

## Intransitivity and criteria of personal identity

### 1 Thomas Reid's brave officer

Suppose a brave officer to have been flogged when a boy at school for robbing an orchard, to have taken a standard from the enemy in his first campaign, and to have been made a general in advanced life; suppose, also, which must be admitted to be possible, that, when he took the standard, he was conscious of his having been flogged at school, and that, when made a general, he was conscious of his taking the standard, but had absolutely lost the consciousness of his flogging.

These things being supposed, it follows, from Mr. Locke's doctrine, that he who was flogged at school is the same person who took the standard, and that he who took the standard is the same person who was made a general. Whence it follows, if there be any truth in logic, that the general is the same person with him who was flogged at school. But the general's consciousness does not reach so far back as his flogging; therefore, according to Mr. Locke's doctrine, he is not the person who was flogged. Therefore the general is, and at the same time is not, the same person with him who was flogged at school.<sup>1</sup>

### 2 The physical criterion of personal identity

"(1) What is necessary [for personal identity over time] is not the continued existence of the whole body, but the continued existence of *enough* of the brain to be the brain of a living person. *X* today is one and the same person as *Y* at some past time if and only if (2) enough of *Y*'s brain continued to exist, and is now *X*'s brain, and (3) this physical continuity has not taken a 'branching' form. (4) Personal identity over time just consists in the holding of facts like (2) and (3)."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), Ch. 6. See also George Berkeley: *Alciphron: or, the Minute Philosopher* Dialogue VII, Sec. 8, Para. 14/27 p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (1984), p. 204.

### 3 The psychological criterion of personal identity

“(1) There is *psychological continuity* if and only if there are overlapping chains of strong connectedness. X today is one and the same person as Y at some past time if and only if (2) X is psychologically continuous with Y, (3) this continuity has the right kind of cause, and (4) it has not taken a ‘branching’ form. (5) Personal identity over time just consists in the holding of facts like (2) and (4).”<sup>3</sup>

“*Psychological connectedness* is the holding of particular direct psychological connections.”<sup>4</sup> E.g. between an original experience and a subsequent memory or between forming a plan and recalling it when putting the plan into action.

“*Psychological continuity* is the holding of overlapping chains of *strong* connectedness.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, p. 207.

<sup>4</sup> Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, p. 206.

<sup>5</sup> Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, p. 206.