5b and 7 listed at the start of the present chapter).

[47] For an interesting analysis of the concept of *culture* in the context of *multiculturalism* and *cosmopolitanism*, see Rizvi (2005). My own reading of Rizvi indicates that he has not sufficiently problematized the concepts of *culture* and (especially) *identity*. Regarding the latter, like Hall and others (as discussed above), Rizvi fails to distinguish between qualitative and numerical identity; he also shifts unannounced between the identity of the group and that of the individuals who belong to it.

Picking up an earlier issue, might those entities I have designated as *supra-persons* be regarded, at least on some occasions, as persons in their own right, precisely because they exhibit chains of communication and connectedness that are more or less linguistic in nature? More specifically, do nations, religions, corporations, gangs, cults, even cultures, qualify as persons because they have language? If so, then they should have the same moral status as other persons. It is doubtless true that the power and resilience of these groups have much to do with their capacities for communication and expression – both inwardly (among their own members) and outwardly (connecting to those outside the collective). More to the point, such entities have *histories* and *narratives* – whether oral or written – about where they have been and, perhaps, where they are and/or should be going. But who are the narrators here and what is the status of these narratives with respect to defining the supra-persons to which they relate? Are they just like those which ordinary persons may tell about themselves and their relationships with others? I think not. For one thing, divine revelation notwithstanding, the only plausible source of such narratives are individual persons with the power to experience, conceptualise, interpret, store, record, recall, and retell what is going on around them. Similarly for the ethical norms, prescriptions and codes which may develop a status over and beyond that of any individual members; they, too, emerge from the deliberations and reflections – whether democratically conducted or not – of actual persons. Moreover, it is inevitably those individuals who hold the reins of power and authority whose voices are heard and recorded. If *supra-persons* are persons, they are extremely strange persons.

Extending this thought, might *supra-persons* function according to basic principles of equality and respect, as reflected in part (B) of the PPW (that with respect to moral value, *all* persons are equal – that is, of equal value and worth)? This would mean, for example, that nations, gangs and corporations would not only treat other nations, gangs and corporations as equals – something rarely seen in practice – but that they would treat *all* persons as equals, including those persons who belong to them as well as those who do not, i.e. *all* citizens, *all* gang members, *and* all members of corporations. But this is precisely what does *not* occur. To the contrary, it is precisely in the nature of these *supra-persons* that they regard themselves as having *greater* value and worth than their members, i.e. than even the sum total of their members. It is this sense of exalted value which distinguishes them from those groups which are merely collections or classes of individual persons.[48]

[48] One more example of how identity theory, so-called, misconstrues the concept of personal identity is drawn from the rise and fall of the *work ethic* which may be traced to the rapid industrial growth in Europe during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Citing the work of Zygmunt Bauman (1998), Margarita Pavlova (2009) explains how work was viewed as "the main factor determining social placement and identity for the majority of males…a phenomenon that planned and ordered all aspects of life…a search for daily meaning… central to an individual's sense of identity and well-being" (p. 90). However, led by an American transformation which saw work (merely) as "the means to become richer", notions of personal autonomy gradually became defined in economic terms. The individual as worker ("producer") was replaced by the individual as "consumer" (p. 91). I do not deny that such a transformation occurred; my target is the presumption that such institutions or roles as *worker* and *consumer* have any conceptual part to play in *personal* development. Whatever it is (if anything) that defines or essentially characterizes *me* as an individual person, neither "worker" nor "consumer" even comes close.

Persons: Individualist, Collectivist and Relational Perspectives

In Chap. 5, I foreshadowed a point of interest in Parfit's treatment of persons and personal identity related to my discussion of supra-persons. It relates to the distinction, just referred to, between the class that is no larger than the sum of its parts/members and the group or collective which is. In defending the notion that there is no need to posit, indeed, no sense in positing, the ongoing existence of an entity over and above its (collection of) parts, (so a person has no existence over and above the "bundle of experiences" that constitutes it) – a view which, Parfit admits, is hard to accept because it entails, among other things, that issues of personal survival are simply moot – he offers the following analogy:

> Suppose that a certain club exists for some time, holding regular meetings. The meetings then cease. Some years later, several people form a club with the same name, and the same rules. We can ask, 'Did these people revive the very same club? Or did they merely start up another club which is exactly similar?' Given certain further details, this would be another empty question. We could know just what happened without answering this question. Suppose that someone said: 'But there must be an answer. The club meeting later must either be, or not be, the very same club.' This would show that this person didn't understand the nature of clubs. (Parfit 1987, p. 23)

By analogy, whether we think of a person as constituted by mental parts such as his experiences, or physical parts such as his cells, Parfit argues that when we know the fate of these constituent parts (in the case of tele-transportation, for instance), we know all there is to know about the fate of the person. In other words, just as the club is nothing beyond its members, persons are nothing beyond whatever combination of parts we choose to consider. To think otherwise is to commit the same kind of conceptual error or *category* mistake as the tourist visiting Oxford who, after seeing all the member colleges, libraries and so on, asks "Yes, but *where* is the university?"; or – to cite an example from the Philosophy for Children novel *Pixie* by Matthew Lipman (1981) – as Pixie who, after seeing all the animals in the zoo and learning their various species names, complains that the zoo is incomplete because it does not have any *mammals*. However, these situations are not all alike. An entity might well be more than the sum of its parts – or members – notwithstanding the truth that when you have seen one (the individual colleges, the individual animals) you have, thereby, "seen" the other (the university, the mammals), particularly when our interest lies, not just in the entity *at* a given time, but in its development *over* time. A club that really is nothing more than the sum of its actual members lasts precisely as long as they do (i.e. as long as they are members), but that is not the way in which we usually talk about clubs from a historical point of view. We do not need to become entangled in Theseus' Ship-type paradoxes (see Chap. 3) to see this. The club that re-forms 10 years after collapsing may or may not be deemed the *same* club but, contrary to Parfit, it does seem to matter. And if the decision is not always to be trivial – new club because new members – then there must be, at least some of the time, defining features which extend beyond any one group of individual members.

There is another point of difference which makes the case of persons quite different from those of clubs, universities and (higher-order) biological taxa. The account

I have offered proposes that while the concept *person* does not generate identity conditions of its own, individual persons, as members of some underlying kind K – *Homo sapiens*, *living organism*, perhaps even *Martian*, *Robot*, etc. – "borrow" the identity conditions from K itself. Accordingly, while I am in some sympathy with the line taken by Parfit, my ontological conclusions regarding the fate of persons are somewhat more optimistic.[49]

My view of persons, as reflected in PPW, is equally sceptical of both *individualistic* and *collectivist* views of personhood (claim (8) at the beginning of this chapter). Where the collective in question is something like the stereotypical individual-devouring State, it is easy to say why any principle extolling the value of individual persons throws a proverbial spanner in the works. Conversely, if somewhat less obviously, PPW does not justify the stereotypical liberal conception of the "free individual", by which, to persist with the jungle metaphor, one individual succeeds by *devouring* others. Individualism in the socio-political sense allows, indeed encourages, those who are stronger, wealthier and more powerful, to impose on those who are less so. It is hard to see how such a system could respect part (B) of the PPW, which demands equality of value and respect among all persons. As critics such as Appiah have pointed out, at the most general level, we see the continuing dominance of white, heterosexual, middle-class and able-bodied males; more specifically, as noted above, we see variants of the same dominance within sub-groups already characterised by injustices perpetrated by the larger dominant group. PPW is a claim about each and every person, stressing both his/her superior moral value in relation to non-persons, and his/her moral equality with every other person.

The idea of identifying personhood as an irreducibly relational construct has been articulated by writers and theorists across several disciplines and coming from several distinct perspectives. It is a recurring theme in the pragmatists C. S. Peirce, G. H. Mead and, of course, John Dewey; no less so in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas and Hans-Georg Gadamer; in the theoretical and applied research of Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner (where the skills and tools of thought are seen in terms of internalized social and linguistic behaviour); and in the work of such feminist scholars as Barbara Thayer-Bacon on relational epistemology (as described in the previous chapter). Among contemporary philosophers, Taylor (who duly acknowledges the work of Bakhtin on our "inner dialogicality"; Taylor 1991, p. 127) is a prominent proponent of the view that human life has a fundamentally *dialogical* – hence, relational – character in virtue of the status of human persons as, essentially, *reason*-making creatures (Taylor 1991, p. 33).[50] Interpersonal relationships may be identified at all points on the spectrum from individual to universal. From the intimate perspective of Buber's "I-Thou", to the broadest conception of global citizenship, the key building-block is the idea of persons in relationship with one another.[51]

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[49] I say more about the identity and existence conditions of groups below. See "*Supra-persons*: Do we need them?"

[50] "The word in language is half someone else's" (Bakhtin 1981, p. 293).

[51] See Buber (1970). Similarly, the work of Emmanuel Levinas is largely based on the core experience of *encountering the other*. Levinas' major works include *Totality and Infinity*: *An Essay on Exteriority* (1969) and *Otherwise than Being*: *Or*, *Beyond Essence* (1980).

Taylor is also credited with linking personhood to an ideal of *authenticity*, as captured by the following comment (in which I interpret the term "human" to mean "person" in line with my own analysis of these terms):

> There is a certain way of being human that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's life. But this notion gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for *me*. (Taylor 1991, p. 28; see also Taylor in Gutmann 1994)

In writing on authenticity and its place in education (Splitter 2009), I intentionally tied this concept to the kind of relational framework I have articulated here. And while I do not doubt Taylor's intention to make a similar connection, as suggested in the previous paragraph, I detect an overly-romanticized view of authenticity, fuelled by the individualistic tendencies of materialism and consumerism, lurking in the shadows waiting to trap the unwary.[52] The above quotation reminds me of a story frequently related by Jewish teachers who, as I have previously indicated, come from a long tradition of linking what is religiously required to how we should treat one another in our daily affairs:

> A rabbi named Zusya died and went to stand before the judgment seat of God. As he waited for God to appear, he grew nervous thinking about his life and how little he had done. He began to imagine that God was going to ask him, "Why weren't you Moses or why weren't you Solomon or why weren't you David?" But when God appeared, the rabbi was surprised. God simply asked, "Why weren't you Zusya?" (Buber, n.d.)

But if we are not to imagine some kind of idealized "me" living alongside the actual me, challenging me always to be something better than I am, the only alternative interpretation would appear to be a call to live up to the ideals, challenges and goals that I set *myself*. And this takes us directly back to the idea that our personhood is linked to our own reflective capacities which, so I have argued, are linked, in turn, to our participation as language users in dialogical relationships with other persons.

Another form of romanticism in relation to personal authenticity emerges from a confusion – as I perceive it – between individual identity and group identity – one which I have been concerned to expose in this chapter. When the shift is made from seeking some kind of individual identity or authenticity to seeking that of the group – specifically, a group that has experienced systematic marginalisation, oppression or discrimination (which is a major focus of identity politics) – it may be accompanied by a call to a return to "traditional values" that were in place prior to such injustices occurring. Heyes provides an example of such a call, made by the native-Canadian writer and activist Taiaiake Alfred:

> Indigenous governance systems embody distinctive political values, radically different from those of the mainstream. Western notions of domination (human and natural) are noticeably absent; in their place we find harmony, autonomy, and respect. We have a responsibility to recover, understand, and preserve these values, not only because they represent a unique contribution to the history of ideas, but *because renewal of respect for*

[52] Witness the proliferation, in the West – and, increasingly, elsewhere – of "feel good" therapies, such as urging young children to sing songs with lyrics like "I am wonderful, I am special…"

> *traditional values is the only lasting solution to the political, economic, and social problems that beset our people*. (as cited in Heyes 2012, emphasis added)

But surely we can be rightly critical of domination and accepting of harmony, autonomy and respect, without going "back" to so-called "traditional" values in the name of a search for authenticity. I am not interested in pitting *old* against *new* here; indeed, I share the view that in order to work out what we now stand for, morally speaking, we should be mindful of both. But the crucial term here is "mindful". I reject what I call the "heirloom" view of values and moral education, whereby the values or norms of any society are those which we inherit, and the educator's task is to ensure that they are received by each new generation in good order, so that students understand that their role is to accept, to preserve, to cherish, but *not* to examine or critique them, lest they become damaged or even broken (as with a precious heirloom). In so far as being mindful includes both awareness *and* a preparedness to examine critically and open-mindedly, then it is, indeed, an appropriate term to keep in mind(!) when considering the importance of tradition in making value judgments.

I like the idea of construing personhood in terms of a *project*, and will return to it in the next chapter.[53] Each of us must participate, from an early age, in the task of *self-determination* in regard to others, where "others" here refers both to other individual persons and to the collectives to which we belong – whether by choice or not. We are born into specific families, cultures, religions, language groups, nations, etc. and, depending on the nature of the collective and our own circumstances, we may or may not have opportunities to make choices about these affiliations. Such choices may include regarding one such affiliation as more central to our lives than others – although Sen's *Fallacy of Singular Affiliation* needs to be borne in mind here. Also, as previously noted, our choices may extend to working from within to bring about change inside the collective, where appropriate or desirable (although in the case of powerful *supra-persons* like nations and religions, such work is likely to be challenging, even dangerous). In any case, *all* our affiliations are characteristics or properties of ourselves as *persons* and so, in turn, of those entities whose kinds determine appropriate identity conditions including, in our own case, the kinds *Homo sapiens* and/or *living organism*. This is precisely the distinction between self-determination – concerning the *kind* of person I am or want to be – and (numerical) identity – concerning the very individual that I am.

Appiah offers a nuanced portrayal of J. S. Mill, the traditional hero of liberalism, as seeking to define what it means to be a truly free individual in a world in which one is born into and part of, a myriad of social and cultural institutions. He also provides a way of reading contemporary writers such as Will Kymlicka, Amy Gutmann, Isaiah Berlin, as well as Charles Taylor, which is coherent and sympathetic, yet at times sharply critical. For example, he shares with Taylor the key thesis

[53] In Rousseau we find the idea that authenticity can be viewed as a process – or, better, a *project* – of self-construction/creation which depends, crucially, on egalitarian relationships of intersubjectivity (see Ferrara 1993). This idea, as Appiah (2005, p. 15) points out, is also in J. S. Mill. See Splitter (2009).

that "the authentic self" (I prefer to say "the person who I am") is "dialogically constituted", along with the clarification that we do not – and should not – utilize this dialogue as a means to extracting the individual person from the context of his social and cultural affiliations – family, religion, school, state, etc. – because one's own "identity" is an ongoing transaction with others and *their* sense of who I am, adding that the very material (the concepts and practices) which gives this dialogue substance also come from those same affiliations (Appiah 2005, p. 305). But, to reiterate, he rejects the notion that the value of cultures is irreducible (with respect to their individual members), along with the idea that we should be satisfied with the various "collective identities" that happen to "inhabit our globe" suggesting, instead, that "collective identities disciplined by historical knowledge and *philosophical reflection* would be radically unlike [and, by implication, preferable to] the identities that now parade before us for recognition" (p. 108, emphasis added).[54] I would go further in claiming that the powerful combination of dialogue and philosophical reflection would enable even very young people to embark on the project of becoming persons with the understanding that their various affiliations, whatever their merits or demerits, are *predicated* on, not constitutive of, their personhood. I want to keep the dialogical – hence the relational – component, but reduce the role of the affiliations and collectives that constitute what these writers call our collective identities. I also maintain that the project of becoming a person, whatever it involves, and wherever it leads, is *not* about identity. While respecting the combined wisdom and scholarship of Appiah, Taylor, Nussbaum, et al. I do not detect in their writings any explicit acknowledgement of the distinction between the groups and collectives which *are* greater than the sums of their parts – which includes most of those commonly discussed – and those which are not. I shall explain in the next chapter why early membership of one or more groups of the latter kind is an essential step in the lifelong project of becoming a person.

Persons, Roles, Traditions, and Frameworks: Further Challenges to the Principle of Personal Worth

In the previous chapter, I confessed my reluctance to be drawn into the complex domain of ethical theory, notwithstanding my commitment to an intrinsic connection between morality and personhood. One of the difficulties, as I noted, concerns the challenge of identifying a foundation for morality that does not seem either question-begging or self-serving (otherwise how convenient that the systems of morality that we construct inevitably place us persons at the top of the ethical tree!). It seems that any grounding for morality cannot itself be moral, which leaves only

[54] Compare Appiah's position with that of Sen: "Being born in a particular culture is obviously not an exercise in cultural liberty, and the preservation of something with which the person is stamped, simply because of birth, can hardly be, in itself, an exercise of freedom" (Sen 2006, pp. 116–117).

the domain of nature (*what is*) or of subjective sentiment/emotion. Hence the familiar quagmires of "is-ought" inferences, justifying moral objectivity, and so on.

I have attempted to bypass all of these issues by proposing – or, at least, defending – a pure, or unencumbered relational view of persons as mutually aware, linguistic creatures whose identities rely on their belonging to some such kind as *human being* or *living organism*. Whatever groupings, associations and affiliations we persons are involved with are, both semantically and ethically, dependent upon this relational conception. The most obvious difficulty here concerns the plausibility of a purely relational conception of personhood. For it will be said that all our relationships are highly contextual and embedded, whether via the roles we play or the situations into which we are born and find ourselves during the course of our lives. Accordingly, the development of a sense of self – aligned as it is with our sense of other selves and a common world – is similarly contextual and embedded. From a moral perspective, the scene is set for an understanding of the history of ethical thought which, while enormously complex in its details, has moved from just such a contextual or embedded conception to one in which the individual (person) becomes *the* focus of moral attention.

Among those who have charted this historical – and philosophical – development, are Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, whose key writings have assumed the status of classics in Twentieth Century philosophy. And yet here, too, we may discern a certain equivocation – a degree of conceptual fuzziness – with respect to the concepts of identity and personhood stemming, as I have previously suggested, from a failure to follow through on the numerical/qualitative distinction. In deference to the depth of their scholarship, I shall discuss their respective views in some detail.

The main target in MacIntyre's landmark work *After Virtue* (1984, 2007) is the state of moral philosophy – and, therefore, of morality itself – in our own time.[55] MacIntyre views the development of ethical thought since the Enlightenment in terms of a gradual abandonment of anything which might have provided a much-needed social framework in which individuals could see themselves and one another as interacting. Reaching back to ancient times by way of the narratives, poems, and dialogues of Homer, Aristotle and other classical figures, thence moving forward to St Thomas Aquinas and The New Testament, Adam Smith, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Benjamin Franklin, Karl Marx, Jane Austin, and Friedrich Nietzche, among many others, MacIntyre finds several key threads which have been used to weave conceptions of the moral life, including: the importance of social roles and traditions, accounts of virtue (or the virtues) based around the idea of a *telos* (especially in Aristotle's terms), the idea of a *practice* which must always involve interpersonal relationships, and – significantly for my own point of view – the power of *language*

[55] According to one commentator (Hauerwas 2007), *After Virtue* is a cornerstone of MacIntyre's work, but by no means the only stone. Nevertheless, Hauerwas argues that the central themes of *After Virtue* are continuous with those of both his earlier and later works, including *Marxism*: *An Interpretation* (1953), *Whose Justice*? *Which Rationality*? (1988) and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (1990); also a third edition of *After Virtue* (2007). In this brief analysis, I do not attempt to go beyond that cornerstone text, which is already sufficiently challenging on account of the depth of MacIntyre's knowledge and expertise, both philosophical and historical.

to create dialogue and narrative.[56] And yet, beginning with such Enlightenment figures as Kant (who saw morality in terms of *duty* having little to do with such sentiments as how people feel toward one another) and the Utilitarians Bentham and Mill (*utility* being, for MacIntyre, another strongly individualistic trait), and proceeding to the present day (i.e. the late Twentieth Century for MacIntyre), where such individualist views of morality as those of Robert Nozick and John Rawls have been so influential, moral philosophy both reflects and contributes to the state of morality in the world, which is one of division and conflict at the political and social level. We could pretend that we live in an age of mutual respect and empathy – pluralism in the noble sense of the term – but, according to MacIntyre, this would indeed be nothing other than a pretence. Among the ironies produced by this turn of events is that the individualism which results is, in MacIntyre's view, strongly relativistic and subjectivist: hardly what Kant and those writing in the analytic tradition would have had in mind!

I have been critical of the postmodernist debate on identity-related issues for failing to register the key logical distinction between numerical and qualitative identity. So it is noteworthy that MacIntyre, when discussing the concept of personal identity, indicates that he is, at least, aware of this distinction:

> Derek Parfit and others have recently drawn attention to the contrast between the criteria of strict identity…(Leibniz's Law applies) and the psychological continuities of personality which are a matter of more or less. (MacIntyre 1984, pp. 216–217)

MacIntyre goes on to corroborate a thesis that I have already endorsed, following Olson (Chap. 5), namely, that "there is no way of *founding* my identity – or lack of it – on the psychological continuity or discontinuity of the self" (p. 217). I also see an affinity here with my claim that no amount of qualitative identity can amount to numerical identity. But he then criticizes both "qualitative" and "numerical" accounts of personal identity for omitting a crucial background feature, namely "the concept of a story and of that kind of unity of character which a story requires". Personal identity, he concludes, "is just that identity presupposed by the unity of the character which the unity of a narrative requires" (p. 218). Further, each of us can not only provide an intelligible narrative account of his own life, but can ask others for an account of their lives: "I am part of their story, as they are part of mine." Here we see, albeit in different terms, the kind of inter-dependence to which I have subscribed in following Davidson's triangulated view of awareness. For MacIntyre, too, each of us is *one among others*. What makes me and my life unique (and unified) is precisely the possibility of providing, or constructing, a narrative unity which is the story of *my* actual life. This narrative is not merely descriptive for it involves an aspect of *accountability*; not only "What did I/you do or might do?" but "*Why* did I/you do it?" Further, while the unity of an individual life is given by a unified narrative, the latter includes such questions as "What is the good for me (or, by extension, for everyone)?", i.e. "How best might I live out that unity and bring it

[56] MacIntyre might have included in his historical account the views of Confucius – still evident in much of contemporary Chinese and East Asian society – in which the paradigm nature of specific social roles – king and minister, father and son – provided the basic rules for how to live well. I shall say more about this below.

to completion?". In MacIntyre's words, "The unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest" (p. 219).

In addressing the question "A quest for what?", MacIntyre draws on what he calls the medieval conception of a quest. He is particularly concerned with two aspects of this conception, the second of which – so I shall argue – provides the key to solving the problem which is looming here and which is underscored by the first aspect. First then, there can be no quest without some sense of what would constitute its end, i.e. its *telos*. We need, he argues, some conception of "the good for man (sic)". Now as I remarked above, *telos* is one member of a family of concepts (including *role*, *tradition*, *narrative*, *virtue*) all of which point to something *larger than* the individual; not just in the quantitative sense of involving a number of individuals, but in the stronger sense by which the individual depends, for its own identity and value, on this larger entity. But this is what I had in mind when I introduced the concept of *supra-person* and the Principle of Personal Worth: roles, traditions, and the like function as *supra-persons* in precisely the sense in which I have gone to considerable lengths in this chapter to criticize. According to the PPW, it is *persons*, not *supra-persons*, which have true moral value and significance.

Consider the following commentary from MacIntyre, in the context of extolling certain features of the pre-modern world:

> …the individual is identified and constituted in and through certain of his or her roles, those roles which bind the individual to the communities in and through which alone specifically human goods are to be attained; I confront the world as a member of this family, this clan, this tribe, this city, this nation, this kingdom. There is no "I" apart from these. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 172; and compare Appiah 2005, p. *xiv*, cited above)

But now juxtapose this with the following comment about so-called "honor killings", made in response to the recent murder of a young Pakistani woman by her own family:

> To understand honor culture, one must think of oneself not as an individual but as a role. You are not John or Julia; you are a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, a father or a mother, a father-in-law or a mother-in-law. Your role dictates your behaviour and your obligations. When one steps out of the prescribed role to act as an individual, the smooth functioning of the family collective is threatened. (Hamad, June 1, 2014)

To this I might respond as follows: if this kind of enforced role playing produces honor killings, then it has no place in a humane or moral society, irrespective of its historical credentials or pedigree (indeed, it never did).[57] Yet the idea of the individual seeing himself as part of a role-playing and virtue-laden tradition is one to

[57] Collectivist sentiments such as pride, shame, honor and loyalty are inevitably tinged with moral connotations. I am not dismissing the notion that the wayward behavior of individuals can bring a sense of dishonor or shame, not only to themselves, but to the wider collective or community which seeks to enforce certain traditions or customs. But in moral terms, the causal direction should move from individual to group, whereas in the case of honor killings (as one extreme example), the direction is reversed: the wrongness of the individual's behavior is based simply on its falling outside the boundaries of what the group can accept. Notions of national or tribal pride and loyalty become problematic in terms of the PPW when priority is given to the well-being of the collective over that of individual persons.

which MacIntyre remains sympathetic throughout his inquiry. Where, then, does this leave room for what I have called a strongly relational view of self and morality, by which each person sees himself as one among other persons, first and foremost? Am I really able to preserve such a view from MacIntyre's forceful critique of liberal individualism which, he claims, is all that moral philosophy has to offer after several centuries of discarding earlier frameworks based on narrative role-playing and the fulfilment of virtue in pursuit of some defined goal or *telos*?

We need to look more closely at such concepts as *role* and *telos*, which are among those emphasised by MacIntyre as characteristics of ancient and medieval views of morality, on the one hand, and conspicuously absent from (most) contemporary theories in moral philosophy, on the other. I stated above that MacIntyre is concerned with two aspects of the narrative quest which is needed if we are to embark on the task of formulating a conception of a unified human life. The first, as noted, is the need to acknowledge and accommodate some kind of *telos*, role, even tradition. But what of the second? Put simply, it is that we cannot assume that the narrative in question *has already been written* (or told), either for any one of us, or for humanity in general:

> …the medieval conception of a quest is not at all that of a search for something already adequately characterised… it is in the course of the quest… that the goal of the quest is finally to be understood. A quest is always an education both in the character of that which is sought and in self-knowledge… We have then arrived at a provisional conclusion about the good life for man: *the good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man*, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is. (MacIntyre 1984, p. 219, emphasis added)

MacIntyre emphasises that this search for the good life is not one in which we engage purely as individuals, in the sense that we are all "bearers of a particular social identity", i.e. of roles of various kinds, along with their respective debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. He declares: "I am born with a past, and to try and cut myself off from that past [e.g. by discarding the contingent social features of my existence], in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationships" (p. 221). In view of my earlier arguments, I am troubled by the idea of a "social identity" which is, in some sense, larger than my own identity. Still, while MacIntyre rejects the claim that moral reasoning can always allow us to "universalise" our way out of these various particularities, what redeems his account – if I may put it so – is his insistence that the latter "constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point". We need to locate ourselves in these particular contexts in order to know where to begin the quest, but "it is in moving forward from such particularity that the search for the good, for the universal, consists." (p. 221).

So in "moving forward", as MacIntyre puts it, I am not to be constrained or limited by the contingent social features of my existence – including the various roles and traditions that make me a member of an historical and ongoing society. But this conclusion, with which I concur, calls for another look at his earlier comment (quoted above, p. 157, and recall a similar claim made by Appiah, p. 142 above), according to which "I confront the world as a member of this family, this clan, this tribe…. There is no "I" apart from these". According to the concept of *person* which

I have defended there is, indeed, no "I" in isolation from one or more relational networks of other "I's", but these networks, while constituted of *persons*, should not be viewed as *supra-persons*. It is generally the case that those closest to me, emotionally (if not also physically) are usually persons who play significant roles in my life: as friends, parents, brothers, etc. But neither my personhood nor theirs is defined by these roles in the sense of being literally or numerically identified by them. Granted, my love for my parents stems, in large part, from their being my parents, but it is *them* whom I love, as a paradigm case of a strong inter-personal relationship, not merely the role that they happen to play as my parents.[58]

It should also be emphasised that the quest I undertake which MacIntyre sees as both end and means (i.e. both the good life and the search for the good life) is not one to be taken alone. At the end of the second edition of his *After Virtue*, he acknowledges this point: "What matters at this stage is the construction of *local forms of community* within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us" (p. 263, emphasis added).[59] I shall say more about the nature of such communities in the final chapter – they are precisely *not supra-persons* because they are, in an important sense, no larger than the sums of their parts. But let me note here that the epistemological core of this kind of community is to be found in those triangulated forms of awareness which provide a conceptual link of inter-dependency among my own sense of self (and your own sense of self), my sense of other selves (persons), and our common sense of the world we share. To see myself as socially embedded in all the ways described by MacIntyre is already to see you (i.e. those to whom I relate) as similarly embedded in a world largely shaped by those very constituent traditions, roles and narratives. If I am not to see these contingent facts of my existence as overpowering and untouchable, I must engage with others, not merely to find out where they are "from", so to speak, but to make it possible for me (and you) to *move forward*, in constructing, together, a sense of the good life by way of inquiry. No doubt one aspect of the darkness to which MacIntyre refers is the reluctance of those in power to facilitate, or even permit, such engagement; nevertheless, the *will* to act might just enable the *way*. One – indeed, I suggest, the primary – domain in which those of good intent can, at least,

[58] In the following chapter, I reiterate the distinction between *supra-persons* and groups which are "no greater than the sums of their parts" (recall Claim #7 at the start of this chapter), and confirm that the classroom community of inquiry can only be a collective of the second kind (it is not a *supra-person*). The basic idea that each person is constituted and sees herself as *one among others* is the appropriate basis for the slogan "No *I* without *We*".

[59] Ample evidence of this "new darkness" may be found by observing the state of the world today, characterised *inter alia* by a dominant market ideology based on the very neo-liberal individualism which MacIntyre finds rationally incoherent (and, I would add, amoral at best), and a host of trouble spots around the world due, in large part, to a rejection of this same liberal tradition and a stubborn refusal on the part of governments to allow – let alone encourage – their citizens to think for themselves beyond the shackles of the various *supra-persons* (in the form of roles, traditions, ethnicities, religions, tribal and national loyalties, etc.) which continue to wield unwarranted moral and existential power.

imagine the way forward is formal *education*, for its major stake-holders are still in the formative stages of becoming aware of themselves, others and the world. Hence the focus of my final chapter, to follow.[60]

The title of Taylor's book – *Sources of the Self*: *The Making of the Modern Identity* (arguably his central philosophical work) – suggests that he is concerned with reviewing both historical and contemporary conceptions of the relationship between personhood and identity, a relationship which is certainly at the heart of my own concerns. And a closer reading of the first few chapters provides considerable support for several key theses I have defended here, including the idea that personhood is the outcome of an ongoing *quest* (*à la* MacIntyre), that each of is necessarily situated as *one among others* who is always at some stage of *becoming*, and that this relational truth is closely linked with our status as linguistic creatures. As I have already remarked, Taylor is a strong defender of the view that we are dialogically constituted. Taylor also rejects the notion of the self as an objective entity that can be studied much as any other object can, thereby sharing with Davidson the idea that it is language, not ontology, which provides the fundamental conditions for self-hood, both in cognitive and in moral terms.

Another point of connection with my own discussion – albeit one much more elaborately laid out – is Taylor's insistence that the identity of the self is irreducibly tied to morality; that "orientation to the good is… a condition of our being selves with an identity." (Taylor 1989, p. 68). Consider:

> To know who I am [to answer the question of identity] is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. (Taylor 1989, p. 27)

And a little later:

> …in order to have an identity, we need an orientation to the good, which means some sense of qualitative discrimination…to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story…we grasp our lives in a *narrative*. (p. 47)[61]

To complete the circle, Taylor also recognizes the crucial role of language in articulating "modern understandings of the good", not just in a trivial sense (if we take articulation to be linguistic by definition), but in the deeper sense of having to "invent language… to say better than others what they really mean" (p. 103). Hence his masterly investigation of the origins of our modern understanding of the good through (recorded and, it must be said, mainly Western) history.

I have previously pointed out a basic ambiguity in the question "Who am I?", as between a quantitative (numerical) and a qualitative interpretation. I also argued

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[60] We may discern some common threads between MacIntyre's account and the idea of grounded cosmopolitanism, as expounded by Hansen (above). One of these, which I endorse, is that the possibility of extrapolation to an unknown future, or to an entire cosmos, etc., depends on having a base which is strongly contextualized and situated in space and time.

[61] Taylor attributes the idea of narrative in this context to writers such as MacIntyre, Ricouer and Bruner.

that when it comes to determining the numerical – what I call the "literal" – identity of any individual, including a person, no amount of qualitative elaboration will do the job. On the other hand, I have not denied the qualitative dimensions of personhood, that is, the idea that personhood is defined or characterized by particular properties or features, of which possessing a moral sensibility is one, and membership in a language community is another. Isn't this precisely what Taylor is also emphasizing? Is there anything here to be concerned about? I think that there is, and that in clarifying the point at issue, we may sharpen our understanding of the relationship between persons and what I have been calling *supra-persons*.

In the early pages of his book, Taylor orients his analysis of identity and morality around the notion of *frameworks* (his first chapter is entitled "Inescapable frameworks"). Frameworks are conceptual devices that allow us to make sense of our lives from a moral perspective (as with MacIntyre, Taylor takes *making* here to point to a search or quest for meaning):

> What I have been calling a framework incorporates a crucial set of qualitative distinctions. To think, feel, judge within such a framework is to function with the sense that some action, or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparably higher than the others which are more readily available to us. (p. 19)… Frameworks provide the background, explicit or implicit, for our moral judgements, intuitions or reactions… when we try to spell out what it is that we presuppose when we judge that a certain form of life is truly worthwhile…we find ourselves articulating inter alia what I have been calling here frameworks. (p. 26)

Examples of such frameworks in history include what Taylor calls "the honour ethic", exemplified in the Homeric tales of great classical warriors and heroes; subsequently overtaken by the Platonic ideal of perfection attained through reason and, in turn, the Judeo-Christian imperative to love God and live by His commandments through our "ordinary" lives (we do not have to be heroes to strive for the highest goods). Later still, the Enlightenment (i.e. its philosophical spokespersons) reasserted humans and their capacity for reason – we could also say their love of justice, concern for dignity and respect, and so on – as the highest pinnacles of moral attainment. Such frameworks may be disputed and/or superseded but, insists Taylor, living as persons without them and the qualitative discriminations they enable, would be impossible (p. 27).

A little later, Taylor introduces the concept of *hypergoods*, defined as higher-order goods "which are not only incomparably more important than others but provide the standpoint from which these must be weighed, judged, decided about." (p. 63). Again, we may say that respect for all persons, justice, dignity, altruism – even the worship of God – (all of which are cited by Taylor as examples of hypergoods) constitute the frames by which we make judgements and perform as moral agents, in which case it seems evident that hypergoods and frameworks are closely related in Taylor's account.

For Taylor, having a moral sense or compass which is directed at and by one or more such frameworks is key to having an identity – to knowing *where I stand*. But isn't this the same kind of thinking that inspires some individuals to give up their own autonomy in favor of an overbearing nation-state, or even as members of a gang or cult? If so, aren't Taylor's frameworks *supra-persons* that claim both moral

and ontological (identity-related) priority over the individuals who belong or subscribe to them? After all, both frameworks and *supra-persons* are conceptually defined in terms of one or more qualitative distinctions (using terminology discussed earlier, they are equivalence classes based on relations of qualitative identity). If this is what Taylor has in mind, how can we reconcile it with the Principle of Personal Worth and my rejection of the very idea that such entities have either moral or existential status above and beyond that of individual persons?

In apparent support of this interpretation, we find Taylor citing examples which come precariously close to those I have questioned earlier in the chapter. Consider the following:

> People may see their identity as defined partly by some moral or spiritual commitment, say as a Catholic, or an anarchist. Or they may define it in part by the nation or tradition they belong to, as an Armenian, say, or a Québecois. What they are saying by this is not just that they are strongly attached to this spiritual view or background; rather it is that this provides the frame within which they can determine where they stand on questions of what is good, or worthwhile, or admirable, or of value. Put counterfactually, they are saying that were they to lose this commitment or identification, they would be at sea, as it were; they wouldn't know any more, for an important range of questions, what the significance of things was for them.
>
> And this situation does, of course, arise for some people. It's what we call an 'identity crisis', an acute form of disorientation, which people often express in terms of not knowing who they are, but which can also be seen as a radical uncertainty of where they stand. They lack a frame or horizon within which things can take on a stable significance… (p. 27).

I am not qualified to challenge the empirical claim that some individuals experience such epistemological – perhaps even psychological – turmoil or disorientation. Nor even that they may see this as a kind of identity crisis. But what I do insist on is that it is, at worst, a crisis of *qualitative* identity that does not touch the more basic question of their literal numerical identity. More cautiously, I think that the idea, implied by Taylor, that such experiences can undermine their moral sense by removing the polar reference point for their moral compass, rests on an equivocation, a shift in the meaning of what we take to be the fundamental frameworks or hypergoods that help us to determine where we stand. On the one hand, these frameworks represent attempts to articulate a moral space occupied by *all* persons, simply in virtue of their being persons rather than mere objects (even "mere" human beings). Whether one opts for a Platonic perspective of perfection attained through reason, a religious perspective based on obedience to (what is taken to be) the will of God, a utilitarian perspective or a Kantian perspective based on what reason determines to be categorically imperative, the account of morality which emerges is one which applies to all persons, not merely to Ancient Greeks, Christians, etc. Granted, there is plenty of room for conflict and disagreement here, as Taylor acknowledges, citing the contemporary case (among others) of the growing acceptance of a "universal [sense of] justice and/or benevolence, in which all human beings are to be treated equally with respect, regardless of race, class, sex, culture, religion." As Taylor explains, there were and still are those who do not accept such a framework, or who claim to accept it but still find ways to exclude certain groups from being treated as genuinely "equal" (a good example in our time concerns the right of same-sex

partners to be legally married). Even historical frameworks have rarely been entirely rejected, as can readily be seen in the global tensions that have their source in religion. Still – and at the risk of being accused of a stubborn commitment to moral universalism – there is room for dialogue here, because those who disagree could (if they were so inclined) find common ground with the basic concept of a person. Taking this interpretation, we might conclude that what Taylor is proposing is entirely consistent with the PPW and my rejection of the moral superiority afforded to *supra-persons*.

On the other hand – and this line of thought is tempting if we are not sufficiently diligent about the concept of *identity* (for example, the distinction between numerical and qualitative identity) – it is fair to ask just what Taylor has in mind by citing such examples as Armenians and Québecois (see above quote). In line with the Fallacy of Singular Affiliation articulated by Sen (above, p. 112), Taylor is well aware that "our identities… are, in fact, complex and many-tiered" (pp. 28–29), but note that such claims refer, once again, to qualitative, not quantitative identity. In failing to acknowledge this distinction, Taylor, so I contend, leaves open the possibility that what is moral for Armenians (and not merely what they regard as moral) is different from what is moral for Québecois and, in turn, the rest of us. But it is precisely at this point that such *supra-persons* as nation-states are given room to assert their moral authority over and above that of persons, regardless of their national or related affiliations.

I do not believe for an instant that this criticism of Taylor, in so far as it holds water, vitiates the major theses that he is defending. This is because I take him to be explicating the connection between personhood and morality at a purely *qualitative* level. Even though he does acknowledge the power of the question "Who am I?", as indicative of each person being "an interlocutor among others" (p. 29), we should understand "I" here qualitatively, in terms of what is constitutive of being a person, rather than quantitatively, in terms of what it is to be *this very* person (e.g. me). Still, as I have remarked earlier when referring to Appiah, Nussbaum and other contemporary writers, the clarity of their respective positions would have been that much sharper if they had acknowledged the distinction in question. I will illustrate this assertion by reference to Taylor's remark that there is an "essential link between identity and a kind of orientation". He continues thus:

> To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary. I feel myself drawn here to use a spatial metaphor… (p. 28)

Taylor wants to take the analogy with space seriously (citing cases in which individuals suffering 'narcissistic personality disorders' actually show signs of spatial disorientation as well). He points out that until a few centuries ago, any talk of a connection between moral orientation and identity ("Who are we?") would not have made sense. It is only in modern times that we have come to realize that "questions of moral orientation cannot be solved in simply universal terms" (p. 28). Not only our individual differences, but the recognition that each person must express

the discovery of their own moral horizon in their own terms, rule out such a universal approach to morality. But here I cannot resist referring to my own discussion in previous chapters, of how each individual (person or object) is a *this-such*, to be (numerically) identified (and re-identified) by way of *both* an appropriate conceptual marker (e.g. a natural kind concept or sortal) *and* positioning in a frame of reference – typically that of space/time – in which we (the identifiers) are also located. The latter, following Kant's fundamental distinction between sensibility and understanding, is not a conceptual move but a demonstrative and literal one. Concepts, I concede, may capture increasingly finer qualitative discriminations and similarities, but they do not numerically pick out the object itself. What I am corroborating, accordingly, is that even though Taylor goes to great lengths to articulate the moral space in which persons may be identified as agents, his discussion is best understood in qualitative, not quantitative terms. Coming to a proper understanding of the exact connection between (our understanding of) persons and morality – which I take to be a fundamental concern for Taylor – leaves untouched the idea that I have promoted in this chapter: that morality and literal identity apply first and foremost to individual persons and only derivatively – if at all – to those entities I have called *supra-persons*.

Finally, I wish to respond to the idea – supported by Taylor, among others – that individuals may suffer a *crisis of identity* in, or as a result of, which they lose sight of who they are and what they stand for. No doubt many such examples could be provided, but I shall cite one from the epic novel *Les Miserables* (Hugo 1862), which has found new appeal through the outstanding musical of the same name, in addition to many other dramatic realisations. Over and above the trials and tribulations of various familial and romantic relationships, the most interesting (to me at least) is that between Jean Valjean and the policeman Javert. Having met Valjean in his convict days (sentenced for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his sister's family), Javert continues to pursue him for many decades on the grounds that he broke his parole. When Javert has finally to confront the reality that Valjean is a fundamentally decent, kind and caring person, he suffers such a "crisis of identity" that he is forced to commit suicide. His entire life had been built around defending a particular set of rules and laws that neatly divided people into the worthy and the worthless – such was the Taylorean framework by which he lived and functioned. Valjean was a challenge to this framework that Javert was either unable, or unwilling, to accommodate.

Of course, Valjean and Javert are utterly different in character. But I suggest that this difference can be viewed in terms of seeing Valjean, on the one hand, as an authentic and genuine person, one who occasionally does the wrong thing but then sees the error of his ways and is determined to repent, even to "live a new life", as we might say. Javert, on the other hand, is not so much an evil person as a severely limited one whose sense of morality is restricted to upholding a Law that he dare not question. He is, one might say, barely a person at all. As he prepares to escape from a life that has become intolerable, he cries out: "My thoughts fly apart……", revealing a state of mind that is troubled beyond endurance (so it seems). But of course it did not have to be so. A more balanced individual, one who understood the virtues of love, forgiveness, humility, etc., might have resigned from the police force and

lived out his days as an ordinary citizen, albeit always with the memory of his earlier life as a rigid upholder of the Law. But Javert is utterly unable to accommodate such essentially "human" attributes. Valjean, in striking contrast, poses to himself the key question "Who am I?", precipitating on more than one occasion a complete change of direction in his life, first as a free man (Monsieur Madaleine) with no identifiable links to the convict Jean Valjean (characterized by a number: 24601), and later as Valjean once more, a person prepared to go back to prison because he cannot live with the prospect of allowing another innocent man to be wrongly convicted under his name. These changes of direction and orientation are surely radical by most standards, but they do *not* precipitate any kind of internal or psychological identity crisis for Valjean; rather, they allow him to change the direction of *his* own life. He is always Jean Valjean (regardless of the name he uses from time to time) – his numerical identity is never in question – and because he is able to accept this reality, he is able also to undergo substantial (qualitative) change to the *kind* of person he is.

My point is simply this: without in any way understating the harm and suffering that individuals may endure when they experience radical qualitative change (alternatively, when qualities which matter to them, such as sexuality, are ignored; or when qualities which should not matter, such as race, are given prominence) – what I referred to earlier as "qualitative chaos" – their literal destruction – which is what a loss of numerical identity would result in – is not inevitable in any existential, semantic or moral sense. That it might prove so psychologically – as with Javert – suggests that more could be done to prepare people, not just to survive, but to overcome most, if not all, the kinds of crises that Taylor and others refer to as "crises of identity".

A Brief Commentary on Change and Loss, Both Qualitative and Quantitative

I have rejected the suggestion that our literal (numerical) identities – whether as persons or anything else – are put at risk when we undergo qualitative change – even when such changes are sufficiently radical to constitute what I have called "qualitative chaos". Still, it is worth comparing two quite different kinds of change that we persons inevitably experience in the course of our lives. Both involve a sense of *loss* that may be deeply felt, but the nature of the loss is quite different in each case. On one hand are those *qualitative* changes which occur from time to time, some of which are relatively minor, even trivial (growing and cutting one's hair, changing one's socks every morning, having lunch at a different time of day, etc.) while others are considerably more important (converting to a new religion, relocating to a different country – whether by choice or compulsion – giving up a particular tradition that is deemed no longer relevant, etc.). On the other hand, assuming that personhood is an emergent feature based on one's actual relationships with others (most notably, other persons), are the *quantitative* changes that result from the loss

(or addition) of such relationships. If we are lucky enough to live to old age, we inevitably lose people – friends, relations, neighbours, colleagues – who are "close" to us (such closeness is often, but not always, in terms of physical proximity: one day they are "there", the next day not). As a result, the network of our relationships is, itself, quantitatively altered (in this case it is diminished, but it could also be enlarged, as when one forms a new relationship, celebrates the birth of a grandchild, etc.).

To reiterate a familiar point, when someone close to me (a "significant other" in some sense) departs for good (which, in these days of easy travel and communication, usually means either that they die or that the relationship between us dies: I shall presume the former here to keep things simple), *their* literal (numerical) identity is destroyed, not only because they cease to be persons, but because they cease to be members of their underlying kind K, which means that they cease to be, period. But *my* literal identity remains intact. Can we plausibly assert that the change that their loss brings upon me is simply another qualitative change, like those mentioned above (albeit one that is extremely important to me)? Yes and no. The quantitative loss of a significant other does impact qualitatively on me, particularly in a psychological sense. Sadness, grief and a tremendous *sense* of loss are new qualities that I now possess (their depth, intensity, duration and variability across different cultures and circumstances do not matter for present purposes). And yet, it seems that in such situations that very sense of loss has a particular resonance that *mimics* the quantitative loss that has occurred. Let me try to explain this.

The person who has died is no longer physically present (bearing in mind that the persons with whom we are most familiar are identical to living organisms which are no longer physically present). Leaving aside specific religious beliefs about what happens to the body at or after the time of death, we know the physical story well enough (one of the points of having a public funeral is to underscore the reality that the departed person's departure is final: "from ashes to ashes and dust to dust"). Yet, in and of itself, such an inevitable transformation does not come close to explaining our sense of grief and loss which is all about the absence of the person, *as if that person were some-thing over and above a material object* (a view I have rejected). While it is doubtless true that the death of a child, in reversing the "natural" order of things, is especially shocking, the death of a beloved parent – that most natural of life's experiences – may seem shocking in its own way. How can this person who has existed for the whole of my life, disappear? Or, put another way, is it not tempting to feel that something quantitative has disappeared from my life, leaving me literally less than I was, remembering that as persons, we are defined by our relationships with others?

For those among us fortunate enough to maintain positive relationships with parents and others who have played such a significant part in our lives, perhaps it is their absence as members of an intimate language community, and not merely their physical absence, that explains the depth of the shock of their passing. Never again will my own sense of self (awareness) be linked to my sense of their awareness (including their awareness of me) or our mutual sense of sharing a common world.

Supra-Persons: Do We Need Them?

In making the point that the identity of individuals is not threatened or challenged by changes to their group memberships, I have conceded that the identity – even the existence – of the groups in question may well be. One response here would be "So what! Who needs them (*supra-persons*), especially given the confused and sometimes dangerous thinking that lies behind their alleged moral and existential status? I do not take such a severe line, since there is no question that people derive considerable pleasure, satisfaction, comfort and even pride from their membership of, or affiliation with, a broad range of groups, associations, collectives, and the like. Nevertheless, with the issues relating to identity – specifically those flowing from the distinction between quantitative and qualitative identity – now clarified, it is worth examining a little more closely how such groups fare in the face of change; i.e. *qualitative* change, given that they themselves are defined and characterized in qualitative terms (or so it may seem).

My discussion of MacIntyre above emphasized the role of history – specifically the place of narrative and tradition – as a necessary (albeit not sufficient) ingredient in constructing a sense of the "good life for man". I would add that much of the alleged power of such *supra-persons* as nations, religions, cultures and ethnicities is grounded in their temporal or historical dimensions. It may well be true, as a matter of history, that we regard ourselves, morally and existentially, through the prism of this or that *supra-person*. Whether by birth, choice or compulsion, we are members of, or affiliated with, specific nations, ethnicities, cultures, religions, traditions, tribes, and roles. The key question is this: "Are we free to live as persons without these particular affiliations and/or without embracing all the norms and practices that have, hitherto, been definitive of them?"

The answer to one part of this question is simple. Yes, we are free to live as persons in the absence of *any* particular *supra-person* although this may be impractical (as in trying to live without any form of national citizenship, for example), or even dangerous (as when individuals attempt to leave a gang, cult or tribe which has exerted a strong influence on their lives and those around them). There are, for example, increasing numbers of people who spurn *any* religious affiliation but reject the idea that they will, thereby, lose their sense of morality or direction in life. Whether such freedom is tolerated depends largely on the context: little or no problem in many Western democracies today; enormous problems in many Middle Eastern nations.

The second part of the question is more challenging. Can we remain affiliated with a specific religion, culture, or tradition yet give up some of its norms and practices? The answer may depend on the degree of centrality or importance of that which is given up (Is a Catholic or Jew who has lost her faith still a Catholic or Jew? Arguably, no in the former case but yes in the latter where the question of faith or belief is less crucial than that of actual lineage). But it is more likely to depend on whether the *supra-person* in question is regarded – especially internally but also externally – as being locked into its own temporal past. If we characterize a tradition as a set of practices that have been handed down through the generations then, by

definition, a tradition ceases when it is no longer handed down (or no longer accepted by the new generation). The classic example here is that of religious fundamentalism, whose proponents are so wedded to the historical pathway of their religion, as determined by its original source or authority (God, the Bible, the Koran, etc.) that they literally cannot conceive of any change that does not, thereby, destroy it. Accordingly, an individual who rejects even one part of the tradition is no longer part of it and, by extension, if even one part is rejected by everyone, then the entire tradition dies.

Contrast these responses with those we would give when the affiliation in question is the natural kind to which such organisms as human persons belong. On the one hand, we humans are *not* free – in the sense of "conceptually or logically free" – to give up being members of this kind. Cease to be living organisms, and we cease to be, period. This, to reiterate, is because the kind in question provides the very identity conditions by which its members can be identified and tracked through space and time. On the other hand, *pace* David Hume – and recalling the example of the school photo (Chap. 2) – we not only *can* persist (as individual members of the kind in question) through time and change; such change is the *sine qua non* of belonging to that kind. The Biblical character Lot's Wife arguably cannot survive *becoming* a pillar of salt (conceptually, not just in fact), but neither could a human child survive in the absence of those forms of growth and change that are characteristic of the kind of creature that she is.

Still, the question of persistence or survival through change in the case of *supra-persons* that are *not* conceived as traditions in the narrow sense outlined, remains to be answered. Here I should like to consider, by way of contrast, one more type of collective entity: a group (class) of individuals whose identity and existence are purely functions of its actual members (as referred to in #7 at the start of the present Chapter). Such a group is *not* a *supra-person* precisely because it has no existential claims beyond those members. In line with the scenario which concerns us, the type of change to consider here is not simply that of adding or removing members to/from the group (which, by definition, results in its demise); rather, it is allowing those actual members to change in terms of their modes and norms of behavior. Since these features are irrelevant to the group's existence and identity, such changes have no impact on it. The group containing individuals A, B and C who were Christians and are now atheists is still *the very same group*. This case represents the opposite extreme from those groups defined in terms of specific traditions and histories; as noted earlier: change one aspect of the tradition and the group itself ceases to exist.

When considering *supra-persons* which lie somewhere between these extremes, the question of their survival through change is genuinely problematic.[62] One such contemporary – and contentious – example is that of the religion Islam, some of whose adherents clearly regard it as a tradition in the narrowest sense, hence their

[62] For a comparison, consider the phylogenetic conception of *species* (discussed in Chap. 4), in particular its inadequacy as a viable definition precisely because it does not generate identity criteria which govern the identity of species through such crucial events as speciation.

utter determination to transform modern societies (both Islamic and others) into traditional Caliphates governed by *Sharia* Law. In calling for the voices of "moderate Islam" to reject such extreme fundamentalism, world leaders are, effectively, declaring that Islam can survive in the contemporary world without clinging to every historical aspect of its own tradition (as, presumably, can other religions such as Christianity and Judaism). This is not the place, and I am not the authority, to rule on this issue; my point is simply that much is at stake here. How do contemporary peace-loving Muslims regard the future of Islam given the weight of that tradition? If the religion itself can continue to thrive in the absence of moral norms and practices that are judged by many to have no place today (female circumcision, amputations for theft, death to "infidels" or to anyone criticizing or depicting the *Prophet* …), then that is surely the way forward. But if it should be determined (by consensus among its own scholars or authorities, presumably) that the strictures of the *Quran* – being the Word of God as revealed by His Prophet – leave no room for such change then, in line with the same moral framework which condemns those traditional practices mentioned – *not*, it should be stressed, a moral framework from some competing or alternative religion, but that which flows from considering how persons ought to treat each other – it is the continuing existence of Islam itself which must be carefully considered.[63]

A second example concerns the cluster of *supra-persons* involving China and the Chinese people, including the nation China, the broader Chinese diaspora, Chinese as ethnicity or as a "people", Chinese culture, Confucianism, Marxist-Maoist ideology, etc. In one way or another, these entities, too, are bound up with a degree of contentiousness, much of which has to do with the goal of defining and preserving a sense of Chinese "identity". The renowned Confucian scholar Tu Wei-ming is quoted in a recent interview as agreeing that "renewed interest in the Confucian tradition is part of something like a search for a Chinese identity" (Tu 2015). Tu accepts that "Certainly historically there is no question about the fact that the Confucian tradition can serve as a very important identity for the Chinese…[and] without Confucianism it is difficult to imagine what the shape of China's culture would be, especially Chinese cultural identity" (2015, see also his 2005).

Several aspects of Tu's position, as characterized all too briefly here, are worthy of comment. One is the shift between referring to "the Chinese" – i.e. the Chinese people – and China – i.e. that entity which has the potential to become a dominant *supra-person* with respect to those same Chinese people. Another is the implied connection between Confucian tradition and what Tu calls "Chinese cultural identity". We see here, once again, some equivocation over the concept of identity, in so far as the terms of this relation shift from individual persons to nations, cultures and traditions. Why does the issue of Chinese identity matter, and for whom? I have

[63] A recent media headline citing a comment by the principal of an Islamic school serves as a reminder of the distorting power of *supra-persons*. This principal told his students that Islamic extremism (which is currently evident in troubled areas around the world) must be caused by non-Muslims because Islam is a peaceful and peace-loving religion.

argued that for individual persons – in this case, actual Chinese people – there *is no* issue of identity and, as such, nothing that needs to be "searched for". Numerical identity, which is, to be sure, essential to each person's existence, is assured, and qualitative identity simply highlights one or more salient features that Chinese people have in common. Further, Tu is surely correct to imply that there are no specific features that all and only Chinese must share, noting, on the one hand, that "no matter how broadly we define Confucianism, it is only one of many traditions that constitute the cultural resources of Cultural China. Next to Daoism, Buddhism, folk traditions, Christianity, Islam, all kinds of traditions, Confucianism is only one of them."; and on the other, that nowadays the names "China", "Chinese" and "Chinese cultural identity" have multiple references, some geographically specific but others more global.

Tu wisely rejects viewing Chinese cultural identity as a tradition in the narrow sense described above offering, instead, a contemporary interpretation of what this concept means, especially for the future of China and Chinese people (however defined). Still, we need to acknowledge that in spelling out the implications and merits of such an interpretation, the historical "story" will play an important part. But we need also to heed MacIntyre's reminder that "it is in moving forward from such particularity that the search for the good, for the universal, consists." (cited earlier) Returning to the example, like Tu, I am concerned particularly with the contemporary viability of Confucianism in so far as it (or those who speak on its behalf) includes a strong moral component. In his discussions of the important features of Confucianism today, Tu emphasises –correctly in my view – that each person is a centre of relationships, and that personal identity has an essential social component. We may accept that such a broadly humanistic (I prefer *person-centred*) focus can be traced back to those paradigmatic relationships that Confucius and his followers emphasised (parent and child, ruler and minister, etc.) and, accordingly, that eminent Chinese intellectuals such as Tu are offering both a reflective/historical and a forward-looking analysis; further, that in so doing, they are mounting a challenge to those political leaders who wish to direct China down a much narrower, more nationalistic path. However, as with any attempt to *personalise* (I do not say "universalise" here) a cultural tradition that has very specific historical roots (which, presumably, make it a tradition in the first place!), if my perspective on personhood is correct, it follows that Confucianism itself retains contemporary relevance, if at all, only in tracing this historical journey. If we accept that contemporary morality stems from our understanding of what it means to be a person in the world (to undertake the quest for the good life, in MacIntyre's terms), then *that* becomes the key condition of morality, one which guarantees that when individuals from Confucian and quite different cultural traditions meet one another – as is increasingly the case in a globalized and connected world – they will treat one another appropriately. And in the event that clashes and tensions arise between such a person-centred morality and one more rigidly confined to a particular tradition – be it Confucianism, Islam, Christianity, or the dictates of the Chinese Communist Party – it is the latter which ought, on grounds of reasonableness and greater harmony, to give way.

Dissolving Boundaries: Beyond *Supra-Persons*

According to my Principle of Personal Worth, the well-being, value and worth of actual persons is always more important than those of the groups (specifically *supra-persons*) to which they belong. I conclude the chapter on an optimistic note, by citing several examples which further underscore this point.

1. The first example relates to an incident during World War II, as narrated by the English author and traveller Patrick Leigh Fermor:

   > As a British officer in the war, [Fermor] found unlikely companionship in Karl Kreipe, a Nazi general audaciously kidnapped by Fermor and associates on German-occupied Crete in 1944. Captor and captive were lying side by side and smoking when, as Fermor recalls: "The general, half to himself, slowly said: '*Vides ut alta stet nive candidum / Soracte* …' ('You see how Soracte stands gleaming white with deep snow.'). I was in luck. It is the opening line of one of the few Odes of Horace I know by heart. I went on reciting where he had broken off … through the remaining five stanzas to the end. '*Ach so*, *Herr Major*,' said the general. '*Ach so*, *Herr General*,' said the major." (Culture is a word to celebrate, not be ashamed of, January 3, 2007)

   This extraordinary incident is indicative of ("high") culture's sustaining power to dissolve the sturdiest of political and ideological boundaries. For me the most poignant moment comes with the cryptic final proclamation "Ach so!" I suggest that the power of that moment of shared understanding – or empathy, since it was clearly more than a mere cognitive connection – derives from its revealing, not just a connection between, but a *dissolution* of (in the sense of *rendering irrelevant*) the salient differences (chiefly, their belonging to different nationalist ideologies which have pushed their respective nations to war) between, the two men. Akin to the absurdity starkly exposed when soldiers from both sides in World War I emerged from the trenches to share a Christmas drink on December 25th, 1914 – the absurdity highlighted by the immediate resumption of hostilities rather than these brief acknowledgements of mutual humanity – it resonates with epistemological, aesthetic and ethical significance. Such instances provide a striking counter-point to the assumption – without which war would be difficult if not impossible – that one's enemies are "less than human". Moreover, they leave no room for any reference to moral differences in nationality or citizenship.
2. My second example of the power of interpersonal mutuality to cross boundaries comes from the work of researchers who have studied the responses of ordinary people relating to one another across the historically deep divides of nationalistic, ethnic and religious boundaries. One such study involved observing verbal and other forms of interaction among adolescents from neighbouring parts of India and Pakistan whose citizens have had to accommodate – physically, cognitively and emotionally – the conflict-ridden Partition of 1947 (Chhabra 2010). These young people were brought together in a residential summer camp in a neutral environment as part of a project called "Seeds of Peace". As the author explains, when dealing with the historical and political questions of *why* Partition

occurred, who was to blame etc., the youngsters were unable to enter into cross-nation dialogical relationships. They could not move beyond the messages they had been taught which, needless to say, puts all the credit onto one side, and all the blame onto the other. However, as they became better acquainted, they inevitably focused on more personal reflections, where it became clear to all participants that the actual experiences – the loss of a relative, for example – (i.e. *how* Partition actually occurred) and the feelings these experiences evoked, were shared and mutual. The growing sense of connectedness, in turn, enabled those from both "sides" to see each other as being "just like themselves" (which is akin to each seeing her/him-self as "one among others", in the sense explained). Chhabra describes this transition from a fixed stance of "we were right and you were wrong" to a more dialogical and inter-personal framework as exemplifying Buber's "I-It" and "I-Thou" relationships, respectively. She also adopts the notion of personhood in terms of a *relational collective self*, hence her rejection of the standard developmental models in psychology which focus on the individual.[64]

During a conference presentation by Chhabra, I was particularly struck by a photograph depicting a number of the youthful participants posing for the camera, arms around one another, and intermingled in a way which showed clearly that by that time, differences in nationality and religion were more or less immaterial to them. They had formed friendships – that most essential and enduring of person-sustaining relationships – which not only displayed the potential for further *personal*-via-*interpersonal* development, but left no room for any conception of citizenship either to disrupt or to facilitate these emergent bonds.

3. The return of Hong Kong sovereignty to the People's Republic of China in July 1997 generated a plethora of citizenship- and governance- related studies which have revealed a broad range of pedagogic and curriculum approaches to civics and national education in what is now Hong Kong *SAR*. And in the last several years, many Hong Kong citizens have literally taken to the streets in protest against what they view as the encroachment of the Mainland (more specifically, the Chinese Government) into issues of local governance, such as a new curriculum in moral and national education, and the means by which the Chief Executive of Hong Kong is to be nominated/elected. At the time of this writing, opinions relating to how the relationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland will develop, particularly with respect to the strongly affective issues of national pride and patriotism, are strongly divided. One might hope for the cultivation of a more critical yet empathetic environment in which ordinary people, including students, are willing to engage in genuine dialogue with one another, and with the political leadership on both sides. However, exacerbating a cultural aversion to robust dialogue in which people are free both to disagree with and challenge

[64] It would be interesting to recreate the less personal interactions among the teenagers, to see if the sense of inter-connectedness established in the personal context might raise the level of the dialogue. Dialogue is a deeply inter- and intra- personal endeavour which is actually part of the process of personal development – a point I shall take up in the following chapter.

the *status quo*, has been the increasing politicization of such key concepts as *critical thinking* and *free speech*, to the point where some members of the Chinese leadership regard those who wish to engage in (or teach) these procedures as attempting to "smuggle in" Western values. In any case, a common response from educators in Hong Kong, when facing students who may be eager to learn but not to talk – at least, not in classrooms where they may feel judged by both peers and teachers – is simply to appeal to prevailing culture, tradition and custom. My own response, as should by now be clear, is respectfully to acknowledge what *has been* but to ask those involved – specifically teachers and students – "But where to from here?". As I indicated above, shifting – or broadening – the question in this way sends a clear message that the *quest for the good life* is not predetermined. Nevertheless, those of us who feel strongly committed to the power of language to generate modes of thinking that transcend the confines of such *supra-persons* as cultures, traditions and nations must be careful not to *impose* this commitment on others; still, we ought, at least to be willing to model and exemplify it in our own practice.

Casting too broad an eye over educational systems and policies can result in a somewhat narrow, even jaundiced perspective on what is actually happening "on the ground". In the case of what is known variously as "nationalistic", "patriotic", "civics", even "moral" education in China – including Hong Kong – it is refreshing to find reports of young people who insist on *thinking for themselves*, irrespective of the "official" line being presented to them by teachers and society in general. In a qualitative study of Hong Kong teachers' views on nationalistic education, Leung Yan Wing found a range of responses, from more cognitive-based (e.g. promoting critical and/or cosmopolitan thinking in a liberal educational context) to more affective-based (e.g. promoting strong feelings of affection and loyalty to the nation state) (Leung 2007). Of particular interest here are the views expressed by two teachers (named Ms Lo and Mr Tang in the study) in responding to the realization that their students did not always support China (or the official Chinese position) when it came to making moral judgements about such key virtues as honesty and loyalty (arguing, for example, that in cases of conflict, honesty and a commitment to truth override loyalty and a commitment to social cohesion). Ms Lo is quoted as saying:

> If my students do not love China after critical reflection, I will feel unhappy. But as I have said that they should be the ones who choose. But I will wonder whether it is my fault. (Leung 2007, p. 83)

Likewise Mr Tang:

> My students may end up not loving China. The most important thing is to challenge them to think, and to differentiate between right from wrong. Hopefully that they could make decision[s] and will not only be indoctrinated. (Leung 2007, p. 84)

Leung expresses the concern that Ms Lo's tendency to blame herself strongly for her students' failure to "love China" above all other considerations might lead her to take a more affective and less critical approach in future. However, my

interest here (reading somewhat "between the lines") is to commend these teachers for understanding (and for having the courage to act on that understanding) that the goal of teaching students to think for themselves (about which I shall say more in the next chapter) is paramount, irrespective of the social, cultural or political context and ramifications. Working toward this goal is not merely a reflection of my so-called "Western" values; rather, it is the inevitable result of spelling out just what it means to be an educated person. Hopefully, in line with my conclusion in the previous section, it is also something which can be embraced by a modern China as part of its own growth and self-determination.

Concluding Comment

The Principle of Personal Worth does not resolve specific ethical problems, but it does shift the onus of responsibility onto those who would defend the moral status of nations, religions, cultures, roles, traditions and other *supra-persons*, in the sense that they must demonstrate that supporting or defending this status will lead to the improved well-being of actual persons, and not merely that of the *supra-person* in question. In Kantian terms, while it is never permissible to use other persons merely as means to our own ends, it is quite appropriate to use nations, religions, etc. as means to ends, where those ends are related to the well-being of actual persons. It may well be important to ensure that the national economy, viewed as a *supra-person*, does not run at a deficit, but if so, it is not because national deficits are wrong or harmful *per se*, but because they are shown to harm actual people. Political leaders and policy makers, removed as they usually are from the day-to-day lives of the people they govern, may need reminding that their decisions have an impact on those individuals, not just on such abstractions as the economy. It is one thing to uphold the moral claims of *supra-persons* over those of ordinary persons when viewed from a distance; but such insistence is much harder when the latter are "in one's face", so to speak. It is precisely with this in mind that I construe the task, or project, of becoming a person as starting with reflecting on those interpersonal relationships which are the closest and most immediate to us.

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Chapter 8
Identity, Personhood and Education

Introduction

In this chapter, I revisit the issues discussed so far – specifically relating to identity and personhood – and view them through the lens of education. I offer a novel defence of the idea that classrooms (indeed, all teaching and learning environments) should be transformed into *communities of inquiry*. In referring to *communities of inquiry*, I have in mind one of the central organizing concepts in the *Philosophy for Children* tradition. However, it is not my purpose here to focus on philosophy for children in any detail; rather, while acknowledging its historical and pedagogic connection to *communities of inquiry*, I claim that it is the latter concept which has the power to reshape – even transform – schooling to match the needs and interests of young people everywhere.[1] The crucial link between *communities of inquiry* and the major themes I have explored in the book relies on the realization, which I have attributed to Donald Davidson (although he did not write specifically about education), that the cognitive and affective dimensions of:

- becoming aware of oneself as a person with ideas, values and perspectives on the world;
- becoming aware of the world in which one is located and about which one is required to learn in the name of formal education; and
- becoming aware of other persons in the world who are also engaged in these activities;

[1] The concept of *community of inquiry* both predates and extends beyond Philosophy for Children, although the latter wonderfully exemplifies the former, as well as confirming that younger children are natural inquirers and can be taught to be better ones. One merit of philosophy, despite its reputation as a remote and esoteric discipline, is that its basic building blocks are the familiar – but contested – ideas that we have about the world (including ourselves and others both like and unlike). Such normative ideals as *truth* and *knowledge* may, in some ultimate sense, direct all inquiry, but philosophy sees them as, at best, potential outcomes that should not be allowed to subvert or distort our thinking. This quality can be enormously liberating to children of all ages. An excellent discussion of communities of inquiry from a historical – but not specifically philosophical – perspective is in Seixas 1993.

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are conceptually and experientially intertwined, in the sense that none of these activities can occur in isolation from the others. It is precisely as members of *communities of inquiry* that we explore and develop our own personhood in the context of relating to others and learning about the world. The inter-dependence of these three dimensions amounts to an articulation of the thesis that persons are, through and through, relational entities.

The Story So Far

Identity, understood in its formal or technical sense, is a two-place relation which is approximated in ordinary language by such words as "same", "equal" and, of course, "identical". It is crucial in mathematics, where the criteria for the identity of numbers, classes and other relevant objects are clearly laid down. And yet the identity relation is difficult to define, in part because it is presupposed in our interpretations of how we experience things, and also because of its apparent air of triviality. We may say, following Aristotle, that identity is that relation which a thing has to itself and to no other thing, or that identity is captured by the characteristics of Reflexivity and Leibniz's Law, as discussed in Chap. 2, but suspicions of triviality or circularity surround such notions.[2] Intuitively, we know that there is an enormous difference between "**a = a**" and "**a = b**" which is not merely linguistic, and outside the formal domains of mathematics and logic, the most familiar context in which to express this difference is found by examining relations of identity over time. At specific instances, we may refer to objects **a** and **b** – by way of different referring expressions – *as if* they were two distinct objects (recall the examples of "same pen", "same gun", etc. from earlier chapters), even though, if the statement of identity is true, there is actually only *one* persisting object.

In line with one influential tradition in analytic philosophy, championed by Wiggins (2001) *et al.*, I support a conception of identity as absolute (non-relative), thereby denying that objects **a** and **b** can be numerically identical in one sense but numerically distinct in another, while affirming that there must always be some such *sense* accorded to identity statements; in other words, if **a = b**, then there is a concept (sort, kind) *f* such that **a** and **b** are both *f*s and **a** is the same *f* as **b**, where *f* supplies the most basic answer to the question "What is **a**?" (Chap. 3). Such concepts generate criteria of identity for the objects that satisfy them, in the sense that in their absence, we would have no semantic warrant for being able to identify **a** at one time, track it through a certain period of time (and/or portion of space) and re-identify (at a later time) object **a** as object **b**. In more positive terms, when we identify and understand such concepts, we know what changes the objects that fall under them can sustain while retaining their identities (which is equivalent to saying, while continuing to exist) and, accordingly, the general circumstances in which they come into and go out of existence.

[2] See Barnes (1977) for a different interpretation of what Leibniz actually meant.

Echoing Wiggins again, I have consistently rejected the confused notion that when we specify some *f* as the conceptual answer to the question "What is it?", we thereby know the very essence or uniqueness of each object that is an *f*. No amount of conceptual (or qualitative) specification can individuate objects uniquely. For that we need to incorporate the idea of an appropriate framework in which we can literally locate and track the things we experience in the world. Such a framework must have room both for the objects in question *and* for those who refer to and identify them – most notably, ourselves. It is, so to speak, staring us in the face: the familiar multi-dimensional spatio-temporal framework in and by which we locate ourselves and the objects we (jointly) experience (including ourselves and one another). Whatever criticisms may be directed at Kant for his heavy-handed compartmentalization of the mind, his failure to come to terms with the concept of *person*, and his insistence that space and time are forms of our sensibility that have no independent existence outside the mind, he was surely correct to insist that our capacity to *know* or *perceive* objects in the world relies on a duality of sensory experience and conceptual framing. In fact, Wiggins traces the origins of this insight to Aristotle, who understood that every object is a *this-such*.

Still following Wiggins, I distinguished between objects whose identity conditions derive from nature, according to scientifically-established laws and theories, and objects whose identity conditions are determined in more conventional terms, according to whether or not they fulfill a specific purpose or function. We may call the former objects "natural" and the latter "artifacts", but it is more accurate to associate these labels with the respective kinds to which the objects belong. When it comes to objects of nature – including ourselves– I spent some time (Chap. 4) critiquing the view – assumed by some philosophers, but widely rejected by scholars with a deeper understanding of relevant biological theory – that the biological species to which such objects belong – *Homo sapiens* in our own case – constitute the natural kinds which, in turn, generate the existence and identity conditions for their members. Upon closer examination of the place of species in nature (notably, as units of evolution and speciation), there are sound scientifically-based reasons for concluding that species are either not natural (when viewed in multi-dimensional terms) or not kinds (when viewed as individual local populations). But if this is right, we are left with the challenge of providing a natural kind which *does* the job of determining conditions of existence and identity for (what we take to be) such natural individuals as insects, plants and animals – including those of the human variety. I expressed some sympathy for the view that the kind *living organism* might fit here, but chose, in more general (perhaps evasive) terms to assume that *some such* natural kind – call it "K" – can be scientifically determined in due course. The crucial point is that K, being a natural kind whose members – including ourselves – are subject to the laws and contingencies of nature, accounts for the conditions of our identity. In other words, K belongs fairly and squarely in the *physical* world which, as I explained in Chap. 5, is not up to the task of explaining those aspects of ourselves that we normally call "psychological" or "mental", even though the latter, in causal or ontological terms and taken one by one must, themselves, be physical. Spurning the Cartesian idea that each of us is either a mind with physical

characteristics somehow attached, or a duality of two entities (mind and body) somehow fused, I prefer to follow the leads of Strawson and Davidson in proposing (i) that each of us belongs to a kind with both physical and mental properties (for Strawson, this kind is *person*); (ii) that we can never hope to understand or explain our psychological characteristics (belief, desire, imagine, intention, hope, etc.), in purely physical terms – which is why our psychological vocabulary remains irreducible and indispensable – and (iii) that in ontological or existential terms (i.e. what *is*), everything is physical, which entails that all our characteristic features and properties – including those that we think of as mental – are also physical and located in the natural world.

I have proposed that in the special case of ourselves (and perhaps other beings of which we are unaware), the answer to the basic question "What am I?" is in two parts. As objects in the natural world which come into and go out of existence according to appropriate conditions of identity, subject to various natural laws and contingencies we are, like all other natural things, members of some kind *K* (be it *living organism*, *animal* or even *Homo sapiens* – for my purposes, it matters not). From this it follows that whatever "else" we may be, the conditions of our identity and existence are, for all intents and purposes, settled by these natural credentials. But as creatures whose brains have evolved to allow the development of language and (hence) self-awareness, rationality, moral and aesthetic sensibility, etc., we regard ourselves and others like us as *persons*. The vast majority of the persons we know are also Ks – and *vice versa* – although it is conceivable both that somewhere "out there", there are whole worlds full of persons whose underlying kind is K_1 (i.e. different from whatever K turns out to be) and, closer to home, that there are both persons who are not Ks and Ks who happen not to be persons. Still, you and I, *qua* persons, depend on our *K-ness* to provide the conditions of our identity, indeed, our very existence. As a rough variant on the "nature-nurture" distinction, we can say that my nature derives from the *kind of creature* that I am and, to that extent, the conditions of my identity are determinate and beyond my (and, arguably, anyone's) control; but the "*kind of" person* I am (or, rather, as I prefer to say, *become*) – and here we think of such broad characteristics as character, personality, aesthetic sensibility, moral compass, etc. – is very much determined by what happens to me during the course of my (natural) life. As persons we are, needless to say, very concerned with these latter aspects of ourselves, even to the extent of supposing – mistakenly I have argued – that our very identities (*who we are*) are bound up with who we are as persons. Such locutions may seem innocuous, except that it is common, at least in the social science literature, to tie personal identity – who we see ourselves as being – to the various groups, collectives, associations and affiliations that make their claims on us (sometimes voluntarily, but often not). It is this move which leads to trouble, or so I have argued.

Ordinary language uses of the words "same" and "similar" are often vague and/or ambiguous. Numerically distinct objects may nevertheless be *qualitatively* "the same", at least in certain respects, i.e. in certain features or characteristics (whether physical, like color, shape, texture, or socio-cultural, like nationality, religion, musical tastes, etc.). Formally speaking, we may divide or *partition* a domain of objects

into discrete classes whose members are relevantly similar to each other (Chap. 2). These classes are *equivalence classes* and the similarity relation in question is an *equivalence relation*. Depending on our agenda or context, we may find some such relations too trivial even to consider (like the relation "travels in the same carriage as" over the domain of passengers in a particular train), but other relations, and their corresponding equivalence classes ("has the same religion/citizenship/culture… as", for example) are often accorded great significance, even to the extent of conflicting with the individuals who are their primary constituents. I considered the implications of such conflicts in Chaps. 6 and 7, particularly in respect of individual persons and the groups, classes and collectives to which they belong.

On the other hand, *numerical* or literal identity is consistent with considerable qualitative change; indeed such change makes sense only on the assumption that the object(s) changing remain(s) numerically identical. By way of further clarification, I distinguished between identity as a two-place relation, and the logical device of *predication* – a distinction easily missed because, in English at least, we use the same term ("is") for both. Where identity is symmetric (if **a** = **b** then **b** = **a**), predication most decidedly is not (notwithstanding the possibility of interpreting "Cheng is bald" as "Cheng is identical to a bald man"). Still – and bypassing some well-known logical difficulties – we can imagine any particular predicate corresponding to a class (e.g. the class of bald objects), whereby the original sentence is equivalent to "Cheng is a member of the class of bald objects". So long as such classes are construed in purely extensional terms – i.e. as defined by their actual members – then they are *no greater than the sums of their parts/members*. But as I have pointed out (Chap. 7), the groups or collectives that matter to us are usually not thus defined. To assert that Bruce is Australian is, let us allow, to assert that Bruce is a member of the class of Australians – or even that he is a citizen of Australia. But we would expect both Australia and the relation of citizenship to be understood in *non*-extensional terms, by way of various properties and characteristics that apply to the nation as a whole, over and above those that apply to its members (whether the latter are considered either individually or collectively). Taken in this sense, nations are examples of *supra-persons*, as defined in Chaps. 6 and 7, such that nationhood in general, and a particular nation such as Australia, are afforded a moral status that is over and above that of (all or any of) its actual members. Moreover, this superior status can be linked to the idea that an individual's identity (the answer to what I called the "basic question" "Who am I?") is dependent on the identity of the *supra-person* (or *supra-persons*) to which s/he belongs. Much of the discussion in these two chapters was aimed at rejecting these ideas and proposing, in their place, (i) that our identities as individual (human) persons are determined independently of, and prior to, our membership of and association with the *supra-persons* which may claim our allegiance (although I allow that we may choose to *identify* with them, which is largely a psychological or affective matter, not connected to identity *per se*); and (ii) that our moral or ethical qualities (including our rights, responsibilities, duties, etc.) are, first and foremost, functions of our personhood and not of those memberships and associations. I expressed this point in the *Principle of Personal Worth*. In Chap. 7, I explored at some length what I referred to as the "social sciences" conception of

identity which, in logical terms, is *qualitative*, not *quantitative*. I argued that the failure of social science – most notably evident in postmodernist accounts – even to acknowledge this distinction (more particularly, that qualitative identity and difference presuppose a clear understanding of the *kind* of entity being referred to, and this, in turn, takes us back to a consideration of numerical identity), has led to a lack of clarity and coherence in the substantial body of literature dealing with the social and political dimensions of identity.

I have remarked that according to the theory of *Anomalous Monism* (AM) originally proposed by Davidson, the claim that we can – or might one day be able to – match our mental and physical concepts and, thereby, provide a clear link between the so-called objects of thought (our beliefs, desires, intentions, hopes, fears, etc.) and those in the world of nature (the ordinary objects we perceive, refer to and learn about, as well as the more theoretical entities of physics), is doomed from the start. Still, to leave things here is surely unsatisfactory, for we want to ask how it is possible both to conceive and perceive a world in which I, you and all other persons exist as self-consciously reflective creatures capable of knowing (in principle) the objective content of that world, *including* ourselves and one another. The "monistic" component of AM confirms the physical nature of all that there is and all that happens in the world, but the "anomalous" component rules out the possibility of understanding the very relationships which ought to be both the most familiar and the most crucial for us: those between myself and others, and those between any one of us and the world itself.

Davidson's own resolution of this problem led him to propose the model of triangulation outlined in Chap. 6. The three points of the triangle – repeated on the first page of the present Chapter – represent the three dimensions of our awareness (which lead to knowledge under the right conditions) that *I* – i.e. each one of us – have: awareness of myself, of others like me, and of the world we share. But Davidson's argument does not rest with merely noticing these features and declaring them to be inter-dependent. As I explained earlier, the crucial links among what we familiarly regard as subjective, inter-subjective and objective awareness are uncovered by his careful analysis of what such concepts as *belief* mean and to what they commit us. By this I mean, for example, his claims that to have a belief – which is a basic component of our subjective awareness – we must have the *concept* of belief which, in turn, involves grasping the distinction between what we claim to be true and what is actually true (in other words, the possibility that any one of our beliefs might be mistaken). But this distinction, by itself, takes us no further than the familiar – but unhelpful – subjective/objective dichotomy. Davidson's crucial insight involves the introduction of a third, equally necessary component: the idea "that we would not have the concept of getting things wrong or right if it were not for our interactions with other people" (Davidson 2001, p. 129). After all, according to the strictures of AM, there is no formula or rule for correlating the propositional content of a particular belief with any real-world object. We may and do bring in other beliefs and propositional attitudes (intentions, desires…) when examining a given belief (this is Davidson's *Holism of the Mental*, also outlined in Chap. 6), but in the process of examination, we are compelled to externalize – to make public –

(at least some of the time) that which we believe, and the tool we use here is *language*. Language, it turns out, is the *sine qua non* of thought (and not just its by-product); indeed, we cannot have one without the other. Persons are linguistic creatures, not just because of the sounds they utter (parrots do this also), but because whichever language they use is both representative and generative of what they think (believe, intend, etc.). As one writer has remarked, "dialogue is essential for communication in the classroom environment" but it "is not simply a form of communication", otherwise it has lost its "productive potential" (Sidorkin 1999, p. 73).

Accordingly, our relationships with other persons have language at their center, just as the phenomenon of language (in relation to thought) requires that we are in – or develop – relationships with others. Further, our relationship to ourselves (our self-awareness) also has language at its center (which is not to say that all modes of self-awareness are linguistic). After all, our capacity to reflect, to be meta-cognitive, is more than just a blunt or crude kind of feeling. I invite my three brothers over for dinner (because I *want* to spend time with them and *believe* that they *feel* likewise); after contacting them, I learn (and *believe*) that Martin and Phillip, but not Andrew are coming, so I *plan* a meal with avocado which, as I *know*, Martin will *enjoy* and Phillip *will not mind*, although Andrew most definitely *would mind* on account of his being allergic. I could not make sense – to myself let alone to others – of even such a familiar scenario without a linguistic vocabulary which discriminates among who is coming, together with an awareness and appreciation – specifically my first person awareness of third person attitudes and beliefs – of who likes what, and so on.

I hope it is clear that both the theory of triangulation and the thought/language nexus are variations on the relational conception of personhood which I am urging. That conception includes the dimensions of my relationships to others, my relationships to objects in the world, and my relationships – through self-awareness – to myself. The point behind the triangulation model is that all these relationships are intertwined and inter-dependent.

Becoming Persons: Classrooms as Relational and Reflective Communities

Assuming that persons are characterized by networks of relationships that have both semantic/linguistic and moral/ethical dimensions, and bearing in mind that the issue of (numerical) identity and existence for persons has turned out to be a non-issue (because persons are members of some underlying kind which determines their identity and existence conditions), it is appropriate to inquire how it is that (some) members of this kind actually become persons. The answer, implied by these assumptions, is that individuals become persons by developing, sustaining and enriching the relationships they have with others who are also (at various stages of becoming) persons. We do these things as children and as adults throughout our lives – whenever we meet new people, perceive someone we already know differently

or more deeply, etc. It might be claimed that such interactions are just a normal part of what living as persons in the world constitutes, and so they are. But my interest is in the *normative* aspects of personal development which cannot be left merely to chance and circumstance. I believe it is both possible and appropriate to assist young people to improve the quality of their inter-personal relationships, which is partly a matter of *who* they actually relate to, but more so a matter of reflecting on and improving various dimensions of the relationships they have, and will have in the future. Here, I suggest, is where schools and classrooms have a role to play. Moreover, when we understand the full implications of personal development, we find a powerful synergy between becoming a person in, and learning about, the world. At several points in this and earlier chapters, I have drawn attention to this synergy. I shall have something more to say about it shortly, thereby confirming a central feature of the environment we call "community of inquiry", namely that the activities of building and belonging to such an environment, becoming aware that one is a member of the community, and being an active participant in learning and thinking about the world we all inhabit, are not separate activities (in the sense that one could occur without the others), but entirely co-dependent. Taken together, they constitute what might properly be called "education".

The Community of Inquiry[3]

Familiar terms and labels – and I am thinking particularly of "community of inquiry" here – can mislead us into thinking that those who employ them all mean the same thing by them. Even within the global *Philosophy for Children* context, where the term enjoys widespread currency – let alone in other educational contexts – we should be careful not to make this assumption. Still, I will proceed to offer both an innocuous general characterization and a more detailed one based on my own work over many years, which will allow us to make the required connection between *community of inquiry* and becoming a person.

The term "community of inquiry" denotes a group of individuals who are engaged collectively in a process of inquiry. Needless to say, this will not take us far unless we explore both the kind of group that constitutes a community and the kinds of activity that warrant being called "inquiry". Let us allow that a community comprises individuals who are engaged (whether self-consciously or not) in working toward a common purpose or goal, who have appropriate affective relations of care, respect, trust and empathy toward one another, and whose power and authority relationships with respect to one another are clearly defined and accepted by the members (not all communities are democratic; indeed, some may be strongly hierarchical, but at least, each member "knows his/her place" within the community and has some part to play in it). Inquiry, on the other hand, is a process driven by the desire

[3]The philosophy for children literature contains numerous references to *community of* inquiry. As a tiny sample, see Lipman (2003), Lipman et al. 1980, Sharp 1987, 1991, 1996, Splitter 2006a, b, and Splitter and Sharp (1995).

to solve or, more broadly, understand something which is puzzling or unknown. The concept itself suggests a *quest* of some kind, a fitting term because it reminds us that a great part of any inquiry – including in the classroom – is to *question*.[4] Somewhat more contentious, perhaps, are the qualities that such philosophers as C. S. Peirce and Matthew Lipman associate with the concept of inquiry, namely, that those engaged in the inquiry must follow it where *it* leads (Peirce, see Anderson 1995), and that inquiry is a form of *self-correcting practice* (Lipman 2003). The former implies that a given inquiry has not only an objective, but a *direction* – its own internal logic and structure – which should be respected; the latter that inquirers should be open-minded with respect to the task at hand (hence the centrality of those questions commonly called "open-ended", although this term is not as easily defined as it may seem[5]). Self-correction is understood, intuitively, as the inclination to *change one's mind* where, we may assume, the factors motivating such a change are reasonable in the context of the inquiry itself (holding a gun to someone's head may constitute an overriding reason for someone to change their mind, but it is probably not a reasonable strategy with respect to the inquiry itself[6]).

The imperative to follow the inquiry where it leads may sound somewhat idealistic, particularly considering that inquiry, when pursued by leading experts and scholars in their field, may look quite different from when it is undertaken in classrooms by students who are less than expert, not just in the sense of knowing less about the subject, but in being less skilled in the relevant procedures associated with that field. This point should resonate with a familiar concern expressed by critics of the inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning, namely, that there is no guarantee that the outcomes of a student-led inquiry will match those that are regarded as *objectively* correct, when judged by the standards of those leading experts and scholars just referred to. This concern has been raised by a number of commentators (e.g., Gregory 2002; Seixas 1993); their proposed solution puts the spotlight on the *teacher* to find ways to bridge the gap between students' levels of knowledge and understanding, and those which constitute scholarly expertise in the respective disciplines. I do not see any simple resolution of this issue; indeed, the thesis I wish to develop – that both personal development and the educational imperative of teaching and learning about the world are inter-dependent processes which require the transformation of classrooms into communities of inquiry –must also confront this challenge.

Still, there is cause for optimism when we turn to the idea that inquiry is self-correcting practice. It is unrealistic to expect many students to reach the lofty levels of expertise that we find among disciplinary scholars, but those who internalize

[4] The idea of seeing personhood in terms of a quest is prominent in writers such as MacIntyre, as discussed in the previous chapter.

[5] Rather than characterize open-ended questions as those which lack determinate answers – a move which would put genuine inquiry in most subject areas out of the reach of all but the most gifted or advanced students – I prefer to focus on the *process* of *questioning* as open or closed, highlighting the pedagogic imperative of maintaining open lines of inquiry where possible (Splitter 2006a, b).

[6] On the other hand, total compliance on the part of the person to whose head the gun is being held seems eminently reasonable!

the disposition to self-correct (akin to Karl Popper's ideas about good scientific practice always seeking to correct – even falsify – itself) are bound to make greater progress along the path toward genuine expertise than those who cling dogmatically to their own findings and opinions (which are often the opinions of others in any case). The force of this point becomes apparent when we consider the claim that inquiry – even when undertaken by individuals working in isolation – has the idea of community *built into* it. Those who are either unwilling or unable to self-correct are thereby excluding themselves from both the community *and* the process of inquiry. This is precisely what happens when someone stubbornly refuses to rethink an issue, or to admit even the faint possibility that they might be mistaken.[7]

By way of a more detailed characterization of a community of inquiry, suppose we ask what someone might see when observing or experiencing such an environment? How does the environment of a community of inquiry differ from that of other teaching and learning environments? I find it convenient to answer this question by referring to three inter-connected dimensions which characterize what goes on in classrooms generally, and in communities of inquiry in particular:

D1 The affective, personal, and social (interpersonal) characteristics of the classroom environment: the kind of place it is
D2 The dynamics of the classroom: who does what, specifically in cognitive and meta-cognitive terms
D3 The content focus of the classroom: what is (supposedly) taught, learned and assessed.

In elaborating on these dimensions as they relate to the community of inquiry, I will indicate how each is connected to the three modes of awareness (of oneself, of others, and of the world we share) which characterize the model of triangulation with which I have been working.

D1 addresses that aspect of the community of inquiry which most reminds us that at every stage of formal education, we are dealing with persons – albeit persons at various stages of development – who deserve our care and respect, and whose well-being is a non-negotiable imperative. But this dimension is not just about how we adults – and teachers in particular – relate to those in our charge; it also addresses the need for children to internalize these affective elements so that their relationships with others – including other members of the classroom community – are also characterized by care and respect.

D1 is also about ensuring that the classroom (as a paradigmatic teaching and learning environment) is a *safe place* for all its members. There are two aspects to consider here. First, it is well known that individuals who feel intimidated, bullied, inadequate, or just "different" in some respects, need protection, support and encouragement. Secondly – and this aspect, while less obvious, is vital for the

[7] In reality, much depends here on the context: they might find themselves excluded from the community when it is operating as a community of inquiry, but this is already a somewhat ideal situation; more commonly, as we frequently see with politicians and others who have the loudest voices, strident dogmatism is seen as a sign of strength and is thereby a powerful influence on others, particularly those who will not, or cannot, think for themselves.

growth of the community as a community *of inquiry* – perceptions of safety which govern what goes on in classrooms encourage appropriate forms of *risk-taking*, which might range from a shy student having the confidence to speak out in the classroom without fear of intimidation or "losing face", to an overly-confident student having the intellectual humility to admit that he is mistaken about something he was sure he "knew" (I might add that teachers can be encouraged to take the same kinds of risks, thereby confronting the myth of the teacher as the all-knowing expert). Compare the high-trapeze artist in a circus who prefers to work *with* a safety net, not only because the net protects her from serious injury, but also because it will encourage her to take more risks, perhaps by "trying out" a daring new manoeuvre, etc.

How does D1 relate to the three modes of awareness I have been considering? Regarding self-awareness, the knowledge that I am respected and cared for as an individual, that I am encouraged to share my thoughts, and that I am listened to and taken seriously (even when I am mistaken or confused), can only enhance my self-esteem and boost my self-awareness. Regarding my awareness of the world to which I (and others) belong, while a nurturing and safe learning environment will not be *sufficient* to generate or sustain such awareness, it is reasonable to insist that it is *necessary*. Students whose subjective sense of self is unbalanced – either because of an under- or over-inflated ego – are unlikely to have a balanced perspective of the world beyond themselves. However, it is with respect to the remaining form of awareness – that of *others* with whom I share the experience of a common world – that this first dimension of the community of inquiry comes into its own. Actually, it is more accurate to say that what highlights the affective and social dimensions of the community of inquiry (i.e. D1) is the *inter-dependence of self-awareness and awareness of others* (note, not just "others" in general, but those others with whom we are in close and immediate contact and communication). My own self-regard is enhanced – indeed, one might say *enabled* – by my being, and seeing myself as, *one among others*. As a member of the community of inquiry, I appreciate that my awareness and valuing of myself is linked to my awareness and valuing of others with whom I interact, in large part because the former depends upon *their* awareness and valuing of me. This is nothing other than an elaboration of such familiar but central concepts as *reciprocity* and *empathy* which the Golden Rule and its variants attempt to capture, and which, as I indicated in Chap. 7, are cornerstones of most, if not all, ethical and religious theories.

If it seems rather obvious that classroom environments – of which the community of inquiry is a shining example – which encourage and enhance reciprocity and empathy in our inter-personal relationships are worthwhile, it is important to remember that this feature is conspicuously absent, both in classrooms which are simply groups of self-centred individuals competing for the teacher's praise and the highest scores in assessment, and in classrooms where, for whatever reason, members have and exhibit little regard for their own individuality.[8]

[8] These characteristics are not mutually exclusive. In many societies both are prominent, with the result that young people are under pressure to "succeed" in the name of social and cultural forces which pay scant respect to them as individual persons. This represents a fairly egregious violation of the Principle of Personal Worth (Chaps. 6 and 7).

I turn to **D2** – the dynamic component of the community of inquiry which focuses particularly on the cognitive *moves* made by its members. Our observer, now through the lens of D2, is looking at the various strategies and behaviours exhibited in the classroom that constitute, generate, or reflect the *thinking* of those involved. Here, as before, I am less interested in the psychological elements of thinking and associated behaviour than in their *normative* or *prescriptive* dimensions. We know that people, including young children, think all, or most of the time; the key questions are: How *well* are they thinking and what can we do to ensure that they are developing and manifesting what I call "powerful thinking", that is, thinking which "digs deep" into issues; which challenges students without overwhelming them (I call this *puzzlement without confusion*); and which allows students to see themselves – and one another – as meta-cognitive and reflective thinkers (both within the disciplines – as scientific thinkers, mathematical thinkers, historical thinkers, etc. – and in a more holistic and integrated sense) who are never entirely satisfied with their own conclusions and, hence, are as interested in questioning as answering? This kind of thinking does not allow itself to become stale or dogmatic; it reminds students that they are part of a community of thinkers.[9] Powerful thinking involves the self-conscious (meta-cognitive) deployment of an open-ended range of strategies, including: reasoning and inferring, predicting consequences, hypothesizing and explaining, forming and using criteria, detecting assumptions, using analogies, exercising moral imagination and creativity, making connections (means/ends, part/whole, cause/effect, …) and distinctions, finding examples and counter examples, reading, listening and communicating intelligently and accurately, wondering, speculating, questioning, doubting, rejecting, self-correcting, planning, anticipating… all overlain by the meta-cognitive awareness that enables good thinkers not merely to utilize such strategies effectively, but to do so reflectively and self-consciously (in the language of analytic philosophy: to *mention* them and not just *use* them). So, for example, it empowers students of all ages when they can not only provide a counter-example or offer a generalization, but articulate that they are doing just that ("I have a counter-example to her generalization", etc.). Interwoven with these strategies are appropriate *dispositions* such as fair-mindedness, intellectual courage and humility, openness, and curiosity.[10] Finally, in exercising these and other strategies, students

[9] I prefer the term "powerful thinking" to more commonly used terms such as "critical" or "higher-order" thinking. The latter reflect assumptions and constraints that I find distracting – e.g. that critical thinking is excessively narrow, that it excludes creative thinking, that higher-order thinking classifies thinking acts in a strictly hierarchical manner, etc. Over and above such complexities, what we are surely most concerned with is the *improvement* of thinking, i.e. helping, guiding or even teaching students to think well, such that their thinking has a greater impact on the world (including their own worlds).

[10] The relationship between skills/strategies and dispositions is complex, as is the contribution played by each to actual behavior. For one thing, skills are already dispositional since they generate conditional statements of the form "Being able to give analogies means that in appropriate circumstances, s/he will suggest/imagine/propose …" Further, while just about every skill needs to be supported by a motivational disposition (otherwise even those well-skilled in giving analogies may never actually do so because they are not inclined to), there are dispositions that do not seem to have any skill component (e.g. curiosity). I have examined the complex issue of cognitive dispositions in Splitter (2010).

need to develop both a sense of appropriateness or context-sensitivity – when to utilize which skill – and the capacity to make good *judgments*, so that they not only engage in reasoning, predicting, explaining, detecting, inquiring and so on, but they do these things *well*, according to standards which *they*, *themselves*, as well as their teachers, are prepared to live with (at least tentatively).

If we put together the first two dimensions of the classroom community of inquiry – seeing oneself as *one among others* and engaging in powerful thinking – we see signs of a tension that can work against students self-consciously engaging in thought-provoking and inquiry-based activities as central components of their lives as learners. Irrespective of how much time and attention are devoted to building a nurturing and supportive classroom environment *a là* D1, and to urging students to think more deeply *a là* D2, the most popular and intuitive conception of thinking connotes an essentially *private* activity; one which feeds, rather than challenges, individualism and impedes a deep sense of connectedness. Indeed, in response to such a clash of focus – strong interpersonal connections at the affective level, weak interpersonal connections at the cognitive level – we should expect to find confusion and resentment among students (particularly in the context of assessment which is individualistic and competitive). This clash is one manifestation of a learning tradition which has, for too long, ignored the reality that as persons, we are thinking *and* feeling beings whose thoughts and feelings are connected to those of others preferring, instead, to perpetuate the view that our feelings and our thoughts have little or nothing to do with each other.

If there is a puzzle here, we also have the means with which to solve it, namely, by reference to the triangular model of awareness. We should resist the traditional view of thinking as intrinsically private, set against a world which is intrinsically public, in favour of one which is *inter-personal*, *inter-subjective* and *holistic* from the start (this, after all, was Davidson's point in introducing the model in the first place), so that the sense of community which operates at the affective level is also functioning cognitively and meta-cognitively.

So how do members of a community of inquiry, including the teacher, gain access to the thinking (we may say *the minds*, as long as this term is understood figuratively rather than literally) of others in the community? The answer to this question is implicit in earlier sections of this book and emerges, once again, from a consideration of the triangular model of awareness. Complementing the empirical work of Vygotsky (1986) and others on the importance of internalization as a learning strategy is the Davidsonian thesis that spoken language and thought are inter-dependent activities – that as much as we need language to express and communicate thought, we need thought to *generate* and give structure to language. Moreover, the inter-dependence here is conceptual in that we cannot make proper *sense* of the so-called subjective activity of thinking without the assumption that thinkers are members of dialogical communities who can, and do, interpret one another's observable actions – including what they say. Actually, the *doing* is the crucial component here; it is the actual engagement in dialogue that is both reflective *and* productive of thinking, for the whole idea of internalization assumes real participation in a public activity, not merely the capacity to do so. Coming back to the kind of classroom environment with which I am concerned, the summary point can be put quite succinctly: a community of inquiry is, necessarily, a community of dialogue.

In Chap. 6 I cited Davidson's support for "talking and listening" over writing and reading, as the primary drivers of self-knowledge and understanding. This view is echoed in some of the recent literature on the central role of language in cognitive development generally, and philosophy for children in particular. For instance, Jenkins and Lyle (2010) have found that poor reading or writing skills do not preclude the comprehension of abstract concepts or the application of abstract thought; conversely, Astington and Baird (2005) assert that it is in conversation that children acquire different concepts of mental states like belief, desire, and intention. However, not just *any* conversation will do the job. Developing thinkers need a structured environment in which the connection between "powerful talking" (dialogue) and "powerful thinking" (inquiry) is made explicit, and in which the improvement of both is a key objective. Such an environment is provided by the classroom community of inquiry. Simply grouping students together and encouraging them to talk is not enough (Murphy *et al.* 2009).[11]

This correlation or complementarity of inquiry and dialogue implies that each will have key features of the other, notwithstanding the somewhat misleading truth that those who have internalized the procedures of dialogue may undertake inquiry autonomously, i.e. without formally collaborating with others (I say "misleading" because when we are referring to the formative years of schooling, we should not take such internalisation for granted – after all, since most students have little opportunity to engage in dialogue, there is not much for them to internalize!). Accordingly, referring to the discussion earlier in this chapter, we may say that *dialogue* is a process driven by the desire to solve or, more broadly, understand something which is puzzling or unknown. As with inquiry, dialogue connotes a *quest* of some kind. Further, again to parallel the earlier discussion, those engaged in the dialogue must follow it where *it* leads, according to appropriate and contextual structural norms; and dialogue, like inquiry, is a form of *self-correcting practice*.

Might there be a connection between D2 (the dynamics of the classroom) and the remaining form of awareness, i.e. the awareness I – and others with whom I interact – have of a common (therefore "objective") world? I think that there is, but it involves D3, the content dimension of inquiry. It is a common-place that thinking – in whatever form it is elaborated – cannot be merely procedural. When I reason, infer, predict, hypothesize, explain, doubt, reject…, there must be *something about which* I reason, infer, predict, and so on. It is true that the objects of thought may not be – perhaps cannot be – those things in the world to which ordinary grammar so

[11] I am grateful to Lam Chi Ming for pointing out these references to me. The idea that dialogue is structured by various cognitive, epistemological, social and ethical norms is familiar in *Philosophy for Children*. See, for example, Gardner 1995. Still, the condition of being logically structured is not intended to exclude the conversations that people – including children – actually have. Dialogue, in this sense, is not the same as Habermas' *ideal speech situation* which, while offering a welcome alternative to the "monologic" of most classroom teaching and learning, has been criticized by several writers as being too far removed from the issues confronting us in daily life. As Noddings remarks,: "We are not well prepared in discourse ethics to meet and respond to real people with all their needs and foibles" (Noddings 2002, p. 120). A recent review of Habermas' work claims that in his later writings, Habermas introduced a more pragmatic dimension into his theory of discourse, Bohman and Rehg 2014.

misleadingly points (a truth illustrated by the fact that when I think of a nine-headed dragon, there is no nine-headed dragon of which I am thinking); still, a content-less or empty thought is no thought at all.[12] Moreover, even our most inward-directed thoughts are thoughts of or about something.

The reliance of our thinking on some kind of content is even clearer when we consider the thinking that involves two or more participants, typically through dialogue. As I noted earlier, what gives dialogue its impetus is the presumption of something which is puzzling or unknown, and of which we share some common experience or understanding. That *something*, whatever its ultimate status, belongs to the world of our shared or common experience.

With respect to **D3** – the content of inquiry – and its relationship to the three modes of awareness, the previous discussion reminds us that some kind of content is inevitably involved when we think. But what of the converse relationship? Of course, we may posit the existence of things in the world without committing ourselves, in Berkeleyan fashion, to the existence of a perceiver of those things, but consider what is involved in a typical classroom context when students are confronted with new or unfamiliar content which they are required to learn. How does this content impinge on the three modes of awareness which make up the triangulation model? The answer to this question depends largely on how effectively the pedagogy being used integrates and ultimately assimilates such content into the existing cognitive structures and belief systems students bring to the classroom. This is a familiar (if politically divisive) notion, reflecting a *constructivist* perspective according to which learners construct knowledge – and, I should add, understanding or meaning – only out of ingredients which they already possess in some sense. Along similar lines, such notable writers as A. N. Whitehead (1929), John Dewey (1916, 1956) and contemporary philosopher Richard Paul (1993) have warned of the dangers of presenting to students (of any age) predetermined content as the outcome of (previous) inquiry or thought, and expecting them simply to "learn" it. There are several errors in such thinking, including the idea that content can be taught independently of the thinking and inquiry processes with which it is intertwined, and the idea that new content can be "imposed" on students without taking any account of the beliefs (knowledge claims), values and attitudes that they bring to any new learning situation.[13]

[12] This may not be true for *feelings*: I might feel afraid or hopeful without there being any thing that I fear or feel hopeful about, although as soon as I transform the feeling into a thought – a feeling of hopefulness into hoping, for example – the need for some kind of content seems to arise. I cannot hope without hoping for *something*.

[13] Seixas, reinforcing similar comments from Dewey's *The Child and the Curriculum*, points out that if we remove the products of scholarly inquiry from the inquiry-based contexts which produce them, and then attempt to "teach" the former to children, we turn "living science" into "non-science, flat and commonplace residua of what was gaining scientific vitality a generation or two ago – degenerate reminiscence" (Seixas 1993, p. 313). Paul, acknowledging similar comments from both Dewey and Whitehead, has also criticized the idea that knowledge can be *presented* to students without engaging them in the process of constructing it. Such "knowledge" is *inert* or lifeless because, while it may well be distilled from the great traditions of our culture and society, it is not seen by students to be connected to what they deem to be of value and significance to them (Paul 1993). See also Splitter and Sharp 1995.

As it happens, the thinking and inquiry processes which underpin the content students are required to learn, and the processes in which students need to engage if they are to assimilate new understandings into their existing epistemological frameworks are, with one qualification, the same. In science, for example, effective teachers seek ways to integrate such procedures as hypothesis formation and testing, induction and deduction, falsification and verification – or, better, corroboration – of theories, and so on, into their teaching, the qualification being that as with the content, teachers need to find ways to *translate* the language and procedures of "adult" science into terms which make sense to students, subject to their age, maturity level, prior learning and so on.

These challenges, along with what it takes to resolve them may, once again, be paraphrased in the language of triangulated awareness. In order effectively to bring "new" content to the awareness of students, so that the former is properly understood by the latter – and not merely memorised to be later discarded – teachers need to do more than merely present it to them. They must *organize* it – together with the modes of inquiry and thought by which they were learned in the first place – so that students can, in due course, feel a genuine sense of connection to, and *ownership* over, what is, initially, not merely new to them, but quite possibly alien, mysterious, confusing, or in other ways overwhelming. Further, teachers must be willing to spend time *persuading* students – on well-reasoned grounds – that some ways of thinking about and viewing the world are better than others. Rational persuasion is a process which is externalized by way of genuine dialogue, whereby students are allowed both the time and the opportunity to examine, deliberate, reflect and think for themselves. While nothing is guaranteed here, it may be hoped that they will internalize what they are learning, to the extent of being meta-cognitively aware of how this new content connects with and impacts on what they already believe, feel, value and know. Finally, while the process outlined here points to a strong, supportive and caring relationship between teacher and student, it is in collaboration with their peers –under the guidance of skilled teachers – that students will construct and internalize the knowledge which will be of greatest value to them.

I have referred to the importance of attending to both content and process in teaching and learning, but should emphasise that these dimensions are, themselves, inter-connected. Extending the point, made above, that presenting content as the "finished" products of prior thought and investigation to students denies them the opportunity to think deeply about what they are expected to learn, it is worth examining the nature of that content in epistemological terms. What does it mean to teach in such a way that students are able to connect their own ideas and perspectives with what is being taught and, thereby, move forward with a deeper understanding of the issues involved? One way to answer this question is to change the way content itself is regarded, by both teachers and students. I have in mind here a shift from seeing content – from the perspective of what is presented to students – as objectively or factually correct – and, accordingly, as unassailable, if not impenetrable – to seeing it as essentially *problematic* – and, accordingly, as open to question, critical examination and revision – in short, as open to being *thought about*. We do not achieve this transition by simply deferring to the responses and ideas that students may have about the content in question, for to do so runs the risk of replacing "hard" facts with

their opposite: the unreliably subjective viewpoints of uninformed students. But we might achieve it by utilizing some well-known – yet still, perhaps, under-appreciated in pedagogic terms – practical techniques that bridge the (apparent) divide between objective fact and subjective opinion, including:

(1) Asking the kinds of probing questions which invite students to reflect on, even challenge, their own – and others' – preconceptions. The most famous exponent of this mode of inquiry was, needless to say, Socrates who saw himself as a "mid-wife" assisting others to "give birth" to new and better ways of thinking, but gained the reputation of being a "gad-fly" – an annoying insect that buzzes around relentlessly, no matter how many times you wave it away. This style of questioning is deliberately *open-ended*, not necessarily in the sense of having multiple or even no correct answers, but because it *opens up* what is presented to further investigation and inquiry. In this respect, teachers might begin a new topic by asking students questions like: "Since today's topic is *X*, what ideas do you (already) have about *X* (or about a related topic *Y*, which will lead to *X*)"? Assuming that the classroom environment is a *safe place*, in the sense elucidated above, these questions invite students to share thoughts that may be confused, naïve or simply mistaken. But such is the way of all true inquiry as it seeks to integrate the various components that are brought to it.

While it is natural to want student learning to be as "objective" as possible, it is easier for teachers to move students to engage in deeper thinking when the starting point is a student's opinion or viewpoint (even – perhaps especially – when it is confused or mistaken), than when it is "factual" information from a text book or from the teacher's own mouth. This is partly because students who are accustomed to receiving "the truth" from those in authority are less likely to question or challenge it, but also because the teacher (or another student) is more likely to question an opinion than (what is perceived as) a fact, unless opinions are regarded as sacrosanct (i.e. "That's my opinion and you have no right to challenge it"). In this context, there is one small but powerful question that should be in every teacher's repertoire: "*Why* (do you say/think that)?" In requesting a *reason* for even the most subjective of viewpoints, we shift the entire focus of the lesson onto a more objective footing. Opinions – like facts – may seem impenetrable, but reasons lead almost inexorably to further expressions of agreement or disagreement, thence to more reasons and requests for justification.

One corollary is worth noting here: The teacher's attitude and manner in such contexts are crucial to the success of the inquiry process. She may be accustomed to asking *closed* questions where she is clearly looking for the "right" answers and responding accordingly ("Good/Yes/That's right" or "Not quite/Anyone else?"); in turn, students who are accustomed to such role-playing, will try to comply, if only to gain her approval. By asking more open-ended questions, the teacher may actually shift the element of risk from the students – who are often scared of giving the "wrong" answer – to herself, because now she faces responses or further questions which she did not anticipate (the traditional lesson plan is the enemy of open questioning). It may even turn out that in the process of exploring a particular topic, her own preconceived views about what

constitutes "the truth" may change. Good teachers are not threatened by such a turn of events[14]; indeed, they welcome it, precisely because it reflects students' willingness to think for themselves. Still, they need to be prepared at the "meta-level" here: not by pressing the correct answer into the inquiry, but by being willing to say "Well, I have not thought of that" or even just "Can you tell us why you think that?". The classroom community, having internalized the logic of inquiry will, in due course, determine whether (as likely) or not the "received" truth from the "experts" should continue to be accepted.

(2) Shifting the focus away from what is given to students in the form of "objective" facts, knowledge, or information, to a more *concept-driven* approach. I hinted at this when suggesting the kinds of questions that teachers might use to open up the subject matter to student inquiry: "Since today's topic is *X*, what ideas do you (already) have about *X* (or about a related topic *Y*, which will lead to *X*)"? Whether "X" stands for the Second World War, the force of gravity, the mathematical number π, the social impact of globalisation, or the difference between knowledge and wisdom, it can be presented to students as a theme, idea, or *concept* to be thought about, rather than as a fact or datum merely to be accepted. Where facts are objective (if they are anything) and opinions subjective (if anything is), concepts nicely bridge the gap; indeed, in line with the theory of triangulation, I submit that concepts encapsulate and integrate the different forms of awareness we have been considering. When asked what he *thinks* about gravity or π, a student will draw upon his own understanding or awareness of these abstract entities. In the context of a one-to-one relationship between student and teacher, the student's view may fall embarrassingly short of what is expected ("I think gravity is just the weight of something"; "I think that π is the area of a circle", etc.); but in the context of the peer community of inquiry to which he belongs, his view is accepted – not as true, but as *one among others*, to be considered and evaluated accordingly. And let us remember that "*others"* refers as well to other inquirers who are also engaged in a process of personal development. Indeed, in addition to characterizing personhood in terms of language, rationality, reflection/self-awareness, and ethical and aesthetic sensibility (Chaps. 6 and 7), I might well have said that persons are those creatures who construct and work with concepts.

It is not within the scope of this book to evaluate how different disciplines – represented as subject areas in the school curriculum – fare with respect to generating networks of concepts which are both part of the acknowledged fabric of those disciplines, *and* accessible – syntactically and semantically – to students of different ages and levels. But I suggest that whether or not teachers make use of such networks in the manner suggested – i.e. to open up subjects and topics for further investigation – is less a matter of the existence of relevant concepts (since they are ubiquitous across disciplines) than their inclination and/or ability to approach the way they teach more conceptually. Here I cannot

[14] Hattie (2003, 2009, 2012) and Hattie and Clinton (2008) have published excellent reports and analyses of empirical work in these areas.

resist putting in a good word for including *philosophy* in the curricula of both primary and secondary schools.[15] Philosophy, when made accessible to young people (e.g. through stories, pictures, video clips, etc. that make connections to issues and ideas that matter to them), is the very paradigm of a discipline which is organized around concepts – particularly concepts which are well-suited to inquiry and dialogue (I have referred to such concepts as satisfying the "3Cs": "Common, Contestable and Central" see Chap. 2). To explore what we (and our students) mean by "freedom", "goodness", "reality", "friendship", "respect", "truth", "beauty" and so on, is to invite an open-ended but structured and focused inquiry which, in turn, has the benefit of giving everyone involved much needed practice in dialogue and thinking which "digs deep".

Knowledge and the Curriculum

Both knowing and coming to know must confront the classic epistemological divide between the knower and that which is (to be) known. Many common assumptions about teaching and learning rely on the possibility of bridging this divide, with the teacher charged with what may seem the impossible task of taking what is objectively known and, by way of a process of transmission or *delivery* (a concept that is both ubiquitous and oddly out of place in curriculum contexts), conveying it to those who are hitherto ignorant, while preserving or enabling that which qualifies it as genuine knowledge (not just "stuff" to be absorbed like a sponge). Granted, contemporary constructivist theories of knowledge acquisition have contributed to a richer and more nuanced picture of the relationship between the knower and the known, by proposing: (i) that the process of coming to know (in whatever field of inquiry) involves a broad range of analytic/deductive, synthetic/inductive and evaluative tools and not just those most commonly associated with instruction (viz. comprehension, memorisation, etc.); (ii) that the raw materials used in this process of construction include those that learners themselves bring from their own perspectives and experiences, and not just those introduced by teacher or text book; and (iii) that the process in question is a collaborative one, involving a range of learners each of whom brings

[15] Educators as well as disciplinary scholars have long warned unheeding politicians and policy-makers of the dangers associated with allowing – even encouraging – students to drift away from studying the humanities in schools and colleges. Taught well, history, for example, provides students with a perspective on how events and states of affairs change through time, thereby leading them to reflect on whether things might or should have been different, etc. Such a perspective is a close relative of the kind of conceptual approach which philosophy provides. Even more important is the focus of the humanities on our *humanity* – read personhood in my terms – in contrast to subjects which deal principally with the world of nature or with the artifacts – including *supra-persons* – of human invention (here I am thinking of the social "sciences" which nowadays include business studies and economics). Of course, for those obsessed with reducing all educational priorities to economic ones (often in the name of such *supra-persons* as national competitiveness and budget surpluses), the argument for including philosophy in the core curriculum will seem somewhat remote.

and communicates their own perspectives and ways of thinking. Still, it has been tempting for some constructivists to avoid the epistemological divide referred to by giving up the idea of objective knowledge altogether, allowing that learners may construct "their own" realities.[16] This, I submit, is both conceptually unsound and strategically unwise (the latter because it likely inflames those looking for an excuse to revert to traditional teacher-centred models). For, to repeat, our claims to knowledge may turn out, in any given case, to be mistaken and are always open to challenge and revision by others either within or outside our own community of inquiry. Such possibilities make sense *only* on the premise that there is something beyond what we may think, *to be mistaken about*. As the scope of our inquiries expands to include – or connect to – the most up-to-date findings of the relevant community of experts – be they scientists, historians, mathematicians or even philosophers – we may be increasingly confident as to the veracity of our own conclusions. But we should not forget that even these expert communities are fallible and that what is now claimed as genuine knowledge may turn out not to be so in the future.

A well-functioning community of inquiry accommodates the growth and depth of knowledge among its members while acknowledging its own fallibility. This process of accommodation involves its members continually moving among their different modes of awareness as the latter expand over time: each student's growing self-awareness, awareness of the thoughts of others, and awareness of the external world mutually interact, not merely contingently, but as a matter of necessity. This, after all, is the whole point of Davidson's triangulation model: the three modes of awareness are irreducibly linked to each other. The upshot of these considerations is that the transformation of classrooms – as teaching and learning environments – into communities of inquiry offers a genuine and powerful alternative to both a more subject-centered traditional approach and a more student-centered progressive approach to teaching and learning.

Ironically, one factor which works against the realization of the community of inquiry in practice is that its theoretical assumptions are so hard to deny. This can lead to a kind of complacency, akin to what can happen in the broader context of teaching for *better thinking*, whereby responsible and caring teachers genuinely believe that "we already do this". Still, there are a number of obstacles which stand between theory and practice here. I shall briefly consider two of them.

The "Class Size" Debate

The issue of class size – or, more precisely, that of teacher-student ratios – has been enlivened by attempts to accommodate a range of ideals which, in practice if not in theory, are seen as mutually incompatible. On the one hand is the pedagogic ideal of limiting or reducing class size in order to maximise the benefits of teacher-student interaction, attention paid to individual students with special or diverse needs, etc.;

[16] As discussed in Chap. 7, Postmodernists are particularly prone to this kind of claim.

while, on the other hand, is the political (or economic) goal of spending as little as possible on (public) education without sacrificing important educational outcomes, because the public purse is simply not large enough to reduce class sizes beyond certain limits (it requires hiring more teachers and providing more classrooms, etc.). Needless to say, the size of the public purse – when it comes to spending on schools – is, itself, dependent on such factors as political will and national capacity. Still, at least in countries that could, in theory, afford to reduce class sizes, the key issue is the one I highlighted above, namely, how to match optimal class size with optimal outcomes.

The tension between the desire to optimise outcomes and the desire for maximum "efficiency" in expenditure on public education has helped to generate a large body of research on the complex issue of class size. While I do not intend to present or even summarise this work here, it is somewhat puzzling that what, for many educators (e.g. up to 99.6 % of teachers and principals in Hong Kong, according to a recent survey[17]), seems such an obvious point – namely the merits of relatively smaller class sizes – remains so contentious in the public mind. Several factors – over and above purely economic ones – help to explain this state of affairs, including: (i) considerable variability around the world over what constitutes *small* class size ("small", of course, being a comparative term); (ii) a persistent view of teachers as pushing for smaller classes out of sheer self-interest; (iii) no consensus as to which outcomes are regarded as optimal; and (iv) confusion over the key issue of *why* small(er) classes are regarded as desirable – confusion which is fed, in part, by the mistaken belief that if we assume that good teaching and classroom management are the most important factors in producing optimal outcomes – and I am happy to assume this – then the question of class size becomes virtually immaterial.[18]

My response to these points is as follows:

(i) What constitutes *large* in some parts of the world would be considered *small* in others, with the most obvious contrast being between the developed and developing worlds respectively. In Confucian-based societies such as China, another relevant factor here is the traditional belief that individualised instruction is less important than "educating" citizens to be part of the broader social or state fabric. As the influence of such traditions decreases in direct proportion to the forces of globalisation – including those of the market economy – several regions in East Asia (including Taiwan, Shanghai and, to an extent, Hong Kong) are embracing *smaller*-class size policies, even though the well-known phenomenon of high achievement rates among students in these areas predates such a change. In any case, notwithstanding the comparative nature of the concept of *small*, I believe that it is quite possible to stipulate an ideal class size *irrespective of cultural and other differences*. I shall come back to this point.

[17] Source: Lee 2010.

[18] There is an additional layer of complexity which I shall not consider here, namely, that classes for students with special needs tend to be smaller anyway, hence seeming to reduce even further the importance of smaller classes. I am grateful to Adrian Beavis for pointing this out.

(ii) Most of us, teachers included, act out of self-interest (it is, arguably, an inevitable aspect of being human – as distinct, perhaps, from being persons). But we do not, generally speaking, act *only* out of self-interest. There are significant philosophical issues lurking here, but it is reasonable to assume that while sheer self-interest may be overriding in the commercial and business worlds where financial gain is the "bottom line" (this is meant as an empirical claim, not a moral one), this is simply not true in the teaching profession. Contrary to the views of many who should know better, most teachers are hard-working and dedicated professionals whose material rewards do not reflect the amount of time and energy they expend on behalf of the young people in their care.[19] The call by teachers for smaller classes is entirely consistent with their overriding concern to improve the quality of teaching and learning, despite such comments as that made by a previous education minister in Hong Kong who suggested "that calls for small classes are being made to save the teachers' rice bowl" (Lee 2010).

(iii) Notwithstanding the widely-accepted view among educators and the broader society that (good) education is as much about learning to think well (which embraces critical, creative, conceptual and flexible thinking, etc.), meaning construction, and cultivating the skills and attitudes for being life-long learners, many teachers remain under pressure to focus on "the basics" for a variety of reasons, including cripplingly low-levels of literacy and numeracy (particularly in minority and disadvantaged populations), but also the political game-playing that promotes such basic skills over "higher-order" competencies which are cast as either optional or downright dangerous. Large-scale standardized testing (both intra- and inter-national) is a powerful tool which – at least until recently – has been used to reinforce this low-level focus. But there is, or should be, no conflict between levels here; indeed, I would go further and suggest that this hierarchical way of categorising skills and outcomes should simply be rejected. After all, if the ideas I have been promoting are correct, even children in the early stages of learning about the world have an increasingly sophisticated sense of themselves both in relation to others, and in relation to the world of which they are a part. This sense is already conceptually richer than much of the curriculum which is traditionally taught in the early years (which is why Matthew Lipman complained that so many children are conceptually *under-nourished*[20]).

This realization concerning the holistic and integrated nature of the outcomes we are concerned with here provides support for smaller classes because

[19] The commonplace notion that teaching is a profession comes under pressure when governments demand ever-greater levels of accountability from teachers. As I see it, professionals have expertise which the rest of us lack and they should be encouraged to make *judgments* based on that expertise. By imposing "objective" measures of standardized assessment on the performance of schools and students, society reveals its lack of trust in and respect for teachers as true professionals.

[20] Lipman (2003); also Kieran Egan (1997) who has argued, over many years, that children bring abstract understandings to their concrete learnings.

it is generally conceded that at least some of these outcomes are unlikely to be achieved in larger ones. The following comments taken from an official document prepared for the Kwantlen University College Board of Governors reflect at least a partial understanding of this point.

> Generally those that use immediate recall of factual information as the measure of success find large classes slightly more effective or at least equally effective. Those that measure problem-solving, critical thinking, long-term retention, and attitude toward the disciple (*sic*!) find small classes more successful.
>
> Kennedy and Siegfried (1997) found that in terms of *knowledge*, large classes are as effective as small classes. However, with respect to the *transfer of knowledge to new situations*, *retention of information*, *problem solving*, *critical thinking and attitude change or motivation*, small-class discussion methods are favored. (Both comments from "Summary of Research Findings on Impact of Class Size on Student Learning and Satisfaction," 2004)

Still, the problem with such comments – over and above the simplistic use of the term "knowledge" in the second one – is that they imply that there are distinct styles of teaching that could somehow be organized separately from each other. As measures of student learning become conceptually more sophisticated, it is reasonable to expect that they will lend increasing support to the case for smaller classes, if only because many societies remain committed to the competitive environment of international assessment. But the key question here is: *Why* are smaller classes more conducive to the effective learning of such skills as critical thinking and judgment formation (what I call "powerful thinking") – skills which are increasingly regarded as essential for our future graduates? This brings me to the fourth and final point.

(iv) The key question here, it seems to me, is "What is it that happens – or might happen – in smaller classrooms that cannot – or does not – happen in larger ones?" Why, for example, are the skills usually designated as "higher-order" associated with small classes? The usual answer to this question is that effective teaching in these areas requires a relatively small teacher-student ratio, so that teachers may have time to attend to individual students. Behind this answer lie several further assumptions, including that attending to student diversity with respect to learning abilities and styles is somehow more relevant when it comes to teaching them how to think well, in contrast to teaching them how to read, write and add – an assumption which is questionable, to say the least – and also that while it might be argued that the lines of communication *from* teacher *to* students need not respect how many there are of the latter (after all, technology allows for lectures to be "taught" to thousands, if not millions of students at the same time), this is not the case when it comes to communication *from* students *to* the teacher, hence also for ongoing interaction between the two. A still further assumption here is that students can be taught to read, write and add without providing spontaneous or individual feedback to teachers (other than through the infamous "chorus" response and mass assessment),

whereas effective teaching of thinking requires a more interactive environment, which is progressively more difficult as student numbers increase.

I cannot comment on the kind of classroom and pedagogic environment required for the effective teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills, partly because I lack the relevant expertise, but also because I question the very idea that these skills *can* be well taught in isolation from the richer panoply of thinking and inter-personal skills that constitute our personhood. However, as indicated above, I do need to say something about the attempt to redirect the entire argument in favour of smaller classes to one which points, instead, to the importance of good teaching and classroom management. Consider the following claim from Gilbert (1995): "The characteristics of students and their instructors, along with course organization and management characteristics are more important than class size" (as cited in "Summary of Research Findings …", 2004).

I readily concede that the factors mentioned by Gilbert are essential to the issue of outcomes (notably the outcomes I have defended in this Chapter). But of course it does not follow that other factors are not also essential. The point is a simple one in modal logic: suppose that **A** (certain characteristics of teachers and students, plus course organization and management) and **B** (small class sizes) are each *necessary* for **C** (desired outcomes). It follows that neither **A** nor **B** alone is *sufficient* for **C** unless it is also the case that **B** is necessary for **A** (in which case **A** is sufficient for **C**) or **A** is necessary for **B** (in which case **B** is sufficient for **C**). It is clear, I concede, that **B** in this case is not sufficient for **C** (smaller class size is no guarantee of desired outcomes), because **A** is not necessary for **B** (class sizes can be reduced without any guarantee of good teacher management or organization); indeed research suggests that teachers often do not modify their pedagogies in smaller class contexts.[21] However, I contend that **A** is also not sufficient for **C** (competent and well prepared teachers, motivated students, and good organization and management do not guarantee desired outcomes) because **B** is not necessary for **A** (by which I mean that the prescribed conditions for teacher quality and course organization can, in theory, be met irrespective of class size). The most competent, well-prepared teachers with the most highly motivated students will struggle in large classes. Indeed, being competent – and, therefore, reflective and committed professionals – they are likely to feel particularly frustrated at their inability to apply their best practices in classes that are simply too large for anything except the most didactic and old-fashioned of pedagogies (or else a dubious compromise such as the common practice of dividing students into large numbers of small groups and "expecting" them spontaneously to engage in various modes of powerful talking and thinking in the absence of direct teacher supervision).

It is tempting to interpret the failure to acknowledge this point – e.g. by insisting that really good teachers can do the same with 50 students as they can with 20 – as nothing more than the familiar political tactic of "blaming the teacher" when outcomes are less than optimal. But the whole business of blame is counter-productive in a field such as education, in which there is a

[21] See Harfitt (2012a, b, c, 2013).

multitude of players and stake-holders, and little consensus on what constitutes either optimal teaching *or* optimal outcomes. Still, if my key thesis that the best outcomes are most likely when classrooms function as inquiring communities, is correct, then there are, indeed, some implications for the issue of class size which are worth noting. Think, on the one hand, about the difficulty of engaging dialogically with others when there are simply too many "others", each of whom is entitled to contribute – to speak, to be heard, etc. – in a situation where all are expected to "follow the inquiry where it leads". Think, on the other hand, about the difficulty of so doing when there are too *few* participants; unless each of them has the requisite skills, aptitude and appropriate balance of confidence and humility (including a willingness to imagine or hypothesize alternative perspectives, to think in radically different ways, etc.), a smoothly flowing dialogue – hence inquiry – will also be difficult to establish and maintain. I do not see either of these points as being particularly culturally sensitive, which is why I am willing to suggest that there is, indeed, an optimal range of class sizes when the class is expected to function well as a community of inquiry (with reference to the three dimensions discussed above). Whether in China, Finland, Australia or Brazil, this range is, roughly speaking, 10–20.

Autonomy, Freedom and Diversity in a Democratic Society

Amartya Sen (2006), whom I cited earlier in connection with his *Fallacy of Singular Identity*, has some strong words about what may seem like a laudable feature of pluralistic and democratic societies, namely their willingness to accommodate and support a diverse range of schools and, we might add, educational systems and teaching styles. In many developed nations, the public or state-run schools coexist with a variety of alternative schools and systems which are considered private or alternative, because they are funded and/or governed – whether partially or wholly – by non-state sources. Oftentimes, the state will insist that such schools, as a condition of being allowed to accept students who are – or whose parents are – tax-paying citizens, must adhere to certain requirements, including that they teach the basic core curriculum, but will allow them to engage in other broadly educational and co-curricular activities, including religious teaching, etc. But the underlying assumption here – that these additional activities will not clash or conflict with values, principles and practices that the state does – or should – protect, is highly questionable. Allowing, even encouraging, the formation of narrowly-sectarian schools in the name of cultural pluralism, freedom and "choice" may open the door to agendas which are inimical to genuine inquiry and the skills and dispositions associated with it. Sen rightly questions this assumption because he is deeply aware of the need to teach children how to reason, make good choices and judgments, and think for themselves (2006, p. 117). Making the connection to other key themes in this book, I would suggest that calls for freedom and choice at the level of schools and systems are misdirected, in so far as they conflict with these same calls at the level of those most directly and chiefly involved: the *children* who have little say in what kind of school they must attend.

I might have claimed that such a failure to focus on the actual individuals involved is a violation of the Principle of Personal Worth (Chaps. 6 and 7), in so far as it gives priority to the well-being of systems or institutions. However, this claim is somewhat premature; for one thing, those who defend the non-state system of schooling (which, in some countries, including Australia and Hong Kong, is heavily subsidized by the government) often point to the rights of *parents* to freely make choices as to their own children's education; for another, those involved – especially the parents – would likely insist that they are acting in the best interests of their (actual) children, thereby preserving the spirit of the Principle of Personal Worth.

Not surprisingly, John Dewey, one of history's strongest advocates of a truly democratic education, had a different – and, in my view, superior – vision in which the school brings together students "of different races, differing religions, and unlike customs" to participate in "a new and broader environment" (Dewey 1916/2008, p. 26). Dewey argues that this new and broader environment will also enable the individual to coordinate and integrate "the diverse influences of the various social environments into which he enters" (p. 26).

It would not be prudent for me to attempt to resolve the complex moral issues involved here, especially in so far as they extend beyond the framework of the Principle of Personal Worth into questions about the rights and interests of parents vis-à-vis their children, etc. I will just make three observations.

(1) Assuming we agree that the very essence of a democracy is to encourage and enable its citizens (legally and educationally) to *think for themselves* on matters of importance, then no state or institution within it has a right to block this imperative. The danger, in the case of narrowly-sectarian (e.g. religious fundamentalist) schools, is that unless the state does indeed make thinking for oneself a priority, such schools could justifiably claim to be operating within the state's educational framework while engaging in practices – or simply failing to question certain traditions – that are inconsistent with it.
(2) It is far from clear that grouping together students with particular religious, ethnic or other affiliations, in the name of strengthening those affiliations, can provide them with anything like the diverse range of experiences and interactions that are likely to be found in a dynamic, diverse and pluralist public system. Since I have argued that each person's own development (her life *as* a person) depends on the extent and depth of just such interactions – her reflective growth as *one among others* – it is a *prima facie* merit of a truly *public* system that it maximise, rather than inhibit, opportunities for all children to experience diversity in all its aspects – subject, I should add, to their being members of inquiring communities in which they are bound to reflect on the significance (or otherwise) of this diversity.[22]

[22] It is for this very reason that states which provide support for private and independent schools *at the expense of public ones* warrant being challenged. Starving the latter financially bolsters the political argument in favor of the former, even to the extent of diverting even larger amounts of public funding to them.

(3) Along similar lines, I question the illusion of freedom and autonomy provided when the power structures involving management and curriculum construction are largely devolved to individual schools – more precisely, to the principals of such schools – and teachers, respectively. The questionable reasoning in this case is similar to that discussed above, by which the existence of a diverse range of schools – in contrast to the diversity *within* schools – is taken as a strong sign of a thriving democracy. Leaving aside such issues as the competence of principals to function as "managers" and the drain on their time and energy to do so (when, arguably, the key role of a principal is to serve as the leading educator in the school), and the dubious need for individual teachers to "reinvent the wheel" of curriculum construction in every school or classroom, once again the key focus should be on students and *their* personal development, autonomy and well-being. Assuming that the model of the community of inquiry is, by and large, superior to other modes of classroom organization and pedagogy, it surely follows that such a model should be in place in *all* schools and classrooms. It should not be left up to individual school managers to opt out of this style of teaching in favour of others which (we are assuming) are not as beneficial to students. Is it not better to have centralized management, curriculum construction and, of course, professional development (with due attention to what these involve in detail), and to leave individual classrooms, students and teachers to explore, create, discover and inquire into issues that they deem to be of most significance, than to have a myriad of management and curriculum structures with little care for, or monitoring of, what actually goes on in specific contexts? Freedom and autonomy may well be democratic virtues, but only when they are applied at the right levels to those who need them the most.

Becoming Persons: One More Time!

Persons are relational entities characterized by complementary modes of awareness – specifically self-awareness, awareness of others (i.e. other persons) and awareness of a common world – whose inter-relationships are facilitated by language. As I have explained, language is the vital bridge between myself, other persons and the world; it is a public, observable phenomenon which can be scientifically explained with reference to the particular (natural) kind of creature that we are. But language – especially spoken language (or the equivalent, e.g. "signing") – is both a reflection and generator of thought. In short, it is language that characterizes us as persons who are capable of learning about and acting in the world.

I have portrayed the community of inquiry as a structured environment in which thought, dialogue and becoming aware of the world around us are bound together, first and foremost through language. When we think about the diversity of ways in which we interact with (and learn about) others and the world and, therefore, of the many directions inquiry can take, we may conceive of personhood as an ongoing process of development – a lifelong project or quest, to recall terms from Chap. 7.

If it is odious to think that young children are not (yet) persons or that those of lesser ability are, somehow, of lesser moral status, the most appropriate way of rebutting such ideas is to insist that we are *all* at various stages of becoming (better, more complete) persons.

However, even the laudable idea of education as a developmental process must be treated with caution, lest it feed the popular but demeaning stereotype of formal schooling as "merely" a means to an end. Throughout his long life, John Dewey stressed the idea that the child's own lived experience must be acknowledged as the heart of both the content and the process of education. Famously rejecting the division between the classroom and the "real world", he called into question the idea that education is a form of *preparation*, in so far as preparation is characterized as a relation between some external end that is judged to be worthwhile, and an activity whose value is entirely derivative upon serving that end. For Dewey, schools and classrooms must be real, genuine and meaningful for students, not by corresponding to something external which has these qualities, but by qualifying as *forms of life* in their own right. Consider the following remark, which appears in his later work *Experience and Education*:

> We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything. (Dewey 1938, p. 51)

It is reasonable to infer that for Dewey, some kind of correspondence or, better, network of relationships, must underlie an authentic educational activity, but not that this network has to invoke a connection with a world that is separate from and given prior to, the child's experience. Rather, the relationships in question are part of that experience and serve to enlarge and enrich it (Splitter 2009).

Central to the process of becoming a person is *self-correction*, the process which Lipman (2003) identified as key to inquiry itself. Self-correction is not merely a brake on our own egos – a disposition akin to humility – it opens up the very possibility of relating to others in ways that enhance our mutual development. If the formation of knowledge and wisdom were simply a linear or additive process, it would be difficult to conceive of it as a truly collaborative one whereby we learn by "bouncing" ideas and hypotheses off one another and our respective world views. It is self-correction which allows for the give-and-take that constitutes genuine learning (Sharp 1996).

However, this way of seeing things does require some further clarification. Communities of inquiry are groups or collectives of individuals: one, or even two, persons do not a community make. In proposing a relational conception of personhood, I am accepting that as our lives proceed, these groups come and go. If we are fortunate, we will spend time in the nurturing but productive environment of a genuine community of inquiry. But no such group lasts for long and often-times, we find ourselves leaving the safety of one community and venturing forth on a new road whose direction and destination are unclear. My view of an ideal community of inquiry does not presume that there will always be one available and open to us in

whatever situation and stage of life we may find ourselves. So it is even more important that we provide young people with opportunities to glean the benefits of belonging while they can. We must rely on something like a Vygotskean notion of internalisation here: the true measure of a given community of inquiry will be how well its members continue to develop and flourish as persons *when that community is no longer in existence*. The challenge or difficulty which needs to be faced is not the impermanence of such communities, because the latter are, I contend, a means to an end. We need also to ask if it is reasonable to hope that they will not become like so many of the other collectives and groups with which young people are, or will find themselves, associated. In other words, what is to prevent the community of inquiry from functioning as a *supra-person* with respect to its members, i.e. a collective whose own structure and direction are not reducible to those of its actual members and may actually conflict with or undermine the personal development of those members? After all, is it not reasonable for a teacher to urge a disruptive student to behave for the sake of the well-being of the broader community of which he is but one member? Is there a conflict here with the Principle of Personal Worth according to which each and every individual's moral interests outweigh those of the groups to which he or she belongs?

My answer to these questions requires revisiting the components of the Principle of Personal Worth, as listed in Chaps. 6 and 7; in particular the following:

(7) Persons are not more important than *simple groups* of, or *networks of relationships among*, persons, where these are understood as collections which are *no greater than the sums of their parts*; groups in this minimal sense are really just relational networks and are quite different from the "supra-persons" referred to above;

I submit that a community of inquiry is a "simple" group in precisely this sense: as a network of relationships, it is no greater than the sum of its participants at any given time. More precisely, a community of inquiry is a *relational* network of individual persons, where the personhood of each member (but *not* the identity, as should by now be clear) is characterized by these (and perhaps other) relationships. As long as we affirm the existence of each person who is a member of the community, the ontological status of both the community and the relationships which, in a key sense, constitute it, is of little long-term interest. If someone were to inquire into the distinguishing characteristics of this or that community of inquiry (that it seems to function very smoothly, that it generates many questions but few answers, etc.), I would direct them to examine its individual members, bearing in mind that the relationships they have with one another – and, through them, with themselves *and* the world beyond the boundaries of that community (remember triangulated awareness) – are defined "from within" (i.e. derived from the characteristics of those members), not "from above" (i.e. derived from the community or some other collective entity).

As with existence and identity, so with morality: any judgment or appraisal made by, or on behalf of, the community as a whole, should be directed at its individual members and their particular inter-relationships within the community. This does not lessen the sense of moral responsibility that the members have, or should have,

toward one another, as when, for example, some students feel left out of the discussion because they are not assertive enough, or the quality of reasoning on a particular occasion is poor. In such situations, *all* members of the community share the responsibility and should accept the need for self-correction in future. What I am proposing – and *all* that I am proposing – is that those members cannot look to the community itself for moral guidance or direction, for it has no moral status in and of itself.

Is this view consistent with my earlier description of the community of inquiry involving self-correction, internal structure and purpose, and following the inquiry where it leads? Are not these characteristics moral or normative in nature, and am I not stipulating that the members of such a community should abide by them? In response, I draw a parallel between a community of inquiry and that form of political organization that many regard as most desirable, viz *democracy*. On the one hand, when we reflect on democracies past and present, we may judge that they always fall short in one respect or another, when held up against an ideal standard of what a democracy *should* be. A more pragmatic, but still principled, approach might be to inquire if those socio-political systems we are examining are functioning *as well as they might*, whether by the standards they have set themselves, or according to some collection of broad ethical criteria by which any form of social organization might be measured. The pragmatic component here – missing, presumably, from some kind of idealized scenario –comes into play because and in so far as ordinary citizens are empowered to change, not just the way their society actually functions, but the criteria by which it is judged to be doing well or in need of improvement. So, too, in a community of inquiry; rather than regard the characteristics I nominated as ideal in some remote or unattainable sense, we may acknowledge that they have previously served us well, and so may be taken as helpful guidelines for how such an environment might function. However, even these characteristics – which define the very structure of a community of inquiry – are not beyond revision or correction by, or with the approval of, the members of the community. Imagine, for example, a student objecting to the requirement that he should respect other members or be willing to self-correct. It would not, in my view, be appropriate merely to point out that these rules define the community of inquiry and, so, are beyond question. But it might be appropriate to take her comment as stimulus for an inquiry of its own. The fact that such rules have served the community of inquiry well in the past might be mentioned, but more pertinent is the strategy of opening up the issue to other members, for they – together with our rebellious student – *are* the community of inquiry. As already remarked, there is no higher standard which can be appealed to.

The community of inquiry and the triangular network of awareness, taken together, represent a fundamental shift in the way we think about teaching and learning. To set knowledge up as something on the side of teachers and curriculum (in the heads of the former and embedded in the latter), needing to be transmitted to otherwise ignorant students is to court a host of familiar pedagogic, epistemological and psychological problems. As I remarked earlier, the shift to more constructivist models of teaching and learning has certainly been helpful here, but it has been dogged by residual concerns about how to reconcile the "subjectivity" (or relativity)

of students' perspectives with the "objectivity" of genuine truth and knowledge (with such misleading expressions as "Students must construct their own realities", etc.). What I am proposing, building on the ideas of Davidson and others, is that we *banish the subjective/objective dichotomy* from the domain of education altogether, thereby eliminating the need for reconciliation in the first place. Like the most knowledgeable adult, the youngest child (certainly by the time she is in school) has a perspective on the world; she sees it through the lens of her own understandings, beliefs, values and attitudes. These are the ingredients which will allow her to develop more fully as a person, becoming more aware of, and knowledgeable about, those around her and the world itself. In coming to see herself as *one among others*, she will both realize (cognitively) and appreciate (affectively) that her own way of seeing things is (i) valuable in its own right as one possible source of truth, knowledge and wisdom, and (ii) open to refinement by being exposed to the views of others (including learning which others are to be relied upon).

To see objects of thought and feeling in terms of the traditional subjective/objective dichotomy is tacitly to accept that there is an unbridgeable chasm between the two; hence the tendency of many teachers (and schools) to encourage students to put their own ideas and opinions behind them, in the interest of learning what is genuinely (objectively) true. As noted earlier, citing Paul (1993) and others, this approach is both psychologically disempowering and pedagogically risky. And the damage wrought by the force of this dichotomy is long-lasting. Among the factors inhibiting the activity of genuine dialogue in social and political contexts, confusion about what is objectively "true" and what is "mere" subjective opinion is prominent. On the one hand, descriptive claims about "the facts" (leaving aside the issue of their reliability) are often used to justify moral or prescriptive positions without any consideration of the precarious nature of their connection; while on the other, dubious moral views may be shielded from scrutiny by (irrelevantly) asserting the right of claimants to hold and express *their own opinions*. However, opinions cannot long survive as mere tastes or personal preferences, if only because they are held and expressed in *linguistic* terms which, as I have repeatedly emphasised, places them fairly and squarely on the table for public (inter-personal) examination; in other words, each person's opinion, like that person herself, is always *one among others*. Persons are, *inter alia*, capable of being *moved by reasons*[23], and as noted above, reasons are conceptual devices that bridge the subjective/objective divide. All the more reason for doing our best to ensure that young people in our charge are able to maximise their opportunities to become persons.

Concluding Comment

I began this book with three (attempted) jokes about identity – specifically around the question "Who am I?" Strange as it may seem, this was a deliberate strategy, in that while I regard identity as a serious and important relation (in mathematics, in

[23] Being moved by reasons is part of the well-known characterization of *critical thinking* proposed by Harvey Siegel (Siegel 1988).

logic, and also in the context of establishing conditions of existence for various kinds of objects in the world), I also hold that it is more or less irrelevant when it comes to the concept of personhood and the involvement of this concept in answers to the "Who am I?" question (when the latter is to be taken seriously). To put the point somewhat bluntly, there is no concept of personal identity as such; there is only the concept of identity as applied, *inter alia*, to those independently existing entities which qualify as persons – most notably, ourselves (but perhaps Martians, hobbits, futuristic robots and computers as well). Still, it is quite appropriate to answer our initial question by appealing to our personhood (once we accept that it is not connected to our numerical or literal identity), which is what led me, in later chapters, to concentrate on what it means to be a person. I defended the familiar idea that personhood is a thoroughly relational concept, where the relationships in question are both semantic or linguistic, and moral or ethical.[24] And I proposed the Principle of Personal Worth largely to ward off any temptation to locate either our identities or our moral status in such socio-political constructs as nation states, economies, religions, cultures, traditions, and gangs. We may (or may not) identify or affiliate with such *supra-persons* but this, I suggested, has more to do with our affective needs and desires than with anything more substantive concerning identity or morality.

I provided a number of examples – both actual and hypothetical – of what can go wrong when *supra-persons* are accorded moral weight over and above that of their members (i.e. persons); more optimistically, I also cited examples where the barriers among different supra-persons are demolished – or, at least, breached – by the simple realization among those on different sides that they are all (emergent) persons and, as such, deserving of mutual respect, care and affection. In such contexts, it is particularly important not to be distracted by the rhetoric of identity politics, in so far as it tempts us to "find" solutions to real problems of social injustice, discrimination and persecution in the "search" for our identities. Our identities are not at issue, and so searching for them is a waste of time; worse, such searches are likely to entrench the very barriers that were part of the problem in the first place. I hasten to reiterate that I am not advocating some form of bland or seamless cosmopolitanism or a confused notion of "global citizenship"; rather, I am simply maintaining that when we see ourselves as persons, we see ourselves as being *one among others* – a conception which embraces the entire range of inter-personal relationships, from the most intimate to the most extended.

In pushing our linguistic capacities to centre-stage in my examination of personhood, I aimed to highlight an idea which has found support both empirically and conceptually: that our innermost thoughts about and reflections on who we (individually) are, are inextricably linked both to our awareness of others (i.e. other persons who, accordingly, are engaged in the same processes of awareness) and to our awareness of a world which we share and of which we, ourselves, are a part. This idea of "triangulation" relies upon a conception of thinking in which language – particularly spoken discourse – is crucial.

[24] I should add that such persons as ourselves are also related *physically*, i.e. connected spatially and temporally. But this is a feature of the (physical) kind of being that we are.

Finally, I shifted the focus to education, offering *both* a novel defence of the idea that formal teaching and learning environments should be transformed into *communities of inquiry*, in which the continuous interplay of thought and language – specifically, inter-personal dialogue – is pivotal, *and* a construal of education as a lifelong process – or project – of *personal development* whereby we gain knowledge and understanding, not just about the world we share, but about ourselves and one another.

Scholars from across a number of disciplines have stressed the importance of dialogue as the lynchpin in the traditional dualities of self and other, and private/subjective and public/objective. Building on the work of Davidson, in particular, I have modified this idea to include a third vertex or point of connection: not just myself and others, but myself, others like me (i.e. persons), and a world which we all share and attempt to know and understand. And again: not just the subjective and the objective (a dichotomy of dubious merit, despite its long pedigree in the history of ideas), but a triangular network of awareness, in which a crucial component is my awareness of others who are also aware of themselves, of me, and of the world. All these forms of awareness are connected through language.

Still, the crucial role of dialogue – and its cognitive counterpart inquiry – is rarely reflected in society, either at the broad level of socio-political interaction and deliberation or, more specifically, in schools. One problem is the inevitable gap between what many educators now agree on, in terms of classroom best practice, teacher professional development, and so on, and the actual policies of governments which are seemingly fixated on seeing students as means to economic ends. Other stake-holders are also culpable here: parents who put enormous pressure on schools, teachers and their own children to produce good results over good education; even students themselves who, unless they are immersed in dialogical environments from an early age, often cannot see the point of apparently endless discussion that may not yield any answers, let alone the "right" ones.

Dialogue is not merely a tool for better learning – although if we emphasise *meaning/understanding* over the recitation and reproduction of predetermined "knowledge", it is certainly an important one – it both reflects and generates forms of awareness and thinking that are constitutive of personhood. Returning once again to the moral dimensions of this concept, I find myself wondering, when reading about the latest acts of brutality, violence or just utter selfishness in different parts of the world, "What were you doing in school when you were 8, 10 or 12 years old? How is it that you never learned that to earn respect one must also give it, or that closed-minded and dogmatic thinking are not the path to either truth or wisdom, or that each of us is but *one among others*? How is it, in short, that you never really became much of a person?"

Among many other things, we learn that in the separate journeys which constitute our individual lives, while we may be pushed or pulled in many directions (sometimes willingly but sometimes not), it is the power that derives from our relationships with others that ultimately determines both the quality and the direction of our lives. In building, developing and reflecting on these relationships, we truly discover who we are which, I have argued, is not about discovering our *identities*.

Paraphrasing a comment from an earlier chapter (Chap. 6), to take seriously the ideas of perspective-taking and triangulation that have been discussed in this book is to realize that there is no contradiction between a "traditional" view of education as a process of *learning about the world*, and a "progressive" view of education as a form of *personal (and inter-personal) development*. Indeed, they merely reflect, if I may put it so, different *perspectives* on the same holistic enterprise of *becoming, being,* and *flourishing as persons* in the world.

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Index

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