

Ethics and the Generous Ontology

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abstract

According to a view attractive to both metaphysicians and ethicists, every period in a person's life is the life of a being just like that person except that it exists only during that period. These "subpeople" appear to have moral status. And their interests seem to clash with ours: it may be in my interests to sacrifice for tomorrow, but not in the interests of a subperson coinciding with me only today, who will never benefit from it. Or perhaps there is no clash, and a subperson's interests derive from those of the person it coincides with. But this makes it likely that our own interests derive from those of other beings coinciding with us.

1.

Metaphysics can impinge on ethics. Think what it would mean for ethics if solipsism were true, or theism. Claims about the metaphysics of human people are especially pertinent: it would certainly make a difference to the morality of killing if (as Plato thought) we are indestructible and death only releases us from our corporeal prison.

I want to consider the ethical implications of a more widely held view, which we might call the *generous ontology*. In its strongest form it makes two claims. First, for every period in a person's life, there is a being just like that person except that it exists only during that period. For example, there is a thing that came into existence at midnight last night, slept in my bed until waking just when I did, ate my breakfast, and is now writing these words. He will continue to go where I go and do as I do until, at the stroke of midnight tonight, he will cease to exist--though because I shall go on living, his passing will be unnoticeable. Another thing, also now coinciding with me and writing these words, came into being at the beginning of this month, and will perish at the end of it. A third exists during even-numbered days by the calendar but not during odd-numbered days. And there are many more beings sitting here writing whose careers are even more arbitrary and gerrymandered than these. The same goes for you and every other person.

Call such beings *subpeople*. Note that the generous ontology assigns subpeople the same metaphysical status as ourselves. They are no mere set-theoretic constructions, or parts of a person's life or history. Rather, a subperson is

supposed to stand to a segment of a person's life as the person stands to her entire life. It is a flesh-and-blood being just like a person, only briefer.

The second claim is that for any nonoverlapping periods during the lives of several people, there is a being just like those people are then except that it exists at no other times. One such being coincides with me from my beginning till now and with you from now until your demise: a thing just like me up to now and just like you afterwards, whose location and character change instantaneously in mid-career. Another coincides with Socrates throughout the whole of his life, with me during the whole of mine, and with the first Norwegian born in the 25th century. Call such beings *crosspeople*.

I would guess that at least half of contemporary metaphysicians accept some species of generous ontology.¹ On the strong form I have been describing, every segment of a person's life is the life of a subperson, and every combination of segments of the lives of several people is the life of a crossperson. There are weaker versions that restrict the population of such beings. Perhaps only some segments of a person's life are the lives of subpeople--those that are in some way natural or unified. There may be a subperson coinciding with me throughout a given contiguous period during which I am conscious, and only then, but not one coinciding with me throughout a given calendar day and only then.

There are also different accounts of the metaphysical basis of the generous ontology--of why all these beings exist. The best-understood is that a subperson is a temporal part of a person, standing to the person as the first lap of a race stands to the race as a whole. This makes the generous ontology a corollary of the ontology of temporal parts or "four-dimensionalism", according to which every matter-filled spacetime region exactly contains a material thing. But "constitution" views of Baker's (2000) sort have similar implications. For reasons that need not detain us, four-dimensionalists almost invariably accept the strongest form of the generous ontology, whereas most constitutionalists prefer weaker versions.

Because it is simplest and easiest to think about, I will discuss the strongest form. But some of my remarks will apply to weaker forms as well.

2.

Generous ontologists agree that subpeople and crosspeople are not themselves people. Why not? What do they think it is to be a person? Philosophers ordinarily say that to be a person is to have certain mental properties, such as rationality and self-consciousness: everyone knows Locke's definition of 'person' as "a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places" (1976: 335). Most friends of the generous ontology deny that having such properties suffices for personhood: sub- and crosspeople have them, yet are not

¹Those advocating a strong version include Quine, Lewis, Armstrong, and Sider. For what it's worth, I don't myself accept any version.

people. The being coinciding with me from midnight last night till midnight tonight--my "today-part"--is, by hypothesis, psychologically indistinguishable from me as I am today. So are all the other sub- and crosspeople now coinciding with me. Yet none of them is a person. There is only one person here: me.² So what have I got that the others lack?

The most common view is that a person is a maximal aggregate of psychologically interconnected person-stages (Lewis 1976). A person-stage is a more-or-less momentary being with the right sorts of mental properties--roughly those that figure in traditional accounts of personhood such as Locke's. Two person-stages are psychologically connected when one "inherits" its psychological properties from the other via some appropriate causal connection. An aggregate of psychologically interconnected person-stages is a being composed of person-stages, each of which is psychologically connected with every other, and it is maximal when it is not a part of any other such aggregate. There are disputes over what counts as a person-stage, the nature of the psychological connections among the stages, and other details, but we can ignore them.

What makes this the right account of personhood, if indeed it is right? Why are maximal aggregates of psychologically interconnected person-stages people, and none of the countless other rational, self-conscious beings whose existence the generous ontology entails? The usual answer is linguistic convention. People are those beings in the extension of the word 'person', and the referents of our personal pronouns and proper names, such as 'I' or 'Socrates'. The question of what makes something a person is therefore equivalent to the question of what sort of things we use these expressions to denote. And it is up to us as a linguistic community to decide which of the eligible candidates--the ones with the right mental properties--those are. Had our habits of speech and thought differed only slightly, beings who are in fact subpeople would have been called people, and the beings who are in fact people would have been called nonpeople.

3.

Many arguments are offered for the generous ontology, most of them technical and not easily summarized (Sider 2001). But here is a more familiar consideration: the generous ontology goes with a "relaxed" attitude towards identity over time. Some of us worry about whether the conditions governing things' persistence are what we naively think they are. Others think these worries are misplaced. The no-worriers are usually presupposing some sort of generous ontology.

Think of your favorite puzzle about identity over time. I have some or all of my brain replaced with something new, undergo Star Trek teleportation, fall into a

²Insofar as I begin or end gradually, the generous ontology is likely to supply many beings, with precise temporal boundaries, that are candidates for being me as good as any. But their differences may be slight enough for ethicists to ignore.

persistent vegetative state, or what have you. Do I survive? Is the being emerging from the adventure me, or someone else? The worriers take this question to have an answer, and worry that we might get it wrong. The no-worriers say there is nothing to get wrong. It's an empty question. Debates about whether I survive are merely arguments about words. The thought is not that I and the resulting being are neither definitely one nor definitely two--a case of vague identity. That would merely add a third possible answer, without altering the appearance that only one of them can be true. The worry that we might get it wrong would remain. The no-worriers think we can say what we like--identical, nonidentical, or indeterminate--with no danger of error.

But if it's right to say that I survive, how could it also be right to say that I don't survive? There must be ambiguity at work. The two (or three) sides in the debate might mean something different by 'survives'. But to say that I survive is just to say that something existing after the procedure is numerically identical with me, and most no-worriers agree that there is only one relation of numerical identity. The ambiguity is more likely to lie in the term 'I' (or 'Olson'): those who say that I survive are referring to one thing by that word, and those who say I don't survive are referring to another. There are (at least) two different candidates for the term's reference, one that survives and one that doesn't. Each side in the debate is saying something true about its own man. More generally, almost any view about identity over time will be true of some beings or other. So there's no chance of mistake, and nothing to worry about. This presupposes the generous ontology.

4.

The generous ontology has implications for ethics only if subpeople or crosspeople have moral status: if they act and are responsible for their actions, are harmed and benefited, have interests, and so on. Otherwise we can treat them as we do sticks and stones.

As I stated it, the ontology says that sub- and crosspeople are exactly like ourselves apart from their temporal boundaries, implying that they think and act just as we do.³ And any being psychologically and behaviorally indistinguishable at some time from a being with moral status ought to have moral status itself then. My today-part may not have precisely the same moral status as I have: he may not be responsible for what I did yesterday. But I can see no grounds for denying him moral status altogether.

If sub- and crosspeople have interests, what are they? Let us suppose that it is in the interests of a *person* to acquire as much benefit and as little harm or detriment as possible. (Set aside worries about what counts as a benefit or harm, how to weigh one against another, or whether benefits and harms far in the future count for less than imminent ones.) If it is also in the interests of sub- and cross-

³A few generous ontologists, e.g. Shoemaker (1999), argue that such beings would have no mental properties; but this is a minority view.

people to maximize *their* benefit and minimize their harm, then their interests differ from ours. It is in my interests to buy milk tonight in order to have something for breakfast tomorrow. If I don't, I shall go hungry in the morning, which would be far worse for me than the tedium of visiting the supermarket. But my today-part will get no such compensating benefit. It seems to be in his interest to seize the day: to eat, drink, and be merry, sparing no expense, mortgaging the house if need be. The doleful effect of all this on me tomorrow is of no concern to him, unless he wants to do me a favor and promote my interests over his own.

In fact, almost anything I could do that would be in my interest would go against the interests of countless subpeople. Any effort I could make--even opening the bottle or raising the glass to my lips--will be an effort on the part of subpeople who will pass away before they can benefit.

5.

We might wonder why these beings act with such spectacular irrationality. My today-part, if he exists, acts consistently in my interests and against his own. He acts in his interests only when they coincide with mine. He has no more intention of seeking short-term pleasure and ignoring tomorrow than I do. Or consider the crossperson coinciding with me until midnight and with you thereafter. Though it would be in his interests to sign over all my money to you before the banks close, the thought never even occurs to him. He thinks only of me.

The reason is that these beings don't know who they are. My today-part is not aware that he has only hours to live, or that he came into being just this morning. Nor is the crossperson jumping from me to you tonight aware that he will do so. That's because their current beliefs are *my* beliefs--we share the same brain, after all--and I believe no such thing. If you ask my today-part whether he will exist tomorrow, he will give the same answer as I do: Of course, barring some sudden disaster.

What *do* these beings believe, then? The usual answer is that they have no beliefs about themselves at all, or at least none about themselves as such: no first-person or *de se* beliefs (Noonan 1998). When they think or say 'I', they do not refer to themselves, but to me, the person. So when my today-part says, "I'll finish this paper tomorrow," he doesn't express the false belief that he himself will finish tomorrow, but the true belief that I will. Why do their first-person pronouns, and the first-person thoughts those words express, refer to me and not to them? Why can't they refer to themselves in the first person? Well, that is simply how we, and they, think and speak. We all use the personal pronouns and related expressions to refer to maximal aggregates of psychologically interconnected person-stages, or some such. Sub- and crosspeople are linguistic helots, deprived by conventions of reference of the ability to speak and think about themselves as such. (A strange view, perhaps, but the sort of thing generous ontologists have to accept.) So the sub- and crosspeople coinciding with me consistently act for my benefit and ignore

their own because their first-person thoughts are always about me and never about themselves.

Someone might argue that their inability to think about themselves as themselves means that they don't count as people in the Lockean sense. When I wonder, "Shall I be alive in 2050?" I am engaging in self-awareness; but when my today-part has that thought, he isn't. He's not thinking about himself as himself, but rather, if I may so speak, about *me* as himself. Even so, this is unlikely to affect his moral status. The sort of self-awareness that sub- and crosspeople lack is an extrinsic property. A duplicate of my today-part, created out of nothing and then annihilated, would have it. It would be extraordinary if this difference had any moral significance. That would give linguistic convention the power to bestow or withhold moral status. Remember, which beings our personal pronouns and first-person thoughts refer to is a matter of convention. Our conventions of reference might change so that our first-person thought and talk no longer referred to ourselves--the beings it in fact refers to--but to other beings that we currently call subpeople. The difference could be so subtle that no one would notice. Moral status could hardly be such a delicate condition as that.

6.

If this is the right account of the interests of sub- and crosspeople, then our interests constantly clash with theirs. Almost anything I could do in my own interests would go against the interests of vast numbers of sub- and crosspeople.

This may not by itself imply that we have any obligations to these beings, as we do to other people. How could we fail to have obligations to our sub- and crosspeople? Not because they are mere parts of us--that would not apply to crosspeople--but perhaps that they coincide with us. Their consciousness is our consciousness. We have obligations to others only because their conscious states are independent of ours (or of any person). But this would imply that our subpeople have no obligations to us either. My today part could indulge himself today with a clear conscience. At any rate, the fact that his celebrations might ruin *me* would give him no reason to restrain himself. That hardly seems fair.

It looks as if we ought to take the interests of sub- and crosspeople into account in our moral thinking, just as they must consider our interests in theirs. But how? In many cases the way to promote their interests is simply to promote mine. Whatever benefits or harms me at a given time will benefit or harm the subpeople coinciding with me then. The better off I am, the better off they will be. But not always. It could be in my interests to learn a difficult language, or undergo a series of painful medical procedures. The long-term benefits may be enormous, and success likely. But those of my subpeople who have the misfortune to exist only during the period of hardship would bear the burdens without any compensating benefit. I should be making their entire lives a misery in order to benefit myself. Granted, this also benefits the subpeople coinciding with me during the period when the benefits

accrue. But no matter how many benefit, it looks unjust to those who suffer with no chance of any reward for themselves.

This may be no problem for maximizing utilitarians. If our sole duty is to maximize happiness, perhaps we ought to do the best by the stages, and never mind about how the good is distributed. (Maximizing utilitarianism is the analog in the moral sphere of the relaxed attitude towards identity over time.) But if morality demands some measure of equality or minimizing of harm to the worst-off, we cannot have this simple solution.

Of course, the subpeople sacrifice their interests willingly: if I decide to suffer now for the sake of some future benefit, so do all the beings now coinciding with me, even those who will not themselves benefit. And it isn't normally unjust for a being willingly to make the remainder of his existence miserable in order to benefit others after his demise. In fact it's admirable. But not in this case, for the subpeople are unaware of their sacrifice. They are motivated by beliefs that they would express by saying such things as 'Learning Russian will make me miserable for two years, but I shall have a brilliant career in the Foreign Office afterwards'. Yet many of them have no chance of existing in two years' time. It's not that their beliefs about their future are false. Because those beliefs are about me and not them, they may be true: their sacrifice may well give *me* a brilliant career. But they have no beliefs about themselves. (They may believe that a person of a certain description will suffer and then benefit, and that certain subpeople will suffer without benefiting. But they have no beliefs about which of these beings they themselves are.) So their actions are not based on informed choices. If they *did* know that they weren't going to enjoy the fruits of their sacrifice, they would be no more likely to do it than you or I would. Causing a being to devote the remainder of his existence to the benefit of others when he is entirely ignorant of its effects on him is unjust.

This seems to imply that anyone who suffers for the sake of a later benefit coincides with sub- and crosspeople whose decision is not based on informed consent: beings who are entirely ignorant of its likely consequences for themselves. More strongly, it suggests that we have a moral obligation to avoid periods of intense misery, no matter what rewards it may bring. Polar expeditions and divorce would be morally dubious at best. For the sake of our subpeople, it seems, we ought to live lives that are fairly pleasant at all times, and forego benefits that we can achieve only at the cost of great sacrifice. Suffering for the sake of a future benefit would entail making beings like ourselves suffer throughout their lives for the benefit of others. Moral duty would compel us to be comfortable and unambitious.

7.

I have been assuming up to now that the interests of sub- and crosspeople differ from our own. But it could be that their interests are always the same as ours. The interests of a subperson might be to maximize benefits and minimize harms not to

herself, but to the person she coincides with. That way all the beings now coinciding with me would now have the same interests. If it is in my interests to suffer today to gain a benefit tomorrow, it would be equally in the interests of my today-part to suffer, even though he will never benefit. It would be in his interests because it benefits *me*. Or think of the crossperson coinciding with me until midnight tonight and with you thereafter. It would not now be in his interests to transfer the contents of my bank account to yours tonight, even though that would benefit him considerably. He has no interest in benefiting himself, unless it also benefits me. (Tomorrow, of course, it will be in his interests to benefit you.) The interests of sub- and crosspeople are parasitic on ours: they are moral helots as well as linguistic ones. In that case I don't violate their interests by suffering now in order to benefit later, and there is no moral duty to avoid discomfort. The generous ontology might not require us to change our behavior at all.

How could it be in the interests of a rational being to sacrifice for the sake of benefits that only others will enjoy, or fail to be in his interests to benefit himself? This would be an application of the idea, familiar from Parfit and others, that numerical identity over time lacks the practical importance it is traditionally ascribed, and that what does matter practically is some other relation, *R*, that normally coincides with identity--some sort of psychological continuity, perhaps (Parfit 1984: 215). If each of your cerebral hemispheres were transplanted into a different head, so that both resulting people were psychologically continuous with you, their welfare might bear on your current interests in the same way that your own future welfare does in normal circumstances. (They might both be responsible for your actions too.) Yet it may be that neither offshoot would *be* you, because if either were, both would be, and that's impossible because they are two and you are one. So it might be in your interests to sacrifice now to benefit them later, even though you yourself won't benefit. In that case we should have what matters practically in identity without identity itself.

Just so, it might be in the interests of your today-part to sacrifice now for your benefit tomorrow: your welfare tomorrow might matter to him today in the same way that it matters to you today. It might likewise be in the current interests of any crossperson coinciding with you now and with someone else tomorrow to benefit you tomorrow. And if we can have what matters without identity, it might also be possible to have identity without what matters. In that case, it might not be in that crossperson's interests now to benefit himself tomorrow: it may be no more in his prudential interest to promote his own welfare tomorrow than it is for you to promote mine. Whereas Parfit thought that what matters comes apart from identity only in unusual cases, it might happen constantly--whenever any sub- or crossperson ceases to coincide with one of us.

Parfitians are not forced to accept this: the general claim that what matters can obtain without identity (or vice versa) does not imply that this is the case with sub- or crosspeople. Because it is an application of that general claim, however, I will

call it the *Parfitian proposal*.

8.

The proposal has important implications. For one thing, the standard four-dimensionalist version of the generous ontology implies that you can survive the double transplant: both offshoots would be you, insofar as they share their temporal parts located before the operation, and talk of “you” then refers ambiguously to each. This leads Lewis (1976) and others to argue that identity really has got the practical importance traditionally ascribed to it. If they have to adopt the Parfitian proposal on ethical grounds, this is mistaken.

Here is a more disquieting thought. The proposal is that the interests of a sub- or crossperson at a given time are the interests at that time of the person it coincides with then. So although all rational, self-conscious beings may have interests, people have a special moral status: they are the primary bearers of interests. The interests of other beings derive from those of people. It is tempting to say that to be a primary bearer of interests is what it is to be a person. We might call this status *moral personhood*.

I described the Parfitian proposal by saying that *we* are moral people, because I took it that *we* ourselves are the primary interest-bearers. *My* interests, surely, could not be merely derivative. It couldn't be in *my* interests to benefit some other being that I now coincide with rather than myself. I am no moral helot. This comfortable assumption would be warranted if I were the only candidate for being the primary bearer of my interests--the only rational moral agent thinking these thoughts and writing these words. But the generous ontology says that I am only one of a vast number of such beings, nearly all of whom are moral helots. How do I know I'm not one of them?

I can know, of course, that I am the being I refer to when I say 'I': one of the beings we call “people” in ordinary English. I know that linguistic fact by virtue of being a competent speaker. And that's what it is to be a person according to advocates of the generous ontology. We might call this status *linguistic personhood*. I know that I'm a linguistic person. And because sub- and crosspeople, by definition, are not linguistic people, I know I'm not one of them. But this would enable me to know that I am a moral person only if moral and linguistic personhood are coextensive: if all and only moral people are linguistic people. And that is indeed what the Parfitian proposal says. But what reason have we to believe that this is the case? To put the point another way, a moral person, on the Parfitian proposal, is by definition a maximal aggregate of R-interrelated person-stages, where R is the mattering relation. At any rate that seems the obvious way of developing the proposal.⁴ And we might call the relation that binds together the

⁴I am assuming for the sake of argument that there is only one “mattering” relation, and thus (on the Parfitian proposal) only one species of moral person. Otherwise the connection between moral and linguistic personhood will be even looser.

stages of a linguistic person R^* , so that a linguistic person is by definition a maximal aggregate of R^* -interrelated person-stages. Moral and linguistic personhood are coextensive only if R and R^* are coextensive. But what grounds have we to suppose that they are?

Moral and linguistic personhood appear to be independent properties. The reason why we, as a linguistic community, came to use the personal referring expressions to denote beings unified by R^* , rather than beings unified by some other relation, lies in the vagaries of human linguistic behavior. These vagaries do not even guarantee that all speakers use those expressions to refer to the same sorts of beings: Chinese linguistic people might be maximal aggregates of stages interrelated in some slightly different way from those we refer to. If all human beings used personal referring expressions to denote the same beings, it would seem to be only an unlikely coincidence. And it would be all the more unlikely if those beings were also the moral people.

9.

Or maybe moral and linguistic personhood are not independent after all. Perhaps our conventions of reference track moral status, so that our personal pronouns, and the thoughts we use them to express, always refer to moral people. The difficulty for this proposal is that we don't know (on the Parfitian proposal) which beings the moral people are. We know that a moral person is a maximal aggregate of R -interrelated person stages, where R is the "mattering" relation; but philosophers debate about what relation that is. Even if we agree that R is some kind of psychological continuity, there are many such kinds, each of which would determine a different class of beings. And if we cannot agree about which, of the many candidates, are the moral people, how can our linguistic conventions pick them out?

Perhaps we use the personal pronouns to refer to moral people without knowing which beings they are, just as we use the word 'water' to refer to a chemical substance without knowing what substance it is. The word 'I' might mean something like 'the being with nonderivative interests, whatever it may be, that is speaking or thinking this', much as 'water' means something like 'the chemical substance, whatever it may be, that fills rivers and lakes'. That would enable us to know that we are moral people.

This would infect the semantics of personal reference with moral content. To call something a person, or to refer to it as 'I' or as 'Socrates', would be to make a value judgment. These would be at least implicitly moral terms, just as 'water' is (on this account of its meaning) at least implicitly a scientific term--vindicating Locke's claim that 'person' is "a forensic term", though not in the way he intended.

It would also mean that in an important sense we don't know which beings we are. We could know that we are maximal aggregates of R -interrelated person

stages, but insofar as we don't know exactly what relation R is, we don't know which beings those aggregates are. Likewise, we don't know what our identity over time consists in. We may know that it consists in R, but we don't know under what conditions R obtains. That would make it a mistake to be relaxed about personal identity. If we ask what it takes for us to persist through time, or whether someone would still exist after a certain event, there would be a unique right answer in terms of R. Any other judgment would be false. Our judgments about our identity over time would be only as reliable as our judgments about what relation it is that matters in identity. They could be badly mistaken, just as moral judgments can be. That would undermine one of the main reasons for accepting the generous ontology in the first place.

What if our conventions of personal reference are independent of the way nonderivative interests are distributed among moral agents? What, in other words, if linguistic and moral personhood are independent? Then something can be a linguistic person without being a moral person. And it is hard to see how we could be certain that we--we linguistic people--are moral people. If anything, it would be highly unlikely if the conventions governing the reference of the word 'I' and related terms managed to pick out, among the multitude of beings writing this paper, the one moral person. It is far more probable that we are among those whose interests are merely derivative: our interests are those of other beings we coincide with. We ourselves are moral helots. Though we fancy ourselves at the center of the moral universe, these are almost certainly delusions of grandeur, and our true place is on the periphery. And the beings who really are at the center are unaware of their exalted status. An accident of linguistic convention has made them blind to it: not being linguistic people, they have no thoughts at all about themselves as such. That would be a deeply absurd situation.

10.

The generous ontology appears, at least, to have troubling ethical consequences. Let me make one final remark. The Parfitian proposal is that the primary interest-bearers--moral people--are maximal aggregates of R-interrelated person-stages. All other beings with moral status derive their interests from them. Assuming that R is a kind of psychological continuity, it follows that only a being that is always psychologically continuous in that way with itself as it is at every other time when it exists can have nonderivative interests. It would be important for ethics if this were true.

It is unlikely to be true, however, without the generous ontology. Suppose there are no sub- or crosspeople. In that case the only rational beings walking the earth are likely to be human organisms. (They might be immaterial substances or Humean bundles of impressions instead, but that is less likely.) In that case there are no maximal aggregates of R-interrelated person-stages. Not only are there no person-stages, but there are no beings R-related, at every time when they exist, to

themselves as they are at every other time when they exist. Every human organism starts out as an embryo, and nothing is ever psychologically continuous in any way with itself as it was as an embryo. The put it the other way round: those who think there *are* beings who are R-related to themselves at all times will almost invariably accept some form of generous ontology. And if there are no such beings, it can hardly be the case that a thing must be always R-related to itself in order to have nonderivative interests: otherwise it would follow that no beings had nonderivative interests, and hence that no beings had interests at all.

So what it takes for a being to have full moral status may depend on the truth of the generous ontology: if it's true, a being might have to be always R-related to itself to have it; if not, the conditions for full moral status may have to be less stringent. Here again metaphysics impinges on ethics.

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