

**Response to Sayan's reply to my comments on his paper
'Why am I not Someone Else?'**

Craig Skinner

I am pleased that Erdinc Sayan has taken the trouble to formulate a detailed reply to my comment on his paper.

I will deal with each of the points he raises.

In the end, however, as with much philosophical dialogue, after each party has gone as far as he can to accommodate the other's views, there remains crucial disagreement, and we can do no more than keep minds open to new evidence, argument, or further reflection, which might change our views.

Thus, Sayan feels I haven't solved his puzzle and that I misunderstood parts of it, whereas I feel I have solved it and that I disagree with, rather than misunderstand, some of his views.

We can swiftly deal with his first two points because there is no real disagreement between us on either.

First, I include a parallel universe option in the twin scenario, but Sayan says that he talks (and quotes Himma) about a twin earth in this universe, not in a parallel universe. Fair enough. I don't think it matters much whether the thought experiments extend to a parallel universe (as part of a multiverse) or are confined to disconnected parts of a single, infinite or very big, universe. In any case the distinction can be hazy – some cosmologists refer to the big single universe case as a “quilted multiverse”.

Secondly, as regards dualism, neither Sayan nor myself is a dualist, and we both make that clear. I simply said that the way he worded his puzzle was a bit suggestive of dualism. And it seems I wasn't the only one to think this, since Sayan tells us that a colleague, on hearing his paper, referred to him as a “shy dualist”.

Let us move on, then, to the more substantial matter, the core of my solution, namely the constructed self. Sayan says:

“I find the notion of *me constructing myself* hardly intelligible. If I am constructing myself then I must be there in the first place”.

But here, the unintelligibility arises because he confuses the self and the human organism, using “me” and “I” to refer to both. If we take due care and reword, we

have “the notion of a developing human being constructing its self” which is perfectly intelligible. More than that, I think it is correct. Indeed, I find it difficult to imagine how a self *could* otherwise come about. Sayan certainly doesn’t suggest an alternative. There is no need to postulate a prior self to do the construction – a self to construct itself – which would indeed be incoherent. No, we need only a normal human without a self, successively zygote, embryo, foetus and neonate, who goes on to construct a self, to develop a sense of self, just as it constructs lips and limbs. And just as genetic or environmental factors can derail normal development, leading to defects such as harelip or deformed limbs, so may defective selves occur. A rare example is Dissociative Personality Disorder (Multiple Personality Disorder) where a human develops several selves, often unknown to one another, all taking turns at being the person’s self, sometimes with one dominant. Another rare example is the interrupted self where a brain lesion permanently prevents any new memory being laid down. The sufferer lives in the present, knows nothing of what happened five minutes ago, greets every regular visitor as if meeting for the first time, has only a momentary self plus old pre-lesion memories, and continued construction of the self in the light of experience has long ceased. A commoner example is schizophrenia where there is one self but it is fragmented: typically, voices in the head are misattributed to somebody else rather than recognized as part of the self.

Of course the best of us can readily get in a tangle because of the self-referential aspects of consciousness and selves. Hume, for instance, claims that introspection never reveals a self, only this or that perception. But he reports no difficulty in knowing that these perceptions are *his*, rather than somebody else’s, so he must have a prior notion of, at least, a self as the owner of these experiences. Also he speaks of this introspection as “When I enter...into what I call myself I always stumble on some particular perception...”, but who exactly are the “I” that does the entering and the “myself” that is entered remains mysterious.

But this is not the place to explicate the nature of the self, here we need only agree that selves exist and are not substantial.

Nor is this the place for details of how the system that is a normal human constructs the “I” or self, the “who” it is to be, suffice it that who I get to be is not a *decision* (which self goes with which body), as Sayan erroneously (in my view) supposes, speculating as to whether this might be random, probabilistic, divine or otherwise, but an *outcome* (of ordinary, albeit wondrous, development of each normal human being).

Finally, Sayan questions my contention that he might not know who he is, saying he doesn’t understand the question or its relevance to his puzzle. But his later comment makes clear that he does understand it, and indeed he concedes the point. Thus, in considering my cloning scenario, he says that if no record were kept of the procedure, “I may never know if I am the original one or not”. My point exactly, he may not *know* who he is. Of course, trivially, he knows he is *himself*, but as to *who* that is, the original or the clone, he doesn’t know. Similarly, for all he, or I, know, he may right

now *be* the twin earth Sayan, the two Sayans having been swapped while asleep last year say.

All this is perhaps not directly relevant to his puzzle, being in the nature of a corollary to the indiscernibility scenario, but I find it interesting that indiscernibility could extend as far as each of the two indiscernible individuals himself not knowing which one he is.

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