

Perry – *The Third Night*



A counterexample to bodily identity theories

- “A person is just a live human body ... [that] has certain capacities —consciousness and perhaps rationality.” (37, contrast w/ p. 5)
- Two versions of the theory
 - Version 1: Persons are human bodies.
 - Version 2: Persons are *live* human bodies *capable of consciousness and rationality*.
- Cohen’s counterexample: The curious case of Julia North. (38)
 - Julia’s brain is transplanted into Mary’s body. Is the survivor Julia or Mary? If Julia, then personal identity depends on the brain, and not the (rest of) the body.
 - This suggests a *brain identity* theory: *Same brain, same person*.
- Weirob says the survivor is Mary. (39), but Cohen says it has been conventionally established that the survivor was Julia. (40–41)
 - Problem: Conventions are *contingent*. Identity is *necessary*.

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- Weirob: Why think the survivor was Julia and not Mary? Why is the memory theory better than the bodily identity theory?
 - Miller: She had Julia’s memories, and memories allow us “to judge our own identity, without examination of our bodies.” (42)
 - Cohen: Asymmetrical concerns for our own future well-being can be explained by the memory theory, but not by the bodily identity theory. (43-44)
- Weirob: What about the possibility of *brain rejuvenation*—transferring one’s mental profile into a new brain? (46)
 - If we say that brain rejuvenation preserves identity, we run into duplication problems. (47)
 - If we say it doesn’t and that identity requires *the same brain*, then the memory theory loses its advantages, for I can’t know whether I am a duplicate just by introspection, nor can I explain my asymmetric concern for the original over the duplicate. (48)

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Summary: We've now looked at four theories of personal identity

- **Soul identity:** same soul, same person
- **Bodily identity:** same body, same person
- **Brain identity:** same brain, same person:
- **Psychological continuity** (i.e., the memory theory) – if P2 can remember some of P1's experiences (or remember someone who can remember someone who can remember ... some of P1's experiences), then P2 is identical to P1.

All of these have problems with multiple possible pasts (false memories, fusion, etc.) and multiple possible futures (duplication, brain-splitting, fission, etc.), leading to failures of transitivity and/or the necessity of identity.

Cohen: “Perhaps we were wrong ... in focusing on *identity* as the necessary condition of anticipation.” (49)

Persistence without Identity?



The problem: What is it for a past or future thing to BE you?

- More generally, what it is for a thing at one time and a thing at another time to be numerically *the same thing*?



Are they one thing described in two different ways, or are they two things?

- Hitherto, we have been asking what it is for a past or future thing to be numerically *identical to you*.
- Is there any other plausible way to understand it?

Persistence without Identity?



Five formal features of identity.

1. **Indiscernibility:** If $X = Y$, then X and Y have *exactly the same* objective properties.
2. **Reflexivity:** $X = X$ (everything is self-identical).
3. **Symmetry:** $X = Y$ if and only if $Y = X$.
4. **Transitivity:** If $X = Y$ and $Y = Z$, then $X = Z$.
5. **Necessity:** If $X = Y$ then it is *not possible* for one to exist without the other or for $X \neq Y$ to be true.

Given the formal features of identity

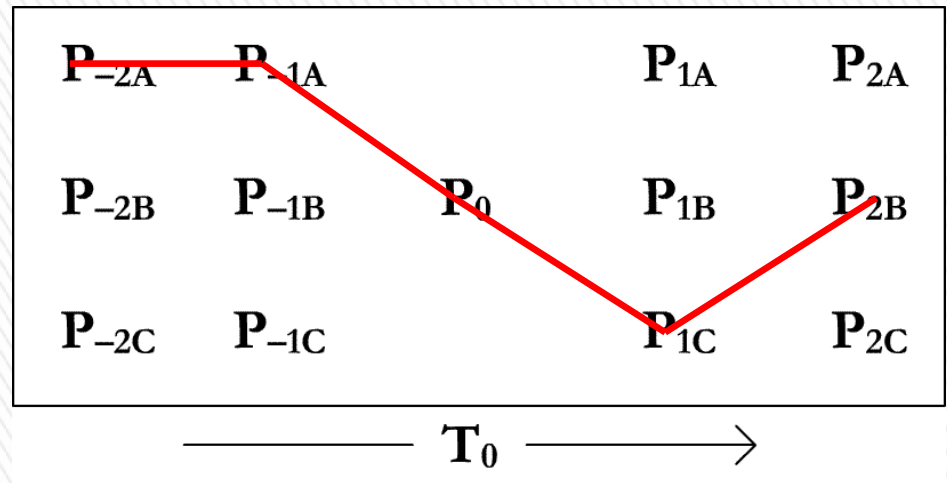
- If $X = Y$, then X and Y *cannot differ* in any objective properties.
- If $X = Y$, then there is *no possible* thing Z which is identical to X , but not Y , or vice-versa.

Persistence without Identity?



Consider, then, a space of all *possible* temporally indexed things.

- If P_0 is identical to anything at a given time, it must be identical to *exactly one* thing at that time.



- If P_0 exists, then anything it is identical to must also exist, and have *exactly the same* objective properties as P_0 .
- Hence, if we construe P_0 's persistence in terms of *identity*, then P_0 must be *temporally extended* and have a *fixed* past, present, and future.

Persistence without Identity?



Another idea

- We usually think of our future not as fixed, but as *open-ended*, such that there are many possible persons we could become.
- If we take this idea seriously, then we cannot take our persistence to be a matter of strict *identity*. (Why not?)
- To ground *memory* and *accountability* for past deeds, we need either past events or a record of them to carry forward in time.
 - Unlike ordinary memories, these records have to distinguish the unique *actual* past of an object from all other *possible* pasts.
- To ground anticipation, a given future person must be a genuinely possible *development* of our present self.
- In 1922, philosopher Kurt Lewin introduced the idea of *genidentity*:
 - O2 at T2 is *genidentical* with O1 at T1 just in case O2 has developed from O1 and carries at least part of O1 over with it.
 - Something like this seems to be what we need.