

Lewis: 'Survival and Identity'

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1. The R-relation and the I-relation

Claim 1: What matters in survival is mental continuity and connectedness.

P at *t* has what matters in survival if there are later person-stages with 'appropriate future successors' of the 'experiences, thoughts, beliefs, desires and traits of characters' of *P* at *t*. For short: if there are later person-stages *R*-related to the person-stage of *P* at *t*.

Claim 2: What matters in survival is identity.

P at *t* has what matters in survival if there are later person-stages who are parts of the same continuant person as the person-stage of *P* at *t*. For short: if there are later person-stages *I*-related to the person-stage of *P* at *t*.

Lewis endorses both claims. He says that necessarily, two stages are *R*-related just in case they are *I*-related.

2. Lewis's reply to Parfit

Parfit argues that these claims are incompatible (and that we should prefer Claim 1). Parfit's reasons: (i) identity is one-one, the *R*-relation is not; (ii) identity is all-or-nothing, the *R*-relation is not.

Lewis responds that this is irrelevant. To show that claims 1 and 2 are incompatible, you'd have to show that the *I*-relation had some features which distinguished it from the *R*-relation.

The *I*-relation does not have to be one-one. If it ever happens that two people share a stage, then that stage will bear the *I*-relation to stages of the two people which don't bear the *I*-relation to each other.

3. Lewis's theory of persons

If it is necessary that two stages are *R*-related iff they are *I*-related, then it is necessary that two stages are *R*-related iff there is some person of which both are parts.

It follows from this that all the stages of any person are *R*-related to one another.

We could consistently hold that all aggregates of stages which are *R*-interrelated (i.e. each bears *R* to all the others) are persons. But that would be absurd. There is no person composed of just my Tuesday person-stages.

Lewis proposes a theory that gets rid of 'junk' like that: a person is a *maximal* R-interrelated aggregate of stages---i.e. an R-interrelated aggregate of stages that isn't contained in any other R-interrelated aggregate of stages.

4. Fission and fusion

Parfit went through a list of all the possible claims one might make about a situation in which one person goes into a fission machine and two people come out. Each of these claims seemed to have very serious difficulties.

Also, none of them were compatible with the claim that the I-relation is the R-relation.

That's because it follows from the claim that the I-relation is the R-relation that *it can never happen that one person goes into a fission machine and two people come out!*

On Lewis's theory of persons, a case of fission is a case where there are two people all along, who share all their pre-fission stages.

5. Lewis's reply to Parfit's objection to Lewis's reply to Parfit.

Objection: isn't this business about the I-relation irrelevant? Shouldn't we say that a person P at a time *t* has what matters in survival iff P has stages at times later than *t*?

In that case we'd have to say that when two people share a stage, one of them can have what matters in survival at that time and the other one not.

But when two people share a stage, they are exactly alike in many ways at that time, and in particular exactly alike in their psychological states at that time. So they can't differ in whether they have what matters in survival.