OUTLINE

Persons

This course will span **four** lectures. In it we will cover topics on the persistence conditions of persons. This will include discussions on psychological continuity, on Parfit's account, and on animalism. These lectures will run as follows:

- 1. Psychological Continuity and Objections, Part I
- 2. Psychological Continuity and Objections, Part II
- 3. Animalism, Part I
- 4. Animalism, Part II

Lecture 1 Psychological Continuity and Objections, Part I

1. Introduction

In everyday life, we speak and act as though we exist over extended periods of time. We tell stories about our past, we regret old decisions, we plan for our futures, we anticipate new experiences. In other words, we speak and act as though the person in those past stories, and the person who is anticipating new experiences are *the same person*. As such a question immediate arises: what does it take for some *Y* to be the same person as some *X*?

In one sense, this persistence question is not unique to subject of persons. There is also a puzzle about the persistence of ordinary objects over time. Ordinary objects seem to regularly change properties, and we speak as though they (often) survive those changes. But what makes, say, a banana that was green *the same banana as* the one that is yellow a few days later?

The question of *our* persistence over time may or may not be distinct from the question about ordinary objects. The reason for this is that, the *necessary and sufficient conditions* of personhood are also a matter of contention. And our answer to the persistence question will partly depend on what kind of thing we think a person is. Let's consider a toy example to illustrate how these two questions are bound together.

Consider any sports team; say, a football team. Suppose at time t, A is the goalkeeper, and B is the striker on that team. Some time later, at t+1, A retires, and B is bought by another team. Is the team at t+1 the same team as that at t? Before you can answer this, you need to know what kind of thing a team is. Suppose I tell you now that the team has had the same logo and jersey for years, including through t and t+1. You'd need to know whether a team is identical with its members, of with its jersey.

But what kind of thing a *person* is remains contentious. Are we identical with an animal? With a 4-dimentional worm? With a bundle of experiences? Only on answering this can we answer identity questions. Though, note that we may reflect that a particular claim about the nature of persons may have unintuitive results for our persistence conditions, and so challenged on those grounds. To return to the analogy, if I told you that a football team is identical with the set of trainers of its members, among other things, you could rightly object that this produces the unintuitive result that, if one player on the team bought new trainers, the team would cease to exist. So we can use intuitions about both questions to inform accounts of each.

2. <u>Psychological continuity</u>

Roughly speaking, the psychological continuity account takes personhood to consist in having a continuous line or chain of psychological events. Precisely what kind of events, and what manner of continuity varies between accounts.

We can motivate this position by looking at the ways in which we speak. We speak as though the same person can undergo significant changes to their body, and yet still be the same person. We also speak as though a person who has undergone a significant personality change "isn't the person they used to be".

Historically, Locke was a famous proponent of this sort account. But since then, contemporary philosophers have refined and precisified the strategy. On Locke's account, psychological continuity consisted in *memory* connections.

3. <u>What constitutes continuity?</u>

Memory (Direct)

On this understanding of continuity, we are only identical with those persons who we can remember.

Problems: third-person memory, ordinary forgetting, hallucination.

Memory (Chain)

In order to avoid some of the problems that are raised against the previous theory, we can distinguish between psychological *connectedness* and psychological continuity. Say that two beings X and Y (where Y exists in the future relative to X) are **psychologically connected** just in case Y is in the psychological states they are in *because of* the psychological states that X is in.

From here, we can say that X and Y are **psychologically continuous** just in case some of Y's psychological states are connected to some of X's psychological states via a chain of psychological connectedness.

This solution helps with some of the problems raised for the simple version of the memory account.

4. Fission

Split brain cases pose a unique challenge to psychological continuity since they drive a wedge between the identity criterion and *numerical identity*.