

Remembering who you are

Relativism, Reason, and Reality

Spring 2005

Lockean theories

- Later B = earlier A iff B can remember A "first-personally"
- Biggest problem is that memory doesn't seem to reach far enough: amnesia, sleep, forgetting,....
- Strategies for extending the reach
 1. B *can* remember more than B *does* remember
 2. B first-personally remembers more than *experiences*
 3. B remembers A *or* remembers B₁ who remembers A *or*...
 4. B remembers A *or* executes A's plans *or* ...

1. *Can* remember

- I don't recall what I did last February 17
- But Locke only requires that I *can* remember
- *Can* under what conditions?
 - Once awakened
 - Hypnosis, Psychoanalysis
 - Verbal prompting
 - Electrical stimulation of brain
- These methods can also cause *false* memories
- Quasi-memory no help here, because hypnosis (e.g.) is not the normal causal process
- Parfit sometimes says "any reliable process"

2. *Non-experiential* remembering

- remembering facts A knew
- remembering skills A had
- remembering what A wanted, feared, etc
- could there be super-amnesia where someone forgets *all* these things?
- the super-amnesiac can't speak or think!
- is she still the same person? is she a person at all?

3. Taking the *ancestral*

- It certainly helps to allow memory chains.
But is that enough?
- The general and the captain might both remember only the boy; so is captain not general?
- Take the ancestral not of memory but
[remembering + being-remembered-by]

4. New forms of psychological glue

- Backward-looking: B quasi-remembers A's experience e iff (i) A had e , (ii) B seems to recall e , (iii) the seeming memory is caused "in the right way" by e
- Forward-looking: B quasi-executes A's intention to x iff (i) A intended to x , (ii) B does x , (iii) B's x -ing is caused "in the right way" by A's intention
- Bi-directional: B quasi-regrets A's action y iff (i) A did y , (ii) B seems to remember doing y and is sad about it and intends not to do it again, (iii) B's seeming memory and sadness and intention are caused "in the right way" by A's doing y .
- Does this help with the sleep problem?

Neo-Lockean theory

- B is psychologically connected to A iff they stand in a lot of quasi-relations
- B is psychologically continuous with A iff they are linked by overlapping chains of psychological connectedness
- This deals (potentially) with most of the problems we've seen -- but not....

Branching

Easy way -- teletransportation

Images removed due to copyright reasons.

Harder way -- neurosurgery

The problem

- Suppose Star Trek style teletransportation preserves psychological continuity
- You step off the pad in Mars congratulating yourself for making it -- until you see a duplicate stepping off an adjacent pad
- "You" didn't make it!! (Fission vs. fusion)

Moral of branching

- Psychological continuity is not enough
- Parfit's solution: identity = psychological continuity in "non-branching" form
- This has a strange consequence: identity is not "intrinsic".
- Whether B is A is not a matter between them alone; it also matters if there's another competitor C for the role of A's future self

Official Complete Standard

Neo-Lockean Theory

Person A who exists at t_1 = person B who exists at t_2 iff A at t_1 is *psychologically continuous* with B at t_2 AND this psychological continuity does not take a "branching" form,

that is,

there aren't at any point after t_1 *two* people each of whom is psychologically continuous with A at t_1 , and there aren't before t_2 two people psychologically continuous with B at t_2 .

Normal cause

- Parfit's "Narrow Psychological Criterion" (p 207) takes psychological continuity to involve the sorts of causal relations that *normally obtain* between present memories and past experiences, etc.
- No good if a diabolic scientist interviews A on Monday and then implants apparent memories in B on Tuesday

Variations

- But Parfit also mentions a "Wide Psychological Criterion" where *any* reliable cause is allowed
- And he also also mentions a "Widest Psychological Criterion" where *any* old cause is allowed, even an unreliable one, such as the mad scientist

Parfit's shorthand

- Personal identity consists in relation R in a non-branching form with
 - the normal cause (Narrow)
 - any reliable cause (Wide)
 - any cause (Widest)
- Soon: why Parfit thinks identity is of derivative value -- it is not "what really matters" in survival
- Keep on with ch. 11, "How We Are Not What We Believe"