Remembering who you are

Relativism, Reason, and Reality
Spring 2005
Lockean theories

• Later B = earlier A iff B can remember A "first-personally"
• Biggest problem is that memory doesn't seem to reach far enough: amnesia, sleep, forgetting,....
• Strategies for extending the reach
  1. B can remember more than B does remember
  2. B first-personally remembers more than experiences
  3. B remembers A or remembers B₁ who remembers A or…
  4. B remembers A or executes A's plans or …
1. *Can* remember

- I don't recall what I did last February 17
- But Locke only requires that I *can* remember
- *Can* under what conditions?
  - Once awakened
  - Hypnosis, Psychoanalysis
  - Verbal prompting
  - Electrical stimulation of brain
- These methods can also cause *false* memories
- Quasi-memory no help here, because hypnosis (e.g.) is not the normal causal process
- Parfit sometimes says "any reliable process"
2. Non-experiential remembering

- remembering facts A knew
- remembering skills A had
- remembering what A wanted, feared, etc
- could there be super-amnesia where someone forgets *all* these things?
- the super-amnesiac can't speak or think!
- is she still the same person? is she a person at all?
3. Taking the *ancestral*

- It certainly helps to allow memory chains. But is that enough?
- The general and the captain might both remember only the boy; so is captain not general?
- Take the ancestral not of memory but [remembering + being-remembered-by]
4. New forms of psychological glue

• Backward-looking: B quasi-remembers A's experience e iff (i) A had e, (ii) B seems to recall e, (iii) the seeming memory is caused "in the right way" by e

• Forward-looking: B quasi-executes A's intention to x iff (i) A intended to x, (ii) B does x, (iii) B's x-ing is caused "in the right way" by A's intention

• Bi-directional: B quasi-regrets A's action y iff (i) A did y, (ii) B seems to remember doing y and is sad about it and intends not to do it again, (iii) B's seeming memory and sadness and intention are caused "in the right way" by A's doing y.

• Does this help with the sleep problem?
Neo-Lockean theory

• B is psychologically connected to A iff they stand in a lot of quasi-relations
• B is psychologically continuous with A iff they are linked by overlapping chains of psychological connectedness
• This deals (potentially) with most of the problems we've seen -- but not....
Branching

Easy way -- teletransportation

Harder way -- neurosurgery
The problem

• Suppose Star Trek style teletransportation preserves psychological continuity
• You step off the pad in Mars congratulating yourself for making it -- until you see a duplicate stepping off an adjacent pad
• "You" didn't make it!! (Fission vs. fusion)
Moral of branching

- Psychological continuity is not enough
- Parfit's solution: identity = psychological continuity in "non-branching" form
- This has a strange consequence: identity is not "intrinsic".
- Whether B is A is not a matter between them alone; it also matters if there's another competitor C for the role of A's future self
Official Complete Standard

Neo-Lockean Theory

Person A who exists at $t_1$ = person B who exists at $t_2$ iff A at $t_1$ is *psychologically continuous* with B at $t_2$ AND this psychological continuity does not take a "branching" form, 

*that is,*

there aren’t at any point after $t_1$ *two* people each of whom is psychologically continuous with A at $t_1$, and there aren't before $t_2$ two people psychologically continuous with B at $t_2$. 
Normal cause

• Parfit's "Narrow Psychological Criterion" (p 207) takes psychological continuity to involve the sorts of causal relations that normally obtain between present memories and past experiences, etc.

• No good if a diabolic scientist interviews A on Monday and then implants apparent memories in B on Tuesday
Variations

• But Parfit also mentions a "Wide Psychological Criterion" where *any* reliable cause is allowed.

• And he also also mentions a "Widest Psychological Criterion" where *any* old cause is allowed, even an unreliable one, such as the mad scientist.
Parfit's shorthand

• Personal identity consists in relation R in a non-branching form with
  – the normal cause (Narrow)
  – any reliable cause (Wide)
  – any cause (Widest)

• Soon: why Parfit thinks identity is of derivative value -- it is not "what really matters" in survival

• Keep on with ch. 11, "How We Are Not What We Believe"