



A Person as a Lifetime: An Aristotelian Account of Persons

Stephanie M. Semler

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The central thesis of this book is that we can derive a viable definition of persons from Aristotle's work. The component parts of this definition are to be found in his writing on ethics and metaphysics. The structure of this working definition will be that of an entire lifetime. J.O. Urmson writes "[t]o call somebody a *eudaimon* is to judge his life as a whole", indicating that a Greek, and therefore also an Aristotelian account of personhood would be a description of an entire human life. Likewise, the evaluation of that life would have to be done at its termination. The concept of persons is at least as much a moral one as it is a metaphysical one. For this reason, I contend that an important insight about persons is to be found in Aristotle's ethical works. The significance of judging one to be a *eudaimon* is in understanding that the life is complete – that is, it has a beginning, middle, and an end, with the same *person* at the helm for the duration. If we know what Aristotle's requirements are for a human lifetime is to have all of these features, perhaps we can derive an Aristotelian concept of persons from it. The benefit of such an investigation is to be found when the difficulties with issues surrounding personal identity seem to indicate that either personal identity must inhere in the physical body of a person, or that, on pain of a view that resembles dualism, it simply doesn't exist.

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