

this certainly reflects my own “historicism” as an erstwhile Marxist, the region’s problems at this stage seem to me so overwhelmingly a matter of the political economy of a post-communist world that I am dubious how much difference philosophy can really make absent “material” global changes.

But doubtless this response is a manifestation of that very same vulgar and mechanical approach just cited. The important thing is that Paget Henry’s stimulating and innovative book has put Afro-Caribbean philosophy on the philosophical map, and the debates can now begin—which is, after all, precisely what he wanted. All credit should go to him for that considerable and pathbreaking accomplishment.

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E. J. Lowe, *Subjects of Experience*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. x, 209.

Subjects of Experience is as ambitious as it is contrary to the spirit of most of contemporary analytic metaphysics and philosophy of mind. The reader needs a scorecard to keep track of all the currently unfashionable positions that Lowe adopts in this courageous little book. While the work ranges broadly over many topics, Lowe’s account of the self is at its core, and will be the focus of this review. However, it should be noted that one of the virtues of *Subjects of Experience* is its broad perspective. In addition to the book’s central discussion of the self, there are chapters on mental causation, perception, action, self-knowledge, and language, thought and imagination.

Lowe begins his discussion of personal identity with the following query: Are persons substances or modes? Although the language is somewhat antiquated (as Lowe recognizes) the distinction is familiar in the current literature. The view that human persons are substances takes one of two forms: animalism (this term is not used by Lowe) and dualism. According to the former, human persons are human animals; according to the latter, human persons are essentially immaterial entities. In contrast to the substantialist view, represented by what is typically called the *psychological continuity theory*, is the view that being a person is a mode. According to Lowe, a mode is “any concrete non-substantial individual,” paradigm examples of which are events, processes, and states (22). The psychological theory that Lowe contrasts with the substantialist perspective is that persons are “wholly constituted by *psychological or mental* events, processes and states.” We will follow Lowe’s ordering and consider first animalism and then the psychological-mode view.

According to Lowe, animalism claims that persons are biological substances, that they are a “kind of animal” (15). Lowe’s chief objection to animalism can be put in the form of a dilemma: animalism “threatens either to promote what is (to my mind) an ethically dubious anthropomorphic speciesism or else to play havoc with zoological taxonomies” (15). How does animalism threaten these things? The animalist claims that persons are not only substances, but are natural substances (since she claims that persons are a kind of animal). But a natural substance is the sort of thing that is among the subjects of science. So if persons are natural kinds, and in particular are animal kinds, then a taxonomy of animal life will have to include them. So somewhere in the terrestrial mammalian taxonomy (presumably subordinate to the genus *homo sapiens*) will be the classification *person*. This looks to be hopelessly anthropomorphic. For while it doesn’t rule out the possibility that other animals could be persons, it does, Lowe avers, make it “most improbable.” Why? Because animalism is the claim that persons are natural substances and natural substances are the subjects of natural law. So if persons are natural substances, then there must be natural laws that advert to them qua persons. If there are such laws, then surely they are laws of zoology. But do we really think that there are zoological laws about persons that would be true of all persons, regardless of their zoological kind? Lowe asks us to suppose that there were amphibious persons called “bolgs”; would we want to insist that if they are persons then there must be zoological (as opposed to psychological) laws that hold for both humans and bolgs? That there are such laws is, Lowe rightly avers, highly dubious.

Having dispensed with the biological theory, Lowe turns his attention to the psychological continuity view. Lowe’s fundamental criticism is that the identity conditions for mental state particulars make essential reference to the individual who possesses them. For example, my perceptual state of now seeing my computer screen has as an essential property its being a state of mine. But if the identity conditions of mental state particulars include reference to the individuals who have them, then on pain of circularity, these particulars can play no role in the individuation of persons.

Having rejected the biological substances and psychological modes accounts of personal identity, Lowe argues for what he calls a non-Cartesian variety of substance dualism. The view is non-Cartesian because it allows mental substance to possess physical characteristics. While we are immaterial entities, we nevertheless possess qualities that can be directly perceived (assuming physical objects in general are directly perceived); and on Lowe’s view, some of these properties are strictly applicable to our selves, and such ascriptions are not a mere shorthand for saying that we have bodies that possess those properties.

I’ll spend the little space I have remaining making critical remarks about Lowe’s argument against animalism. The problem is that he mis-describes the position. According to Lowe, the animalist view is that persons are biological

kinds. This can be understood, Lowe tells us on page 18, in one of two ways, both of which are deeply problematic. It might mean that persons are *real biological kinds*. This means that human beings fall under two different substantial animal kinds: *homo sapiens* and persons. The most significant problem with this suggestion is that one's membership in a natural kind goes a long way toward defining that individual's essence. If one is a member of two biological kinds, then one's individual essence will have to incorporate the essential properties of two kinds. But the persistence conditions of the two kinds are likely to be very different. So, for example, consider again a bolg. The bolg, qua amphibian, can survive the change from possessing gills and a tail to possessing lungs and four legs. But, Lowe asserts, humans cannot survive such an alteration. Now both bolgs and humans are also supposed to be members of the biological kind *person*. The question now is whether the persistence conditions of personhood allow persons to survive amphibian metamorphosis. If they do, "then it follows, absurdly, that an individual human being *can* survive the change qua person but cannot survive it qua member of *homo sapiens*. If they do not, then it follows, equally absurdly, that an individual bolg *cannot* survive the change qua person but can survive it qua bolg" (20).

The other horn of the dilemma has the animalist weakening her claim so that the kind in question is nominal: the kind membership is "secured merely by the possession of some set of 'defining characteristics'" (18). The difficulty now is that it appears "obscure in what sense it could still be insisted that the concept of a person is essentially a *biological one*" (18). However, on Lowe's account of the animalist view this is precisely the goal of the theory: to give an account of the nature of persons.

Lowe's characterization of animalism is doubly unfortunate. Not only is the claim that the concept of *person* is essentially biological severely implausible, but it is not the view of those (like David Wiggins) who are Lowe's intended target. Animalism, as it is found in the contemporary personal identity literature, is *not* the claim that persons have a dual biological nature (one from the standard zoological taxonomy, one qua persons). Rather the animalist thinks that you and I are essentially animals; our persistence conditions are set by our animal natures. We survive as long (and only as long) as the particular animals we are survive. Our continued personhood is not essential to our persistence. If I end up in a vegetative state, it is I who continues to exist even though I am no longer a person. In short, the animalist will claim that personhood is at most a nominal biological kind.

Lowe's criticism of the animal view goes awry because he does not separate the question of what is necessary and sufficient for the continued existence of beings like you and me from the question of the nature of personhood. The

animalist has nothing to say about the second issue but offers a theory of the first.

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Douglas Ehring, *Causation and Persistence: A Theory of Causation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. Pp. x, 191.

This book ranks with the best of contemporary work on the metaphysics of causation, both because of its thorough and unified treatment of the literature and because its author faces head-on the most difficult foundational questions about causality: How, at the most basic level, do causes bring about their effects? What are the mechanisms operating in the world to bind its parts together? Ehring's answers to these questions are clear, original, and supported by sophisticated arguments. The book is a fine example of what C. B. Martin calls "ontological seriousness," a concern for the truthmakers of (in this case) our causal claims, for figuring out *how causality works* at the most fundamental level.

Ehring's attention for the bulk of the work is on causation's singularist component: the local, intrinsic tie between cause and effect. He faults most mainstream views for neglecting this in favor of causation's generalist, or type-level, component. The price of ignoring the intrinsic tie comes out most clearly in his extended discussion of preemption (chap. 1). Neo-Humean, counterfactual, and probabilistic theories fail to handle certain cases of preemption, either making preempted causes efficacious or wrongly denying efficacy to actual (preempting) causes. The most troublesome cases are those involving direct or "occurrent" preemption, in which the preempted cause, had it been allowed to be active, would have directly brought about its effect. Ehring's complex examples here do not permit quick summary, but the central idea is that a purely generalist theory, however sophisticated, does not take into account local factors internal to a case of preemption, factors needed to distinguish actual causes from the preempted ones.

One view that does take such internal factors into account is the transference theory, on which the singularist component is the literal transference of something—traditionally, energy or some similar quantity—from cause to effect. Only here do we find the resources to distinguish genuine causes from preempted ones in the most difficult cases. In the book's central chapters, Ehring develops an account that, while strictly speaking not the transference theory, bears a "family resemblance" to it (10).