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Altruism, Grief, and Identity

I. Preliminary

To explain my approach, I want to say a few words about what metaphysics is. Not that there is an agreed upon fact of the matter. Most people, however, agree on a rough characterization of metaphysics as a study of the fundamental features of reality, features such as existence, non-existence, identity, distinctness, causation, space, time, parts, wholes, possibility, necessity, boundaries, free will, and others. That reality has these features is presupposed in sciences, arts, humanities, religion, as well as in daily life. We have pre-theoretical commitments to propositions involving these features. Unfortunately these commitments come into conflict with themselves, each other, or other theoretical or dogmatic commitments. Sorting out these conflicts is the job of the metaphysician. Part of the task is deciding whether to take various claims literally, or to reinterpret them into revisions that can be taken literally. Success is in part determined by how well the results can be used to solve other problems, how elegant they are, whether they give a sense of confronting reality. So I say that to do metaphysics is to attempt to develop our natural or acquired presuppositions about the fundamental features of reality into suppositions as literal, coherent, useful, beautiful, and enlightening as possible.

I say 'suppositions' because I take an important lesson of the ancient and modern skeptics, of Hume and Kant, and of the pragmatists, to be that you have to suppose in order to know. Any conclusion we may be said to know, whether by deduction, induction, or abduction, is based partly in supposition. Hume and Kant responded to skepticism by arguing that certain suppositions were unavoidable, either because natural or apodeictic. However few if any of their candidates turned out to be unavoidable. The pragmatists gave a successor account masquerading as a theory of truth, though a weak theory of truth since there is little reason to believe that useful beliefs should be true. On

the other hand pragmatism is a strong theory of what it is good to suppose true. Still it is not the last word since there is more to goodness than usefulness. Some have emphasized aesthetic value, but that still leaves out the feeling of confronting reality given by the best metaphysics. In any event, doing metaphysics is being concerned with the supposition end of the project of knowing. The goal of metaphysics is not to know, but to excellently suppose.

One reason for trying to arrive at claims to be taken literally is to help prevent equivocation, which is an ever present danger leading to bad arguments, false conflicts, and miscommunication. Taking claims literally helps reduce the chances of equivocation by severely restricting the range of possible meanings. Further, taking a claim literally tests whether the claim's attraction consists at least partly in the genuine possibility that it is true, as opposed to consisting entirely in the emotions that it occasions. For at least these reasons metaphysicians assume that any truth that can be stated can be stated literally.[1]

This characterization of metaphysics justifies taking seriously unexamined things we ordinarily say or deeply resonate to that we cannot prove. Further it justifies seeing the extent to which we can take these things literally.

II. Altruism

Think of examples of altruism. Minor ones are fine. Professors often decide to do for colleagues or students things that are of little consequence to salary or promotion. For example, we take time for careful comments on an undergraduate paper because doing so is right and will help the student, even though the task is dull and our research that the deans reward awaits.[2] Here's the question: Are we being irrational to do this? The worry is not that we are acting completely without reason. There are reasons of duty and benevolence, surely. However there are also competing reasons of pleasure and

[1] van Inwagen gives an additional reason for taking metaphysical claims literally. He says that "metaphysics is an attempt to get at how things really are." (p. 3) However this reason begs the question. Why can't a figurative claim get at how things really are? One would have to already have assumed that figurative metaphysical claims should be taken literally, in order to conclude that they do not get at how things really are. Peter van Inwagen, "Introduction: What is Metaphysics?" in van Inwagen and Zimmerman, eds. *Metaphysics: The Big Questions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 1-13.

prudence. How do we decide which class of reasons to act on? Do we have any reason to pick the altruistic reasons over the egoistic reasons? The worry is that we have no reason at this next level.

The worry arises because egoistic reasons seem to be the primary and privileged reasons. Many people, perhaps most, acknowledge the authority of egoistic reasons over themselves. Few question the rationality of doing for yourself.[3] Further, most traditional answers to the question "why do for others?" seem ultimately to appeal to egoistic reasons. Plato tells you your soul will be more harmonious.[4] Jesus tells you your reward will be in heaven.[5] People recognize the existence of altruistic reasons, but often need an egoistic reason to accept the authority over themselves of altruistic reasons. Such a person may well understand and appreciate that the benefit to another is some sort of reason to act altruistically. However that reason seems irrelevant until the agent is convinced that there is some personal benefit to acknowledging its authority. The worry is that this common egoistic outlook is correct—that only egoistic reasons justify subjugating ourselves to altruistic reasons.

In most cases there are egoistic reasons allied with altruistic ones, so there is no reason to choose between them. In such cases one can merely appear to oneself and others to have accepted the authority of altruistic reasons. But the alliance is unlikely in all cases.[6] Suppose a case in which there is fundamentally no reason for the altruistic act other than the good done the other person. And suppose there is a reason against it—some cost to oneself. In such a case, given the common egoistic outlook, there would seem to be no reason for someone to choose to act on the altruistic reason. There would be no reason for him to acknowledge its authority over him. The rationality of his not choosing so would then be secure, and of his choosing so would be suspect. Thus, given the common outlook, the burden of proof would lie with those who would argue that

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[2] For a more moving example consider Gerasim in Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych." Tolstoy, Leo, *The Death of Iván Ilych, and other stories*. Trans. by Louise and Aylmer Maude (London, Oxford University Press, 1971).

[3] See Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1907), pp. 119-120. Cf. the editor's introduction to Michael Pakaluk, ed., *Other Selves* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1991), pp. xi-xii.

[4] G.M.A. Grube, trans., *Plato's Republic* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1974).

[5] I'm grateful to John Troyer for this observation, complete with the following supporting Biblical passages from Matthew: 6:3-4, 19:21, 5:3, 5:5, 5:8, 5:46.

[6] Sidwick, pp. 175, 503.

altruistic, non-egoistic action is rational.[7] I hope to show that even if one retains the common outlook, one can shoulder this burden of proof.

Note that the task is not accomplished by pointing out that we often by inclination care about the welfare of others. I'm not assuming egoistic reasons need be selfish ones. Acting on such inclinations would be rational for the agent, simply because it pleases him.[8] The cases I am concerned with are those in which there are no reasons of prudence or pleasure.

Note also that the problem remains even if it can be proven that there are in fact no cases of altruism or no cases of egoism. It would be a mere academic problem, but of interest nonetheless, and even more so if we doubt such proofs.

I will focus on doing for others, but the same problem arises for other cases as important, or even more important, viz., simply taking others into account. We often refrain from actions, or modify actions, out of regard for others.[9] Is it irrational, say, for the egoist to resist the temptation to assign an expensive book just to get a free desk copy? Should the expense to one's students count against the benefit to oneself? If being other-benefiting is irrational, so is being other-regarding. Still, the issue can be more sharply put by focusing on altruism, so I will keep that focus.

Of course the common outlook might be wrong. It might be, for instance, that only altruistic reasons justify acknowledging the authority of egoistic reasons. Some people, traditionally especially women, might say that in their own cases this alternative outlook more nearly captures how they reason. Someone whose concern for others, especially family and friends, tends toward self-abnegation might feel that the burden of proof rests with those who would explain the rationality of acting for egoistic reasons. I hope to show that even if one assumes this alternative altruistic outlook, one can shoulder the burden of proof.

Sidgwick pointed out that altruistic reasons are not derivable from egoistic ones, nor egoistic from altruistic, and so there can be cases in which one class of reasons

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[7] Sidgwick, p. 120.
[8] See Joseph Butler, Sermon XI, "Upon the Love of Our Neighbor," in L.A. Selby-Bigge, ed., *British Moralists: Being Selections from Writers Principally of the Eighteenth Century*, vol.I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), esp. pp. 236 & 239-240.
[9] cf. Bernard Williams who defines 'altruism' more broadly. "Egoism and Altruism" in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), pp. 250-251.

applies and the other does not. He left it an unresolved problem in ethics whether in such cases there can be a reason to pick the class of reasons to act on. Sidgwick pointed out that the core of the problem is simply that you are one person and anyone else is someone else. You and the other are two, not one. You and the other are numerically distinct, not numerically identical.[10] Thus his benefit is not your benefit.

Why do I belabor this obvious point about being numerically distinct? I do so because I am not sure it is entirely true. If it is not, then there is a point of identity between distinct persons. If there is a point of identity, then to that extent the problem of the divergence of altruism and egoism can be addressed. His benefit would be your benefit after all.

Here is one reason that I suspect the so-called obvious point: There seems to be experiential evidence that the numerical distinctness isn't entire, in the phenomenon of grief.

III. Grief

What I propose to do is to consider some characterizations of grief and loss that we deeply resonate to or ordinarily use and which promise to help with the problem of altruism. I will look at them as a metaphysician does. It may well be that they are apt simply because they are evocative. I will investigate, however, whether there is any literal truth that might explain their aptness.

Note that there may well be varieties of grief. Some might be entirely self-regarding; others might be entirely other-regarding. However there seem to be some that are relevantly intermediate.

The first characterization, one that has likely occurred to you, is in Donne's famous 17th Meditation.

> Who bends not his *eare* to any *bell*, which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that *bell*, which is passing a *peece of himselfe* out of this *world*? No man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*; if a *Clod* bee washed away by the *Sea*, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a *Promontorie* were, as well as if a Mannor of thy *friends* or of *thine owne*

[10] Sidgwick, Concluding Chapter, pp. 497-499.

were; any mans *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankinde*; And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for *thee*.[11]

How is it that "any man's death diminishes me?" Donne compares the situation to a continent losing a clod of earth. The whole continent is affected. But how does this image help? Suppose a clod is lost. I am neither that clod nor am I the continent that has lost it. I am merely another part of the continent, another clod, so seemingly I have lost nothing. Why should the dying person be regarded by anyone as a "piece of himself" as Donne puts it. Donne's image seems to give us as yet no literal truth to work with.

Another promising source is Augustine. He gives one of the great characterizations of grief. Here's a selection that shows his profound acquaintance with loss:

> My heart was black with grief. Whatever I looked upon had the air of death. My native place was a prison-house and my home a strange unhappiness. The things we had done together became sheer torment without him. My eyes were restless looking for him, but he was not there. I hated all places because he was not in them. . . . I had no delight but in tears, for tears had taken the place my friend had held in the love of my heart.[12]

He finds that he is weary of life and yet afraid of death. His explanation, containing the images directly relevant here, is as follows:

> Rightly has a friend been called "the half of my soul."[13] For I thought of my soul and his soul as one soul in two bodies; and my life was a horror to me because I would not live halved. And it may be that I feared to die lest thereby he should die wholly whom I had loved so deeply.[14]

There are two different explanations here. One is that a friend is half your soul. The other is that a friend and you are one soul in two bodies. Either way Augustine is conveying unity in difference: One soul despite two halves; one soul despite two bodies.

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[11] from "Devotions upon Emergent Occasions," in Charles Coffin, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), p. 446.
[12] St. Augustine, *Confessions,* trans. Frank Sheed (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1993) Book IV, Chap. 4.
[13] Horace, *Odes*, Bk. I, Ode 3, ln. 8. *The Complete Odes and Satires of Horace*, trans by Sidney Alexander (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 7.
[14] *Confessions,* Bk. IV, Ch. 6.

In some sense Augustine was trying to say that he and his friend, although two persons, are identical in some point. The grief is witness to that.[15]

Can we make literal sense of this though? Can we find literal truth in it? The question is not whether it is true that a soul is halved or shared, but whether these would literally entail any identity. Again, Augustine has employed the part/whole relation in two ways. First he says the soul is one whole with two distinct parts. Second he says the soul is one common part of two distinct wholes. It is hard to see how these two very different images can literally convey the same point, as Augustine seems to assume. But even taken separately, it is hard to see how they could literally capture the identity with his friend that Augustine is after.

Take Augustine's first image. The halved soul image has the same problem as Donne's continent. The halves are numerically distinct regardless of the oneness of the whole. Loss of one half is no loss to the other half anymore than the loss of one clod of earth is a loss to another.

Likewise the shared soul image is not yet a help. Augustine is saying that he and his friend are each a whole yet with a part in common. The situation is like that of Siamese twins with a heart in common. With the death of his friend's body, however, Augustine himself remains a whole. The formerly shared soul still exists; it's just that Augustine has sole possession now. Nothing numerically identical with any part of Augustine has been lost.

Remember, the reconciliation of egoism and altruism requires breaching the distinctness between the two persons. Appeal to parts and whole seems to be the way to do this. However being parts of a common whole hasn't yet helped, nor has having a part in common.

It may be, however, that the fault is not so much with the characterizations of grief as with our metaphysics of parts and wholes. I propose to sketch a new metaphysics of parts and wholes that will help us understand grief, and help us be reconciled to altruism.

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[15] Similar appeals to the part/whole relation are found in characterizations of love by Descartes in *The Passions of the Soul*, Articles 79-83, in Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, trans., *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 366-368. Cf. Aristophanes's

IV. Identity

Consider a six-pack. Back in the old days there used to be restricted aisles in the supermarket that said 'six items or less'. Now it is 12, or 20 even, but let's say 6. Suppose all you have is your six-pack and you stop to consider whether to enter the restricted aisle. (One of the charms of philosophy is that every ordinary thing dissolves into mystery.) You ask yourself how many items you have. 1? 6? Here I ignore the plastic fastener which is simply an additional object. So how many items do you have? On the received view, the answer is at least seven. There are the six cans. In addition there is the six-pack itself. It is distinct from each can; after all it is a six-pack and each can is not. Likewise the six-pack is distinct from the six cans collectively; after all they are many and it is one. So, you have seven things and have to go stand in the line behind the bedraggled mom with two shopping carts.

This is the received view, but surely something is wrong. Seven cannot be the right answer. The six-pack itself can't be something in addition to the cans. You can't sell the cans to people and keep the six-pack for yourself. One popular response would be to deny the existence of the six-pack simply because it is composite.[16] But this is a desperate move considering that most of the things we care about are composites.[17] We need a new view. Here is a sketch:[18]

I want to say that literally the six-pack is the six cans. It is them, not something additional. There are two equally accurate ways for the six-pack to be counted—as six

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speech in Plato's *Symposium*, 189c-193d in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds. *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 542-546.

[16] As for instance Leibniz in his letter to Arnauld dated 30 April 1687, and Hume when endorsing Malezieu's argument. H.T. Mason, ed., *The Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1967), pp. 120-122. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* ed. by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Bk. 1, Pt. 2, Sec. 3, Par. 3.

[17] The resources of paraphrase and plural logic are useful in taking the sting out of such an approach. See Peter van Inwagen, *Material Beings* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), Ch. 10. Crucially however such an approach would deny that a whole is a single thing. It would deny genuine unity between the distinct parts. I cannot accept that there is no genuine unity in the world between distinct things. Cf. David Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Ch. 17. (For van Inwagen, life does not provide genuine unity between distinct simples, it just introduces an additional thing into the world—the living whole—in accordance with the traditional account of parts and wholes.) Actually the unity of six-packs in particular is not something I am deeply committed to, but they make handy examples.

[18] For more detailed exposition see my "Many-One Identity," *Philosophical Papers* 17 (1988), pp. 193-216, and "Identity in the Loose and Popular Sense," *Mind* 97 (1988), pp. 575-582.

and as one. Counting it as six is counting the six cans as numerically distinct. On the other hand, counting the six-pack as one is counting the six cans as numerically identical. Were they still six, the whole, which is them, would be many. But it isn't. Thus if the whole is real then there is an accurate way of counting in which the six are numerically identical.[19]

I'm not agreeing with the Fregean point here that quantity may be relative to concepts or sortals. Frege's suggestion fails, as mine does not, when whole and parts are homoeomerous, when they fall under the same sortal. Frege's view really concerns how to select for counting some of the myriad things that on the traditional view are all existent.[20] Otherwise we would have to take literally Frege's claim that a copse is "the same external phenomenon" as five trees, and then his view would mutate into mine in which there are two equally accurate counts of the same thing.[21]

Even counted as one, the six-pack will still have complexity. It will have the kind of complexity which simple, partless things can have. Suppose, as Hume believed, that two simples could be of different colors, red and blue. In that case, the red one insofar as it is red would be dissimilar to the other, yet insofar as it is simple would be similar to the other. The red one as red can be distinguished from itself as simple. This is a kind of complexity—a complexity of what may be called aspects. This complexity is not a violation of Leibniz's Law which is misnamed the Indiscernibility of Identicals. Identicals in different aspects can be identical yet discernible. What Leibniz's Law really says is that no contradictions are true. And none are, if something in one aspect has a characteristic it lacks in another. There would only be a contradiction if something in one aspect had a quality that in all aspects it lacked, or if something had and lacked a quality

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[19] For other treatments of composition as identity see Lewis and Armstrong. David Lewis, *Parts of Classes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 81-87. D.M. Armstrong, *A Theory of Universals*, Vol. II of *Universals and Scientific Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 37-38.

[20] David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 52-53. Cf. John Perry, "The Problem of Personal Identity," in John Perry, ed., *Personal Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 28.

[21] Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A logico-mathematical enquiry into the concept of number,* trans. by J.L. Austin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), Sec. 46, p. 59. Geach is right that if quantity is relative to sortal, then so is identity. My responses to Frege apply to Geach as well. P.T. Geach, "Identity," *The Review of Metaphysics* 21 (1967), pp. 3-12. Putnams's conceptual relativism labors under the same disadvantage with the additional mystery that it can neither be the same thing that is one in one conceptual scheme and many in another, nor distinct things. Hilary Putnam, "Truth and Convention: On Davidson's Refutation of Conceptual Relativism," *Dialectica* 41 (1987), pp. 69-77.

in exactly the same aspect. Thus when counting as one and identical, the six cans exist merely as distinguishable aspects of the whole.[22]

This talk of aspects should not be confused with talk of ranking the same individual under different concepts. The aspectival distinction is not a mere conceptual distinction.[23] I will give two arguments. First is a long argument: A difference captured by a conceptual distinction is not a difference in the object itself. Rather it is a difference between what is entailed or explained by the concepts the object falls under. For example, the morning star appears in the morning; the evening star does not; yet they are the same planet. Solution to the apparent contradiction: 'Morning star' entails or explains appearing in the morning; 'evening star' does not. The planet itself does indeed appear in the morning. The seeming lack of morning appearance was just the lack of its inclusion in the concept of evening star. This approach will not work with an aspectival distinction. The red simple as simple resembles the blue simple; the red simple as red does not; the red simple is the same thing in either aspect. The difference is not a matter of what is entailed or explained by concepts. It is a difference in the object itself. The dissimilarity is as real as the similarity. The lack of similarity cannot be explained away as the lack of its inclusion in the concept of red, the way lack of morning appearance was explained away by the lack of its inclusion in the concept of evening star. There might seem to be some help—help, that is, in explaining the difference between the red simple as simple and the red simple as red—by saying that the similarity is entailed by one concept and the dissimilarity by the other. But this is no help. After all, both concepts apply. So both the similarity and lack of similarity are true of the red simple and the apparent contradiction is back. Nor does it help to go on to appeal to differing types of similarity to avoid the apparent contraction. These would be similar to each other insofar as they are similarities and dissimilar insofar as they are of different types, and thus the same problem would recur.[24] A non-conceptual difference is needed to resolve the apparent contradiction.

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[22] See my "The Discernibility of Identicals," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 24 (1999), pp. 37-55.
[23] Nor is it simply a result of things being "multinominous." See John Donne, "Why is Venus-Star Multinominous, Called Both *Hesperus* and *Vesper*?" in Coffin, ed.
[24] This final point is inspired by a passage from Husserl quoted in Robert E. Butts, "Husserl's Critique of Hume's Notion of Distinctions Of Reason," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1949), pp. 213-221.

The second argument is briefer: There are things true of an object in an aspect that are neither simply true of the object nor are entailed or explained by the concept used of the object. Someone as Senator might support a bill which she as citizen opposes. It is not simply true of her that she supports the bill. She does and she doesn't. Nor is her support entailed or explained by the fact that she falls under the concept of Senator. Thus talk of aspects is not just talk of individuals or concepts.

It may seem that my view entails a simple absurdity. Suppose in a six-pack one can is dented and another isn't. Then when the cans count as one and the same, the undented can is dented. Contradiction. However this objection works only by obscuring the complexity I have tried to reveal. If 'the undented can is dented' is disambiguated as 'the six-pack insofar as it is the undented can is dented' then the claim is contradictory, but not entailed by my view. If disambiguated as 'the six-pack insofar as it is the undented can is undented, but insofar as it is the dented can is dented' then it is entailed by my view but not contradictory.[25]

It may seem that the view of composition as identity here makes the parts essential to the whole. Losing a part would apparently yield a different whole. But just as a can in one place can be identical with a differing can in another place on one way of counting, so a six-pack at one time can be identical with a diminished six-pack at a later time on one way of counting.[26]

The received view is that there is one truth about how many things something with parts is. My proposed view is that there is more than one truth. Just as the cans are differing aspects of the six-pack counted as one, so the six-pack as one and the six-pack as six are differing aspects of the six-pack. This is not a subjective relativism. There is not a truth for me as opposed to a truth for you. There is objective reality. It is just that reality is multi-faceted.

How does this help with the characterizations of grief? The main point, again, is this: If the cans are in no way identical, then holding the six-pack is holding seven things. So if we reject that result, then we are committed to the cans being in some way

[25] This answer is my response to Wiggins's charge that an account like Geach's relative identity violates Leibniz's Law. David Wiggins, Ch. 1, esp. 24-28. I owe the example to Eugene Mills.
[26] For the reservation see Trenton Merricks, "Composition as Identity, Mereological Essentialism, and Counterpart Theory," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1999), p. 192-195.

identical. This is the identity that helps with literally characterizing grief. This view of parts and wholes makes Donne and Augustine right. Parts are literally identical with the whole in one facet of reality, on my proposed view. So different parts, insofar as they are identical with the whole, are identical with each other. Thus if the whole loses another part, the first part has literally lost that part as well. The dirt clod that remains has literally lost the one that fell into the ocean, insofar as both are identical with the continent. Likewise Augustine's half soul that remains is "halved" insofar as it is identical with the whole soul that is halved.

The unity of Augustine and his friend into a whole is emphasized even more by taking them to be joined by a single common part. Either way, the same soul is being talked about, whether it is regarded as one unit or two halves.

Thus we can make sense of there being a point of identity between the one who grieves and the one who died. We can even make sense of how the two seemingly very different images make the same point.

Still, the distinctness, the twoness of Augustine and his friend must be acknowledged. He conveys it by talking about the distinct halves of the soul or the distinct bodies. My metaphysics captures it by having him and his friend be two distinct things on another equally accurate count.

Donne's and Augustine's characterizations can be made literal sense of if we see that numerical identity depends on the facets of a multi-faceted reality. This view allows us to make sense of what we ordinarily say when grieving: "I've lost a part of myself." We are trying to convey that we are in a way identical with and in a way distinct from the person we grieve for. And we are.[27]

On this understanding of parts and wholes, grief is evidence of partial identity with others – not just intellectual evidence, but a deeply felt experience of that identity.

I've said that what is to be taken literally is that a common whole or a common part gives a point of identity. Even Augustine, orthodox Christian that he was, didn't think a soul played these roles. My preferred literal whole is on the model of the "fused

[27] A proper theory of parts and wholes may help in understanding love as well as grief. See Descartes's characterization of love in *The Passions of the Soul*, articles 79-83, in Elizabeth Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, trans., *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 366-

egos" or "plural subject" approach to social ontology taken by Margaret Gilbert.[28] Although I disagree with Gilbert about various metaphysical details, I agree with her approach of taking social wholes to be real and unitary. Additional unity between the members of social wholes might be provided by considering certain relevant universals—such as humanity—as common parts on the model of my theory of instantiation.[29] Here however, I just want to set up the possibility of distinct persons sharing a point of identity, leaving open how the account would go.

Given these results we can now explain, even if we assume the common egoistic outlook, how someone might find reason to do what seemed to make sense only on altruistic reasons; for the other is in some respect the self. That one's action benefits the other person thus becomes an authoritative reason. Likewise, even given the alternative altruistic outlook, someone might find reason to do what seemed to make sense only on egoistic reasons; for the self is in some respect the other.

This result may be right about friends and family, but what about people you are less close to such as students, not to mention any given member of humankind? Identity in some respect can hold in these cases as long as the importance of the identity can be a matter of degree depending on the relationship. Perhaps even the teacher/student relationship is enough to ground a point of identity of some importance. Perhaps even common humanity is enough, as Donne believes.

That there are degrees of importance is compatible with there being some wholes that make one partially identical to other things in ways of little importance, or in ways of importance one misjudges. Some points of identity warrant no grief; some warrant grief one doesn't know enough to feel. Likewise some points of identity warrant no concern for the correlative broader self; some warrant concern one doesn't know enough to recognize.

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368. See also Marilyn Friedman, "Romantic Love and Personal Autonomy," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 22 (1998), pp. 162-181.

[28] Margaret Gilbert, "Fusion: Sketch of a 'Contractual' Model," in *Living Together: Rationality, Sociality, and Obligation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), pp. 215-227, and "Group Wrongs and Guilt Feelings" *The Journal of Ethics* 1 (1997), pp. 65-84. Rovane argues for the possibility of a "group person"—a person composed of human persons—in order to argue that we ought not understand 'same person' as same human animal. However she does not defend the actuality of group persons and appeals to an account like Gilbert's for other social wholes. Carol Rovane, *The Bounds of Agency: An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 7, 137-141.

[29] "Instantiation as Partial Identity," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 79 (2001), pp. 449-464.

Note that I have addressed the problem of altruism not by giving egoistic reasons to justify altruistic ones. That project Sidgwick has shown to fail. Rather I have shown that in some, perhaps all, the cases in which it appeared that only altruistic reasons applied, egoistic reasons do as well.

It may seem that I have merely shifted the choice between egoistic and altruistic reasons, to a choice between being a narrow or a broad self. However the point is that one is each, in a different facet of reality. Both selves are real. The choice is not which self to be, broad or narrow, but which self to favor—one more "self-centered" in the customary sense or one in which the center has moved beyond the narrow self. In other words, the choice is whether to favor the self for which the other is distinct or the self for which the other is not distinct. There is much to be said concerning this choice, but it is a choice governed ultimately by egoistic reasons, and so one that makes sense either way, given the common egoistic outlook.[30]

My account differs from the powerful treatments of the problem of altruism offered by Nagel and Parfit. Despite their differences, both argue that if we have reasons to do for future selves, then we have reasons to do for others. This line of thought provides no answer, however, to a Sigwick who would argue by Modus Tollens that the short-term egoist would have no reason to do for future selves anything irrelevant to current pleasure or prudence. My approach would be the one Nagel dismisses as 'absurd' of showing a point of identity with future selves, just like the approach Nagel dismisses as 'mystical' of showing a point of identity with other persons.[31] Mine is not absurd, however, given my theory of aspects. Nor is it mystical in the sense of having a many be only apparently many and really one.[32] Rather my approach has what are really many in one facet of reality, be really one in another.

So our small sacrifices for our students would ultimately be irrational if we are just the narrow selves we might seem to be. But our selves are broader in some ways. In

[30] According to Keohane, both Pascal and Rousseau characterize ideal communities in which "individuals lose the narrow self to discover the true self in the whole." Nannerl O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 280. While I am in favor of at times shifting the center from the narrow self, I am suspicious of losing the narrow self in subordination to the whole.
[31] Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 99. Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: University Press, 1984).

some ways another person can literally be, in Augustine's words, one's "other self."[33,34,35]

[32] See the reconciliation of the three views of Brahman from the Upanishads in Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books), Ch. 3, esp. pp. 29-31. I'm grateful to Robert Luyster for this reference.

[33] "...I marvelled still more that he should be dead and I his other self living still." *Confessions,* Bk. IV, Ch. 6. See Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. by Martin Ostwald (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962), 1166a33, 1170b6.

[34] There is some suggestive empirical evidence in the study of twins that the high degree of altruism they demonstrate for each other and the extreme grief one feels upon the loss of the other correlate with the degree to which one regards the other as an extension of himself. Jerome Shaffer introduced me to the literature on twins. Jane Mersky Leder, *Brothers and Sisters: How they shape our lives,* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1991), Ch. 7. Ricardo C. Ainsle, *The Psychology of Twinship* (Lincoln, NE: The University of Nebraska Press, 1985). See also Nancy L. Segal, "Cooperation, Competition, and Altruism Within Twin Sets: A Reappraisal," *Ethology and Sociobiology* 5 (1984), pp. 163-177. Jerry Sazama pointed out that claims resembling some of mine are found in the mystical literature and recommended the writings of Thomas Kelly. For example Kelly describes what he calls spiritual fellowship in the following way: "It is as if the boundaries of our self were enlarged, as if we were within them and as if they were within us." Thomas R. Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (New York: Harper, 1941), p. 59. Scott Lehmann has shown me resembling claims in the "deep ecology" literature which seem to have their roots in mysticism. For example see Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985), pp. 65-73, and John Seed, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming, and Arne Naess, *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1988), pp. 19-30.

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