

V71LAR: Locke, Appearance and Reality

TOPIC 5: PERSONAL IDENTITY,
continued...

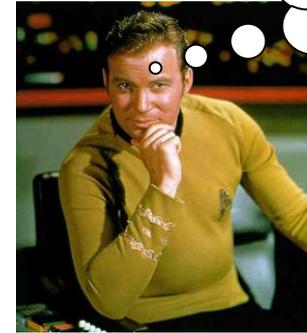
Some comments on the last lecture

- Here's a possible theory of personal identity arising from your responses to the test cases last time:
- **Combined Bodily and Psychological View:**
Necessarily, for a person x existing at t_1 and for a person y existing at some later time t_2 , x is the same person as y iff. y has the same body as x AND y is psychologically continuous with x .
- Problem: Although the combined condition is certainly sufficient for being the same person, it is arguably not necessary.
 - E.g. Locke's example of the Prince and Cobbler (II.xxvii.15)
- Locke's view focuses *purely* on psychological continuity...

1. The Psychological Approach

- According to the Psychological Approach, what it takes for persons to persist through time is some sort of psychological relation.
- Locke's statement of the approach: "...yet it is plain, consciousness, as far as ever it can be extended - should it be to ages past - unites existences and actions very remote in time into the same person, as well as it does the existences and actions of the immediately preceding moment: so that whatever has the consciousness of present and past actions, is the same person to whom they both belong." II.xxvii.16.
- E.g. of Prince and Cobbler (II.xxvii.15)
- E.g. Socrates awake and Socrates asleep (II.xxvii.19)
- Key question for this approach: What, precisely, is the psychological relation involved?

1(a) The Memory Criterion



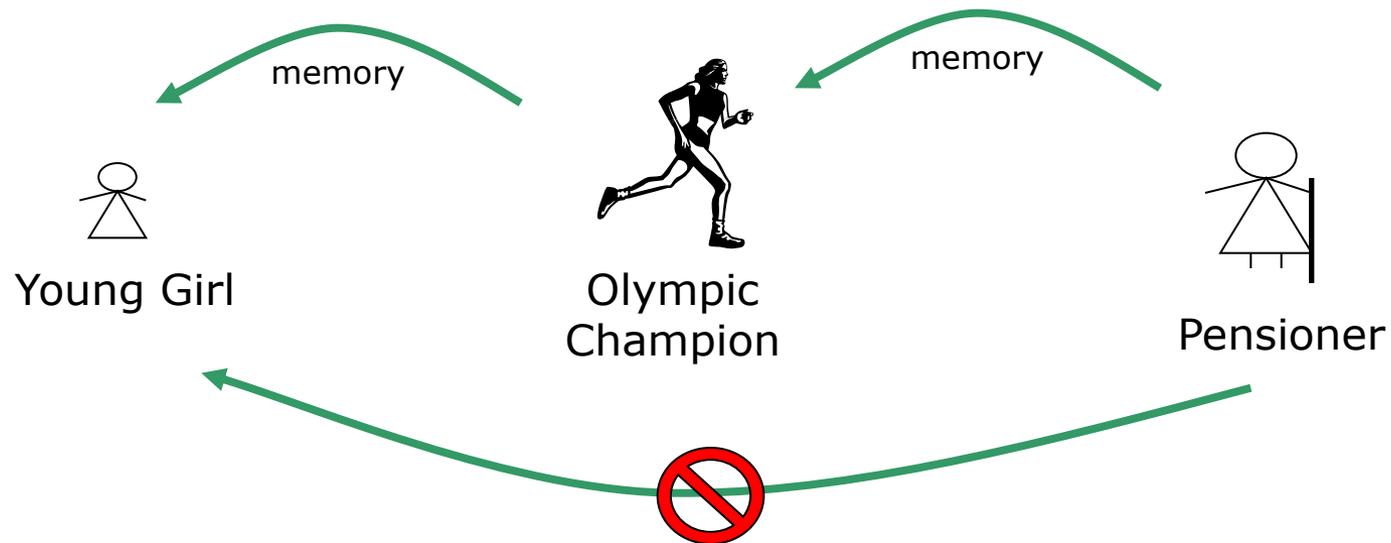
- t_1 t_2
- **Crude Memory Criterion:** Necessarily, for a person x existing at t_1 and for a person y existing at some later time t_2 , x is the same person as y iff. y can remember at t_2 an experience that happened to x at t_1 .

1(a) The Memory Criterion (ctd.)

- Locke: "For as far as any intelligent being can repeat the idea of any past action with the same consciousness it had of it at first, and with the same consciousness it has of any present action; so far it is the same personal self." II.xxvii.10, see also 15-16.
- Problems
 - Amnesia. See II.xxvii.20 for Locke's reply.
 - False memories/circularity (Butler, see Mackie for a reply).
 - Gallant Officer Paradox (Reid)...

1(a) The Memory Criterion (ctd.)

The Gallant Officer Paradox:



- According to the memory criterion, $P=OC$ and $OC=YG$
- Hence $P = YG$ (by the transitivity of identity).
- Yet, according to a direct application of the memory criterion $P \neq YG$.

1(a) The Memory Criterion (ctd.)

- **Sophisticated memory criterion:** Necessarily, for a person x existing at t_1 and for a person y existing at some later time t_2 , x is the same person as y iff. there is a complete series of overlapping direct experience-memory connections between y and x .
- The sophisticated memory connection denies that a direct memory connection is necessary for personal identity. All that is necessary is an overlapping series of connections.
- Problems:
 - Dreamless sleep (having no experiences).
 - Duplication (see below).

1(b) A Broad Psychological Approach

- Some types of psychological connection between x at t_1 and y at t_2 :
- Y at t_2 can remember an experience had by x at t_1
 - Y at t_2 is connected to x at t_1 via an overlapping chain of such memories.
- Y at t_2 shares (most of) the beliefs, desires, wishes, intentions of x at t_1
 - Y at t_2 is connected to x at t_1 via an overlapping chain of such connections.
- Y at t_2 shares (most of) character traits, mental abilities of x at t_1
 - Y at t_2 is connected to x at t_1 via an overlapping chain of such connections
- According to a broad psychological approach, a sufficient number of these connections makes y at t_2 psychologically continuous with x at t_1 .
- **Broad Psychological Approach:** Necessarily, for a person x existing at t_1 and for a person y existing at some later time t_2 , x is the same person as y iff. y at t_2 is psychologically continuous with x at t_1 .
- It is a matter of interpretation whether this or the memory criterion is Locke's settled view (see II.xxvii.9, 15-16).

2. Williams' Duplication Problem

- The following scenario is at least logically possible



- The Psychological Approach must say that $A=B$ and $A=C$. But that's odd, because $B \neq C$.
- So it looks as if the Psychological Approach must deny the transitivity of identity!
- Moral: Personal Identity is a one-one relation, whereas psychological continuity is a one-many relation.
- (NB. Similar objection applies to the combined bodily and psychological view: double-hemisphere transplants.)

2. Williams' Duplication Problem (ctd.)

The only other options in the Duplication case are :

(i) Neither of B or C are the same person as A

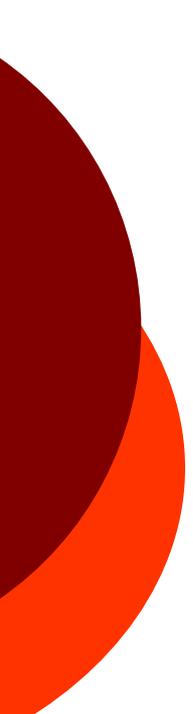
This is the line taken by Parfit and Nozick. Parfit's argument:

- In fission cases, we should care equally about both offshoots
- In fission cases, neither offshoot is the same person as the original
- Therefore, personal identity is not what matters to us

I.e. whereas 'being the same person as' is a one-one relation, 'taking prudential concern in the affairs of' is not.

(ii) One of B and C is the same person as A, but not both.

This is the line preferred by Swinburne (the "simple view"). Problem is that this is just another version of Cartesianism (see lecture 9).



Reading and References

- *Locke, J. Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Book II, chapter xxvii.
- Lowe, E.J. 1995. *Locke on Human Understanding* (Routledge). Chapter 5.
- The objections to Locke's theory from Butler and Reid are reprinted in the back of the module guide.
- For other reading, please see the module guide.

Questions?

- neil.sinclair@nottingham.ac.uk
- Tel: 0115 95 13428
- **Office hours:** Thursdays and Fridays 12-1 (room C8a, top floor, Trent building).