DEREK PARFIT: 
SPLIT-BRAIN CASES AND THE BUNDLE THEORY

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Every person is a series of different states, events, thoughts, and sensations

Unified through the actual experience and later memories

“Like a bundle tied up with string” (Parfit, 352)

There is no person separate from the brain and the body

Not an intuitive view- rejected by most people

Similar to Buddha's views
Ego Theory

- Each person has an “ego,” or subject of experiences
- The ego is something intangible, outside of the body and brain
- Events happen to a person—brought together by the being who experiences it
- Existence of a soul (or similar concept)
- Parfit rejects the Ego Theory
THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

- Imagine that “teletransportation” is possible
- A machine scans your cells and is able to place an exact copy of you on another planet
- The machine destroys the original cells
- Is that copy still you? Has the “real you” actually died?
THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

- What if only 1% of your cells were replaced?
- Many would say if only 1% were replaced, the person would still be you.
- At what percentage of cells is the new being no longer you?
Parfit’s Answer

- Parfit argues that the question is irrelevant.
- “These are not here two different possibilities, one of which must be true. These are merely two different descriptions of the very same course of events.” (Parfit, 354)
- Is he right?
What are split-brain cases?

How many persons are involved in a split-brain patient? One, two, or zero?

Ego Theory would argue that there are two separate egos but only one person.

Does Ego Theory still hold when “ego” is no longer the same as “person?”
SPLIT-BRAIN CASES AS SUPPORT FOR THE BUNDLE THEORY

- Parfit and the Bundle Theory claim that there is no “person” involved
- Different awareness of events occurring at the same time, not different egos
- True for both split-brain patients and people with normal brains
QUESTIONS

- Do you support the Bundle Theory or Ego Theory? Do the split-brain cases impact your view either way?
- Is it easier to believe that there is no such thing as a person, or that it’s possible to have two persons inside one body?
- If your brain were split in half and put in two separate bodies, would that count as surviving at all? If a person is just their body and their brain, why does it matter how you survive as long as you are alive in some form?