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The Identity of Persons: Narrative Constitution or Psychological Continuity?*

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates Marya Schechtman's narrativist account of self and personal identity, which she dubbed the "Narrative Self-Constitution View". I lay out the main features of this conception by contrasting it with the views of Derek Parfit, a major contemporary representative of the psychological relationalist tradition originating from Locke and Hume, to which Schechtman's theory, and narrativism in general, may be seen as a major challenge. In the discussion I will also refer to some other notions of the self, namely the minimal self conceptions of Dan Zahavi and Galen Strawson which, I take it, are also relevant for the reconstruction and evaluation of the narrativist *vs* psychological relationalist debate.

I will proceed as follows. First, I provide a brief summary of Parfit's and Schechtman's account of the nature of persons and of personal identity. Then I discuss some points of Schechtman's criticism of Parfit's view, focusing on memory, and argue that Parfit's notion of q-memory may be saved from Schechtman's objections. As a consequence, Parfit's psychological relationalist view of diachronic personal identity, which is elaborated in terms of the notion of q-memory (and q-belief, q-desire and other q-states), need not be discarded necessarily. However, I also argue that Parfit's view, according to which what matters is only the holding of R-relation, is also wanting. I maintain, in contrast to Parfit, that in order relations that matter to hold, identification is necessary. Lastly I discuss possible relations between identification, minimal self and narrative self.

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II. SCHECHTMAN AND PARFIT: THE NATURE OF PERSONS AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

1. Parfit' reductionist view of persons

According to Parfit's reductionist view of persons:

(1) A person's existence just consists in the existence of a brain and a body, and a series of interrelated physical and mental events.

(2) A person is an entity that is *distinct* from a brain and a body and such series of events, that *has* a body and brain, and *has* thoughts, desires etc. But it is *not a separately existing* entity. This view about the relation of persons and their mental states and their relations may be characterized as ontologically reductionist but conceptually non-reductionist.[1]

(3) The facts that determine a particular person's existence can be described in *an impersonal way*, that is, without either presupposing the identity of the person, or explicitly claiming that the experiences in the person's life are had by that person, or even without explicitly claiming that that person exists. (This amounts to the claim that particular mental states can be identified without reference to their subject, the person who "has" them. Cf. Parfit 1984. 189 ff.)

The identity of a person through time, according to the psychological relationalist view, is constituted by *psychological continuity and/or connectedness*,[2] what Parfit calls, following Russell, the 'R-relation'. *Psychological connectedness* is the holding of direct psychological connections. *Psychological continuity* between two persons existing at different times is the holding of overlapping changes of strong (more than 50%) psychological connectedness between them. A person P_2 at t_2 is identical with person P_1 at t_1, if they are *psychologically continuous and/or connected*, and *there is no other* person P_2* at t_2, with whom P_1 at t_1 is also psychologically continuous and/or connected.

From the above characterization of persons it follows that it is *possible* that the same human being may not be not the same person at different times. Parfit not only acknowledges but welcomes this consequence. He asserts, however, that this does not pose a threat to "what matters", i.e. to what we take personal identity to be important for. What matters, according to him, are the following relations between persons which are essential for personal existence: respon-

[1] Similarly to Hume's account of the existence of nations. According to him, nations are constituted by their citizens, territory, institutions, culture etc., but they are distinct from their constituents in the sense that they have different properties; many predicates of nations cannot be predicated truthfully or meaningfully of their citizens, territory, institutions etc.

[2] Parfit uses slightly different definitions of R-relation in different contexts (see Belzer 1996), but this need not concern us here.

sibility, compensation, survival and self-interested concern. According to the traditional view, a person is responsible for a past action, if he or she is identical with the agent of that action. Similarly, a person is entitled for compensation for past harms of a person if they are identical. Furthermore, a person's survivor is the future person who is identical with him or her; and a person is justified in having a special concern for a future person, if the future person is identical with him or her. All these relations that matter are grounded in the identity of persons. Parfit, in contrast, holds that it is not identity but the holding of R-relation that grounds these relations. A person is responsible for a past person's deed or entitled for compensation for the harms suffered by a past person if they are R-related. And a person's survivor is the future person with whom he or she is R-related; and a person is justified in having a special, self-interested concern for a future person if they are R-related. But R-related persons are not necessarily identical, they may be different persons.

2. Schechtman's non-reductionism: the Narrative Self-Constitution View

Central to Schechtman's view is the notion of narrative, which she characterizes, following Bruner, as follows:

> A narrative is composed of a unique sequence of events, mental states, happenings, involving human beings as characters and actors. These are its constituents. But these constituents do not, as it were, have a life of meaning of their own. Their meaning is given by their place in the overall configuration of the sequence as a whole – its plot or *fabula*. (Bruner 1990. 43–44.)

More in detail:

> To say that a person's life is narrative in character, is at least partly to claim, that *no time-slice is fully intelligible*, or even definable *outside the context of life* in which it appears.
> […]
> We expect a person's beliefs, desires, values, emotions, actions and experiences to *hang together in a way* that makes what she says and does and feels *psychologically intelligible*. The general gist of this observation can be captured by considering the distinction we recognize between fictional characters who are well drawn and those who are not. Sometimes the collection of actions, thoughts, emotions, and characteristics ascribed to a character make sense – we can understand her reactions, motivations and decisions – they pull together a robust picture. Other times, however, we are at a loss to put together the information we are given about a character.
> […]

> A parallel distinction can be drawn in the case of biographical and autobiographical narratives. There are stories of lives, and the subjects of these stories can be well-defined ones just as the protagonists of the fictional narratives can be.
>
> Roughly, then, the narrative self-constitution view requires that a person have a self-conception that coheres to produce a well-defined character. (Schechtman 1996. 96–97.)

Thus Schechtman's conception of personhood essentially relates to the concept of narrative. According to her view:

> i. A person emerges when and by a conscious being begins to conceive himself as a persistent entity constant through time; and this attitude is grounded by interpreting his or her experiences, acts and events of life into a *narrative*. The – emergent – person, who is a "product" of organizing memories, experiences and other mental states into a narrative, is logically prior to his or her experiences, hence cannot be reduced to them.[3]
> ii. A person is a *holistic* complex, his or her mental states are not discrete and cannot be identified atomistically. The contents of experiences, by being organized into a narrative, mutually inform and influence each other. (The "soup" or "stew" theory of the self, as she dubs it).

Schechtman's account of the diachronic identity of persons is also connected to the notion of narrative, and differs fundamentally from Parfit's psychological relationist view. She maintains that

> iii. The self, constituted by experiences narratively organized, is a persistent entity, remaining identical through time. The reason is that when a conscious being conceives his experiences and life events in a coherent narrative, he or she *eo ipso* conceives the protagonist of this narrative as a persistent entity.
> iv. Persons are *temporarily extended* entities. A single consciousness over time is constituted by those particular mental states and features instantiated at different times which mutually influence and inform each other. They are part of the same person because they belong to the same narrative.

Schechtman's account of what matters, i.e. responsibility and the other three features, is also tied to narrativity. She holds, in line with the traditional view, that a person is responsible for a past deed, if he or she is identical with its agent,

[3] This may sound circular, since, according to i., the person *emerges from* organizing *experiences* (memories of past experiences and acts), how could then the person be logically prior to experiences? This objection may be avoided by the assumption that the phenomenological nature of the experiences change by being arranged into a narrative and thereby experiencing them *as the* (same persisting) *person's* experiences.

if they are the same person. However, according to her narrativist approach, being the same person is accounted for as the agent's being the protagonist of the narrator's life narrative. So, according to Schechtman, Parfit's "re-identification question", i.e. the formulation of the question of responsibility for past actions as a question about the re-identification of persons, is misguided (and similarly concerning the other features that matter). A person who emerges by conceiving himself as the protagonist of his life narrative is *eo ipso* persistent, therefore it does not make sense to ask whether some criterion is met which would *ground* the re-identification of the person with the agent of the a past action. Instead, what is relevant concerning responsibility (and the other features) is the "characterization question" addressing which experiences, beliefs, emotions, psychological character traits constitute a particular person; and the issue whether an act may or may not be credited to the person ought to be based on this. The re-identification question is also relevant, according to Schechtman, but it concerns the identity of the *body*. Re-identifying persons via their bodies constrains but does not determine the kind of psychological configurations that constitute a single psychological subject.

III. SCHECHTMAN'S CRITICISM OF PARFIT

1. Schechtman's objections against Parfit's reductionist view

According to Schechtman, the criterion of diachronic re-identification of persons proposed by Parfit relies on the following assumptions:

i. Persons (i.e. the mental states which constitute them) are impersonally identifiable.
ii. Particular mental states are atomistically/discretely identifiable.
iii. The nature of episodic memory is correctly accounted by the so-called "storehouse-theory" of recollection.[4]

Schechtman rejects all these claims. I will discuss in detail only i. the question whether an impersonal identification of a person is possible. Schechtman's major objection against i. derives from the phenomenology of remembering, but further support is provided by her rejection of ii. and iii. I do not intend to dis-

[4] According to this view, memory is seen as a sort of warehouse in which our ideas and experiences are laid away for later retrieval in their original form. The "storehouse" conception was arguably held by Plato, Augustine, Hobbes, Hume and Locke. Schechtman does not claim that contemporary psychological continuity theories, or Parfit in particular, explicitly embrace the storehouse theory, but she claims that it fits well with their implicit understanding of remembering that grounds their account of diachronic identity of persons. Cf. Schechtman 1996b. 6 ff.

cuss the issue of atomistic identifiability and the storehouse-theory of memory here, but let me note in passing that, arguably, even accepting Schechtman's rejection of ii. and iii. does not necessarily undermine a Parfit-style psychological relationist account of persons and personal identity.

One strategy to show this could be to argue that the holistic nature of the content of mental states is less comprehensive than Schechtman takes it to be. Perhaps a more plausible view is a sort of "molecularism", according to which the changes of particular mental states affect not the whole web but only a smaller set of mental states the contents of which influence each other and liable to change together. Such molecularism does not necessarily contradict the idea that a particular person at a time may be identified by the set of interrelated mental states, and that diachronic identity may be accounted for in terms of psychological continuity and/or connectedness.

As for the storehouse-theory, Schechtman's objections are based on results from empirical research on memory. (See e.g. Barsalou 1988, Ross 1989, Barclay–DeCooke 1988.) According to these, autobiographic memory consists of episodic memories of particular events (experiences or acts) to a much lesser degree than it was earlier supposed; the majority of autobiographical memories are condensed memories of certain experience or activity *types*, with which one was typically engaged in a certain period. Furthermore, many of our episodic memories are constructed, moreover, it is often the case that such constructed memories are literally false: the events the subjects (honestly) seem to remember did not in fact happen. Interestingly, however, these false memories often correctly characterize the nature of the (falsely) remembered real events or situations.[5]

Again, it may be possible that Parfit's view of diachronic identity can be accommodated with the constructive theory of memory. For the essence of his psychological view is that identity is preserved if the process of change in of the overall content of a mind is continuous (i.e. not abrupt) and its pace is relatively slow. But diachronic identity of a person does not only consist in the availability of (veridical) episodic memories but it also involves the persistence of other kinds of mental characteristics, psychological character traits, long-terms goals, moral values and so on, which are not constructed in the manner of episodic memories. Furthermore, even the condensed nature of many autobiographic memories seems to be no hindrance for identifying one's past activity in a certain period of his or her life. The constructedness of episodic memory however, seems to pose a more serious threat. But the extent to which constructedness threatens diachronic identification based on psychological continuity depends on the proportion of distorted memories. Moreover, even having a large number

[5] See e.g. Neisser's discussion of John Dean's testimony at the Watergate hearings about his conversations with president Nixon. Neisser 1990. Cf. Schechtman 1990b. 8 ff.

of false memories, which nonetheless characterize the remembered situation correctly, may not be fatal for a Parfitian memory/psychological continuity theory either.

2. Schechtman's circularity objection

After these brief remarks about the constructedness of memory and the discrete identifiability of mental states and their connection with the psychological relationist view of personal identity, I turn to Schechtman's objection against the possibility of an impersonal identification of persons.

The argument of Schechtman against Parfit may be seen as a twist on Butler's classical circularity objection to Locke's "memory criterion", according to which:

> (It is) self-evident that consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute personal identity, any more then knowledge in any other case, can constitute truth which it presupposes (Butler 1736, in Perry 1975. 100).

Butler claims that it is a conceptual truth that a person can only remember his or her own experiences. Parfit, in reply to this objection, introduces the notion of q-memory (quasi-memory). Accordingly, P_2 at t_2 q-remembers a particular mental event (say, a perceptual experience) with the content M, if:

> i. P_2 at t_2 seems to remember a mental event, with the content M.
> ii. There existed a person P_1 who actually had a mental event with the content M at t_1.
> iii. The memory-like mental event with content M of P_2 at t_2 was caused by the mental event with the content M of P_1 at t_1 by any cause.

Think of the following situation, for example. John and Jane spend their vacation together in Venice. After dinner John goes for a walk while Jane stays at the hotel and falls asleep. John sits down on St. Mark's Square by the water. The weather is stormy: at 11. p.m. John sees a huge lightning vis-a-vis, striking the bell-tower of the church San Giorgio Maggiore.

According to Parfit's suggestion it is conceivable that at some later date Jane q-remembers John's visual experience of that lighting. This means that

> i. John in fact had a visual impression of a lightning that stroke the bell-tower of San Giorgio Maggiore at t_1.
> ii. Jane seems to remember a particular visual impression of a lightning striking San Giorgio Maggiore similar to John's at t_2.
> iii. Jane's apparent memory is caused by John's experience in the right way (i.e. by any reliable mechanism, including science-fiction devices).

Schechtman's objection is the following. Many conscious experiences are personal, in the sense that their content is essentially linked to the life of their subject. Schechtman illustrates this by borrowing Edward Casey's characterization of the content of memories. Casey writes:

> I recall going to the movie *Small Change* a few weeks ago […] The lights dimmed, and *Small Change* began directly. (Or was there not a short feature first? – I cannot say for sure.) The film was in French, with English subtitles. I have only a vague recollection of the spoken words; in fact, I cannot remember any single word or phrase, though I certainly remember the characters *as speaking*. The same indefiniteness applies to the subtitles, at which I furtively glanced when unable to follow the French. Of the music in the film I have no memory at all – indeed, not just of *what* it was but *whether* there was any music at all. In contrast with this, I retain a very vivid visual image of the opening scene, in which a stream of school children are viewed rushing home, seemingly in a downhill direction all the way. The other two scenes also stand out in my present recollection: an infant's fall from a window of a high-rise apartment (the twenty-ninth floor?) and the male teacher (whose name along with all others in the film I have forgotten) lecturing passionately to his class about child abuse. Interspersed between these scenes is a medley of less vividly recalled episodes, ranging from fairly distinct (the actions of the child-abusing mother) to quite indistinct (e.g. children's recitations in the classroom). While I am recollecting this uneven and incomplete sequence of filmic incidents, I find myself at the same time remembering my own children's ongoing reactions to the film. I do not remember their behaviour in detail but only as a kind of generalised response consisting of laughing, whispered questions, outright comments, and the like. These reaction are as intrinsic to the memory as the unfolding of the film itself; so too is the mixture of pleasure and exasperation which I felt being located, as it were, *between* children and film. Suddenly my memory of *Small Change* comes to an end; the lights go up, and we leave through a side exit near us […] (Casey 1987. 25–26.)

Note that the contents of these memories in some way express that it was *the remembering subject*, Casey, *who* was in the movie-theater, as it involves being there with *his* wife and *his* children in the town *he* was living etc. In other words, the phenomenology of his memories are tainted by being *his* memories, by the fact the objects of the experiences he remembers had a special relation to him.

Now, think of the case when someone else, e.g. Jane from our above story, q-remembers Casey`s experiences. Then either:

> The phenomenal character of these q-memories *does not involve* that some of the objects or persons in the q-remembered experience *are related to the life of Casey*, to the *subject of the experiences* q-remembered. Then the phenomenal character of her q-memory is quite different from Casey`s memory: it appears as seen pictures and heard

> sounds following each other, for example, of a woman with children, in a movie and in a city, but *not as of Jane's* wife and *her* children, or *as of her* hometown (as she has no wife, children etc.).

or

> It *does involve* that some of the objects of the q-remembered experience *are related to the life of Casey*, i.e. *the subject of the experiences* q-remembered. But then the content of the q-memories is in *manifest contradiction* with Jane's other memories and other mental states. Therefore such a q-memory would have a very strange phenomenal character: Jane would recall being in a movie-theater with her wife and children, reading the English subtitles in order to understand the French film, while at the same time she is also aware that she has no wife and children and has a very good command of French… The phenomenal character of this confused state is surely different from that of Casey, who simply remembers his wife and children and the movie.

In sum: either way, the phenomenal character of Jane's q-memory and Casey's memory of the same past event would not be the same. As a consequence, memory cannot be analysed as *q-memory with a normal cause* (bodily continuity of the same human being), therefore Butler`s circularity objection is not answered.

Furthermore, the same applies to other sort of quasi-states, such as q-beliefs, q-intentions and the rest: they cannot replace normal mental states. Hence Parfit's contention that it is R-relation that matters (concerning responsibility, compensation, survival and self-interested concern) cannot hold, since R-relation is defined as a relation between persons who are not identical, but whose psychological relations can be interpreted as q-states of the other person's states (for example, a later person can q-remember an earlier person's experiences, or a later person can q-intend an earlier person's intentions, with whom he or she is R-related).

3. Reply to Schechtman's circularity objection

Schechtman is right, the phenomenological character of a memory state about one's own earlier experiences is often different from the phenomenological character of a q-memory of another person about the same event, since either the phenomenal character of the q-memory lacks the personal aspect the content of memory has, or it has it, but then it is manifestly inconsistent with the content of other mental states of the q-remember.

But we may change the definition of q-memory somewhat by adding a *further condition*, namely:

iv. A particular q-memory relation can only take place between psychologically continuous persons.[6]

If we accept iv., I maintain, Schechtman's objection does not hold: memory and q-memory experiences of a particular past event will have the same (or similar) phenomenal character. When a *q-memory*

(1) Has a normal cause (i.e. the persistence of the body),

or

(2) Was caused by non-branching replication (one replica comes to existence and the original person dies),

or

(3) Was caused by branching replication (i.e. by fission: one or more replicas come to existence and the original person also continues to exist),

then *the q-memory* of the later person(s) *can be consistent and coherent*[7] with the other memories and further mental states of the q-remembering subject.

This is because in case 1) q-remembering is simply remembering – hence if the memory event is consistent and coherent with the other mental states of the subject, then so is the q-memory event. In cases 2) and 3), non-branching and branching replication, if *the new environment* (the space, time and social environment into which the replica is "born" and where he or she continues the life of the original person) is relatively *"close" to the original*, then the replica's mental contents will be largely *consistent and coherent* with the content of his or her q-memory. *If the new environment is very "distant"*, spatially or temporarily or socially, – for example, the replica emerges on an alien planet, or at a much later date, or in a very different social environment, (as it happens, for example, in Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*), then the q-memory will be *strongly inconsistent and incoherent* with the content of other mental states of the replica. To put it another way: *if the trajectory* leading from the subject of the remembered experience to the current replica *is not (too) gappy*, then the *consistence and coherence* of the mind of the replica *prevails*.

It may be objected, however, that a *q-memory may be inconsistent and incoherent* with other memories and further mental states of the q-remembering subject, *if he or she is a fusion* of two (or more) past persons, q-remembering one of his or her predecessor's experience. This is true, but *irrelevant*. The reason is that iv., the requirement of psychological continuity, is not met in the case of fusion. If

[6] I understand Parfit's original formulation of psychological continuity as a relation that allows for temporary gaps in the existence of the psychological continuous persons. In my view, this is in line with Parfit's intended understanding of replication and teletransportation.

[7] At least to the degree in which the mental states of a normal person are consistent and coherent.

the content of John's and Jane's mind are fused, then the resulting mind would be inconsistent and incoherent to a great degree. But the relation between the minds of Jane and the fused person "John-and-Jane" would not be psychologically continuous, in Parfit's sense, because there would be no overlapping chains of strong psychological connectedness between Jane's mind just before the fusion and John-and-Jane's mind right after the fusion. (Except in cases when the contents of mind of the predecessor persons to be fused, John and Jane, were very similar just before the fusion. But then, the mental contents of the fused-person would *not* be inconsistent and incoherent.)

Admittedly, condition iv., by which we can answer Schechtman's objection, is not included in Parfit's original definition of q-memory. For example, Jane at t_2, when q-remembering the experience of the lightning John saw, and John at t_1, when seeing the lightning, are not supposed to be psychologically continuous. But, I believe, condition iv. seems to conform to the general spirit of psychological continuity theories. In my view, psychological continuity theories were motivated by providing an account of personal identity, which, on the one hand, emphasizes the importance of the *psychological relations* between persons, but does not appeal to the concept of a persistent *mental substance*, while on the other, also emphasizes that – although *bodily continuity is* an important aspect of personal identity –*numerical identity of the body* is not a necessary requirement.

Furthermore, the motivation of the early psychological continuity theorists was supposedly *not* to propose an account, according to which numerically *different human beings*, *with different bodies* and *different life histories* (which evolved in different spatio-temporal and social environments), i.e. persons who are not psychologically continuous, *could be smoothly psychologically connected* so that the resulting minds would be "normal", that is, similar to minds having psychologically connections only with persons psychologically continuous with them. In my view, this latter understanding of fusion (which seems to be supported by some writings of Parfit, see e.g. Parfit 1971) goes beyond the original (and, to me, legitimate) ambitions of psychological continuity theories of personal identity.

4. A variant of the circularity objection based on immunity to error through misidentification (IEM)

According to some philosophers, for example, Wittgenstein and Shoemaker, memory–states are immune to error through misidentification (IEM). (Cf. Wittgenstein 1958. 66–67; and Shoemaker 1968.) This means that a subject cannot err about who is the subject of a particular memory, i.e. whether it was he or she or some other person the experience of whom he or she remembers or seems to remember.

This is not to say, of course, that we cannot have false memories. A memory can be false if its content is not veridical. This may happen is several ways. For example, an event of recollection may be of an experience that really took place in the past, and the content of the experience was veridical at the time of having it, but later recollection of the original experience is distorted. Another possibility is that the content of an experience was non-veridical already in the original situation, and this false content is recalled correctly. Or there was no such experience at all, which the subject seems to remember, but it was made up entirely by him. (Either stimulated by external causes, as in the case of certain law processes, where criminal suspects make up false memories under the influence of the investigators; or by internal causes, when a subject expects that the event he or she seems to remember must have happened, based on his or her other beliefs and desires.) So memories can be false.

But they cannot be false because of misidentifying their subject. Proponents of the view that memory is immune to error through misidentification argue, that we identity ourselves as subjects of mental states in a special way (and perhaps also as subjects of bodily states that when we experience as states of *our body*). We identify ourselves as subjects in a direct and infallible first-personal way, differently from the way we identify objects. Such direct, first-personal identification of one's self is at work also in the case of remembering. Such identification of the self does not assume any ascriptive knowledge about the self; identification through description applies only when we identify ourselves as objects.

Thus the objection against the psychological relationist view based on the immunity-claim is as follows. Since it is impossible to err about the subject of the remembered experience, therefore it simply makes no sense to identity a past person with a present one based on the holding of R-relation between them. For this would be a case of ascriptive identification, i.e. a mode of identification when there is a prior description of the nature of one's self and identification would consist in checking whether the past person satisfies this description.

5. Reply to the IEM-based circularity objection

One may reply to this objection as follows. If fusion were a real possibility then mistaking the subject of a remembered experience seems conceivable. Clairvoyance may be another example. Clairvoyance may be seen as a kind of q-remembering, because telepathic "seeing" of some past experience of another person satisfies the definition of q-memory. And it seems conceivable that a clairvoyant person misidentifies the subject of a mental state he or she directly experiences. Such cases could occur when the "seer" would mistake a recollection of his

or her previous mental state for a veridical clairvoyant state about some other person's experience. Since such cases are conceivable, it is not necessary that a person could not be mistaken about who is the subject of some experience he or she remembers or q-remembers. Therefore, I maintain, this sort of circularity objection is not successful. It is not true that psychological continuity cannot establish personal identity because a person can only be psychologically continuous with oneself, since a person can have memory-like states only about his or her past experiences, as one cannot err about the subject of experiences he or she seems to remember.

IV. THE INEVIBILITY OF IDENTIFICATION

As already discussed, according to the traditional view personal identity is required for what matters. According to Parfit's alternative conception, what is important for what matters is not identity, but the holding of R-relation. If two persons are R-related, then the relations of responsibility, eligibility for compensation, survival and self-interested concern hold between them. If a person is not R-related to another (even if they are bodily continuous), then ascribing responsibility to him or her for the acts of the other person is not justified (and similar considerations apply to the other three features).

My view differs from both. I hold, in opposition to the traditional view and in line with Parfit, that identity is not a matter of fact. But I also hold, in opposition to Parfit, that the holding of the R-relation is not sufficient for what matters. In contrast with both, I hold that identity is necessary for what matters, but identity is established by identification.

Thus identification is necessary for what matters. Merely the holding of R-relation is not sufficient, for consider: would *simply* the fact and my knowledge of it that the mental states of some other past person were very similar to mine, i.e. we are "psychological twins", as it were, would bring about my taking responsibility for that other person's deeds? And similarly: would the mere fact and my knowledge of it that some other person is my psychological twin induce a special concern in me for his or her well-being? Or, were I to die, would I then believe that my psychological twin is my survivor? I do not think so. In order to take responsibility for a past person's deeds, I have to identity myself with that person. But merely being strongly psychologically connected or even psychologically continuous with a person seems not sufficient for identifying myself with him or her. And the same applies to survival and self-interested concern: strong psychological connectedness or even psychological continuity seems not sufficient for considering a future person to be my survivor or to be worthy of special, self-interested concern. I have to identify myself with that future person to view him as my survivor who deserves my special concern.

My view may also be formulated as claiming that identity does matter, but identity is created by identification, it is not a pre-existing fact which is recognized by the act of identification.

V. WHAT GROUNDS IDENTIFICATION?

If identification is necessary for what matters, the question then emerges: what is the origin of identification? Here are some possible options.

R-relation. Identification may be founded merely upon being R-related: simply, if a person is R-related to another person this fact may itself brings about it that he or she identifies with the other. However, this does not always seem to be the case. Even in the normal course of events it sometimes happens that a person does not identity him- or herself with the agent of a past deed with whom he is R-related. There are also pathological cases in which subjects do not identify (or even explicitly reject identifying) themselves with the subject of "their" past actions. And there are also conceivable cases of replication when it seems plausible to assume that the replica may not identify him or herself with the "original" person, or that a person does not identify with a future replica. Such cases may be when the environments of the replica and the original person differ significantly (i.e. they are very far from each other, temporarily or spatially or socially).

Minimal self. Another option may be to assume that there exist minimal selves in Zahavi's sense (cf. Zahavi 2006, 2010), and identification is based on the identity of our minimal self. According to Zahavi, all episodic memory-states involve an "elusive sense of presence", i.e. the content of memory experiences involve the feeling that the subject of the remembered experience was *me*, the same person as the remembering subject. This supposed phenomenological feature of memory experiences Zahavi terms as (having) a minimal self. A minimal self is "transcendent in immanence" as Husserl put it (Husserl 1976. 123–124): it does not exist beyond the content of conscious experience, but it is permanently present within all conscious experiences (cf. Zahavi 2011. 327–328).

If we accept this view, a further question may also arise concerning the origin of minimal self. One option is that certain *relations*, namely the holding of R-relation between (the mental states of) different persons cause the emergence of the minimal self, our sense of diachronic unity. A person identifies with the subject of a remembered experience, because he has a sense of being the same subject.

There are several arguments against such reductionist views, which aim to explain the feeling of being the same subject over time in terms of certain *relations* between certain mental states, instantiated at different times. Hume, for example, suggested in the *Treatise* that the illusion of a persisting self is creat-

ed by psychological mechanisms based on the similarity of content of, and the causal relations between mental states. Our mind tends to judge that mental states (perceptions) that have similar content are about the same object. (Hume 1739/2007. *Of Personal Identity*. Book I Part IV, Section VI.) Therefore, if the mental states of a person remembered are similar to a sufficient degree to the mental states of the remembering person this automatically induces the belief in the rememberer of being identical with the remembered person. However, as it is well-known, Hume revoked this proposal in the *Appendix*, and admitted not being able to conceive how *relations* between completely *distinct* (ontologically independent) mental states could be the source of the belief in the existence of having a persistent self (Hume 1739/2007. *Appendix*).

Husserl, and following him Zahavi, formulated another objection against such relationist views (cf. Zahavi 2005. 49–72). According to objection, the minimal self cannot be constructed out of the particular contents of consciousness and relations among them, because the synchronic unity of consciousness presupposes time-consciousness, which, in turn, presupposes the diachronic identity of the self. The reason is that time-consciousness is rooted in the structure of conscious experiences. Conscious experiences are not momentary; they are more like blocks or fields: beyond the actual experience the experience just passed is still retained in consciousness (retention), while we also have expectations about the upcoming next experiences (protention). But such triadic structure to be possible, the subject of experience must be identical, i.e. unchanging in which the stream of experience sets forth (Husserl 1952. 98; 1974. 363). Hence time-consciousness, awareness of the passage of time, requires the diachronic identity of the subject. Therefore, the idea that the holding of R-relation may create the sense of diachronic identity is ruled out.

If these arguments are accepted, then the minimal self is not reducible to R-relation between experiences instantiated at different times. Still, we may accept the reality of irreducible minimal selves which could ground identification just as well.

Zahavi also characterizes the concept of minimal self in comparison with Albahari's notion of perspectival self (Zahavi 2010). Albahari proposes a distinction between perspectival self and higher self, and correlatively between two notion of consciousness, witness-consciousness and ownership-consciousness (Albahari 2009). Albahari's perspectival self is similar to Zahavi's minimal self in many, though not all, respects. Having a perspectival self is tantamount to being witness-conscious of all experiences. Where being witness-conscious means being simply presented with the objects of consciousness. The perspectival self, however, is different from the higher self. The higher self emerges only when one appropriates some of the mental states presented to witness-consciousness; in other words, when one identifies with certain beliefs and desires contemplated by the witness-consciousness. The awareness of our higher self involves a felt

difference between awareness of the self and not-self, while witness-consciousness does not involve such a differentiation.

Zahavi's view is similar, but he holds that already the minimal self is personal (individualistic). This difference between Zahavi's and Albahari's accounts has implications for my view which holds that identification is necessary for what matters. Having only a perspectival self involves no identification, thus it is not sufficient for grounding what matters. Having a higher self involves identification by definition, thus, in Albahari's framework, having a higher-self is required for what matters. In contrast, Zahavi's minimal self is personal, and, since awareness of one's minimal self is pre-reflective, having a minimal sense, i.e. a sense of diachronic identity, does not require an act of identification. But having a minimal self may underlie identification and may be sufficient for what matters.

Episodic persons. There are also views that deny the reality of persistent minimal selves. According to Galen Strawson, for example, the sense of diachronic identity is not a universal feature of all conscious experiences (of normal adult humans); there exist also so-called "episodic characters", he himself being one. Such persons do remember their past experiences, but (at least most of the times) do not feel a personal presence, i.e. that they do not feel to be identical with the subject of the remembered experience.

I will not want to discuss this view, for it differs fundamentally both from Schechtman's narrativist and Parfit's psychological continuity view, which I contrast in this paper. Schechtman and Parfit differ in many fundamental points, but they share the assumption that it is a general feature of the self-conception of (normal adult) humans that they conceive themselves as identical persons through their lives. They have different views on what they take to be the origin of this belief (i.e. having a life-narrative or psychological continuity), and also concerning whether it is morally good that we have this belief. Parfit proposes that it would be morally preferable if we got rid of our conviction of having a persistent self through our life. Schechtman is probably neutral on this, as she accepts only the psychological, not the moral narrativity thesis. According to the former, human life as a matter of fact has a narrative form, while the latter, advocated for example by Alasdair MacIntyre,[8] also asserts that a life in search of a (good) life narrative is morally superior to a life that has no such aim. But, again, both Parfit and Schechtman assumes that it is a fact that we conceive ourselves as being the same person through our life. Strawson, however, denies this common ground, and, accordingly, explains responsibility and the other three features in an alternative framework.

[8] See e.g. MacIntyre 1984. chapter 15. 202–215.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

By the above considerations I hope to have shown that:

(1) Schechtman's attack on the conception of re-identifying persons based on the holding of R-relation between them may not be successful. In particular, Parfit's psychological relationist view *can* be defended from Schechtman's objection that the notion of q-memory is inconsistent.
(2) Nonetheless, contrary to Parfit, the relations that matter (responsibility. eligibility for compensation, survival and self-interested concern) cannot be grounded exclusively by the holding of R-relation.
(3) The relations that matter require identification.
(4) Identification cannot be not grounded merely in the holding of R-relation.
(5) Identification may be grounded in having a minimal self.
(6) Assuming the reality of minimal selves, we may conceive the relation between minimal self and narrative self in two different ways. It may be the case that a life-narrative is constituted only by such experiences, with the subject of which the narrator identifies him- or herself (i.e. only by experiences about the narrator feels a personal presence). Alternatively, it may be the case that the feeling of personal presence emerges by "inserting" the experience into the narrative.[9] If the former is the case, then having a minimal self is a precondition of having a narrative self. If the latter, then the narrative self is prior to the minimal self, as it is the setting up of a narrative which induces the sense of diachronic identity. And, as identification is grounded by the minimal self, it also follows that narrativity is required for what matters.

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[9] To argue in more detail for either of these positions requires further investigations that I cannot undertake here.

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