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Human Identity and Bioethics

When philosophers address personal identity, they usually explore numerical identity: What are the criteria for a person's continuing existence? When nonphilosophers address personal identity, they often have in mind narrative identity: Which characteristics of a particular person are especially salient to her self-conception? This book develops accounts of both senses of identity, arguing that both are normatively important, and is unique in its exploration of a wide range of issues in bioethics through the lens of identity. Defending a biological view of our numerical identity and a framework for understanding narrative identity, David DeGrazia investigates various issues for which considerations of identity prove critical: the definition of death; the authority of advance directives in cases of severe dementia; the use of enhancement technologies; prenatal genetic interventions; and certain types of reproductive choices. *Human Identity and Bioethics* demonstrates the power of personal identity theory to illuminate issues in bioethics as they bring philosophical theory to life.

David DeGrazia is Professor of Philosophy at George Washington University. He is the author of *Taking Animals Seriously: Mental Life and Moral Status* and *Animal Rights: A Very Short Introduction* and coeditor, with Thomas Mappes, of *Biomedical Ethics* in its fourth, fifth, and sixth editions.

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To the memory of Terry Moore, a great editor

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Acknowledgments

I have been working on this book for quite a while. During this time, I have spent countless enjoyable hours reading, brainstorming, and writing. But perhaps most enjoyable of all has been the time spent exchanging ideas with academic friends.

My focused research on personal identity theory began in the summer of 1997. That summer and the following fall, while I was on sabbatical, I was a Visiting Scholar at the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy at the University of Maryland. I am grateful to the Institute's scholars, especially David Wasserman and Robert Wachbroit, for their hospitality. At some point during my visit, I came to reject the dominant psychological approach to personal identity in favor of some type of biological approach. At around the same time, in reading Marya Schechtman's work, I recognized the importance of carefully distinguishing numerical identity, on which most analytical philosophers had focused, and narrative identity. Before long, I had come across Eric Olson's work and began to benefit from his careful defense and elaboration of the biological view of numerical identity. Subsequent communications with these two scholars were very helpful to me.

In fall 1997, I began to draft articles addressing some of the topics taken up in this book. The articles have come gradually over the years as I have tried out various ideas (and sometimes devoted myself entirely to other projects). Feedback from journals has been invaluable. Also invaluable has been feedback following talks, both formal and informal, that I have given to various audiences: one at the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy; two at the Center for Human Values, Princeton University; three at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University; three at annual

meetings of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities; and four for my colleagues in the Department of Philosophy, George Washington University. I would like to thank everyone who listened and shared ideas with me. Special thanks to Peter Singer for setting up an exchange with Jeff McMahan in my second visit to Princeton. Since then, I have learned a lot from Jeff and his writings.

Chapters began to take shape, slowly, a few years ago. Special thanks to Ray Martin, Maggie Little, and Andy Altman for encouraging responses to my initial plan for the book. As chapters were drafted and redrafted, I received written feedback from quite a few people. David Wasserman heroically read Chapters 2–7 as each emerged in embryonic form. Maggie Little responded with great insight to Chapters 5 and 7, as did Marya Schechtman to Chapters 3 and 5. Ray Martin and Jeff McMahan helpfully commented on Chapter 2. I am much obliged to Jeff Brand-Ballard for his reactions to Chapters 4–6. Many thanks also to Patricia Greenspan (Chapter 3); Madison Powers, Tom Beauchamp, and especially Robert Veatch (Chapter 4); Jeff Blustein, Ken Schaffner, LeRoy Walters, Rebecca Dresser, and Robert Wachbroit (Chapter 5); Eric Juengst, Carl Elliott, Eric Sidel, Buddy Karelis, and Ilya Farber (Chapter 6); and Dan Brock (Chapter 7). My colleagues in the Department of Philosophy also provided helpful oral feedback on the last two chapters. Finally, two anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press generously commented on the entire manuscript; one had responded earlier in great detail to sample chapters when I was seeking a contract.

Terry Moore, philosophy editor at Cambridge University Press, solicited this review of sample chapters and two reviews of the project prospectus. After Cambridge gave me a contract, Terry responded encouragingly to my occasional progress reports until illness forced him to delegate some duties to Stephanie Achard. Stephanie served admirably in Terry's stead in her remaining time with the Press; recently, and shortly after Terry's death (at much too young an age), Beatrice Rehl ably assumed the post of philosophy editor. During the transition, Glenna Gordon has provided helpful continuity as editorial assistant. My heartfelt thanks to everyone at Cambridge and especially to Terry, whom I will remember as someone who long ago gave a young guy a chance (leading to the publication of *Taking Animals Seriously*).

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