

THE SELF: THE INCREDULOUS STARE ARTICULATED

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Abstract

This paper is an examination of Galen Strawson's theory of the human person as a succession of momentary selves (or SESMETs: Subjects of Experience that are Single MENTAL Things). Insofar as there is a clear distinction between enduring objects and events or processes, SESMETs would seem to partake of the features of both, for they are at once short-lived subjects of consciousness and brief episodes of consciousness. Strawson in fact rejects the object/process distinction, and contends that there is no sense in which a SESMET is a process and a rock is not a process. Strawson's rejection of the object/process distinction is essential to his attempt to meet the charge that the concept of a SESMET is an incoherent conflation of the concept 'object' and the concept 'process.' But many philosophers will find the rejection of the object/process distinction objectionable on general metaphysical grounds. I suggest that these philosophers (I am one of them) and Strawson will not be able usefully to discuss issues in the philosophy of mind (such as his theory of SESMETs) till they have reached agreement about what the most fundamental ontological categories are.

This paper is an attempt to put into some sort of rational order some thoughts I have had about the self.¹ I confess that I haven't read much of what philosophers have said about the self.² But I've heard a fair number of philosophers talk about the self – Patricia Churchland, Daniel Dennett, Owen Flanagan – and I had the same reaction on each occasion: I did not understand what was

¹ I have revised this paper since it was presented at the conference whose proceedings are printed in this number of *Ratio*, but I have not tried to turn it into an essay. The reader will note that it represents itself as the text of a lecture – a lecture written to be delivered on a particular occasion, and to an audience that contained Galen Strawson.

² With the exception of Galen Strawson. My understanding of his theory of the self is based on my reading of his essays 'The Self' [in R. Martin and J. Barresi, *Personal Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 335–381; 'The Self' was first published in the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 4 (1997)] and 'The Self and SESMETs,' *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 6 (1999), pp. 99–135. Page references in square brackets in the text refer to the latter essay.

being said. Galen Strawson's work on the self gets a different reaction from me: not the furrowed brow but the incredulous stare. At any rate, the incredulous stare is the reaction his theory would get from me if I did not sternly suppress it. Let me explain. It was of course David Lewis who enriched the technical vocabulary of the phenomenology of the reception of philosophical theories by the addition of the useful phrase 'the incredulous stare'. For quite a long while, although I understood the theory of possible worlds that Lewis said he accepted, I couldn't quite bring myself to believe that he really did believe what he said he believed about possible worlds. And I understand Galen's theory of the self, of multiple selves, of SESMETs (Subjects of Experience that are Single MENTAL Things) – or I think I do, although I have to make an effort to believe that he believes what he says he believes about selves. But I am determined to make the effort, for I have learned my lesson. I wasted a considerable amount of time *c.* 1980 trying to figure out what Lewis really believed about possible worlds, and I have since resolved to believe philosophers when they say they believe something.

I will do two things. First, I'll set out Galen's theory as I understand it, or set out a part of it as I understand it. Secondly, I'll explain why I find the theory so hard to believe – even as I resist the temptation to find it hard to believe that Galen believes it. Lewis, we remember, pointed out that an incredulous stare isn't an argument. I have promised to refrain from directing any incredulous stares at Galen (I've allowed the phrase to remain in my title; one isn't obliged to be on one's best behavior in a title), but, if an incredulous stare directed at the advocate of a theory isn't an argument for the falsity of that theory, neither is the bare statement that one finds that theory very hard to believe. Nevertheless, a careful attempt to articulate one's reasons for finding a theory hard to believe can yield something like an argument for the falsity of that theory. At any rate, making a careful attempt to articulate my reasons for finding Galen's theory hard to believe is the best I can do by way of an argument for its falsity. Indeed, it's the best I can do by way of saying anything about it that could conceivably be of philosophical interest to anyone.

Most philosophers who talk about the self face a simple dilemma. Either one's self is what one refers to when one says 'I' or it is not. If it is not – well, if something isn't oneself, why should one call it one's self? If it is, then the thesis that there are no selves entails that one does not exist; and the thesis that there are selves

is simply the thesis that one exists and (no doubt) that others like one exist.³

This dilemma is obvious enough. That is, whether or not there's a way for philosophers who talk of 'the self' (those who affirm its existence and those who denounce it as a myth) to escape from it, it's obvious enough that those philosophers ought to have considered it and have something to say in response to it. But none of the philosophers I have heard talk about the self seems to have thought about it – or to have thought *of* it. When I have tried to get them to think about it, various conversational misfires follow, misfires of a kind I am familiar with from discussions of a wide range of philosophical questions. (It may be that when, as I shall, I try to explain to Galen some of my reservations about what he says about objects and processes, one of these misfires will occur.) When I try to explain to these philosophers what my problem about their use of the phrase 'the self' is, they very resolutely don't see what my problem with their use of the phrase is, and I don't see what their problem is with seeing what my problem is.

If, however, I were to confront *Galen* with my dilemma, there would be no room for a conversational misfire of the kind I have alluded to, for he is aware of the dilemma and has a response to it. He would tell me that it was a false dilemma because the word 'I' is ambiguous. When I use the word, or when the word issues from this mouth you see before you (he would tell me), the word refers in one of its senses to a person who has existed for many years, and in the other to that person's self, or, more precisely, to that person's *current* self. This is the *semantical* component of Galen's theory of the self. But the body of his theory is its *metaphysical* component: a series of connected theses about the nature of selves and the nature of persons, and the ways in which selves and persons are related. (The theory also has a *phenomenological* component, which I will not discuss.)

It is the metaphysical component of the theory I want to talk about. I am a person. (At any rate, he who reads this paper to you, reads the whole paper from beginning to end, is a person. In the sequel, I will ask you to take the words 'I' and 'me' and 'my' always to refer to the person before you and not to that

³ For a more detailed presentation of this dilemma, see the first few pages of my essay, 'What Do We Refer to When We Say "I"?' in *The Blackwell Guide to Metaphysics*, Richard M. Gale (ed.), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2002) pp. 175–189.

person's current self. If you will grant this request, you will enable me to avoid a lot of annoying, repetitious parenthetical circumlocution. I promise that I will not abuse your indulgence; it is not my intention to undermine Galen's thesis that 'I' can refer either to the person who utters it or to the current self of that person by stipulating that *in this paper* it shall refer only to the person; I'm simply explicitly restricting the referent of 'I' *et al.* to one of things Galen says they refer to in order to simplify the syntax of what I'm going to say.) I am, I say, a person. I have constituent selves. What are these selves and what is their relation to me? Selves or SESMETs are, Galen says, physical objects, just as persons are. (Galen is a materialist or physicalist. In this paper, I will take the truth of physicalism as given.)

SESMETs are physical objects. They are, Galen says, peculiarly shaped things [131]. And *my* SESMETs are parts of me. They compose me temporally as pearls compose a string of pearls spatially. I am a temporal sequence of SESMETs. (Does this mean that SESMETs are temporal parts of me? I'll try to talk round this question, to make no explicit commitments as regards the ontology of diachronic composition.) Each of my SESMETs is a subject of experience, as I am, but one with a much briefer temporal span than mine, perhaps only a second or two. Each SESMET, moreover, has a particular kind of unity that makes it a real physical object and not an arbitrary non-unity like the mereological sum of the Thames, Nikita Khrushchev's head, and the bottom half of the Empire State Building. And this is the point at which the semantical component of the theory joins the metaphysical. 'I' is like 'now' and 'the world' in that it can, so to speak, refer to more or to less. When I say, 'Everybody push when I say 'now' – one, two, three, *now!*', the word 'now' refers to 'less'; when a surly teenager says, 'That was then, this is now,' the word refers to 'more.' But, if the two utterances are simultaneous, 'less' is a part of 'more.' Or consider the phrase 'the world', which may refer to the inhabited parts of the surface of the earth, to the entire surface of the earth, to the planet (the whole solid ball), and to the cosmos. That is to say, 'the world' may refer, depending on context, to less or to more, and 'less' must be a proper part of 'more.' The word 'I' is, as I have said, like 'now' and 'the world'. On a particular occasion of utterance, it may refer either to a person (a long-lasting subject of experience) or to that person's current self (a short-lived subject of experience). The latter case is the case of 'less,' the former case the case of 'more.' And 'less,'

is a proper part of 'more,' for one's current self is a part of one. Anyone who attempts to adapt the dilemma I have urged on various philosophers who speak of the self to Galen's theory and who contends that my current SESMET (supposing there to be an object that has the right properties to count as my current SESMET) cannot properly be called my current *self* because it is not I is mistaken, because my current SESMET is one of the possible referents of my utterance of 'I'. The sentence 'I have existed for over sixty years' can express a truth and so can the sentence 'I have existed for only a second or so', just as the two sentences 'The world is eight thousand miles in diameter' and 'The world is billions of light-years in diameter' can both express truths.

There is a lot more to Galen's theory than this. (I have, for example, said nothing about the features of a SESMET that make it a non-arbitrary unity. A discussion of these features would require an exposition of the phenomenological component of his theory. It will suffice for my purposes simply to note that, according to the theory, there *are* features of SESMETs in virtue of which they have a non-arbitrary kind of unity.) But this is enough for me to go on with. I can now explain why I find the theory so hard to believe, no matter what other constituent theses it might have. I am a person (the theory says), and I have constituent selves. Certain parts of me are peculiarly shaped physical objects called selves. Right now a current part of me, a currently existing physical object, is my current self. And these things are *real* things, not some sort of useful fiction, as, perhaps, shadows or waves or holes or wrinkles are. But I have questions. I think they are good questions, but that doesn't mean that I think Galen can't answer them. In fact, I think I know what his answers would be. Nonetheless, it will be useful to ask the questions and listen to his answers.

If selves or SESMETs are real things, then the following is true of each of them: for every property, it has either that property or its complement. And what *are* the properties of SESMETs? Well, consider my current self. It's a physical thing, we're told, a peculiarly shaped physical thing that's a part of me. But then *what* is its peculiar shape? And how big is it? What region of space does it occupy? What is its mass? How many atoms is it composed of? If it's a physical thing, surely, it must have (in addition to a shape) a size and a mass? It must (must it not?) occupy a certain region of space, for how could a thing have a shape and not occupy some region of space? But then why aren't these SESMETs known to anatomists, albeit under some other name? I don't expect that a

forensic pathologist examining a murder victim would say anything like, 'The man's self seems to be relatively intact,' but one would expect that if SESMETs were real physical parts of us, anatomists would know about SESMETs even if they didn't know they were selves. (Unless, perhaps, they were very small, and for that reason didn't show up even in CAT scans or PET scans.)

Here is what I take Galen's answer to this question to be. (The words that follow are mine, not his.)

You must overcome your subservience to the object-process dichotomy. Consider a performance of, say, 'Pictures at an Exhibition' – by a particular pianist on a particular occasion. This is a physical object. It's a peculiarly shaped one in that it occupies a peculiarly shaped region of space-time. But it's no argument against the reality of this object that we can't say what its mass is, or could only by making some extremely artificial stipulation. SESMETs are in certain respects like performances of musical works. There are questions one could sensibly ask about someone's pineal gland or a grand piano ('How much does it weigh?', for example) such that, if one can't sensibly ask those same questions about a self or a performance, it doesn't follow that selves or performances aren't physical objects in the same sense as that in which pineal glands or grand pianos are physical objects.

But I see you stirring in protest. I bet I know what you're going to say. You're going to tell me that a musical performance is not, as I have said it is, an object but an event or process. And you're going to tell me that you strongly suspect that a SESMET is likewise an event or process and that my theory must therefore entail that a self is an event or process. You will tell me, finally, that a self, whatever else it may be, must be an object, not an event. A self, you will argue, is supposed to be a part of a person, and although many brief events are parts of the long event that is a person's life, no event can be a part of an object or continuant or substance – and a person is an object. A self, moreover, is supposed to be a subject of experience, and an event can't be a subject of experience: an experience is an event, but the subject of an experience can't be an event. I have anticipated your protest. Recall the words with which I began: You must overcome your subservience to the object-process dichotomy. [Note in propria persona: Although I have written the speech I'm putting into Galen's mouth, several of its key sentences are direct quotations from 'The Self and the SESMETs.'] There is no sense in which a SESMET is a process in which a rock is not also and equally a process. [125] It's wrong to think that if a physical process occurs there must be physical objects that, for the duration of the process, collectively occupy the region of space in

which the process takes place, and which are such that the changes in the intrinsic properties of those objects, and the changes in the relations they bear to one another, constitute that process. This may be true according to our pre-theoretical conception of objects and processes, but we know that the world frequently refuses to behave in the ways our pre-theoretical conceptions lead us to expect. There is no ontologically weighty distinction between an object and a process. [126] There is no defensible concept of an object – a spatio-temporal continuant, as philosophers say – that allows one to distinguish validly between objects and processes by saying that one is an essentially dynamic or changeful phenomenon and the other is not [126].

So speaks Galen, at least in my imagination. I wish to make three points in reply.

First, what he says is very heavy on assertion and very light on argument. It's no worse for that, but the fact should be recognized. Secondly, there is an important argument he does not address. I think that an adequate solution to the problem that this argument presents is possible within the constraints of his theory, but the point is worth raising. The argument is based on an example of Davidson's. Consider a ball that is both rotating and heating up. The rotation of the ball and the warming of the ball are distinct events or processes. But if there is no distinction to be made between an object and an event, then, it would seem, each must be identical with the ball, and hence with the other. Here is what I would say about this problem if I were, like Galen, an advocate of the deconstruction of the object-process dichotomy. The ball is (is not to be distinguished from) the sum of all the processes taking place in the ball-shaped region of space it occupies. This sum is itself a process, or as good a candidate for the dubious office 'process' as anything is. The rotation of the ball and the warming of the ball are two distinct proper parts of this total process, rather as 'orbiting the earth' and 'orbiting the sun' are two distinct components of the moon's corkscrew trajectory. The ball, the total process, the rotation, and the warming are all physical objects and physical objects in the same sense (three physical objects, not four, since 'the ball' and 'the total process' are two names for the same physical object).

Thirdly and finally, I want to say something about the following sentence of Galen's (it is one of the direct quotations that were included in the speech that, for the most part, I wrote for him):

There is no defensible concept of an object – a spatio-temporal continuant, as philosophers say – that allows one to distinguish validly between objects and processes by saying that one is an essentially dynamic or changeful phenomenon and the other is not.

I don't think anyone has ever thought that physical objects are not essentially dynamic and changeful, otherwise than because that person thought, like the Eleatics and McTaggart, that *nothing* was dynamic and changeful. That is, I don't think anyone has thought that physical objects were not dynamic and changeful and that something else *was*. How could that be? Physical objects, or most of them, change their intrinsic properties with the passage of time, and (if change exists at all) what could be more dynamic and changeful than that? What could being dynamic and changeful be *but* that? Or is the idea that objects could in principle be 'frozen' and remain objects, while a frozen process would not be an process at all? If so, I would say if this observation is supposed to show that there is something wrong with the object-process distinction, it is unconvincing because it depends crucially on a verbal accident. Objects and processes and the distinction between them can be believed in and objects and processes can nevertheless be regarded as perfectly parallel with respect to change and unchange (if that is what one wants) by a simple verbal adjustment. Simply do what some philosophers have done for reasons unrelated to Galen's point: regard 'unchanges' as perfectly good, if rather special, kinds of events or processes – just as, in kinematics, 0cm/sec is a perfectly good, if rather special, velocity. On that understanding of 'process,' processes, like objects, do not essentially involve change; and it seems to be a mere accident that we have not adopted that understanding of 'process.'

But these three points are minor points. A general metaphysical framework cannot be refuted, or to the least degree rendered implausible, by the presentation of minor points. And we must consider the general metaphysical framework in which Galen embeds his ontology of the self if we wish to evaluate that theory, for the theory is indefensible except in the terms provided by the general metaphysical framework. Selves must be processes, brief *episodes* in a person's mental life, if their temporal span is to be as brief as Galen says it is. And selves must be possible referents of the word 'I' if they are really to be selves. And any referent of 'I'

must be an object. These requirements are inconsistent if 'object' and 'process' are distinct and incompatible ontological categories. And, therefore, Galen's theory is defensible only if 'object' and 'process' are *not* distinct and incompatible ontological categories.

I must say that I have a very hard time understanding Galen's larger metaphysical framework. (The 'larger metaphysical framework' is not, as I see it, a part of the theory of SESMETs, although it figures in, and is in fact essential to, Galen's defense of the theory against an important objection. The statement I have just made is therefore consistent with my earlier claim to understand the theory of SESMETs.) One aspect, at least, of the framework, its refusal to countenance the 'object-process dichotomy,' simply bewilders me. If I may borrow these well-known words, let me see whether I can say something to evoke the appropriate sense of bewilderment – or at any rate, say something that will explain my own bewilderment. I will try to do this by laying out a metaphysical framework of my own, the general system of categories that I use to think about things.

Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin. The most general metaphysical category is the category 'thing.' I use 'thing' as the most general count-noun. Everything is a thing. A thing is anything that can be referred to by a third-person-singular pronoun – as when I say, 'The following is true of everything, that it is identical with itself.' The category 'thing' comprises everything there is, everything that exists (for I take a stern anti-Meinongian line about non-existents: non-existents simply don't exist: the number of them is 0).

Things divide into two subcategories, the concrete and the abstract. If there are such things as the following, they are concrete: cabbages, kings, bits of sealing wax, electrons, tables and chairs, angels, pixies, and God. I myself believe in only some of the things in this list: cabbages, kings, electrons, angels, and God.⁴ But I am quite certain that if there *were* bits of sealing wax, tables and chairs, and pixies, they *would be* concrete things. Here is a list of abstract things: propositions, possibilities, sentence-types, sets, properties or attributes, numbers, novels (as opposed to tangible copies of novels), theories, and such miscellaneous items as the

⁴ For my reasons for thinking that there are no bits of sealing wax and no tables and chairs, see my book *Material Beings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). My reasons for thinking that there are no pixies are more straightforward.

key of F-sharp minor, democracy, and the literary form *the epic poem*. I am not sure which of the things in this list I believe really exist (I certainly think some of them do), but I am quite certain that if there is such a thing as, for example, the key of F-sharp minor, it is an abstract thing.

There is only one kind of concrete thing: that which has traditionally been called 'substance' or 'individual thing.' (This is what corresponds in my framework to Galen's category 'object.')

And there is only one type of abstract thing. I will call this one type 'relation.' I will first expand on this statement. Among relations there are 0-term relations, or propositions, 1-term relations (also called properties, attributes, qualities, features, characteristics, . . .), and 2-or-more-term relations, which I will call 'proper relations' (on the model of proper fractions and proper subsets). I will not discuss proper relations. I will, however, say something about propositions and properties. Propositions are things that have truth-values. They are things that can be *said*; that is, asserted. They are things that can be assented to or denied. (For most propositions, these descriptions are true only in principle, at least as regards human beings.) Properties, by contrast, are things that can be *said of* or *about* something (whether truly or falsely); that it is white, for example. That it is white is one of the things you can say truly about the White House, and you can say it truly about the Taj Mahal, too. But you can't say it truly of the Eiffel Tower or the key of F-sharp minor; you can, in fact, say it only falsely of these things, for (if there indeed are such things as these) each is non-white. A few properties have traditional names that are, as the linguists say, perfect nominals: 'whiteness', for example, or 'wisdom'. In my view, 'wisdom' is a name for what we say *of* or *about* Solomon and the Cumaean Sibyl when, speaking with reference to them, we say, as appropriate, 'He is wise' or 'She is wise'. But most properties have no such names: one of the things we can say of something is that it is one of the two daughters of the forty-third President of the U.S. (we could say this truly of exactly two things; if we said it of Chelsea Clinton or the Eiffel Tower or the number of planets, we'd be saying it falsely of those things). And this property, a perfectly good example of a property in my view, has no one-word name. Typical properties (and, more generally, typical relations) are, as 'whiteness' and 'wisdom' and our more complicated example testify, universals, for, typically, a property can be said truly of – or, to use some more usual idioms, can belong to, be had by, be instantiated by, be exempli-

fied by – two or more things. Not all properties have this feature, however, for there are plenty of things that can be said truly of only one thing (that it is a daughter of the forty-second president; that it is an even prime), and plenty that cannot be said truly of even one thing (that it is a woman who served as President of the U.S. in the twentieth century; that it is both round and square). I thus come down on the side of Platonism, as opposed both to nominalism and Aristotelianism. And a very capacious Platonism it is. I'd *like* to say that to every meaningful open sentence there corresponds a property, but Russell's paradox stands in my way.⁵

I should at some point mention that Galen attempts to deconstruct not only the object-process distinction, but the object-property distinction as well. I didn't mention the object-property distinction earlier because its relevance to the philosophy of the self is less clear to me than is the relevance of the object-process distinction. I mention it now because the object-property distinction (or, in my terms, the substance-property distinction) is crucial to my metaphysical framework. I must also mention the fact that Galen and I do not seem to be talking about the same sort of thing when we use the word 'property'. He would say that what I am calling properties are universals and that what he calls properties are what should, strictly speaking, be called property-*instances*. One often encounters this term in discussions of the metaphysics of properties, but I have never been able to understand it. It would seem to me that an instance of the property whiteness would not itself be a property in any possible sense of the word but rather a white thing – the Taj Mahal, for example. (If Galen were to reply to this objection, I am pretty sure that one of those conversational misfires would ensue.) In connection with his rejection of the object-property distinction, Galen more than once quotes the following sentence from the *Critique of Pure Reason*: '... in their relation to substance, accidents [Galen equates Kant's "accidents" and his own property-instances] are not really subordinated to it, but are the mode of existing of the substance itself.' The only response I can make to this sentence is the furrowed brow I mentioned earlier. In any case, *my* properties, universals, are certainly distinct from substances.

⁵ For some remarks on Russell's Paradox and on many other issues raised by the theory of properties of which I have presented a brief sketch in the text, see my essay 'A Theory of Properties,' *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, Vol. 1, Dean Zimmerman (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 107–138.

What could be more clearly a proper distinction than the distinction between Socrates and the things one can say truly about Socrates?

If I had not explicitly classified them as such, it would be evident from what I have said about them that (what I call) properties are abstract objects. And abstract objects cannot be 'constituents' of substances. (Whatever that might mean. So far as I can see, the only constituents of a material substance like a chair are smaller material substances, such as legs and screws and cellulose molecules.) If there are such things as 'tropes' ('trope', I suppose, is another word for 'property-instance') or 'immanent universals,' they are not properties or any other sort of relation. And, since, in my view, there are only substances and relations, there are no tropes or immanent universals. I don't mind this consequence, for, as far as I can see, the term 'trope' (as used by philosophers), and the term 'immanent universal' are perfectly meaningless. Another perfectly meaningless term – this one over on the 'concrete' side of things – would be 'bare particular'. (Here, finally, is a point in which Galen and I are in complete agreement.) A bare particular would either be what you get when you subtract the tropes from an ordinary substance (and thus the term would be meaningless) or else a thing of which nothing is true; and, of course, the idea of a thing of which nothing is true makes no sense at all.

Now I must try to say something useful about substances or individual things. I can think of only two useful things to say. First, following Aristotle, I can say that a substance is a thing that has properties but is not itself a property. (Since I think that the only concrete things are substances, might I not define a concrete thing as a thing that has properties but is not itself a property? I will not, for I think that I have an independent grasp of the concepts *concrete thing* and *substance*, and I mean my thesis that the only concrete things are substances to be a substantive metaphysical thesis.) Secondly, it follows from what I have said that substances have causal powers and that anything that has causal powers is a substance. (For concrete things and only concrete things have causal powers, and I have said that the only concrete things are substances.) Some philosophers will be unhappy with this feature of my metaphysical framework. Perhaps you are one of them. Perhaps you think that there are things that have causal powers but are not substances. If you do, I'll have to ask you what those things might be. Tropes? There are no such things. Sur-

faces? There are no such things. States? *Either* there are no such things or they are some sort of property and thus lack causal powers. Social entities like football teams and corporations? I don't know what to say about them, other than to remind you that hard cases make bad law. (I don't mean that I can't think of any way to fit social entities into my ontological framework; I mean I can think of lots of ways to fit them in, and am not sure which is the best.)

Stuffs? Well, stuffs are worthy of discussion, but it seems to me that one of the lessons of science is that 'stuff' cannot function as a fundamental category for understanding the world. For a region of space to be filled with butter or tin is, we now know, for that region to contain elementary particles arranged in certain specific ways. And elementary particles are not made of stuffs.

Events? Ah, that's a very good question, and very much to the present point. In my view, there are no events. True statements that apparently imply the existence of events can, I contend, be paraphrased as statements solely about the changing properties of and changing relations among substances. This is the feature of my metaphysical framework at which it is most obviously in conflict with Galen's metaphysical framework. Galen maintains that there are objects (which are more or less what I call substances) and processes (it is evident that 'process' and 'event' must either be the same category or else that 'process' must be a sub-category of 'event'), but that objects and processes are, to put the matter crudely, the *same thing*: the supposed *distinction* between them is, at the level of fundamental ontology, an illusion. I maintain that 'substance' is a fundamental ontological category and that there are no events. True, substances change their properties, and the relations among them change. At one time I am cold and ten feet from Galen; at another I am warm and hundreds of miles from him. But it does not follow from the fact that things change that there are such things as changes. Or, contraposing, from the premise that there are no such things as changes, the conclusion does not follow that things do not change.

One who accepts my metaphysical framework must therefore say that if there are selves they are substances. And substances are in no sense events or processes. Substances are in no sense processes for two reasons. First, as I have said, there are no processes for them to be. Secondly, if there *were* processes, they would have the wrong properties for them to be substances – just as, if there were pixies, they would have the wrong properties to

be elephants. Events or processes, if they existed, would begin, end, happen, take place, go on, or occur. They would be changes in the intrinsic properties of or the relations among substances. Substances come into being and pass away; they last or endure or get older; if they are material substances, they have masses. And these properties are not properties events would have if they existed. I do not see a place for selves, as distinct from persons, in a world whose fundamental ontology is the way I believe the fundamental ontology of the actual world (and, indeed, of any possible world) to be. If Galen is right, then every time I complete a certain unified episode of thought-and-feeling, a self ends; one pearl in the string that composes me, the person, is over. But I am convinced that, on such occasions, no substance ceases to exist.

This is, of course, no argument against the existence of selves or SESMETs. It is no argument against the existence of *xs* to point out that there is no place for *xs* in the general metaphysical framework one favors. But I haven't introduced my metaphysical framework with a view to presenting an argument against the existence of selves. I didn't arrive at my general picture of the world in order to have a picture of the world that has no place for selves. But, in the end, I *do* have a picture of the world that has, or seems to have, no place in it for selves. It seems that, at any rate as regards Galen and me, the debate about the existence of selves must be set aside and replaced by a debate about existence-in-general, about which general metaphysical framework to accept.

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