

Personal Identity
PHIL 1480 Metaphysics
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1. Swapping bodies

2. Brain exchanges

3. Brain rewirings

4. Williams' argument that brain rewiring is not a way of swapping bodies

- (i) It is possible to survive total amnesia.
- (ii) If so, it is possible to survive total amnesia together with a radical change in one's character.
- (iii) If so, it is possible to survive total amnesia together with a radical change in one's character and the implantation of illusory, fictitious memories.
- (iv) If so, it is possible to survive an analogous process in which the new character and "memories" are designed to be appropriate to another actual person, B.
- (v) If so, it is possible to survive an analogous process in which works by reading information from B's brain into yours.
- (vi) If so, it is possible to continue to exist, and stay in the same body, even when the information-transfer goes in both directions.

5. Parfit's Psychological Spectrum

Essentially the same (up to (iv)) same, only with many more small steps.

6. Parfit's Physical Spectrum

It is possible to survive having 1% of your cells destroyed and replaced with duplicates. If so, it is possible to survive having 2% of your cells destroyed and replaced with duplicates.

...

If so, it is possible to survive having 100% of your cells destroyed and replaced with duplicates.

7. Parfit's Combined Spectrum

It is possible to survive having 1% of your cells destroyed and replaced with Garbo-like cells.

If so, it is possible to survive having 2% of your cells destroyed and replaced with Garbo-like cells.

...

If so, it is possible to survive having 100% of your cells destroyed and replaced with Garbo-like cells.

8. Reductionism

According to Parfit, Williams's argument and the Psychological Spectrum work by tacitly exploiting the premise that there is always a *fact of the matter* about whether some future person will be oneself or a new person. Without this premise, these arguments would look no better than standard Sorites arguments for the premise that someone with a million hairs is bald, or whatever.

But, if we are Reductionists—if we think that the facts about how people persist through time are what they are *in virtue of* facts of some more fundamental kind—we should reject this assumption: we should think that there sometimes could be no fact of the matter about whether some future person is oneself or someone else. (Why? For one thing, because if we are Reductionists we cannot accept the conclusion of the Combined Spectrum argument.)

According to Parfit, this is radically at odds with our 'common sense' view of ourselves: