

Commentary on Nida-Rümelin

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We think Nida-Rümelin's chapter is a clear and forceful articulation of a certain view of what it is for experiences to 'belong to' subjects. This view, which we follow Nida-Rümelin in calling 'the simple view', fits very naturally with a range of other popular ideas (about how to define phenomenal consciousness, experiential properties, phenomenal unity, and so on), and is arguably implicit in many authors' discussions. Drawing out and defending this view explicitly makes this paper a valuable contribution to the literature.

However, we are less sure that Nida-Rümelin's chapter succeeds at deriving a simple view of subjects from it. Indeed, some opposing views are noted in passing and dismissed by mere stipulation. For instance, she presupposes 'uniqueness', the claim that "For every token experience E there is [only] a single subject S involved in E"; this is precisely the claim we argue against in our chapter, 'In Defence of Phenomenal Sharing'. And the motivation she gives for it (that it is "almost trivial" because of how she individuates events) is precisely the trivialisation we argue against in section 2 of that chapter.

Setting uniqueness aside, our opinions about the chapter's overall success differ. Luke is unconvinced that a strong argument has been made for simple views of either belonging or personal identity. Philip thinks Martine has the groundwork for a good case for the simple view of personal identity, but that a further premise—the principle called 'Purity' below, which

Philip finds plausible but Luke doubts—needs to be added. At this point our response forks into two individually penned pieces, the first by Luke and the second by Philip.

Luke: A Recipe for a Non-Simple View

Nida-Rümelin's argument from the simplicity of belonging to substance dualism provides the reader with a blueprint for how to refute it. She argues that belonging, co-belonging, and personal identity are so closely connected that the simplicity of one entails the simplicity of the others. But if this is so, then any successful analysis of one of these entails at least a partial analysis of the others.

Here is an example. Suppose one is convinced of some sort of neo-Lockean account:

1. Subject S1 at t1 is identical to subject S2 at t2 if and only if S1 stands in relation R to S2.

'Relation R 'is a placeholder for some fuller analysis, such as 'linked by an unbroken chain of successive subjects each of whom has a sufficient density of psychological connections to the next 'where 'psychological connections 'include things like episodic memory, fulfillment of intentions, preservation of personality, and so on. Perhaps this account is false, but if it is true, it is surely a conceptual truth, even a conceptual analysis of the notion of a singular persisting perspective.

Suppose that S1 and S2 were initially identified as the subjects of two experiences e1 and e2; then we can turn 1 into 2:

2. The subject of e_1 is identical to the subject of e_2 if and only if the subject of e_1 stands in relation R to the subject of e_2 .

Since two experiences belonging to identical subjects just is co-belonging, 2 can be simplified into 3:

3. E_1 co-belongs with e_2 if and only if the subject of e_1 stands in relation R to the subject of e_2 .

Moreover, some further rearrangement turns 3 into 4:

4. E_1 belongs to the subject of e_2 if and only if the subject of e_1 stands in relation R to the subject of e_2 .

And 4 can then be simplified into 5:

5. E_1 belongs to a subject S if and only if the subject of e_1 stands in relation R to S .

With 3 and 5 we have partial analyses of co-belonging and belonging. These analyses are not yet reductive, since they still make reference to subjects and 'their' experiences, i.e. to the belonging relation. But neo-Lockeans often think we can explicate 'relation R ' in terms of relations among experiences (e.g. memory connections, structural similarities, causal links, etc.), such that a

complete description of experiences and their relations would let us derive facts about which subjects exist and which experiences belonged to them.

Nida-Rümelin's takes as an explicit premise that no non-circular analysis of belonging is *a priori* equivalent to the conception by taking perspectives. If I am right, any partly or wholly reductive analysis of subjects or their identity conditions will provide a non-circular analysis of belonging, and if those analyses claim to be based on reflecting on the nature of perspectives, then they will be *a priori* equivalent to the conception by taking perspectives - at least if they succeed. Nida-Rümelin's premise thus stands or falls with the claim that no reductive analysis of subjects succeeds. But that means it essentially asserts the simple view of subjects, and opponents of that view will simply reject it. There is still useful progress in drawing what different views of subjects will imply about belonging, and perhaps drawing attention to the apparent simplicity of the conception by taking perspectives makes the simple view more attractive. But I do not think it succeeds at deriving that view from neutral and independent premises.

Philip: The missing premise in the case for the simple view of personal identity

In contrast to Luke, I'm inclined to think we can get the simple view of personal identity out of these considerations, but I think we need to add another premise to Martine's argument before we get there.

I am persuaded by Martine's case that what it is for an individual to have an experience does not admit of reductive analysis, and hence that what is for two experiences – whether at a time or across time – to be had by the same individual does not admit of reductive analysis. It doesn't

immediately follow, however, that no *experiencing individual* admits of reductive analysis. An individual X admits of reductive analysis iff we can give an informative and non-circular specification of what it is for X to exist. Clare's party, for example, admits of reductive analysis: all it is for Clare's party to exist is for people to be partying at Clare's house.

I'm happy with Martine's claims that 'nothing more can be said to elucidate 'what it is for E₁ and E₂ to co-belong than: it is like something for S to undergo E₁ *and* it is like something for S to undergo E₂. But it doesn't follow that there's nothing more to be said about what it is for S to exist. It's one thing to analyse what it is for S to have a given property/be involved in a certain event, quite another to analyse what it is for S to exist. Thus, I don't think Martine has quite ruled out the following view:

Hybrid – For any subject X, what it is for X to exist admits of reductive analysis, but what it is for X to experience does not admit of reductive analysis.

Having said that, I think the following is a pretty plausible thesis, which is obviously inconsistent with Hybrid:

Purity – For any individual X, X has properties that do not admit of reductive analysis only if X does not admit of reductive analysis.

If phenomenal properties do not admit of reductive analysis, then Purity rules out Clare's party having phenomenal properties. All it is for Clare's party to exist is for people to be partying at

Clare's house, and hence a party isn't a 'thing' that exists in any metaphysically serious sense that might instantiate metaphysically serious properties.

With the addition of Purity, I am persuaded by Martine's case for the simple view of personal identity.