



Presidential Commission
for the Study of Bioethical Issues

TRANSCRIPT

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DR. GUTMANN: Good morning, everybody. I'm Amy Gutmann. I am Chair of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues and President of the University of Pennsylvania, and my Vice Chair, Jim Wagner, who is President of Emory University will lead off this morning's session, but let me just do a few preliminary things, if I may.

First, we are transitioning in this session to do some in-depth discussion of neuroscience which will be the third of three topics that the Commission will study and write a report on, after genomes and privacy, countermeasures for children, and then we will do neuroscience and the self, and the only other thing I want to say as a preliminary comment is that anybody who is with us in the audience who would like to ask a question or make a comment, we have pieces of -- cards right there. Do you want to stand up and -- cards, if you just go to any staff member or raise your hand, they'll give you a card. Write down your question and your name, and either Jim or I will be happy to take your question and address it to anyone who presents.

Now I'd just like to turn it over to Jim Wagner who will introduce the first session.

DR. WAGNER: Well, good morning. Thank you, Amy,

and welcome back, Commissioners.

Yes, we are transitioning to neuroscience and self, but this is a great transition session because the questions around self and what is self and personality are things we began to deal with just a little bit yesterday even in a genomic situation where -- genomic circumstance, area when we were talking about the possibility that one's own estimation of one's self and their aspirations might be compromised or at least modulated by knowledge of their own genome, but we are going to be focusing through this session today on the neuroscience aspects of that.

We know, somehow, that when someone suffers a brain injury or a neurodegenerative disease like Alzheimer's or some pharmacological effect, some of the changes we see from chemotherapy for example, we're quick to say, gee, they've become a different person, and it may not be clear exactly what we mean by that or what we think we know about that, so in light of this, we need to understand terms like person and personality and self so that we can have a productive conversation.

To help us with that this morning, we have John Perry and Marya Schechtman who are philosophers who study

self.

Not many of us, I'm afraid, on the Commission have pondered these ideas, I'm sure not in the depth that they have, and we really look forward to how they can help us.

To begin with, I'll ask John Perry to speak. He is a distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the University of California Riverside; Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Stanford. At Stanford he served as Chair of the Philosophy Department, Director of the Center for the Study of Language and Information, which was an independent center founded in 1983.

He's made significant contributions to many areas of philosophy including philosophy of language, metaphysics and philosophy of the mind.

He's the author of over 100 articles and books and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a recipient of many honors and awards including -- is it pronounced Nicot -- I don't know that award, and Humbolt Award. Nicot, thank you. I apologize, and last but not least, co-host of Philosophy Talk, a radio program that -- and the tag line here says it's a program that questions

everything except your intelligence, which is good for me.
Thank you.

Professor Perry, we're pleased to have you here.
Please.

DR. PERRY. Thank you very much. I'm very happy
to be here. How's that, better?

Okay. I'm very happy to be here. In my ten
minutes, I'm going to try to demystify the self a little bit.
Self is a word that in philosophy often comes associated with
really deep ideas and impressive terminology.

Starting off with Descartes, the self is the
soul, so it's what's going to get you to heaven or hell.
According to Kant, we've got a transcendental self.
According to Hume, the self is a bundle, and according to
William James, it's a stream.

So if you look in philosophy to find out what the
self is, you might be somewhat mystified, but I think it's
really a fairly straightforward concept if you think about
what human life is all about.

I think self is just a way of talking about
ourselves. That shouldn't be too surprising. We are
persons. Marya is going to tell you more about what persons

are, but persons are beings that last through time and have a location in space, and their survival is very dependent on being able to pick up information about them, about the environment around them and about their insides and taking steps that make sense to avoid pain and bring about pleasure or meet their goals in the light of this information.

Now the objects around us play many roles with respect to us, and we also play an important role with respect to ourselves, the role of identity. So I think the self, the primary meaning of the self, is not so mysterious, it's like the neighbor or the teacher.

It's just -- I'm describing someone or referring to someone in virtue of their relation to me, and the relation is identity. It sounds maybe a little bit like hocus pocus, but I don't think it is because these roles all come with special ways of knowing about things and special ways of acting on things.

Our Chairperson, Amy Gutmann, is now right in front of me, and that gives me an excellent way to know more about her. I can look at her and see that she's somehow not aged since she gave the Kant lectures at Stanford a few years ago.

I have a way of knowing about the person to the right of me. I turn and look. Oh, my gosh, it's another discoverer of the Fountain of Youth, and I have ways of acting on people depending on their relation to me so I can kind of frighten Marya by doing that and I could probably make Amy laugh but I won't.

So people have various relations to us as a result of which we pick up information in various ways and we act on them in various ways, and we, ourselves, are a special case of that.

There are ways of knowing about yourself that aren't ways of knowing about anyone else. I knew I was about to cough before you did. There's a certain way of knowing that you're about to cough that you have and no one else has.

There's a certain way of scratching a head that is the way of scratching the head of the person you are, so it's a very simple point. We all come pre-equipped with ways of knowing about things in various relations to us, including ourselves. We have very special ways of knowing about ourselves, and we all come pre-equipped with various strategies for acting upon things in various relations to us, and there are special strategies for acting on yourself.

If you imagine someone with amnesia who's forgotten who they are. What does that mean? Well they've forgotten their public identity.

Let's suppose I have amnesia. Let's suppose I always admired John Searle, the great Berkeley professor, so maybe as I get older my admiration will turn into a delusion that I think I am John Searle, and I'll take credit for his books and try to be like him in every way.

Will I have forgotten completely who I am? No, I mean if I'm hungry and somebody puts a bowl of soup in front of me, I'll know which mouth to spoon the soup into. The most basic things about ourselves we wouldn't forget about in amnesia.

This bring up, or at least what I should call television amnesia, since I'm in the presence of people who probably know what amnesia really amounts to but the kind where a knock on the head makes you forget who you are and then towards the last commercial break, another knock on the head brings it all back.

This brings up another aspect of the self, what we know about ourselves, what we think of ourselves, isn't just limited to what we know about in the special ways that

everyone has to know about themselves, and what we do with regard to ourselves isn't always based on just that kind of information.

For example, this morning trying to figure out exactly where I should come for this meeting, I looked up on the website of the Commission and found out where in San Francisco your meeting was, and part of doing that was seeing my own name there, John Perry, and I said, oh, that must be the session I need to get to because that's me.

Now you all have a John Perry concept, in most cases probably rather recent and not that rich and vivid, but you have some idea of who I am, and I have a John Perry concept that is quite different than my self concept.

That is, I know all sorts of things about myself and can find out all sorts of things about myself that don't involve just using my normally self-informative ways of knowing: introspection and, you know, looking down at myself and scratching to see if I itch and so forth but involve the same ways of knowing about me that you have.

For example, a lot of this information I can't find out in normally self-informative ways like where my class meets next quarter. I have to look up in the time

schedule to find my name and find out that fact about myself in the same way all the students find out that fact about me.

So our ordinary concept of self as human beings is much more complicated than you might need just to be a chicken or a dog, where you could pretty much get by with a knowledge that you have of yourself in normally self-informative ways and knowledge that you have about the environment in normal ways, but so much of our knowledge is representational.

It comes to us through the forms of the printed word, the spoken word, and now the electronic word, and that includes a lot of information we get about ourselves, so our self-concept is a combination of what are called -- information we have in normally self-informative ways and information we have about the person we happen to be.

When you have amnesia, those two things fall apart, but for most of us, they're seamlessly together, but there are interesting differences.

There is a great story by Borges called Borges and I, and in this story the writer talks about this other guy, Borges, who takes all of his ideas and makes a big fuss about them and who seems to have habits and dispositions that

the writer doesn't quite approve of, and he says on the other hand, I can't complain because that's the only way my ideas get out and so forth and so on, and in the end he says I don't know which of us wrote this essay.

The idea there is that there is a certain tension in our concept of self between the things we know in the normal ways that animals and humans and babies know about themselves, and the things we know in virtue of this incredibly complicated social process by which there is a public persona of us that we share, and the two can create a stress.

So I've tried to demystify the self a little bit. I don't think we need such obscure notions as the soul. There may be a soul, but it shouldn't be confused with the self. It's a religious notion whereas I think the self is a very common-sensical notion that grew right up with the other concepts that humans -- that evolved along with humans to express their understanding of the world.

These are not concepts that may fit easily into neuroscience, but if they get at something real about the world, they must fit in there somewhere.

I don't think we need a transcendental self,

although I can't be sure because I'm not sure what it was supposed to be.

There is a stream of consciousness and there is a bundle of impressions, but I don't think either of those is really the self. I think the self is just me, a flesh and blood person thought of under the relation of identity which is one of the most important relations anyone has to me, not quite as important as the relation my spouse of 50 years has to me because basically what she thinks and wants are more important than what I think and want, but I must come in at least second.

So identity is a very important relation. It's an epistemic relation, it's a practical relation, and we have a rather complicated concept of ourselves because we have a rather complicated relation to ourselves primarily because we live in a world in which we're not just presented to ourselves through perception but through various representations of ourselves that we share with others.

Thank you.

DR. WAGNER: I'd like to hear next from Professor Schechtman, Marya Schechtman, who is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Illinois in Chicago. She

received her Ph.D. from Harvard in 1988 and is the author of the Constitution of Selves and numerous articles on personal identity.

Her research focuses on the interface between metaphysical, empirical and practical questions about self and identity and works to show these different methods of investigation can work together to provide deeper insight into our nature.

Professor Schechtman, welcome.

DR. SCHECHTMAN: Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to be here, and I don't know if I'll demystify or remystify. We'll see.

So there are many different things that we might mean when we talk about the question of personal identity. One is a metaphysical question about the persistence of an object over time, and here our concern is fundamentally with number. That is, if we look at something at one time and something at another time, are we looking at two somethings or one something at two different times?

So this is a very fundamental basic question about whether a single entity continues.

But outside of the context of metaphysics,

usually the question of personal identity is conceived as a question about psychological, social, or ethical aspects of our lives, so there are Ericksonian identity questions that have to do with authenticity and personal flourishing; questions of identity of the sort at work in identity politics; and the questions that arise in the context of profound character transformation, just to name a few.

I think that the most exciting discussions in the philosophy of personal identity are the ones that seek to draw a connection between all these different kinds of questions, and the few that I'm going to outline today take this approach.

So I'm going to present this to you, which is my view, in two different stages. I'm going to start with the view as it's originally conceived and presented because that's the worked-out view, but recently I've been rethinking some key issues, so I'll mention that at the end because I think they're going to be especially relevant here.

So my account of personal identity flows from a tradition that arguably begins with John Locke, who says that person is a forensic term, and this claim is generally understood to suggest that what it is to be a person is to be

an appropriate target of normative judgments, for instance, judgments about moral responsibility and prudential rationality, and then the idea is that the unity of a person is set by the unity -- are the limits within which judgments of this sort apply, right, so since I can only be responsible for my own actions or only rationally have egoistic concern for my own future, the argument goes, personal identity should be defined in terms of whatever relation underwrites responsibility and concern of this sort.

Locke says that we're capable of these relations because we're self-conscious and so that personal identity over time should be defined in terms of sameness of consciousness, and the challenge of course is to say just what that means. Sameness of consciousness is a rather obscure and weak field of pull of that but what does it exactly mean?

So I gloss this notion with a narrative account of personal identity, and according to this view, we constitute ourselves as persons by forming and operating with autobiographical narratives that take the form of a story of a person's life.

So the unity of a person on this view comes from

the unity of a like narrative, to be the target of forensic judgments, one needs to have an autobiographical narrative of the right sort and particular normative judgments take place within the confines of a single like narrative.

Of course the coherence and plausibility of this kind of view depends upon providing a viable understanding of what the right kind of narrative is and, more to the point, I think, what it means to have a narrative, and as you may imagine, this is a pretty long story, but let me just give a few points, a few key points of the view.

First, narratives are largely implicit, so the view doesn't say that we need to recite the stories of our lives either to ourselves or to anyone else in order to be persons.

Instead, our experiences and actions need to be structured around an implicit awareness of such a narrative, so when I walked into this room, I knew why I was here, what I was going to do, where I came from, how it connects to my life. That's what I knew.

Two, narratives are not deeply literary, so the story of my life is a story rather than a mere chronicle of events because the things that happen are causally related in

particular ways, and it's the story of a person's life both because of the kinds of events it includes, that is, getting on an airplane, speaking at an event like this, and so on, and also because of the causal relation.

Some of them have to do with a reason, reflection, psychological motivation, but there is no requirement that a person's autobiographical narrative needs to be tightly woven or thematically unified as a literary narrative.

Our lives are full of happenstance and trivia as well as significant events, and that's part of the narrative too.

Three, narratives need to be largely and locally accessible. Although an identity-constituting narrative will be mostly implicit, the person who possesses it needs to be able to access it when appropriate, so if someone says where do you live, do you have any children, are you married, why did you say that, I should be able to say something in response whether I choose to or not, and depending on the question, the right answer might be something like I forget or I don't really know. I didn't think about it. Why, is it important?

But in order to have the right kind of narrative, you need to know when that kind of answer is appropriate and when not having an answer is cause for concern.

Finally, narratives need to be accurate but not completely so. So possession of a narrative is supposed to be what makes us capable of normative interactions with others so it can't be that the truth about my life is just whatever story I make up.

We need to be enough in sync with others to allow for normative interactions and that means our narratives need to conform to what are taken to be fundamental truths around the world, just things like people don't live for 700 years, can't be in two places at one time, can't get from Chicago to Paris in two seconds and that sort of thing.

They also need to show an understanding of what counts as evidence both for matters of fact and for traits of character and disposition, so I don't have to agree with what everybody thinks about me. There can be room for interpretation, but I have to know what the right kind of evidence is for these sorts of attributions.

So obviously all of this needs much more explanation, but the basic idea is that the integrity of a

person at a quite basic level requires that she understand the form of life that persons lead and that she sees her life as an instance of that form of life.

She has to understand herself as an embodied social being with a history, a future, and a certain kind of flight trajectory.

Now my rethinking of this view basically involves a rejection or I would call it a modification actually of the Lockean conception of personhood. I've come to see it as just too narrow.

So what Locke is trying to do is capture what's central and distinctive about persons, and that's how he comes up with a forensic idea, and while I think it's true that normative interactions are, of course, an especially salient and unique feature of our lives, they're far from the whole story.

There are many characteristically interpersonal interactions that don't revolve around making forensic or normative judgments at all. They're only tangentially so, so think of the way in which parents interact with infant children or children with parents suffering profound dementia.

In these cases, the normative judgments that hold between typical mature persons have no place because neither the infant nor the dementia patient has the requisite capacity, and according to Locke, neither the infant nor the demented parent would be a person.

But I think that that doesn't make sense ultimately when you think about it. The parent interacts with the infant, and the adult child interacts with the demented parent I think in each case clearly as a person and not just as a human animal.

So the point here isn't just that all humans should be afforded a certain moral status or have a certain dignity, although I certainly believe that, but the point that I'm trying to make now is about the wide range of interpersonal relationships that define us as persons, so parents sing to and read to and play with infants. An adult child might take a demented parent to music therapy or art therapy or to celebrate a birthday or other holiday at a particularly significant place, and these are interactions between people.

They're peculiarly interpersonal interactions. Now in these cases, the personal forms of interaction are

connected to the individual's overall life trajectory, so an infant is a person at the beginning of her life developing capabilities and relationships that will unfold for years.

An elderly parent with dementia is someone toward the end of the life maybe, someone who cared for and supported his children through their youth and worked 50 years at the auto plant and lost the love of his life and then became ill or whatever, and so the narrative is still working there, but it's just not a narrative that's within the person's psyche. It's a narrative coming from the outside, and the implications here are broader than they might appear because my idea isn't just that before and after the ability to be a properly autonomous self-narrating person.

There are periods at the end or beginning or sometimes unfortunately in the middle of life at which one might be considered a person as a kind of courtesy.

Instead I think these end points throw into sharp relief the great wealth of the peculiarly interpersonal interactions that are present throughout our lives, so when we go to a movie with friends and discuss it afterwards over drinks, listen to jazz records together, go out dancing, any

number of things that we do together that don't involve making judgments of moral responsibility or prudential concern.

It's a further implication that even those humans who never achieved the full-blown Lockean capacities become persons by being part of these many other peculiarly personal interactions, so on the view that I'm trying to develop now, the modified narrative approach, a person isn't just a unit of moral responsibility and prudential concern as Locke had it but rather a locus of the full-range of our concerns about and relationships with other people, and the identity of a person consists in the unity or integrity of such a locus which comes from a narrative lived-in public space of interpersonal interactions rather than one that's constructed within the privacy of one's own psyche, and so identity becomes a much more interactive and dynamic affair. Thank you.

DR. WAGNER: Thank you both. If I might take the privilege of the leading off the questioning. I particularly, Professor Schechtman, appreciated the latter part of your comments about the relational definition of a personhood outside of a self definition. I found, and

with apologies ahead of time in case what I heard is not what you intended to say, but, John, I heard a very helpful actually self perspective on the definition of self from you, and we began this way actually, Marya, with you as well when you started talking about the unity of person has something to do with the autobiographical narrative, and what worried me was auto in autobiographical and what concerns me is the self definition of self.

If in fact part of what our responsibility is when we consider the impact of technology practice and policy on invading and modifying someone else's self, then it seems to me we have some responsibility to preserve and protect another's self.

In fact that's going to be our job. I appreciated that you at the end were saying that a young child or someone with Alzheimer's -- in fact I guess one could argue that much of their self remains outside of them, not in an autobiography at all because it's lost on the demented individual, but in a biography that we preserve.

This is -- I'd like you to comment on this because am I wrong in suggesting that understanding our responsibility to not inappropriately modify a biography of

someone else through invasive use of neuroscience or a blunt reading of a genome, human genome, is where the questions of ethics are going to come up. Am I -- please comment on that, on my concern.

DR. PERRY: Well my definition of self makes it pretty easy to be a self, but when we think of the integrity of the self we usually think that the person has some self-concept that is adaptive that allows them to function well. It allows them to do what persons need to do to pick up information about the environment and make decisions based on that information that makes sense.

I think the way we think about it in common sense and pretty much what we've inherited and try to improve on in philosophy is what I would call interpreting theory, that is, we're really trying to get at what's going on in a person's head and understand her actions. In terms of an account that it assumes that what goes on in their head makes sense given the way they fit into the world.

An example would be a radio for most of us. I guess we're all old enough to remember radio, so if you have a radio, you can manipulate it very well. You -- at least in the old days, you had two buttons or two things, the volume

and the tuning, and you could go to different stations and you know what to expect if you go to KALW, 91.7 on your radio dial here in San Francisco, you will hear relatively boring public radio-type stuff.

If you go to 103.7, you'll hear music from the '60s, '70s, and '80s, so in a way you know how a radio works. You have a battery of concepts that are very useful in dealing with the radio and in talking to the person on the other seat on the radio when you turn it to 103.7 I'm tired of boring public radio stuff even though we don't -- at least in my case have the least idea of what's going inside the radio.

We've developed and of course in this the case the radio is developed to fit our concepts early in the way, but we have a set of concepts for a very complicated thing that worked pretty well as long as the complicated thing fits into the environment the way it's supposed to.

Our brains are the most complicated things in the solar system, maybe in the universe, maybe in the galaxy, and maybe somewhere in between, and yet we're able to do these amazing things.

Like all of us came here within five minutes of

each other vectoring all over the United States to get here close to the same time. Why did we do that? Well it all involved predictions about what other people were going to do and what they do is all based on this huge brain.

The theory -- the interpretive theories work right, work well, when the mechanism is intact but as soon as that radio goes bad, it doesn't do me any good at all. Then I need a radio technician, so that's my picture. The problem is where do you draw the line. With a radio it's pretty easy. You could get the music you want.

I have a paranoid schizophrenic son. Should I look on that as someone who's lost the claim to personhood and the basic things that come with it or someone who is just much different than I and taking on a very different cut on the world is a very different request.

DR. WAGNER: Marya, how about you? What is -- to try to be a little more succinct with my question, what is our responsibility to preserve and protect someone else's self?

DR. SCHECHTMAN: I'm afraid I don't have an answer to that question, but I think in order to start thinking about an answer to that question, what's crucial is

to think about why we care about the self.

I mean partly we want to know a self is or what a person is, but also part of what you want to ask is why is the integrity so important, and I think we're all very used to thinking about autonomy and thinking about the value of autonomy and how you don't want to mess with somebody's autonomy, and I'm all for that, but I think that it's a broader range of questions really than that when we think about what's important about the self because there are these other relationships and interactions that aren't about autonomy, the preservation of which like parent/child relationships, like friendships, and so on are also deeply important to us.

So I guess when we think about changing people's -- you know the question of will I be a different person with this intervention or will we mess with somebody's identity in this intervention, we want to think about what we're going to do to their life, I mean to their life as a person, what it's going to be like for them.

One of the things that -- I actually am not an ethicist by training, but one of the things that makes me think is that this must make the question that much more

complicated because it depends in each case on how it unfolds.

I mean it's not just the intervention itself or what switch the intervention flips in somebody's sort of psyche, but then what happens, who do they go home to and what is that like for them.

So in thinking about what we're doing to people when we intervene, and probably clinicians are used to this, but you need to think maybe philosophers less so, but what kind of support network they have or what parts of their life they're going to be able to continue that maybe don't have to do just with capacity.

DR. GUTMANN: So I'm going to ask a follow-up question given your views of identity, persons, and selves, and the question -- I can ask the question very simply, and I think it's a question that's going to come up when we do neuroscience and the self. It's out there in many of the discussions, and so I'll pose the question simply which is when are selves or persons responsible for their actions, when should they be held responsible for their actions?

Are there -- and I could follow it up with subsets of these questions. Are there facts about selves or

persons that if we know them and when we know them we should cease to hold those people morally responsible for their actions.

DR. PERRY: Well, I think there certainly are. The problems philosophers have or I think should have is not drawing the line too quickly. That is there is a view out there as you know that anytime an action is caused and that causal chain goes back to events before say the person existed or before the person was thinking about the problem. It doesn't really have to be deterministic. It can just -- that person is not responsible.

That seems to me somewhat crazy. Well, if that's too strong a word, but -

DR. GUTMANN: But go on because I think we need to lay the ground work here.

DR. PERRY: That's something that happens a lot with philosophers is that a perfectly good concept like -- the way we usually handle it in English is with can.

If I go to the store and my wife says I want you to get two percent milk -

DR. GUTMANN: Can I just -- can you hear back there?

DR. PERRY: I want you to get two percent milk, not skim milk, not whole milk, two percent milk, and I go up to the counter -- I go up to thing and I pull out a thing of whole milk when there's two percent milk there, there's a clear sense of which I could have gotten two percent milk, and there's a clear sense in which I got home and she's angry at me. That's appropriate.

On the other hand, if all they've got is whole milk, now there's a clear sense in which I can't get two percent milk and there's a clear sense in which she should let me off the hook when I come home with the whole milk.

So we have a working concept which is you can do some things, you can't do others. What things can you? Well, if you can make the movements in the situation and have a result, you can do it. If you can't make the movements or they don't work in this situation, you can't do it.

I think that's a concept that we have, we need, and it makes perfectly good sense and it's reasonably tied into moral theory.

Then somebody like Augustine, say, who I admire greatly invents something like free will which is really kind of a religious take on that concept and philosophers spend

centuries showing that we really don't have it, but -- and that affects science.

I mean you see really fantastic scientists like Gazzaniga and Libet I guess and others who really wrestle with the problem of whether we have free will, but I think often they're misconceiving the question we ought to be asking is whether we're free in a perfectly ordinary, useful sense.

Now having said that, when can not so much external limitations or physical limitations but limitations that come from the mind itself undercut that freedom?

Well, that's a hard question, but there's some clear cases. I think paranoid schizophrenia when it's uncontrolled by medication that the things going on in the mind are so bizarre at least in the cases -- some cases I know -- that you should either say the person is not free or that their freedom is significantly impaired by the fact that it's in the service of really bizarre desires and beliefs.

In other cases where it's not so much that there's delusions about what's going on, but there is an inability to put the information together into reasonable plans, that's another case.

There are -- so there's a range of cases, but there is a body of work. I'm thinking particularly of John Fisher and his colleagues that have tried to develop this concept of freedom as something that one has within the causal chain and make a lot of distinctions based on actual cases and they have a number of criteria. I can't recall them, but I think that would be very worth your Commission's digging into because it's of the vast literature it is, I think, by far -- going to be by far the most useful in actually developing a set of criteria guidelines.

DR. SCHECHTMAN: Yes, I don't really have a lot to add to that because I think that in the first part I absolutely agree that there is this moment at which finding out that things are caused and this is -- you know, it's been interesting in watching actually undergraduate students change in that response when it used to really disturb students to think that there might be underlying NEURAL mechanisms that were making -- and now they don't care at all. At least that's like they say of course, but it doesn't seem to impact their sense that they're free or threatened that sense of freedom in the same way, and I think -

DR. PERRY: I don't suppose that's because of the

article I published last year.

DR. SCHECHTMAN: I think it probably is.

DR. PERRY: Yes, okay.

DR. SCHECHTMAN: Although they did say that you could have gone to another store and they would have skim milk there.

DR. WAGNER: Or the radio technician finds a radio less marvelous because they understand the circuitry.

DR. PERRY: Yes.

DR. SCHECHTMAN: And I also think that we have to make more problematic the notion of responsibility in general, not just the question of whether you need to be free or cause to be responsible but what kind of responsibility we're talking about and what sorts of things we're trying to hold you responsible for.

It's not a monolithic notion, and so it may be that it comes in degrees and it comes in kinds, responsibility.

DR. FARAHANY: I hope you don't mind I'm going to take us back to some of the conversations that we had yesterday about the genome because I think a lot your comments, both of you, pertain to the issues that we are

dealing with.

One of the issues that came up is the concept of extended personality and thinking about what are the boundaries of self, so you both spoke about different conceptions of self, primarily autobiographical or self-representational concepts of self, and we were discussing the ideas of, you know, the cups that you're both drinking leave your saliva behind from which I can actually get your DNA and learn things, and, John, you said something interesting which is one thing that's important to self is that there are special ways of knowing about ourselves that other people do not have and yet there are also special ways of other people knowing things about ourselves that we do not have.

One of those intersects with the genome which is to the extent that I leave behind genomic material and somebody else can pick it up and scan it and read it and discover things. They may discover things about my pre-dispositions and, you know, preferences and desires that may be encoded in some sense, at least influencing my behavior, that I may not know unless I actually have access to the same information.

But, you know, what we were talking about

yesterday, and I would be quite interested in hearing is how does knowledge that other people have about you impact conceptions of self and what would you consider to be the boundaries of self?

Would you consider embodiments of self and, you know, electronic forms and written pieces of information and traces of bodily fluids and bodily material that's left behind all to be part of self or is the boundary of self really just the physical representation of me sitting right here and not what I leave as traces behind?

DR. PERRY: Do you want to answer that?

DR. SCHECHTMAN: Well, I'll try, so to the first part about how knowledge of others influences self, in my conception of what self and person is, they're absolutely crucial, so you need some kind of equilibrium between your own conception of who you are and your biography and your life and the conception that other people have of you, and they have to work together so that you can interact with other people, so I mean this is the idea that you have to be enough in sync or enough on the same page in my original conception to be able to be in the business of giving reasons and taking reasons and having normative interactions with

others, but in the more extended view that I'm talking about, to have whatever kind of relationships we have that are interpersonal relationships.

There has to be enough common ground. It doesn't mean that we have to absolutely agree. There may be no fact of the matter about some of these things, but I have to be sensitive to what other people think of me. I have to be - in just the ways we are naturally as well as ways we cultivate, and we need to be able to find enough common ground to interact, and exactly how much that is, I think is an empirical question.

On the second question, the way I think of the self for person as a sort of this locus of personal concern and care, so there are all kinds of ways in which I care about my son and think about him, and some of them are deeply tied to our personal relationship. Some are more generic and have to do with humans, but there's one thing. There's a biological being, a moral being, a social being, someone I have a relationship with, and I need one place to latch all that.

So because I think of it that way, I would not think of self extending in these other ways, although I mean

it would have some connection to the notion of self. They would be traces of the self or something, but in my view, self has got to be more integrated than that.

DR. PERRY: Yes, I think it's important to keep a distinction between what's me and what is in some sense mine. It's my DNA, but it's no longer part of me, but the issue you raise about - the idea of going through life and having people know more about you than you do is not foreign to us, at least people who think they know more about us than we do. Our parents certainly do, and then maybe our counselors at high school and if we go to a shrink, and get them actually to talk to us, they may know a lot about us.

So even about very personal things about we desire in our relations to our loved ones, we can handle the idea that someone in these indirect ways may know more about us than we do, but the world we're entering into through the work of you and your colleagues I guess - not you, you're a lawyer and a Ph.D. - oh, dear. Philosopher, oh, okay. Yes, well you're not going to affect anybody then.

The world we're entering into through the work of neuroscience and biology is in that to me frightening. I mean I won't live long enough to be too worried by it, but

with the Internet on one hand and Facebook and all the facts that anything you do disclose about yourself can be gotten out there, analyzed, and come back at you after you've long forgotten it -- what people can find out about us by our DNA and what that may lead to as we understand better how the brain works, to go through life in kind of a fog in the midst of other people and databases that have incredible information about you which you feel you have a right to but most of which you couldn't understand, it's a bizarre world. That's what I've got to say.

DR. SULMASY: One of the things that I'm trying to do is sort of say what seems to be similar and what differs between both of your views, and obviously cognition, self-awareness, agency are at play in both concepts, but would it be fair to suggest that in some ways, John, you're sort of in some ways looking for a threshold of expression of those capacities whereas Marya might be suggesting that it's belonging to a kind that has kind-specific capacities for this that have a developmental history and possibilities of disruption, you know, physically, psychologically, et cetera?

Would that be a fair way of characterizing the differences and if not, why not, and do you want to talk to

each other about the differences as well?

DR. PERRY: Well, I'll start since I'm older. I think there's a lot of agreement between us. We're both - we both come from great admiration and a lot of study of John Locke.

My picture is more focused on local rationality, that is the things that get you through the hour or the day. The ability to feed yourself, avoid predators, and then how technology, by which I mean language particularly and all the things that develop from it, have made that basic thing more complicated.

Whereas I think Marya is more interested in what we might call the more sophisticated selves that actually have a life plan. To be a self in my sense of self you don't need to have a life plan. You can stumble from one damn thing to another. I suppose that's partly autobiographical and maybe her conception is because she comes from a more rational and thoughtful brain.

DR. SCHECHTMAN: Well I first want to say, the way that you characterize my view is exactly -- I wish I had had that to characterize it, so that was great. Thank you.

I think certainly my early stuff is about having a

life plan, and the later stuff was trying less to be about how the individual needs to have a life plan in order to get through the hour and the day, but nevertheless, it's still in this broad picture. I'm still looking at how it all fits together over time.

So I really do come to these questions from the challenge of figuring out how you are a single person throughout a life given all the ways we do change in the typical case and all the ways we can change, and so I'm thinking about this diachronic question.

But, yes, it is also true, and one of the things that I said quickly because I said everything quickly in passing was that I view my new conception as a modification of the Lockean view rather than a rejection, and I think most Lockeans would think if you don't need memory and you don't need self-consciousness to be a person, it's just a rejection, but the reason that I think it's a modification is precisely for what you point to which is if we as a kind didn't possess the Lockean traits, there would be no form of life that made persons of the sort that I'm talking about, so the reason that infants and the demented and people without the Lockean capacities are persons is because of the

infrastructure that comes from being part of the - from a kind that does this and involves culture basically, so I don't know - and I guess that is quite different from what you're talking about in terms of self at a time.

DR. PERRY: Yes, not incompatible.

DR. SCHECHTMAN: Not incompatible.

DR. PERRY: A different part of the elephant as they would say - as Locke would say.

DR. KUCHERLAPATI: Thank you. I guess the representations of self and persons that you talked about I guess is a philosophical definition, and I want to talk and see how you think about this from a biological point of view, so one could define a person not by any of the criteria that you talked about, but by their DNA and that this doesn't have to involve any narrative. It doesn't involve any other things, and yet I could define an individual uniquely in the whole universe by their DNA, or there may be individuals who don't have the ability to be able to have a narrative and yet they're individuals, and I would define them as individuals and persons by virtue of their DNA.

How do we bring these different concepts, the biological concepts of self and persons, versus the

philosophical thinking of that person and self?

DR. SCHECHTMAN: I'll start. I'll try, so I guess the question is for what purpose are you trying to delimit an individual and for different purposes you'll look at different aspects of the individual, but these can't be just distinct from one another. They have to somehow fit together.

So the view that I'm trying to develop is not - there's no incompatibility with biological individuation, but what I'm really trying to say is that when we're not doing medicine or neuroscience or biology, we never look at other human beings just as organisms.

We can't, and so looking at the DNA, looking at the biology is an abstraction from the way in which we usually individuate, and we individuate them by looking at organisms, but we aren't looking at them as an organism.

Thinking of them as organisms is an abstraction, so there will be certain situations in which you want to privilege that way of, you know, settling issues of individuality.

There are going to be other contexts in which you're going to look at different ones, but you want to be

talking about the same thing all time, and so because of that, that's one of the things that drives me to say I have to have a view of personhood and selfhood where you don't need all the complicated psychological capacities because there are obviously people who don't have them, and all of us failed to have them when we born and so on.

So I mean I guess what I think is it's again different ways of looking at the different parts of the elephant but I imagine important ones when some of the ethical questions about interventions come up.

DR. PERRY: My late brother was a computer scientist and worked at IBM for many years, and when personal computers came, he very nicely sent me a book on assembly language programming and said I would really enjoy this because I would be able to do so much more with my computer at this level.

Well that didn't work out very well, but, of course, he was right. I mean that's what's really going on in some sense of really going on and in some sense if you know what's going on at that stage, you must know everything that's going on, but, of course, I could have known everything that was going on at that stage and not had a

glimmer of what was going on just as I could maybe understand the flow of electrons through a diagram of an old superheterodyne radio, but that wouldn't tell me anything about what the radio was about, what made it interesting, why people actually pay money for these things, why they bring them in to get fixed, what's the difference between the ones that work and the ones that don't.

So similarly, yes, biology, DNA, that's incredibly important, and it's odd that we should discover how we work so long after we develop a rich set of concepts for describing what we do, but your job as a biologist isn't just to work down at the assembly language level but to understand how all the rich programs and structures that paradoxically build up before we knew anything about that fit into it which probably won't be very smoothly and easily because they were developed from such a different perspective.

DR. GUTMANN: To comment on this point because I think it's a very important point. It isn't or is it that there's a biological conception of the self that you've just articulated that's DNA and a philosophical conception of the self. If your conception of the self is biological, that is a philosophical conception of the self.

In other words, all that a philosophical conception of the self is, is some conception of the self, and we have to have one even if we don't articulate it where we're working with one.

I think that's just, you know - it isn't that there - so if you have a philosophical conception of the self that's biological, it will include certain things and not others, and if you have one that goes beyond biology, so I'd like you to say something about how narrow or broad you think a conception of the self can be.

DR. PERRY: Well I mean you can look at a unicellular organism or an amoeba, something very simple, and you can have a conception of self, right.

I mean there's a unit there. It typically has some way of getting information not for the purposes of cognition but for the purposes of reaction in a way that usually makes sense, and so you can see - you can talk about the boundaries of the self and how the self works as a system with selves, that is with units with individuals that fall far short of meeting Marya's or anybody else's conception of personhood.

So - and those are perfectly valid conceptions of

individuality in the self, but they're not rich enough to raise the problems which I assume bioethicists need to address which mostly come out when we have these more rich concepts of self, dealing with more complicated beings, in particular, us.

DR. WAGNER: Let's try to squeeze in one last question if we can. There does seem to be a sense in the room that there is a metabiological - something beyond biology that identifies an us for a self.

DR. HAUSER: I'd like to maybe extend in a different direction some of this discussion.

Does our right to be private in our inner self including our DNA and our underlying biology, does that extend after we die? Is there a statute of limitations on this?

DR. SCHECHTMAN: That's a wonderful question.

DR. PERRY: I would say I don't see offhand any obvious reason that it should extend, but there may be lots of subtle reasons why that policy should be adopted, but a somewhat related question is if we've got say an Alzheimer's patient and they want to do certain things with the self they've so to speak inherited, does that earlier person have

rights to control that?

For example, if ten years from now in the throws of Alzheimer's disease I want to destroy all - everything I've ever written and all traces and so forth and so on, do the wishes that I have now that my later self not be allowed to do that hold sway or is it always the person at the time, so after death, I don't know, but even before death the issue arises.

DR. SCHECHTMAN: Right, and I would just say it depends a lot on where you think the right to privacy comes from which I don't have worked out, but I do think on a narrative view it's clear that there are ways in which messing with somebody's narrative after the fact is still messing with their narrative.

So if you're focusing on experience, then it's not clear why after you die it would matter, but if you're focusing on the narrative and that's who you are, then there are reasons why it would.

DR. PERRY: Just a final word. Notice how many of our politicians worry about their legacy. What does worrying about their legacy mean? Well, it usually means worrying about the sentences that will be written about them long

after they die, and they really care about that.

Now should they be dissuaded from that bit of irrationality or should we realize that that bit of irrationality is very central to human life? Well, I leave it to you.

DR. WAGNER: Oh, did you have - I'm sorry. Dan had one quick --

DR. SULMASY: Yes, just two seconds to say that actually there is a very interesting article from a guy named Soren Holm written about five years ago on this very topic. It's called The Privacy of Tutankhamen, and there's a sense in which even if we do have a narrative end, we can bring it to extremes. Marya and John, thank you for a stimulating conversation.

(Applause.)

DR. WAGNER: And I believe that brings us to our next session.