

DEREK PARFIT: SPLIT-BRAIN CASES AND THE BUNDLE THEORY

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BUNDLE THEORY

- 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



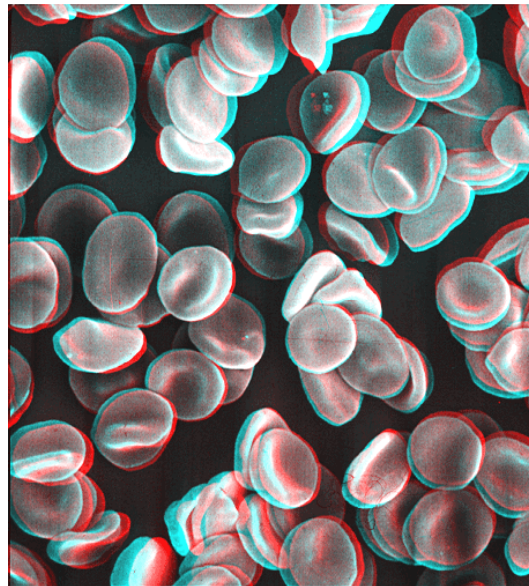
THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

- 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?



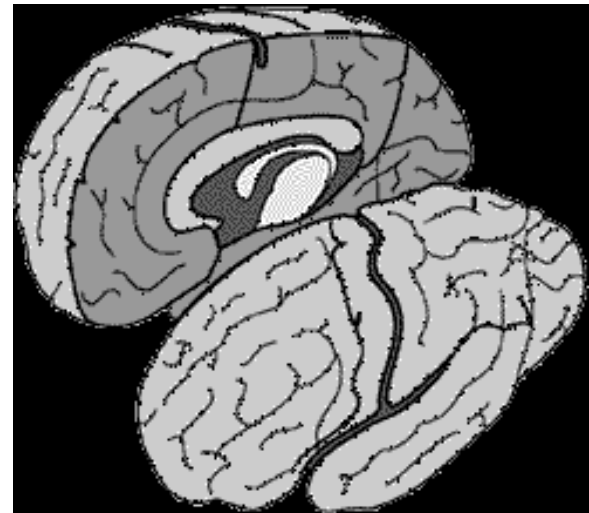
PARFIT'S ANSWER

- 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?



SPLIT-BRAIN CASES

- What are split-brain cases?
- [Video](#)
- 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?

