

Not Everyone Will Get Out Alive:

On Dean Zimmerman's "Personal Identity and the Survival of Death"

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Abstract: Dean Zimmerman defends the ecumenical claim that it is possible for all human persons to survive the biological death of the body regardless of the plausible theory of personal identity adopted. In this paper, I present some principles about survival that are relevant to any plausible theory of personal identity and relevant to any survival of interest. When applied to some particular cases of human beings, these principles make the ecumenical claim either false or difficult to believe rationally.

Keywords: Dean Zimmerman, Personal Identity, Survival

In his article "Personal Identity and the Survival of Death" (2012), Dean Zimmerman argues for the ecumenical claim that it is possible for all human persons to survive the biological death of the body regardless of the theory of personal identity one adopts, or more accurately, whatever is the plausible theory of personal identity adopted.

Is it possible *for me* to survive the death of my body? The question should be answered affirmatively on almost every account of the nature of human persons that has any plausibility (2012, 145, emphasis added)¹

Of course, the question is not just whether Dean Zimmerman can survive because of his nature. Anyone can assume the reasoning from a first-person perspective to see if it is convincing.

It is a question of great moment to me whether *I* can continue to exist after the death of my body; and the same question can be asked by anyone, using the same form of words. (102)

¹ All bracketed numbers refer to the pages of Zimmerman's article.

Indeed, the use of 'I' is similar among us, namely human persons who can say 'I' under normal circumstances, although we can refer to a single person each time.

The many similarities among the human minds that express their thoughts using first-person pronouns, and the similarities among the human bodies with which *we* speak or write words like "I," "ich," and so on, strongly suggest that each of our uses of first-person pronouns manages to refer to a thing of the same natural kind; and I shall assume that is the case. (2012, 103, emphasis added)

The ecumenical affirmation is thus stated in the first-person, singular or plural.

What I try to show is that survival of death is a real possibility, no matter how the cards fall—whether or not *we* have temporal parts, and whether or not *we* have (or are) souls. (2012, 108, emphasis added)

We will see, however, that extending the first-person plural from the first-person singular is not satisfactory.

In this article, I want to explore some principles about survival that are relevant to any plausible theory of personal identity and to a form of survival that would matter. These principles make the ecumenical claim either false or difficult to believe rationally when applied to some human beings. These cases are not intended to be science-fictional thought experiments, but rather stylized representations of actual or possible cases. They will not be presented as accounts of empirical cases. Thus, this possibility is not merely logical or conceptual. In examining the case of a human being with multiple personalities who died without being cured, I will not assume that I am referring to an empirically attested case, but only that some cases of multiple personalities exist and that the fact of dying without being cured is highly likely for at least one case in the human history.

My conclusion will be that it seems wrong to me to say that for any theory of personal identity and for any human being, if the theory is true and if the individual is a human being, then it is possible for the individual to survive the biological death.

1. Methodological Issues

Zimmerman's aim in his article is to answer: "the question whether, nevertheless, human persons might somehow be able to survive the kind of event I am calling 'the death of the body'" (2012, 98). The first intuition is that it is possible that a human person is not simply her body, which seems to be mortal and which, at the moment of the biological death, seems to drag the body and the person into nothingness. Zimmerman does not presuppose that the person is not her body,

he simply asserts that the biological death of the body poses a problem for an adult person capable of reflecting on her own survival. His starting point, then, is the question of an adult human person capable of using “I” and capable of examining the criteria of personal identity over time as well as the criteria of the persistence of entities such as the body of a human person. Thus, as we shall see, the question is, therefore, not only about the survival of the being that I am—a person, a human being or both—but also about a survival that matters to me.

The reflection takes place in two stages. The first is conducted in the first-person singular: what kind of creature am I if I say “I” and if I can think about my death as well as my survival; the second involves an extension to creatures like me. The first moment is not Lockean since the question is not whether I would survive while actively being a self-conscious person. The question is: what are *my* conditions of persistence, given various plausible theories of who I am, I who exhibit reflexive consciousness and the ability to say “I” without being sure that I am essentially a person in the Lockean sense, that is, a being that has essentially the ability to reflexive consciousness and to say “I”? (2012, 102). Thus, there is a need to broaden the reflection from my case (or the case of Dean Zimmerman writing the article) to all human persons whose extension has not been specified.

In this sense, Zimmerman's project is doubly ecumenical: on the one hand, he argues that all plausible theories of persons are compatible with survival after the biological death, and on the other hand, he seems to argue for a maximum extension to all human persons who can survive. Zimmerman thus does not proceed to an examination of the various conditions of persistence that might be attributed to the different possible categories of person but begins with what is true for him in order to better understand what is true for people like him, or like us in the sense that the reader is invited to generalize as Zimmerman does in his article. “My greatest concern is not with personal identity in general but rather with the identity over time of the kind of person *I* happen to be” (2012, 103, Zimmerman's emphasis). But in order to achieve the maximum ecumenical expansion of theories and individuals that can survive, a series of principles must also be taken into account, the application of which to some specific cases will prove problematic. These principles are not set out by Zimmerman, but in my view, they should be followed more explicitly.

The first principle specifies the kind of survival that is relevant because a human person could survive under some uninteresting conditions. For example, every human person could survive by reliving her last hour over and over again, which would be boring for most people and an ordeal for some. Hence the following principle:

The Condition: In order to matter, our afterlife must be such that it makes possible a conscious and fulfilling relationship with the good ultimate principle—a god or otherwise².

Rather than mentioning only God, it is better to extend *The Condition* to any good metaphysical principle capable of providing a conscious and fulfilling relationship with itself. A conscious relationship is a relationship that is self-conscious, a relationship in which the person knows in some way that she is connected to the ultimate reality in order to live a happy or flourishing life. Survival must therefore be the situation in which I, the person who lived before death, have, after the biological death, a conscious and fulfilling relationship with the ultimate principle. *The condition* is thus a reformulation of the condition of salvation, beatitude or even liberation found in various religious traditions. It expresses part of the content of the faith or the hope in an afterlife.

This principle thus gives weight to psychological continuity not as a criterion of personal identity but as a necessary condition for my survival to be relevant to the kind of life I would have after the biological death that would matter to me. This seems to be partially recognized by Zimmerman when he points out that it is not enough for God to prolong the existence of the person's soul but also her psychological life.

Granted, if God merely preserved our souls without restoring any of our cognitive faculties, we would be no better off than someone in a permanent vegetative state. Similarly, our lives would lose much of their meaning were God to preserve us, as bare souls, and then bring us into union with brains that gave us alien, unappealing character traits and completely illusory memories. [...] It follows that *I* can exist, despite such psychological losses, and that whatever happens to my soul happens to me. In any case, the only real hope for us, if the emergent dualist is right, requires God's miraculous intervention; and we should trust a benevolent deity to "re-clothe" us with appropriate bodies and brains, if we believe in an afterlife at all. (132)

This "re-clothing" is not only aimed at the survival of the person, since it has the function of restoring the conditions necessary for her psychological life to be preserved. Nevertheless, Zimmerman might object that he is concerned with the mere survival of the human person, not with what matters in survival. For example, Zimmerman does not discuss the nature of the final judgment, of the beatific life or of hell. But, by choosing his life as a reference point, namely the

² This principle is not individualistic in the sense that the postmortem life would consist solely of the vision or experience of the ultimate principle. It is perfectly compatible with *The Condition* that the postmortem life is also a social life, as will be shown by *Solidarity* presented below.

life of a self-conscious adult capable of saying “I”, it is indeed a survival that would make possible a conscious and fulfilling relationship with the ultimate principle. In using *The Condition*, my aim is not to impose a goal that is not the one that Zimmerman has set for himself, since I believe that, on the contrary, by following the requirements of *The Condition*, one can manifest a legitimate presupposition of any reflection on survival that Zimmerman should have assumed more explicitly. It states what matters in survival and in the ecumenical affirmation.

In fact, by insisting on *The Condition*, another principle is endorsed.

The Danger of the Uninteresting Argument (DUA): A relevant reasoning about the survival of human persons must not simply defend the claim that the good ultimate principle can cause a human person to continue to exist even if her body suffers the biological death. The surviving human person must be consistent with *The Condition*.

By choosing himself as a starting point and reference, Zimmerman is implicitly thinking not of survival simpliciter but of the survival of a person with her capacities to fulfill *The Condition*. However, by requiring that a philosophy of survival describes human persons and their survival in such a way that they conform to *The Condition*, another danger must be avoided.

The Danger of a Detailed Description (DDD): A relevant reasoning about the survival of human persons need not provide a detailed description of the kind of life lived after the biological death of the body.

DDD and DUA provide a framework for thinking that avoids two excesses: a too-poor theory and a too-rich theory. However, even if DDD is accepted, we need to say a little more needs about the kind of life that is worth hoping for after the biological death, hence the following principle:

Solidarity: A human being cannot be excluded from any possibility of survival simply because, at the moment of her death, she does not have the capacity to live in a conscious and fulfilling relationship with the good ultimate principle.

The principle is about human beings and does not mention human persons, as we had originally done in presenting Zimmerman's project. The concept of person can be understood in two senses: either it includes all human beings, that is all the members of the human species, or it includes only those beings capable of a first-person perspective, capable of self-consciousness and capable of saying

“I”, and thus ‘person’ has a psychological sense. Since human beings either develop their psychological capacities or they do not, *Solidarity* claims that we cannot a priori exclude from the consideration of survival some human beings who would not achieve a psychological life including a first-person perspective before their death.

By insisting on *Solidarity*, an extreme thesis is rejected. This extreme thesis would argue that survival is only for those human beings who, at the moment of their biological death, are already capable of conforming to *The Condition*, i.e., persons in a sufficiently developed psychological sense. The cases we are about to examine would be considered irrelevant because they are those of humans who, at the moment of their biological death, are incapable of a conscious and fulfilling relationship with the ultimate principle. *Solidarity* holds that it is undesirable to exclude them from a possible postmortem life for this reason alone and that they should be included in the broadening of the reflection from oneself to others.

In defense of *Solidarity*, two views are possible. One is that every human being has a right to an afterlife because each human being belongs to the moral community composed of at least all human beings, and their capacities or inabilities are not sufficient to legitimately exclude them. The other argues that we feel connected to others, whether or not they have the capacities to satisfy *The Condition*, and that a life after the biological death without them would be a life of a lesser quality for which the relation to the good principle would not be sufficient to compensate. So, let us, therefore, distinguish two versions of *Solidarity*.

Universal Solidarity: It is more just that human beings should be able to survive regardless of their abilities or disabilities at the time of their biological death.

Particular Solidarity: If two human beings have had a morally positive relationship that has contributed to the meaning of their lives, it is more just that they can maintain a positive relationship after their biological death.

In order to remain as general as possible and not to limit the argument, we will not specify what this morally positive relationship is. It simply claims that the relationship must have some moral quality in order to prevent survival from perpetuating unjust or perverse relationships simply because they were constitutive of the meaning of these people’s lives. If I have been a loyal hitman for my godfather all my adult life, it is not required that a survival theory explains how such a relationship should be maintained. Again, such survival thinking is not of interest to us, and the fact that these kinds of relationships which are

important to the meaning of life of some people are not maintained after the biological death is no objection. On the other hand, a reflection on survival must take into account not only the survival of an adult human person, but also the survival of human beings with whom she is positively related, even if these human beings are not adults capable of saying "I", because the adult person who serves as a reference in the reasoning is intimately related to these other persons. However, *Solidarity* does not claim that the relationship after the biological death must be identical to the one before death.

2. The Case of Human Beings without Any First-person Perspective

To begin with, let us consider two close cases in which a human being has not developed sufficiently to have a first-person perspective, that is, a self-consciousness that enables her to say "I".

First, the life of a fetus is the development of capacities, but it is clear that a fetus does not have the use of the pronoun "I" or even, at least in the first few months if not more, a first-person perspective that would make it self-conscious in contrast to others. Although the fetus is human in a biological sense, it will have to develop to become a person comparable to an adult with a reflexive consciousness and the use of "I". To avoid DUA, then it is not enough to say that the ultimate principle can produce a human person identical to the human person before death, since *The Condition* must be satisfied. The question is whether or not, given *The Condition*, all plausible theories of person are compatible with the survival of a fetus after the biological death.

Second, in a similar way, it will be necessary to examine the case of a severely disabled child who has not been able to develop a first-person perspective and who would need a radical transformation in order to conform to *The Condition*.

If we adopt a psychological criterion of personal identity, survival presupposes that some psychological continuity is ensured between the life before and the life after the biological death. Here, psychological continuity requires a significant development of the psychological life so that some mental states unique to that person can exist.

According to the psychological criterion theories, either survival requires the same cause ensuring psychological continuity, or any cause is deemed relevant. If we take a psychological criterion with the same cause, the case of the severely disabled child is quite simple: at the time of her death, she does not have a first-person perspective, nor does she have the capacity to have one. It is impossible to develop her ability to have a first-person perspective. If she were to survive, she would never conform to *The Condition*. The creation of a new human being with more developed abilities would be necessary, but then there would be no survival.

The case of the survival of the dead fetus is more complex. The fetus would have to continue its development not only through the survival of its body, but also through its connection with its mother, who would essentially ensure the life of its body before death. If the mother did not die at the same time as the fetus, then after her own death she would have to regress to the time when she was pregnant in order to allow the fetus to develop into capacities compatible with *The Condition*. Survival by psychological continuity with the same kind of cause thus implies the possibility of the survival of the body, which Zimmerman otherwise defends. One does not fall under DDD by pushing the reasoning in that direction since one must be able to conceive of the possibility of the same cause ensuring psychological continuity. Although this scenario of a postmortem resumed pregnancy is apparently coherent, its plausibility seems weak to me: the mother must not survive in the continuity of her pre-death situation but return to the moment when her pregnancy was interrupted. And if she was raped and aborted, let's say involuntarily to avoid any debate about voluntary abortion, should she be forced to terminate her pregnancy? Is it compatible with *The Condition* to impose this pregnancy on her?

A psychological criterion with a possibly different cause could be adopted to avoid these embarrassments. A postmortem mechanism could cause the being without a first-person perspective to grow up without knowledge of this process so that, when it became self-conscious, it could think of itself as a "normal" person.

The problem is that such survival is like the creation of a person in terms of the psychological criterion and not its continuation after the biological death. The necessary psychological continuity simply implies that the few sensations or mental states of the human being without a first-person perspective will be followed by other increasingly complex mental states, which at some point will give rise to some first-person thoughts. It is only at this point that a person exists according to the psychological criterion of personal identity. It does not fall under the DDD objection to question the possibility of such a development since a psychological theory is a theory based on continuity and therefore it must be possible to imagine how a life before the biological death and a life after the biological death can be connected. However, it is difficult to reconcile 1) the after-death development of a being without a first-person perspective leading to the beginning of a new personal human life and 2) Zimmerman's method, which consists in broadening the reflection on human persons, taking as a point of reference the type of life of an adult human person capable of saying "I", a life that must already be present before the biological death.

The Condition blocks one way of solving this problem. One might imagine that what matters is that human beings, in the biological sense, survive, not that only human beings with a personal psychological life to extend survive. This kind of

survival of human beings without a first-person perspective and without further development would then not be accompanied by a conscious and fulfilling relationship with the ultimate principle, nor would the creation of a personal postmortem life be a conscious and fulfilling relationship achieved through the survival of the person—since there is no one to survive. *The Condition* would not be met. If the only survival is the life of a being without a first-person perspective and without development, then this seems to be more of an objection.

If one adopts a biological or animalist criterion of human survival in which the continuity of the living body is the necessary and sufficient condition for the survival of the person after the biological death, similar problems arise.

The human being without a first-person perspective must be allowed to develop in order to acquire the capacities compatible with *The Condition*. The alternative is either that she continues her natural development or that she develops "artificially" in order to acquire the capacities of a self-conscious human person capable of saying "I". We have already expressed doubts about both of these possibilities.

One might respond that the ultimate principle is capable of avoiding this continuous transition from the life of a human being without a first-person perspective to the life of a self-conscious human person able to say "I". It could directly produce the adult person or someone close to the adult state, by producing a body whose life would be compatible with *The Condition*. It is important to note that this is not an accelerating development: the speed of continuous transformation is irrelevant to the argument.

The problem with the lack of a continuous transition is that it violates a principle acknowledged by Zimmerman (2012, 136): the life after the biological death must be connected to the life before the biological death by immanent causality in order to prevent a non-identical replica of the person from surviving in its place in some way. Even if one accepts a suggestion close to Hershenov's (cited in Zimmerman 2012, 136–140) that it is sufficient for the reconstitution of the person after the biological death to take the earlier stages of life before death as her model, both cases are still problematic. Her life does not provide a sufficient pattern to constitute a person whose life is compatible with *The Condition*. What psychology, what memories, what desires, etc., should be provided? Those that are consistent with her personality? But which personality are we talking about? Those of her individual essence? But what individual essence are we talking about if we refer to the biological or psychological criterion and apply it to a being that has not had time to develop?

The dualism of body and soul remains a possibility. Whatever the dualist theory—hylomorphic, emergentist or simple (*à la* Descartes)—, it is possible to distinguish, at least conceptually, between the existence of a soul and the individual human person. If one assumes that the soul contains the whole

personality of the person in advance, then the afterlife of a human being with such a soul without an actualized first-person perspective is the development of her capacities in such a way that she can conform to *The Condition*. This avoids the objection of the creation of the person after the biological death as well as the objection of the implausibility of the development of this being in continuity with its life before its biological death.

However, if one assumes that the soul contains only the capacities of that person, and that, in order to conform to *The Condition*, one must also have a personal life with memories and intentions etc., one will find the same problems that have arisen with other theories.

The conclusion of the review of these cases is that it is highly unlikely that all theories of personal identity are compatible with the relevant survival of a human being without a first-person perspective, in the sense that there would be not only the same being before and after its death, but also a being capable of living according to *The Condition*.

3. The Case of Multiple Personalities

The cases of multiple persons within the same human organism or those of identity disorders raise many questions about the medical diagnosis of such situations and about the possible cure of these persons.³ Instead of referring to a specific case documented in the medical or psychiatric literature, I will rely on an imaginary case that is very close to many specific cases.

Our case will be that of an individual with two personalities alternately taking control of her body and psychology without one of the personalities recognizing what the other is experiencing as part of her own life. To flesh out this case, one could imagine a human being having alternately an adult woman personality and an adolescent boy personality.⁴ The point is that there is no unity like the one normally produced by the first-person perspective, like the one that constitutes the life of a self-conscious adult capable of saying "I" in standard usage.

It should be noted that this is not a case where we have to recognize the multiple aspects of a person's personality. The lack of unity under consideration here is not the same as a case where the same person exhibits apparently opposite behaviors, but which are perfectly compatible with the existence of one and the same person, whatever theory of personal identity one holds. That the same human organism can be described as that of an adult woman and a teenager is quite different from a case where the same person is, for example, a submissive employee and a tyrannical husband. However, in order not to presuppose a

³ See Hacking (1995).

⁴ This case is not far-fetched, it is a simplification of real cases.

theory of personal identity, we will not speak of a multiplicity of persons identifiable by some identity criterion, but simply of multiple personalities, whether there is one or several persons⁵. But one form of survival is inconceivable: the ex-nihilo production of a person to replace the chaos of personalities, since then there would be no survival but a birth.⁶

If we adopt the psychological criterion, survival presupposes psychological continuity. In our case, the question is: continuity with what, since there is no single mental life to prolong?

The Condition implies that a person capable of a unified perspective on her life exists after the biological death. Since it is not possible for survival to produce a new person to replace the previous personalities, it is necessary for the previous person to exist and be transformed to acquire a unified first-person perspective to replace the chaos of multiple personalities. Therefore, the possibility of an afterlife will be fundamentally dependent on a cure. Thus, the possibility for the person to feel healed could play the role of a test. The person should be able to feel relieved to have a unified personal life that makes her fit for a fulfilling relationship with the ultimate principle. The problem is that more needs to be said about the general form of this healing, without falling into DDD and while respecting *The Condition*.

The ultimate principle might identify the personality that truly expresses the person and choose that the person survives with the psychology inherited from that single personality. This is a credible possibility in many cases, and it is possible to imagine that after the biological death, the person is relieved to be just herself at last. But it is far from clear that all cases of multiple personalities or identity disorders confirm that one of the personalities manifests the true person. The pruning of alternative personalities would therefore be arbitrary and would be akin to creating a new person.

Another and perhaps simpler way would be that the continuity after the biological death connects not the two moments before and after death but rather 1) the last stage of life in which a person existed with a single first-person perspective and 2) the beginning of her life after the biological death. The credibility of such a hypothesis depends on the existence of a unified first-person perspective in each case. But, the most radical identity disorders begin very early, in childhood. For the advocate of personal identity through psychological continuity, the existence of a person who can be the point of reference for survival

⁵ On the legitimacy of talking about multiple persons, see J-L Mackie (1985) and Tim Bayne (2013).

⁶ Life after death can be metaphorically described as a birth or rebirth, but it should not be literally the birth of a new person without continuity with the one who has undergone the biological death.

is sometimes very doubtful. In the case of early disorders, Owen Flanagan (1994, 146–7) insists on this difficulty in identifying a person who would later be cured.

The question of how a multiple might become whole again makes less sense for the second sense of wholeness, character wholeness or personality wholeness. This is because multiples often begin to dissociate at a very early age. They were never whole or complete in the normative sense of having achieved a stable, mature, full character.

This last point suggests that if a multiple becomes whole again, it cannot usually involve becoming who she "really" is or was beneath or behind the multiplicity of selves she displays. This is because there is no self she "really" is or was before multiplicity took hold. This suggests that thinking of self-reclamation in any literal sense may be misleading, since it suggests getting back again what one once was or had. (1994, 146–7)

An objection might be that it is possible for a god or for an ultimate principle to identify the seeds of a psychological life that could be developed after the biological death without producing an ad hoc person. However, it does not always seem plausible that such a personality exists in the germ. And even if one accepts this possibility, the survival of this original person presupposes that continuity is possible despite the temporal gap between childhood and survival, a gap produced by the often total amnesia that accompanies radical identity disorders. But a temporal gap is incompatible with personal identity across time if one accepts the need for immanent causality, since ending the temporal gap requires an external cause to produce the person who no longer existed.

If one adopts an animalist or dualist conception of the person, then the continuity of the person, i.e. of her biological life, her soul or the union of her soul and her body, is not threatened by identity disorders or multiple personalities. On the other hand, this condition seems to be difficult to fulfill, which brings us back to the above reasoning about the impossibility of a person's survival in terms of the psychological criterion of personal identity. Even if the person survives in some way, a person severely disabled by identity disorders will lack a unified first-person perspective that allows for a fulfilling relationship with the ultimate principle. Certainly, according to the animalist and dualist theories, the transformation of the person's psychology will not be the creation of a new person, and the conjunction of the survival of the same person and the new first-person perspective replacing a chaotic multiplicity is consistent. For these theories, the survival of a person affected by radical identity disorders is possible in accordance with *Solidarity*, although it is not credible that *The Condition* can be satisfied.

4. Why the Ecumenical Claim Fails

The two types of cases examined are counterexamples to the claim that, whatever the plausible theory of persons, every human person will be able to survive the biological death. We have challenged the possibility of survival for some human beings because of their low development or the lack of a unified subjective perspective. We have also insisted on the relevance of survival which gives significant weight to the psychological continuity, whether or not one adopts the psychological criterion of personal identity over time. It seems unlikely, therefore, that survival, and especially survival compatible with *The Condition*, is universal. However, we have already rejected the extreme thesis that rejects *Solidarity*. Both cases are then counterexamples to Zimmerman's ecumenical claim.

Finally, I will propose a hypothesis to explain the error of the ecumenical affirmation.

As suggested in the introduction, Zimmerman does not simply study the survival of human beings in the biological sense. His method is to start with the adult human person who is self-conscious and able to say "I".

I belong to a natural kind of entity that, at least in its mature, healthy form, has the abilities Locke associated with personhood—namely, the abilities to think and to be self-conscious. I also have certain persistence conditions essentially—that is, there are certain kinds of change I can undergo, and others that I could not possibly survive. [...] "person" will mean "person like me": that is, a kind of thing that shares my persistence conditions and that, at least *normally*, satisfies Locke's definition of a person as a thinking, self-conscious being. The many similarities among the human minds that express their thoughts using first-person pronouns, and the similarities among the human bodies with which we speak or write words like "I," "ich," and so on, strongly suggest that each of our uses of first-person pronouns manages to refer to a thing of the same natural kind; and I shall assume that is the case. (103)

The problem seems to lie in the combination of two points well identified by Zimmerman, but perhaps insufficiently developed. Belonging to a kind—humanity—is directly related to its mature form which corresponds to the Lockean definition of the person that serves as a model in the discussion. But, thinking about the possible survival of all human beings and thinking about the survival of self-conscious beings capable of saying "I" are two different tasks. There are two concepts of survival. One is fundamental but not very interesting in itself and the other is non-fundamental but interesting.

The fundamental concept of survival applies to a being who survives the biological death. The non-fundamental but interesting concept applies to a

human person who satisfies *The Condition*. The first concept is fundamental because it is necessary to be still alive in order to hope for a better life after the biological death.

In his article, Zimmerman tends to focus rather on the first concept. However, by taking as his reference point an adult human person enjoying full cognitive faculties, he overlooks the cases of human beings who die without these capacities and for whom survival in the non-fundamental sense seems impossible. And since it is very likely that Zimmerman would adopt a principle like *Solidarity*, we have a first objection.

Nevertheless, the reference to an adult human person with full cognitive faculties is not a mistake because that is what we are interested in survival, namely survival in the non-fundamental but interesting sense. That's why I have emphasized *The Condition*. Again, cases involving problems of psychological continuity are grounds for an objection to the possibility of universal survival in this second sense. Since the extreme thesis that would deny *Solidarity* does not seem convincing to us, the ecumenical thesis is not yet properly defended.⁷

⁷ I would like to thank Cyrille Michon and Jean-Baptiste Guillon for their comments and objections to a first version of this text.

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Published Online First: May 20, 2023