

C. E. Garland

Long Dissertation Abstract

In my dissertation I seek an answer to the following question: what, if anything, makes true the expression of grief that, in losing her loved one, the bereaved has lost a part of herself. Call such utterances, ‘the grief utterances’. Their ubiquity and the accompanying phenomenology suggests that there is something deeply right, and true, about these utterances. Yet, little philosophical attention has been paid to the extent to which a metaphysician’s toolbox, well-equipped with notions like parthood and persons, can help us give an account of what makes it true that anyone is ever part of the other in the sense conveyed in these utterances. Using resources found in the literature on personhood, parthood, and identity, I establish two potential answers to this question.

In my first chapter I discuss the extent to which psychology and recent philosophical work on attachment can help give an account of the grief utterances. While these contributions may explain the phenomenology that accompanies, and perhaps prompts, the grief utterances, attachment alone does not account for the intimacy necessary for us to judge them as such. From this, I introduce the Intimacy Constraint on possible answers. Any answer to what makes the grief utterances true must be such that it rules out paradigmatic instances of one not losing a part of oneself, and includes those instances that we think are paradigmatic. I also distinguish the question of what makes the grief utterances true from the question of what makes grief rational.

The second chapter considers three possible answers by appealing to unusual parts of people already suggested in the literature. Some metaphysicians think that people are extended through time, and so have temporal parts. Since in losing a loved one we lose a possible future, perhaps we lose a temporal part. Others think that people extend through modal space, and so have modal parts, each corresponding to a possibility for that person. Since in losing a loved one we lose many possibilities, perhaps we have lost a modal part. Others believe in the extended mind, that our mind can extend to anything that stores our mental states, beliefs, or memories for us. Surely our loved ones do this, so, perhaps in losing a loved one, we lose a bit of our extended mind. I argue that none of these suggestions meet the Intimacy Constraint. While this chapter is largely negative, I also demonstrate that the apparent maximality of *personhood* (roughly, a property, F , is maximal if, necessarily no F is a large part of any other F) does not provide reason to think that it is not possible for one person to be part of another.

The remainder of my dissertation relies on the notion of a plural person. Roughly, two individuals form a plural person when, in addition to each individual’s personal conception of a life worth her living, the two have also formed a joint conception of a life worth their living together. I take it that any individuals who form a plural person are individuals who meet the parameters set in the Intimacy Constraint. Thus, I take the loss of a person with whom one forms a plural person as a paradigmatic instance of losing a part of oneself. In Chapter Three I modify the characterization of a plural person just given in order to account for the possibility that one can form a plural person with another individual who may not (yet) count as an individual person. This is required as we seem to recognize a parent’s loss of a child or

infant as a paradigmatic instance of losing a part. Following this, I clarify the existence, individuation, and persistence conditions of plural persons. Lastly, I discuss the bearing this has for current work on personhood and social groups. One implication of the view is that moral personhood is (partly) constituted by convention. I defend this result from several objections.

In Chapter Four I take up and develop an answer to the question of what makes grief utterances true from Donald Baxter. Baxter's idea is that one loses a part of oneself because some whole to which one is identical loses a part. In this chapter I first argue that while Baxter seems to believe that we lose a part of ourselves whenever another individual goes out of existence, this will not meet the Intimacy Constraint. Then, I show how we can distinguish plural persons from other social groups and collections of people in a way that allows us to do so. Next I point out that Baxter's theory requires a version of Leibniz's Law (LL) that has not been recognized in the literature. I draw out the requirements of, and restrictions on, this particular version of LL. With this new version of LL in place, Baxter's theory can successfully make true the grief utterances. However, I argue that it does so in a way that fails to resonate with the phenomenology of grief: given Baxter's system, the primary bearer of the loss is the plural person, and not oneself. Thus, Baxter's theory does not accurately capture the phenomenology driving the grief utterances.

In my final chapter I consider an answer to the question that *does* result in the bereaved being the primary bearer of the loss. One's social self consists of a network of those individuals to whom one is appropriately related. In losing a loved one, one node of this network is destroyed. Thus, one loses a part of one's social self. However, the notion of a social self is too broad and also fails to meet the Intimacy Constraint. Yet, the idea that one's relationships are constitutive of oneself seems right for this context. In this chapter I demonstrate the way in which being a member of a plural person structures one's practical identity, that is, one's internal map of who they are, their desires, goals and preferences. I argue that belonging to a plural person is partially constitutive of one's practical identity. Thus, in losing a loved one, one loses a constitutive part of one's practical identity.