

# Perry – *The Second Night*



## Miller objects to Weirob's bodily identity theory:

- I can know who I am by introspection and who I have been by memory, without knowing whether I have the same body. (19-20)
- I can imagine waking up with different body (cf. Kafka). (21)

## Miller's third proposal:

- Sameness of a river at different places or of a game at different times consists in their parts being properly “connected.” (23-24)
- So also, the sameness of a person over time consists in the parts of a person's life (the “person-stages”) being properly connected.
- John Locke's (1632–1704) *memory* theory of personal identity.
  - “To remember—or more plausibly, to be able to remember—the thoughts and feelings of a person who was conscious in the past is just what it is to be that person.” (26)
  - i.e.,  $P_2$  at  $T_2 = P_1$  at  $T_1$  iff  $P_2$  can remember  $P_1$ 's mental states.

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## The memory gap objection

- First posed by Thomas Reid (1710–1796).
- On the one hand, if P2 at T2 must remember *all* of P1's experiences at T1, then imperfect memory destroys personal identity.
- On the other hand, if P2 need only remember *some* of P1's experiences, then the following scenario is possible:
  - P3 at T3 remembers *some* of what P2 experienced at T2, P2 remembers *some* of what P1 experienced at T1, but P3 remembers *none* of what P1 experienced at T1.
  - By the memory theory, P3 is identical to P2 but not to P1; hence transitivity fails, and so the theory does not preserve personal identity over multiple stages.
- A common response is to insist that personal identity is preserved from T1 to T3 so long as each stage from T1 to T3 contains at least one memory of *the immediately preceding stage*.

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## Weirob's first objection: circularity

- First posed by Joseph Butler (1692–1752).
- “[W]e must distinguish between *actually* remembering and merely *seeming* to remember.” (27) Only genuine memories can ground personal identity over time..
- But how do we know whether a person actually remembers an earlier person-stage or only seems to remember it?
- Miller: the actual remember is the same person who actually had the experiences.
- Weirob: “[Y]our argument just amounts to this. Survival is possible, because imaginable. It is imaginable, because my identity with some Heavenly person is imaginable. To imagine it, we imagine, First, a person who seems to remember my thoughts and actions, and Second, is me. Surely there could hardly be a tighter circle.” (29–30)

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## Rebuttal of the circularity objection:

- Cohen: We can avoid circularity by supposing that real memories are appropriately *caused* by the original experiences. (31)
- Weirob: But given that ordinary memories are brain states, “[h]ow can states of my brain, when I die, influence in the appropriate way the apparent memories of the Heavenly person Sam takes me to be?” (31)
- Miller: God causes that heavenly person to have the apparent memories she has “*because* you had the ones you had at death.” (32)

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## Weirob's second objection: duplication

- First posed by Samuel Clarke (1675–1729).
- “[I]f God could create one person in heaven, and by designing her after me, make her me, why could he not create two such [persons], and cause this transfer of information into both of them?” (32)
- If God were to do this, we would have a violation of *transitivity*, and thus wouldn't have an *identity* relation between Weirob-now and any of those heavenly persons.
- Cohen: What if God didn't create more than one? (33).
- Weirob: This leads to numerous absurdities.
  - Basic problem: identity is a *necessary* relation (i.e., for all X, necessarily,  $X = X$ ), not a *contingent* one. To say that God merely *happens* not to create a duplicate is to treat the relation as contingent, and thus not as one of *identity*.

What do you think? Is there any way to rebut this objection?