

Divided minds, fission and what matters

PHIL 1480 Metaphysics

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1. Divided minds

Actual cases of commissurotomy

- One important thing about these cases that Parfit doesn't note: in almost all circumstances these people seem to function normally.

My Physics Exam

2. Explaining the unity of consciousness

What is it for two simultaneous experiences to be *unified*, in the way the experiences of one person typically are?

Parfit's answer: it's for them to be objects of a *state of simultaneous awareness*

One answer Parfit disagrees with: it's for them to *belong to the same person*. Objection: we've just seen cases where experiences belong to the same person but are not unified.

Another answer Parfit disagrees with: it's for them to belong to the same *subject*, where subjects are, in some cases at least, not people. Objection: this is a pointless explanation

If Parfit's answer is correct, does that support Reductionism?

3. Fission cases

Brain-bisection

Double teletransportation or 'beaming'

4. Fission and personal identity

One way to classify possible accounts of fission cases is by the question: how many people, in all, are involved in the whole story?

First answer: three. The original person, who ceases to exist at the point of fission; and the two fission products, who come into existence then.

- A variant says that the original person still exists after the fission, and is then the *sum* of two other people.

Second answer: two. The original person, who continues to exist, and one new person, who comes into existence. But given the symmetry of the situation, what could determine which of the fission products is the original?

- Another view on which the answer is *two* is Lewis's. According to Lewis, there are two people present *all along*, which share the same pre-fission temporal parts but have different post-fission temporal parts.

Third answer: one. What we have after the fission is not what we seem to have—two people—but one unusually large and scattered person with a split personality.

5. Identity and what matters