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Is There a Bodily Criterion of Personal Identity?

I.

One of the main problems of personal identity is supposed to be how we relate to our bodies. A few philosophers endorse what is called a 'bodily criterion of personal identity': they say that we *are* our bodies, or at any rate that our identity over time consists in the identity of our bodies. Many more deny this—typically on the grounds that we can imagine ourselves coming apart from our bodies. But both sides agree that the bodily criterion is an important view which anyone thinking about personal identity must consider.

I have never been able to work out what the bodily criterion is supposed to be. Despite my best efforts, I have not found any clear position that plays the role in debates on personal identity that everyone takes the bodily criterion to play.

What role is that? What is the bodily criterion supposed to be? Well, it is supposed to be a thesis about our bodies and how we relate to them. Second, it is supposed to be, or imply, an account of what it takes for us to persist through time. Specifically, it should imply that we go where our bodies go: it should rule out our having different bodies at different times, or surviving without a body. Third, the bodily criterion is supposed to be a substantive metaphysical claim that is neither trivially true nor trivially false. That we *have* bodies is uncontroversial, or at least no more controversial than the existence of other physical objects; but there is supposed to be room for disagreement about whether we are our bodies. This is not just the old debate between dualism and materialism. It is supposed to be possible for a materialist—someone who thinks that we are made entirely of matter—to reject the bodily criterion by denying that we are identical with our bodies.

Any thesis that deserves to be called the bodily criterion of personal identity ought to have at least these three features. It should also be compatible with the things that virtually all philosophers say about our bodies in other contexts. For instance, both those who accept the bodily criterion and those who deny it agree that a person's body does not cease to exist simply because that person loses the ability to think. The bodily criterion should respect this; otherwise both sides of the debate would say, 'that's not what *I* meant by the bodily criterion.' Let us try to formulate a thesis that meets this modest standard.

2.

The bodily criterion suggests two different thoughts: that a person's identity consists in the identity of something called her body, and that we are identical with our bodies. These are not the same: Ayer, for instance, held the first but not the second (1936: 194). But they are closely related, and it is no accident that they are commonly affirmed or denied together. They are certainly supposed to be compatible. (This is another thesis about bodies that both friends and foes of the bodily criterion agree on.)

Let us begin with the first thought, that our identity is determined by the identity of our bodies. Here is a typical statement:

Person A at time t_1 is identical to person B at time t_2 if and only if A and B have the same body'. (Garrett 1998: 45)

I take this to mean that one is, necessarily, that past or future person whose body then is the very thing that is one's body now:

Necessarily, for any person x existing at a time t and any person y existing at another time t^* , $x=y$ if and only if the thing that is x 's body at t is the thing that is y 's body at t^* .

Let us call this the *Standard Bodily Criterion*, or Standard Criterion for short.

Is this the bodily criterion? Well, suppose you were to lapse into an irreversible vegetative state: your upper brain is destroyed, while the lower parts that direct your 'vegetative' functions remain intact. The result is an animal that is fully alive in the biological sense—as alive as an oyster is alive—but with no mental features whatever. Most philosophers, I think, would say that your body still exists in this case. Of course, the Standard Criterion does not itself say this. It doesn't say when something is the same body as an earlier one, and when not. This raises a problem: the bodily criterion will tell us nothing about our identity through time unless we have at least some idea of what it takes for a person's body to persist; yet no one has ever produced a serious account of the identity conditions of human bodies. But never mind. In order to give the bodily criterion a run for its money, let us pretend that we know what it takes for a person's body to persist. Specifically, let us accept that your body persists as a vegetable when you lapse into an irreversible vegetative state.

Now what happens to *you* in this case? The bodily criterion ought to imply that you go where your body goes. If your body persists as a vegetable, then according to the bodily criterion you too ought to persist as a vegetable. But the Standard Criterion implies no such thing. That is because it applies only in cases where we have a person existing at one time and a person existing at another time; and there is no *person* left behind after your upper brain is destroyed.

The usual view of personhood, anyway, is that a thing needs certain mental properties, or at least the capacity to acquire them, in order to count as a person. You might think that advocates of the bodily criterion should reject any account of what it is to be a person that involves mental properties. But there is no reason why they should. Such an account ought to be perfectly compatible with the bodily criterion. There is no evident contradiction in saying that beings with such-and-such mental properties are identical with their bodies, or that they persist if and only if their bodies do. The bodily criterion is not meant to be a definition of 'person', but rather an account of our identity through time. Moreover, if the bodily criterion is to be in competition with other accounts of personal identity, those accounts must all give identity conditions for people in the same sense of the word; otherwise they will simply be about different things. And what non-psychological account of personhood could advocates of the bodily criterion give?

Now since a human vegetable has no mental properties and no capacity to acquire them, it is presumably not a person. So the Standard Criterion implies nothing about whether you could come to be a human vegetable—even supposing that your body could come to be a vegetable. For the same reason, it implies nothing about what happens to you when you die. Your body may persist as a corpse when you die; but if a corpse is not a person, the Standard Criterion does not imply that you persist as a corpse. It simply does not apply here, for this is not a case in which we have 'a person x existing at a time t and a person y existing at another time t^* '. The Standard Criterion even allows for you to have different bodies at different times, if at one of those times you are not a person. Suppose you get a bad case of senile dementia—so bad that you no longer count as a person. For all the Standard Criterion says, you may end up as a demented non-person with a different body from the one you have now.

The Standard Criterion tells us far less than the bodily criterion was supposed to tell us. In fact the Standard Criterion is not really an account of what it takes for us to persist through time at all, but only an account of what it takes for us to persist *as people*—that is, what it takes for us to persist as long as we remain people. It tells us nothing about what would happen to us if we ceased to be people and became vegetables or corpses.

Now many philosophers assume that every person is a person essentially, or at any rate that nothing could be a person at one time and a non-person at another. That entails that no person could persist without remaining a person. This assumption leads philosophers to ask what it takes for us to persist through time by asking what it takes for

a person existing at one time to be identical with a person existing at another time; and it is this question that the Standard Criterion purports to answer.

If being a person implies having mental properties, however, the assumption that people are people essentially is questionable. It entails the contentious metaphysical claim that whatever is a person at one time must necessarily cease to exist (not just cease to be a person) if it loses all of its mental properties. This is something that no advocate of the bodily criterion would accept. The bodily criterion is supposed to imply that we may end as unthinking vegetables or corpses, and hence (on the usual view of personhood) that we are people only contingently. If we are to take the bodily criterion seriously, then, we cannot assume at the outset that people are people essentially. We cannot ask about our identity over time in a way that presupposes something that is incompatible with the bodily criterion. Since the Standard Criterion does make this assumption, it is not an acceptable statement of the bodily criterion.

3.

We can avoid this problem by asking the right question about our identity over time (Olson 1997: 21-26): Under what conditions is a person existing at one time identical with *anything*, person or not, existing at another time? This suggests what we might call the *Revised Bodily Criterion*:

Necessarily, any person x who exists at a time t is identical with something y that exists at another time t^* (whether or not y is a person then) if and only if the thing that is x 's body at t is the thing that is y 's body at t^* .

That is, you are that past or future being whose body then is the thing that is your body now. If all people are essentially people, the standard and revised criteria are equivalent; but we cannot assume that here.

But the Revised Criterion is not the bodily criterion either. Where the Standard Criterion implied too little, the Revised Criterion implies too much. The Standard Criterion implied nothing about whether you could one day be a vegetable or a corpse. The Revised Criterion implies that you definitely could not be; nor, for that matter, were you ever a foetus. And this is so even if our bodies were once foetuses and may one day be vegetables or corpses.

Suppose you die peacefully and your body continues to exist as a corpse. Do *you* still exist? The Revised Criterion says that you do if and only if something that exists then has as its body the thing that is now your body: if the corpse has the same body then as you have now, it is you. Alternatively, if the corpse *is* the very thing that is now your body, and if it is then the body of anything, you are the thing whose body it then is. Otherwise you no longer exist. (I assume that the corpse and the corpse's body are the only candidates, after your death, for being the thing that is now your body.) What, then, is the corpse's body? Or what thing is it the body of?

That depends on what it is for something to be someone's (or something's) body. For any things x and y , under what conditions is x the body of y ? This important question is almost universally ignored. Philosophers speak freely of 'people's bodies' without saying a word about how they understand that phrase. If there are such things as our bodies, however, and if it makes sense to ask how we relate to them, this question must have an answer. It may be a vague or a messy or a complicated answer: for instance, there may be pairs of objects such that, for one reason or another, it is neither definitely true nor definitely false that one is the body of the other. But a vague or messy or complicated answer is still an answer. There must be such an account if the bodily criterion of personal identity is to have any content at all. (Note that an account of what it is for someone to be embodied—to have *a* body—does not yet tell us which thing one's body is. Nor does an account of what it is for a *body* to be someone's body, until we know what counts as a 'body' in the relevant sense.)

The most common account of what it is for something to be someone's body is roughly this: your body is that material object by means of which you perceive and act in

the physical world. More precisely, it is the largest such object: your left hand is not your body, even though you use it to perceive and act. You get knowledge of the physical world only by the way it impinges upon your body, via your sense organs. And you can affect the physical world only by affecting your body. To move your pencil, you have to move your body; but you can move your body directly, just by intending to, and without thereby moving anything else (save parts of it). I once called this the *Cartesian Account* of what makes something someone's body—not because it implies Cartesian dualism, but because Descartes held something like it.

The Cartesian Account is probably not right as it stands: for one thing, it appears to conflict with the conviction that limbs and organs that you can neither move nor feel may still be parts of your body (Olson 1997: 145-48). But let us ignore these worries and suppose that something like the Cartesian Account is correct. The Revised Criterion then amounts to this:

Necessarily, any person x who exists at a time t is identical with something y that exists at a time t^* if and only if the largest material object that x can move and feel directly at t is the largest material object that y can move and feel directly at t^* .

A moment's reflection shows that this is not an acceptable statement of the bodily criterion. A corpse cannot learn about the physical world by any means whatever, let alone by virtue of changes in any particular material object. Nor can it move any material object just by intending to move it, for it cannot intend anything. Nothing is the corpse's body on the Cartesian Account. For similar reasons, the corpse is not the body of anything.

The Revised Criterion thus implies that you would cease to exist if you lost all your mental capacities, for without them you would have no body, and the Revised Criterion rules out your surviving without a body. You could never come to be a corpse, or a vegetable, even if the thing that is now your body came to be a corpse or a vegetable. Nor were you ever a foetus. During the first half or two-thirds of its gestation, anyway, a human foetus has no mental properties, and therefore no body. Nor was any foetus your body, for a foetus (on the Cartesian Account) is not the body of anything. So you did not exist when the foetus that produced you was developing in the womb, even if the thing that is now your body existed then. You don't always go where your body goes. Your body—the thing that is now your body—exists at times when you don't exist. It follows that you are not identical with your body. The Revised Criterion is actually incompatible with the idea that people are their bodies. This is clearly not what the bodily criterion was supposed to be.

4.

We might try to avoid these troubles by moving to the second way of understanding the bodily criterion, namely the idea that people *are* their bodies. Call this *Corporealism*. As we have seen, the Standard Criterion does not imply Corporealism, since for all it says your body might outlive you; and the Revised Criterion is incompatible with it.

There are at least two different versions of Corporealism. *Weak Corporealism* says that you are identical with that thing that is now your body. That is:

Necessarily, for any person x existing at a time t , x is the thing that is x 's body at t .

Though this does not explicitly say what it takes for us to persist through time, it implies that you are that past or future being that is identical with the thing that is now your body:

Necessarily, for any person x existing at a time t and any y existing at another time, $x=y$ if and only if y is the thing that is x 's body at t .

So your identity is the identity of your body insofar as you and your body are one and the same.

I doubt whether Weak Corporealism is what anyone means by the bodily criterion, for Weak Corporealism allows for a person to survive without a body. It even allows for people to exchange bodies. At any rate it does so on the Cartesian Account of what it is for something to be someone's body.

Suppose, as Weak Corporealism has it, that you are the thing that is now your body. That is, you yourself are the largest material object through which you now perceive the world, and which you can now move just by intending to move. Now imagine that surgeons cut the sensory and motor nerves that connect your brain with the rest of you, but leave intact the connections that direct your life-sustaining functions. The resulting being would be alive but entirely blind, deaf, numb, and paralyzed. (I take this to be physically possible, though it would no doubt be a delicate business in practice.) Presumably you could survive this: the resulting being would be you. At any rate the bodily criterion shouldn't rule it out. On the Cartesian Account, however, you would thereby cease to have a body, for there would no longer be any material object that you could move or feel. Thus, you could survive without having any body at all, even if you are identical with your body. This is not because you are only contingently identical with your body, but because your body only contingently has the property of being your body.

It is easy enough to alter the story so that you get a new body. Let the surgeons hook up the motor and sensory nerves leaving your brain to the appropriate nerves of *my* spinal cord (and my optic nerves, etc.) by wires or radio links, so that you can move my limbs and perceive via my sense organs in just such a way that the thing that was once my body comes to be your body. Adding appropriate links between my brain and your spinal cord would make the thing that was previously your body, my body. We could exchange bodies. You could even outlive your body: if we destroyed the thing that comes to be your body in this way, you would still exist. This is precisely the sort of thing that the bodily criterion was meant to rule out. Yet it is compatible with Weak Corporealism.

We could avoid this by moving to *Strong Corporealism*, the view that each person must, at every time when she exists, be identical with the thing that is her body then:

Necessarily, for any person x existing at any time t and any y existing at any time t^* , $x=y$ if and only if y is the thing that is x 's body at t and x is the thing that is y 's body at t^* .

That is, you are identical with that thing that is now your body and which is, at every other time when it exists, its own body. The persistence of your body *as such* is necessary and sufficient for you to persist.

This rules out your existing without a body or exchanging bodies. However, it also rules out your existing at a time when you have no mental capacities. For you would then be unable to act or perceive, and so nothing, not even yourself, would count as your body. Strong Corporealism therefore implies that you were never a foetus and could never come to be a vegetable or a corpse. In fact *your body* was never a foetus and could never come to be a vegetable or a corpse, since you are your body and you couldn't do so. For that matter, Strong Corporealism implies that both you and your body would perish if surgeons disconnected the sensory and motor nerves leaving your brain. No one sympathetic towards the bodily criterion would accept that. Strong Corporealism is not what anyone meant by the bodily criterion either.

5.

We have not yet found a statement of the bodily criterion that does what that view is supposed to do. The Revised Criterion implied that you could never be a foetus or a vegetable or a corpse, even if your body is, and ruled out our being identical with our bodies. Weak Corporealism allowed for people to survive without a body and to change bodies. Strong Corporealism implied that neither people nor their bodies were ever

foetuses, or could come to be vegetables or corpses, or could survive total paralysis. None of these views is the bodily criterion we learned about as students.

Now many of these difficulties can be laid at the door of the Cartesian Account of body ownership. So we might try a different account of what makes something someone's body. There are not many to choose from. The literature offers two main rivals to the Cartesian Account.

Shoemaker counts a thing as your body if its relation to you is near enough to what the Cartesian Account specifies.¹ Someone who is completely paralyzed may still have a body, he says, if there is something that she *would* be able to move just by intending to, were it not damaged or disabled. Roughly, x is y 's body if and only if y would be able to move and feel x in the 'Cartesian' way if x were intact.

This would rule out your surviving without a body or exchanging bodies with someone else as a result of your sensory and motor nerves' being cut or re-routed, making Weak Corporealism look more like what the bodily criterion was supposed to be. But Shoemaker's account still appears to imply that a foetus, vegetable, or corpse neither has a body nor is the body of anything. A foetus *is* intact, yet until at least mid-gestation it cannot move or feel anything, or be moved or felt in the relevant way. There is nothing the foetus relates to in anything like the Cartesian way, and not just because a few nerves are cut. Nor is there anything that a vegetable or a corpse relates to in anything like the way in which you relate to the thing you can now move and feel. Nothing there is in any way capable of doing any moving or feeling. If a foetus, vegetable, or corpse neither has a body nor is the body of anything, then Weak Corporealism still implies that you could exist without a body (assuming that the thing that is now your body was once a foetus or could one day be a vegetable or corpse).

Even if Shoemaker's account could be amended to avoid these problems, it faces a more serious obstacle: it implies all by itself that we are identical with our bodies. The implication is not merely that we are identical with our bodies if the bodily criterion is true. On Shoemaker's account, the very idea of what it is for something to be someone's body implies that we are our bodies. Or at least it does so given an assumption that most philosophers, whether friends or foes of the bodily criterion, would accept, namely that we are made of the same matter as our bodies. That is, we are things of flesh and blood, and not immaterial souls, bundles of perceptions, or what have you; and we are no larger or smaller than our bodies. Call this *Standard Materialism*. It implies that you yourself are the largest thing that you can move and feel in the direct Cartesian way, or that you would be able to move and feel in that way if it were intact. (At any rate you are one such thing. I will return to this complication in the next section.) Hence, on Shoemaker's account of what it is for something to be someone's body, you qualify as your own body on Standard Materialism.

But the bodily criterion is not supposed to follow from Standard Materialism. Many Standard Materialists, including Shoemaker himself, deny that we are our bodies and reject the bodily criterion root and branch. The view that we are made of the same matter as our bodies but are nonetheless numerically different from them is widely held. Shoemaker's account of body ownership would make this view self-contradictory. I take this to be unacceptable.

Tye (1980) proposes that a person's body is the bearer of those physical and spatio-temporal properties truly predicable of her in ordinary language. The idea is this: we say truly, when we aren't doing philosophy, that Margaret Thatcher is human (in the biological sense), is female, is over five feet tall, and so on. Even those who think that in the strict and philosophical sense Thatcher is an immaterial substance or a bundle of perceptions will agree that this naïve description is in some sense accurate. What makes it accurate, Tye says, is that these things are strictly true of the material object that is Thatcher's body. So that is what her body is.

This view is in some ways more promising than the Cartesian Account and its

¹ 1976: 115. What he actually offers is an account of what it is to be embodied, not of what it is for something to be someone's body; so I extrapolate.

variants. But it too makes Standard Materialism imply that we are identical with our bodies; for in that case those physical and spatio-temporal properties truly predicable of you in ordinary language really are, in the strict and philosophical sense, properties of you.

So neither of these alternative accounts of body ownership is any help in formulating the bodily criterion.

6.

The content of the bodily criterion depends on what it is for something to be someone's body. We want an account of this relation that would enable the bodily criterion to play the role it is supposed to play in debates about personal identity. The account should not imply that most of those who claim to reject the bodily criterion are in fact committed to it; in particular, it shouldn't make Standard Materialism a version of the bodily criterion. None of the accounts of body ownership currently on offer meets this standard. Perhaps we can do better by inventing one of our own. We seem to need something more stringent than those we have considered: not just anything that you would be able to move and feel in the Cartesian way if it were intact, or that bears those physical and spatio-temporal properties truly predicable of you in ordinary language, counts as your body. Here are three suggestions.

1. Your body is that *body* that bears those physical and spatio-temporal properties truly predicable of you in ordinary language, or that you would be able to move and feel in the Cartesian way if it were intact. The bodily criterion would then be the claim that you are that body. Standard Materialists may agree that you bear the relevant physical and spatio-temporal properties, but disagree about whether you are a body; so they can disagree about whether you are identical with your body, and hence about whether the bodily criterion is true.

But what is a body? Not just any material object, or even any connected material object (one that is 'all in one piece'), for according to Standard Materialism you are a body in that sense. A *human* body, then. (Set aside worries about non-human people.) But what is a human body? If it is just the body of a human person, then the proposed amendment--replacing 'thing' with 'body'--adds nothing. Perhaps a human body is a human organism. The bodily criterion would then be the claim that each of us is identical with a human animal: *Animalism*, as it is sometimes called.

Animalism does have many of the features that the bodily criterion is supposed to have. It is neither trivially true nor trivially false. It looks consistent with Standard Materialism, but does not follow from it. And it implies something about what it takes for us to persist through time, namely that our persistence conditions are those of animals.

But Animalism is not the bodily criterion. It does not belong to the idea of one's body that it must be an animal, let alone a human animal. At any rate, people often say that someone could have a partly or wholly inorganic body: our bodies might one day include artificial limbs, or even be entirely robotic. But no animal--no biological organism--could be partly or wholly inorganic. If you cut off an animal's limb and replace it with something inorganic, the animal only gets smaller and has an inorganic prosthesis attached to it. So the view that people might one day have partly or wholly inorganic bodies allows for a person to be identical with his body without being an animal, or to be an animal without being identical with his body. Many philosophers even say that an animal's body is always a different thing from the animal itself. They say that an animal stops existing when it dies, but unless its death is particularly violent its body persists as a corpse; or they say that an animal, by virtue of large-scale changes of parts, can have different bodies at different times. That would mean that no one could be both an animal and identical with his body. Animalism would be incompatible with the bodily criterion. I am in no position to say whether these claims about bodies are true. But they are not obviously false; and they don't seem to conflict with the very idea of one's body.

So animalism is not a thesis about how we relate to our bodies. The idea of one's body doesn't come into it. One could of course stipulate: 'By "x's body" I shall mean

the biological organism that bears those physical and spatio-temporal properties truly predicable of x in ordinary language.' But it would be a stipulation, and no part of what anyone ordinarily means by 'body'. The bodily criterion was supposed to be about bodies in some ordinary sense of the term.

I don't know what else 'body' could mean in this context.

2. Some say that a person's body by definition lacks any mental properties (Wiggins 1976: 152). The absurdity in supposing that Bertrand Russell's body denied the existence of God is due to the fact that Russell's body obviously did not have that belief. So we might say that your body is that bearer of those physical and spatio-temporal properties truly predicable of you in ordinary language (or that thing that you can move and feel in the relevant way) that has no mental properties. Standard Materialists could then deny that we are our bodies.

But this would make Corporealism trivially false. If part of what it is to be one's body were to be something that lacks any mental properties, then it would be evident that we are not our bodies, for it is evident (eliminative materialism aside) that we have mental properties. Yet no one thinks that the bodily criterion is trivially false.

3. Perhaps your body is that bearer of those physical and spatio-temporal properties truly predicable of you in ordinary language that has brute physical (non-psychological) identity conditions.² Many philosophers say that our identity through time consists in some sort of mental continuity. They will deny that we are identical with our bodies in this sense, even if they are Standard Materialists. Standard Materialists who take us to have brute physical identity conditions are those who accept the bodily criterion. The bodily criterion would be the claim that you are identical with your body in this sense.

This is the most promising attempt to state the bodily criterion that I know of. For all that, I cannot accept it, because of two technical problems. The first arises from a snag in Tye's account of body ownership and others that I have ignored up to now.

What thing is it that bears those physical and spatio-temporal properties truly predicable of you in ordinary language? Presumably a certain human organism does. But many philosophers believe that other things do too. Any Standard Materialist who denies that you are your body believes that the same matter can make up more than one material object at once. That suggests that a certain hunk of flesh or mass of matter now stands to 'your' organism as your body stands to you, or as (according to a popular view) a hunk of clay stands to a clay statue made from it. Owing to metabolic turnover, an organism coincides with different masses of matter at different times. If, as many believe, you coincide both with a mass of matter and with an organism, then there are at least two things that bear those physical and spatio-temporal properties truly predicable of you in ordinary language and have brute physical identity conditions.

This could mean either of two things. If your body must be the *only* thing that has the relevant features, then nothing is your body. Yet both those who accept the bodily criterion and those who deny it agree that we have bodies.

Or we might say that anything with the relevant features is your body—one of your bodies, that is. So the animal and the mass of matter coinciding with you would both be bodies of yours: you would have at least two bodies. Worse, those bodies would have different identity conditions. Your 'animal body' would continue to exist as long as it remains biologically alive (so I should argue, anyway). Your 'matter body' would remain your body only as long as that mass of matter remains in human form: a fraction of a second. The moment your metabolism assimilates or expels a particle, the mass would begin to disperse. In a few months' time it would be widely scattered. (If a mass of matter must be connected, it exists only momentarily.) Which body would it be that, according to the bodily criterion, is you, or whose identity determines your identity?

Of course, there may be no such things as masses of matter. There may be only one thing with brute physical identity conditions that bears those physical and spatio-temporal properties truly predicable of you in ordinary language. But the intelligibility of

² I owe this inspired suggestion to Katherine Hawley.

the bodily criterion ought not to turn on this deep metaphysical issue. This problem plagues other accounts of what makes something someone's body as well: many philosophers believe that there is more than one largest thing that you would be able to move and feel in the Cartesian way if it were intact.

Here is the second problem. Some philosophers say that we are human organisms, but deny that those organisms have *any* identity conditions, brute physical or otherwise (Merricks 1998). Our identity over time does not consist in anything other than itself. Nearly everyone would call this a version of the bodily criterion. But it would not be a version of the bodily criterion on the current proposal. Perhaps the bodily criterion is the view that we are those things that have the relevant physical and spatio-temporal properties and lack psychological identity conditions. But consider the view of Lowe (1996: 35f., 41ff.) and Baker (2000) that we have no identity conditions, yet coincide with human organisms numerically different from ourselves. Lowe and Baker deny that this is a version of the bodily criterion, and no one has ever disputed this description. Yet it would be a version of the bodily criterion on our revised proposal, implying that we ourselves are our bodies.

I can see no good solution to either of these problems.

7.

The accounts of body ownership that Descartes, Shoemaker, and Tye propose imply that the bodily criterion is not the controversial view that many materialist philosophers oppose, but rather something that follows trivially from Standard Materialism. And our attempts to find an account of body ownership that avoided this problem merely turned up more trouble. So we have not yet found the bodily criterion.

You might conclude from this that there is no *one* bodily criterion, but rather a number of different bodily criteria that philosophers have failed to distinguish. The problem, you might think, is merely that those who ask whether we are our bodies, or whether our identity through time is determined by the identity of our bodies, have not said which notion of 'body' they mean. But none of these versions is acceptable as a statement of the bodily criterion. And if they really were versions of the bodily criterion, it ought to be possible to say explicitly what they are versions of, and why. There ought to be a more general thesis about how we relate to our bodies that the various versions entail. This would be the bodily criterion we seek. Yet we have been unable to find such a thesis. What could it mean, then, to say that Animalism (for instance) is a version of the bodily criterion?

If there is any unifying idea behind the various views that are called versions of the bodily criterion, it is that we are material things whose identity consists in some sort of brute physical continuity:

Necessarily, any person x who exists at a time t is a material thing, and is identical with any y that exists at another time t^* if and only if x relates at t in some brute physical way to y as it is at t^* .

Given an appropriate specification of the 'brute physical way', this claim seems perfectly intelligible. It is an important position in debates on personal identity. And it seems to follow from most views that are called versions of the bodily criterion.³ Is this what we were after?

I think not. The *Anodyne Bodily Criterion*, as we might call it, is the bodily criterion in name only. It doesn't mention bodies. That notion doesn't come into it. That was its virtue: if it were about our bodies and how we relate to them, it would presumably be equivalent to one of the unsatisfactory formulations we considered earlier. We needn't talk about our bodies in order to say that we are material and that our identity consists in brute physical continuity. Introducing that notion only makes trouble. You can call brute physical continuity 'bodily' continuity if you like, but you will

³ Merricks' view, mentioned at the end of the previous section, is an exception.

only come to grief if you try to understand it in terms of things called people's bodies. If the bodily criterion is nothing more than the Anodyne Criterion, it is not a thesis about bodies. Stated carefully, it is not the view that we are identical with our bodies, or that our identity consists in the identity of our bodies. But then we might as well say that there is no bodily criterion of personal identity.

8.

Let me now venture a diagnosis of the problem. I suspect that the reason we have been unable to find the bodily criterion of personal identity is that there is none. Why did we all think there was? Presumably it was because we took phrases like 'Wilma's body' to be names of objects. To say that Wilma has a muscular body, we supposed, is to state a relation between Wilma and a certain muscular object. Having a muscular body is like having a powerful car, except that one has one's body in a more intimate sense than one has one's car. Without some sort of assumption like this there can be no question of how we relate to our bodies, and no bodily criterion worthy of the name. Our inability to state the bodily criterion, if nothing else, suggests that this linguistic assumption is false.

If this is hard to believe, consider a closely related term: *mind*. Does the phrase 'Wilma's mind' purport to name an object? When we say that Wilma has a clever mind, are we stating a relation between Wilma and a certain clever object? Is having a clever mind like having a clean shirt, except that one has one's mind in a more intimate sense than one has one's shirt? I think most philosophers would say no. Otherwise many metaphysical questions would arise: What is this clever thing made of? How big is it? How clever is it? (As clever as Wilma?) How exactly does it relate to Wilma? (Is it identical with her? Or a part of her?) What is it about this mind that makes it Wilma's, rather than someone else's? *Could* it have been the mind of someone else? And so on. These are questions no one asks. But if minds were things that people in some sense own, they would have to have answers.

This is not to deny that real questions are sometimes put in the language of people's minds. We may ask, for instance, whether a person's identity consists in the identity of her mind. But no one means this literally. It is only an informal way of saying something we should put more carefully in other terms: whether a person's identity consists in some sort of psychological unity and continuity, for instance. When we speak carefully, apparent reference to the mind as an owned mental object disappears. To speak of someone's mind is presumably just to speak in a loose and colourful way of her mental properties, where the notion of a mental property can be explained without talking about things called minds. To say that Wilma has a clever mind is to just say that Wilma is clever (with the implication, perhaps, that cleverness is a mental property: though Wilma may be tall, we don't say that her mind is tall).

I suggest that talk of people's bodies is like talk of people's minds. Our bodies are no more physical things that we somehow have than our minds are mental things that we have. To speak of a person's body is just to speak in a loose and colourful way about her 'bodily' properties, where the notion of a bodily property can be explained without talking about things called people's bodies. To say that Wilma has a muscular body is just to say that Wilma is muscular. (With the implication, perhaps, that being muscular is a bodily property. What makes it absurd to say that Russell's body denied the existence of God may be the absurd implication that denying the existence of God is a bodily property.) The human body is the subject matter of anatomy and physiology only in the notional sense that the mind or psyche is the subject matter of psychology. The true subjects of those sciences are the anatomical, physiological, and mental properties of human beings.⁴ When we speak carefully, reference to the body as a physical object whose relation to its owner is open to question disappears. That is why the only acceptable statement of the bodily criterion is not about bodies. We should no more

⁴ Versions of this view are defended in van Inwagen 1980, Rosenberg 1998: 71-3, and Olson 1997: 152f.

expect there to be a bodily criterion of personal identity relating people to their bodies than we should expect there to be a 'mental' criterion of personal identity relating people to things called minds.

If this is right, there is no meaningful question of how we relate to our bodies, any more than there is a real question of how we relate to our minds. There may be real questions that the phrase 'how we relate to our bodies' suggests: whether we are made entirely of matter, for instance, or whether our identity through time consists in some sort of brute physical continuity. But they are not really questions about things called bodies. There is no bodily criterion of personal identity strictly so called. More generally, there is no concept of a body as a thing that each of us has.

This would have wide implications. The notion of one's body as an owned object plays an essential role in a great deal of philosophical thought. The landscape would look rather different without it.

I am not confident that this diagnosis is correct. Perhaps I simply haven't been clever enough to understand the bodily criterion. But there is clearly *some* sort of problem here. Those who believe that there is a bodily criterion of personal identity ought to tell us what they think it is.⁵

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⁵ I thank Keith Allen, Andrew Deakin, Katherine Hawley, Jane Heal, Dan Hewitt, Diana Kendall, Hugh Mellor, Trenton Merricks, Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra, an anonymous referee, and the audience at the St Andrews conference for comments on earlier drafts.