Philosophy 340 W. Lycan
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PERSON/MIND IDENTITY AND INDIVIDUATION

Physical objects persist as individuals through time, and through change. (Though not through *all* changes; some change is radical enough to destroy the object.) The same is true of human beings. In virtue of what is person A, considered at time t_2, one and the same person (or anyway one and the same individual entity) as B, considered at a previous time t_1?

The Cartesian account of persistence

If Descartes' mind-body Dualism is correct, the answer to the question of personal identity is simple: A is the same as B if A's body is animated by the same Cartesian mind/soul/ego as was B's body.

But the Cartesian theory presupposes that Cartesian minds *themselves* persist through time and change, so it only puts the problem off. What makes Cartesian mind A at t2 identical with Cartesian mind B at t1? The only obvious candidate is a Psychological Continuity theory (see below), which is available to the materialist as well.

Bishop Butler held the Cartesian view. He also distinguished between a "loose and popular" sense and a "strict and philosophical" sense of "persisting." Inanimate objects, including plants, persist, but only with our cooperation: *We count* today's rose bush as the numerically same one that was in the same spot last week, because it suits our purposes to talk in that way. But in a stricter sense it is not the same plant: Since last week, it's lost some leaves and petals, and new buds have appeared. Our calling it the same involves at least a bit of deeming, stipulation, or conventionality. By contrast, persons persist in the strict and philosophical sense, without deeming and independently of anyone else's purposes.

The point of the "ship of Theseus" example is to show that sometimes the element of deeming is extreme. As I argued (not everyone would agree) there is simply no fact of the matter as to whether the much-repaired ship or the one puckishly reconstituted from the original parts is the same ship as the original. In one sense the one is, in another sense the other; talk as you like. But again, Butler and Roderick Chisholm argue, there is always a nonconventional and correct answer to the identity question about persons: "Is person A, at t_2 one and the same person (or entity) as B at t_1?"

Now, the Butler-Chisholm argument for Dualism: Physical objects persist only loosely-and-popularly. But persons persist strictly-and-philosophically; even though they *change* over time, they do not lose or gain *parts*. Therefore, persons are not identical with physical objects, and some form of Dualism is true.

But what makes Butler and Chisholm so sure that persons do persist strictly-and-philosophically? That assumption, left undefended, comes very close to begging the question against the materialist.

The Memory theory

Locke's Memory theory has it that A is identical with B if and only if A remembers experiencing events from B's life. One argument for this view is Locke's prince/cobbler appeal to the possibility of body-switching. When the prince wakes up in the body of the cobbler, all that seems to make him the prince rather than the cobbler is his memories of the prince's past life and his utter lack of acquaintance with the cobbler's.

But as Olson points out, continuity of memory is not strictly required for personal identity through time. I might be stricken with total amnesia, yet I am still *I*, WGL. (I would then have to relearn that I am in fact WGL.) And of course there are at least small parts of my life that I do not remember at all, even "indirectly" in Olson's sense. They were nonetheless parts of *my* life.

Nor is apparent (what Olson calls "quasi-")memory sufficient for persistence. (Remember, Olson has already disposed of "genuine" memory as a criterion, using the Blott-Clott example in sec. 4.) I may come to think I am the Duke of Wellington reincarnated, and have apparent memories of Waterloo—even very vivid ones—but that does not make me the Duke of Wellington. (What it makes me is a loony.) Or, similarly, the Zapper may rearrange your brain and make you think you are Wellington at Waterloo right now, remembering the Peninsular campaign that is memorialized in Kelburn, NZ street names. You are not the Great Duke any more than I am.

Psychological continuity and connectedness

There is no need to restrict our attention to memory. Other kinds of psychological continuity may count as well: chains of reasoning, streams of perceptual experience, etc.

But this does not help much. Then same sorts of objections apply as to the Memory theory.

David Lewis and Sydney Shoemaker build in a causal requirement ("connectedness" rather than just continuity). A at t_2 is one and the same object/person as B at t_1 just in case the current mental state of A is connected by an unbroken chain of previous states, each causally or at least counterfactually dependent on the earlier states and ultimately dependent on the state of B at t_1. This idea would be of help to the Cartesian (assuming states of Cartesian minds depend causally on previous states of those minds). But there are apparent counterexamples.

First, it may seem that psychological continuity isn't necessary. In a sufficiently dramatic case of amnesia, continuity fails; the amnesic is like a newborn child. Yet it is still the original person who *is amnesic*. (This can be resisted: Even if memory in particular is discontinuous, talents, habits of mind, intellectual abilities, personality quirks may remain and be continuity enough. Or, we could grant that amnesia is a borderline case and conclude that the new person both is and isn't the original one.)

But the teleporter examples show that psychological connectedness is not sufficient for identity. Mark I: When you step into it, it breaks you down into all your component particles and streams them, along with the blueprint, to the receiver on Saturn. The receiver immediately reconstitutes you and you step out and walk away.

No problem so far, but now Mark II: When you step into it, it breaks you down into all your component particles, makes a blueprint, and radios the blueprint to

the receiver on Saturn; then it just throws your particles away. The receiver has a stock of particles, and it draws on that stock in following the blueprint to reconstitute you out of those particles. You step out and walk away.

Or do you? It's less obvious in this case that the resulting duplicate of you is you. Perhaps you died in the teleporter, and what steps out of the receiver is only a duplicate, even though it has all your current psychological states and an exactly similar body.

What we should say in such cases depends in part on what theory of mind we accept. For example, a Functionalist will find it comparatively easy (though not absolutely compelling) to believe that in case (2) you do survive. But there is a strong case for saying that you do not survive: If the operator of the receiver fails to push the right buttons, you are certainly dead and gone. Why should the creation of a qualitative duplicate in Saturn save you? It's only a duplicate.

Mark II.V: The sender makes and transmits the blueprint, but does not break you down or harm you in any way; you walk back out of the teleporter and go get coffee. In this case, it's obvious that the duplicate in Saturn is only a duplicate, not you at all.

Mark II.III/IV: The receiver goes hyperactive and creates *lots* of duplicates. Now it's even more obvious that they're duplicates.

This is a serious objection to all Psychological theories. Each of the duplicates is psychologically connected to you in terms of causal dependence. Yet none is you. The Psychological theorist's only hope is to stigmatize the teleporter type of causal dependence as "deviant" and say it doesn't count. But what, then, does it take for the causal chain to be legitimate?

Animalism

Somatic theories have going for them that we do normally use bodily criteria as ways of reidentifying people (though of course evidence of apparent memories helps too, as it would in the prince/cobbler case).

Animalism in particular is incompatible with Psychological theories, because no sort of psychological relation is either necessary or sufficient for sameness of animal (Olson). And it has going for it that, sitting in your chair as you read this is a thinking animal; it would be nasty to suppose that there are two distinct beings in the chair, that animal and you the person. And cf. Olson's "Too-Many-Thinkers" problem.

Objection 1: The prince/cobbler case of course. If a person can switch bodies with someone else yet remain the same person, then it can hardly be the body that makes that person persist through the switch. Reply: It's easy enough to accept the idea that if you swapped bodies with someone else *while retaining your original cerebrum*, you would still be you though in a different body. Likewise, if the soul of the prince has entered into and informed the body of the cobbler because there has been a brain transplant during the night, fine; but unless we are already inclined toward the Cartesian theory, it is hard to make sense of *whole*-body-switching. The Animalist can tough that one out against the Psychological theorist. But, rejoinder: So what about the cerebrum transplant case? It seems clear that the person goes with the cerebrum and does not stay with the animal. (That too can be toughed out, as Olson explains, but it's harder.)

Objection 2: Somatic theories presuppose the identity of physical bodies across time. And normally, that would be unproblematic. But there are puzzles and paradoxes that beset the persistence even of purely physical objects through time, such as of course the "ship of Theseus." If you take my view that in such cases there is no fact of the matter, it would follow from Animalism that there is no f. of the m. about personal identity. As before, is that credible?

Split brains

We originally cast the mind-body problem in terms of your mind and its metaphysical relation to your body. But there is a mind*s?*-body problem, raised by Sperry et al.'s experiments on commissurotomized patients. In a split-brain subject, there is mentation in the left hemisphere and there is mentation in the right hemisphere, and those two bunches of mentation are separate from each other; they can even come into conflict, as if there are two people in one body who are fighting each other. It is natural, though not inevitable, to say that in these cases there are two minds in a single body. (Similar questions are raised by MPD cases.)

This fascinating phenomenon was called to philosophers' attention by Thomas Nagel, who defended the startling thesis that there is *no tenable current answer* to the "How many minds?" question: He lists five hypotheses, and he goes on to attack each of them in turn. This embarrasses ego theories, which as B says imply that minds can be determinately counted.

You might think that it's unimportant what we decide to say about these extraordinary, extremely rare surgical cases. But as Nagel emphasizes, any answer to the "How many minds?" question for commissurotomees naturally extrapolates to *us*. E.g., if a split-brain patient has two minds, one in the left hemisphere and one in the right, shouldn't we say that *you now* have two minds, one in each hemisphere?—or maybe even that "you" are really two people locked up in one body? (One of you can be called "Lefty" and the other one "Righty." Of course, the two communicate intimately through the corpus callosum, like twin brothers or sisters who are very close and who have a tin can telephone.) Nagel considers this argument: Your left hemisphere would keep you functioning as a person even if your right hemisphere were excised, and your right hemisphere would keep you functioning as a person even if your left were excised; so it seems that each alone is being a person or center of consciousness. Call this the "Survival" argument.

Here are the five hypotheses and Nagel's arguments against them.

(1) *The right hemisphere is a mere automaton.*
Nagel: That's silly. "[W]hat the right hemisphere can do on its own is too elaborate, too intentionally directed and too psychologically intelligible to be regarded merely as a collection of unconscious automatic responses." Also, the Survival argument.
Best argument for (1): Consciousness goes with language, and the right hemisphere has no significant language capacity. Objection: The survival argument again.

(2) *There is mentation in the right hemisphere, but it is not integrated into a*

mind.

That's nearly as silly. Nagel cites the "high degree of organization and intermodal coherence of the right hemisphere's mental activities." (Also, the Survival argument again.)

Best argument for (2): Language again. Even if language is not required for mentation, it is required for the mentation to constitute a mind. Minds require *narrative*. Objection: But why can't the narrative be itself mental, a series of unspoken thoughts, rather than said out loud?

(3) *There are two minds, one in each hemisphere*.

Nagel: But the dissociation shows up only under the extraordinary, highly engineered circumstances of a Sperryish experiment. The rest of the time, the subject's behavior is almost completely normal, *and* s/he reports no internal dissociation or diminution either. "It seems strange to suggest that we are not in a position to ascribe all those experiences to the same person, just because of some peculiarities about how the integration is achieved."

Best argument for (3): The hemispheres are, after all, separate, and have mentation of different sorts going on in them.

(4) *There is one mind, but it is dissociated*.

Nagel: This has the opposite problem. It explains the normal behavior, but it can't make sense of the dissociative behavior during the experiments. During an experiment, there seem to be mental things happening simultaneously in the patient that can't fit into a single mind. Also, what could it possibly be like to be a single dissociated mind?

Best argument for (4): That it does explain the normal behavior. Dissociative behavior under weird experimental conditions shows dissociation, but not actual duality.

(5) *There is fission and fusion: Sometimes there's one mind, then it splits into two, then it fuses back into one, etc*.

Nagel: But there is no anatomical change in the patient as between normal conditions and experimental conditions; the experiment "merely elicits a noteworthy set of symptoms." There is no change in the brain to explain why there would first be one mind, then two, then only one again. Finally, what about an experiment that *gradually tapers off*? At what point in the process does the second mind go poof and disappear?

Best argument for (5): That's what the behavior seems to show—that sometimes there's a single mind but occasionally it splits into two.

I think Nagel's argument against (3) is pretty weak. We already know that, in addition to the fact that the two hemispheres share some underlying brain, commissurotomy patients have elaborate coping strategies, making use of information that travels from hemisphere to hemisphere through the environment. To take one simple but important example, the right hemisphere hears the left one talk. So it's not so hard to imagine that the two minds can pass as one. As for being in a position to ascribe all the experiences to the same person, *of course* we would almost irresistibly do that while the patient was behaving normally; that doesn't show that the "peculiarities" don't make the difference.

We might drop the assumption that there is a fact of the matter. Maybe people are like six-packs: A six-pack is one thing for some purposes (e.g., pricing), six things for other purposes (supplying a party of six), and a gazillion things for still others (physics). Maybe a split-brain patient is one mind for some purposes but two for others. Maybe *you* are one mind for some purposes but two for others. (Hahaaa!)