ABSTRACT

Given that people go through such drastic changes in both appearance and the mind, it is a wonder that we are able to re-identify individuals across periods of time. This curiosity raises the main question of this project: What constitutes identity? In this thesis, I introduce and defend a theory of personal identity that I call *physical perspectivism*. This theory names point of view to be the mark of identity, meaning that we are able to re-identify an individual based on whether their point of view is the same from one moment to the next. I claim that point of view is independent of mental states: you can have the same first-hand perspective even if your personality or memories change. Your point of view is not experience, but the thing that experiences. The *physical* aspect of the theory is the emphasis on the neurological events in the brain that I claim are identical to point of view. To evaluate and demonstrate physical perspectivism's virtues, I discuss thought experiments and theories proposed by John Locke, Bernard Williams, and Judith Jarvis Thomson. I analyze each theory and show that none provides satisfactory answers to difficult questions of identity. I demonstrate how the theory fits many common intuitions regarding existence, particularly anticipation of survival. I also show how physical perspectivism is resistant to classic thought experiments meant to complicate matters of identity, namely Derek Parfit's division case. I conclude that due to these merits and my own intuitions, physical perspectivism is worth further exploration.

The Physical Perspectivism Theory of Personal Identity

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I. Introduction

Picture this: you wake up in a lab strapped to a table without recollection of how you got there. You turn your head to see another person who seems to be in a similar position to you. A woman in a lab coat sees that your neighbor is awake and seems pleased, but doesn't give much else away as to what is going on. Your eyes dart to the right of the woman and catch on 1to two things: a picture of the person on the table, and a picture of Jennifer Coolidge. As you see this, the woman in the lab coat presses a button and the person appears to pass out, only to awake a few moments later behaving strangely. As you observe, you realize that this person's behavior bears a striking resemblance to Jennifer Coolidge's.

Seeing your confusion, the woman in the lab coat describes what is happening. You two have been recruited for a government program testing the limits of personal identity. Her hypothesis is that once someone's brain structure changes, their identity changes as well. So if the brain structure changes to be exactly similar to someone else's (in this case, Jennifer Coolidge's) that person's identity changes to be that of Jennifer Coolidge. She tells you that in just a couple of minutes, she will alter *your* brain as well, but this time to resemble Bruno Mars.

How should you feel in this situation? Should you expect your identity to go out of existence given that Bruno Mars will somehow inhabit your body? Or should you expect to wake up thinking that you are Bruno Mars, losing your old identity in the personality sense but not in the literal sense? By 'literal sense', I mean whether you will

wake up at all, whether or not you will survive. The described scenario aims to test the limits of certain hypotheses regarding what makes someone the same person over time. This is the type of situation the metaphysician aims to analyze when she gives an account of personal identity: what aspects of a person are necessary and sufficient for them to persist through time as an individual with a single identity?

Marya Schechtman names this the *reidentification question*.[1] Change is inevitable and expected when it comes to surface level features such as interests or personality traits. What I aim to address with this question, and what this text focuses on, is how we can say that someone persists through changes so significant. I will specifically focus on the metaphysics of identity over time, meaning I aim to answer how someone can persist over time while existing as the same entity. Can we identify another person as Jennifer Coolidge after such significant personality and memory changes occur within mere moments?

When answering questions like these, most identity theorists fall into one of two categories: those who believe psychological features to be the mark of identity, such as memory or consciousness, and those who believe it to be physical features, such as the brain or body. Identity theorists have few alternatives that lie outside of these polarized categories. Most do not wish to combine the downsides of both when swallowing the consequences of only one is easier to handle. I intend to argue that a physical theory, when described through mental processes rather than physical substrates, provides an account of identity with fewer and less substantial downsides than alternative views.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine arguments for and against some of the leading theories of personal identity. I will begin by critically analyzing a

[1] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p. 7

Lockeian-based psychological theory and move on to two bodily theories, specifically those argued by Bernard Williams and Judith Jarvis Thomson. I will critically examine each work and point out where I believe that they fall short. This will attempt to narrow down what features of identity each author believes to be important and contrast them with my own prioritizations. I will ultimately argue for an account of identity that attempts to focus on a phenomenon rather than a substrate, claiming that we ought to pick out a person's point of view when attempting to reidentify them. This point of view, I will claim, is the neurological activity within the brain originating from the brainstem. We can thus physically determine whether someone is the same person over time based on the continuity of neurological activity from their brainstem, as these events give rise to what we perceive as experiences from our point of view. My view is different from other physical theories because it is based on the continuity of a mental event rather than a physical substance.

II. John Locke - "Of Identity and Diversity"

A. Memory Theory

John Locke has a completely psychological view of identity. In "Of Identity and Diversity," he states that personhood is characterized by consciousness. Consciousness, which Locke claims is represented by memory, is the mark of a "thinking, intelligent being,"[2] and if this being is what we refer to when we say that someone is the same person as before, then consciousness is what allows for the retention of identity.

[2] Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, chapter 27 p. 333-334

Personhood thus rests in consciousness and consciousness allows a person to exist throughout time.

What is interesting about Locke's theory is that he names memory as the indicator of consciousness. Consciousness here refers to awareness of internal states and one's surroundings, which Locke believes to be related to memory. This is because a memory allows you to recall a moment of conscious experience, connecting that previous consciousness with your current one. He asserts that personal identity reaches no farther than consciousness reaches,[3] meaning that identity stretches as far back as the individual can remember. Interruptions in memory, he claims, represent new consciousnesses which do not retain the same identity as the current consciousness. For example, say you hit your head really hard and suddenly forget your entire life until yesterday. Locke's theory states that before yesterday, the identity inhabiting your body is completely different from the one you currently hold. You experience a completely new consciousness, and thus a completely new identity, post-amnesia.

This is arguably one of the virtues of his theory. We are certain, epistemologically, of who we are. We remember every event, action, feeling, etc. that is a part of our identity. Anything we don't remember experiencing, we would say, is not a part of us. There is no question as to how we know who we are because knowing, if equated with remembering, is a necessary aspect of this theory. Say you hear a story about how you threw a tantrum in a restaurant as a child, causing a scene and breaking a plate. Because you don't remember this event, Locke would say that it cannot be attributed to your identity. It doesn't feel like *you* did those things because you don't remember doing them, and Locke's theory supports that intuition.

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[3] Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, chapter 27 p. 333-334

His theory also translates neatly to moral responsibility. Imagine a person with dissociative identity disorder. This person experiences semi-frequent switches in personality, with each personality claiming to be a new, separate person. Their 'host' personality is their natural one, while other personalities are called 'alters.' Each personality also reports that they don't remember the actions or experiences of other personalities in the same body. For sake of reference, we can name the host's personality Linda and one of her alters Louise. Let's say that while possessing the personality of Louise, this person robs a bank. After switching back to their host personality, Linda reports not remembering robbing the bank at all. *She* did not rob the bank, she claims, it was Louise who did it.

The question of moral responsibility in this case is a complicated one. Linda's body committed a crime, but she doesn't remember committing this crime and it doesn't feel like she even decided to do it. Yet, it *was* her body that did it, and we cannot only imprison her during times when Louise is said to inhabit the body. How can we determine whether to hold someone (or whom to hold) morally responsible in cases where the typical markers of identity are unclear? Locke's theory of identity would support Linda's claim. Because she does not remember robbing the bank, the crime is not a part of her consciousness and thus not a part of her identity. It doesn't matter that her body did it[4] because the consciousness inhabiting that body at the time of the crime does not match up with Linda's. Linda thus cannot be held morally responsible for the actions of Louise. Locke's theory provides easy answers to otherwise complicated questions regarding moral responsibility and identity.

[4] Locke's theory does not rule out the possibility that Linda's body can be held responsible in the legal sense. The theory only claims that Linda as an identity cannot be held morally responsible for Louise's actions.

B. Memory Theory Objections

1. Problem of Retroactive Change

There are upsides to Locke's theory, but significant issues as well. The first of which we can call the problem of retroactive change. Recall how once you get amnesia, the identity you had pre-memory loss (let's call it identity A) becomes different from your identity post-memory loss (identity B). However, say you miraculously gain your memory back after a week. All of a sudden, the previously distinct identity A is yours again, the same as identity B! The consciousness that Locke would previously say was completely distinct from your current one switches back to being the same one you currently hold. I find this odd: how can identity retroactively change? If we wish to give an account of identity across time, our theory ought to be temporally stable, not subject to change at the whim of remembrance.

Locke could say that the identity of the person in the memory (or those in forgotten memories) does not matter; all that matters is the identity of the current person. When Lockian identity change occurs, it is the current identity that changes to match the identity of the consciousness represented by the memory. If identity B is separate from previous identity A, but then identity B remembers the consciousness of identity A, identity B changes to identity A, not the other way around. The previous identity is fixed in time and it is your current identity that changes to be separate from or match a previous identity. Because that identity is based on memory (a present phenomenon), no retroactive change occurs, only present change.

This is not enough to save this theory from criticism, however. Thomas Reid, in "*Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*," discusses the case of an army officer who had been "flogged when [he was] a boy at school for robbing an orchard, [had] taken a

standard from the enemy in his first campaign, and [had] been made a general in advanced life."[5] Reid proposes that when the officer took the standard, he remembered being flogged as a boy. But when he became a general, he remembered taking the standard but not the flogging. Let's call the person flogged at school 'the boy', the person who took the standard 'the officer', and the person who was promoted 'the general'. According to Locke's theory, the boy is the same as the officer because the officer remembers the events that the boy experienced. The officer is the same as the general because the general remembers the events the officer experienced. However, since the general does not remember the events of the boy, the boy is not the same as the general. This does not make logical sense. By transitivity, if 'the boy'='the officer' and 'the officer'='the general', then 'the boy'='the general'. This is contradictory to what Locke would say about this case. To Reid and to me, this logical inconsistency is enough to reject this theory.

In terms of retroactive change, this thought experiment shows how Locke's theory cannot only be thought of as a present phenomenon. If we hold past identities as fixed, as the solution to retroactive change suggests, then the above logical contradiction occurs. Let's say that the general didn't always remember the events of the officer and he instead remembered them recently. If we hold the officer's identity fixed, then the general's identity changes to that of the officer. But the identity of the officer remembered the events that the boy experienced, meaning the two identities are the same. This means that the general holds the same identity as the boy, contradicting Locke's theory as demonstrated above.

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[5] Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man,* p. 248-49

If we rather hold the general's identity fixed, we can instead say that the specific consciousness that the general remembers from when he was an officer changes to be a part of his current identity. To avoid the transitivity problem discussed above, the Locke theorist would have to treat episodes of consciousness as only memories, not identities. This means that these past episodes of consciousness could become a part of the general's identity without saying anything about the identities of those consciousnesses. This, however, would involve the retroactive change discussed above, as both the consciousnesses the general remembers and the ones he does not would have to change to either be a part of or not a part of the general's identity. Each interpretation thus has significant downsides, the likes of which I am not inclined to swallow.

2. *Retrieval of Memory Problem*

To point out yet another issue, if the act of remembering is what pieces your identity together, it appears as though you would have zero connection to your past unless you actively were remembering all that you could simultaneously. Let's call this the retrieval of memory problem. This is suggested by the amnesia case Locke himself presents. It is not as though the person with amnesia *could* not remember, as they eventually regained their memory. It is that they did not remember at the time—something not much different than not actively remembering something when you hypothetically could. Of course, this brings up the distinction between a tip-of-the-tongue state and amnesia where there are different types of barriers to memory retrieval. But given that the memories are somewhere in your brain in both cases, my critique still applies. This calls into question what Locke means by memory, because surely he cannot want this as a consequence of his theory. If he *is* referring to

active memory, the memories would need to be present in the mind to be a part of your identity, meaning identity would not stretch back very far. If he is simply referring to memories available to your consciousness, Locke would need to describe what makes a memory available to your consciousness given that memories can presumably be stored in your brain without the possibility of retrieval.

Memory itself is also notoriously unreliable. For one, the mind alters memories often; you may think that something happened one way but in reality, it was something else entirely.[6] If this is the case, what links that portion of your memory to an objective moment of time in which you are supposed to have that identity? How would that be different from a delusion of a memory or even a brain alteration that gave you completely false memories? Locke could claim that only 'true' memories connect back to identity, but then he would lose the epistemological value of knowing who you are. Altered memories feel no different than true ones, so you cannot be sure which memories are part of your identity.

Imagine a mad neuroscientist who discovered exactly how memories physically manifested in the brain. The neuroscientist studies Jennifer Coolidge and tweaks the memory structure of someone's brain to be exactly like hers. For Locke, this makes that person Jennifer Coolidge as well. But now there are two people of the same identity at the same time despite being two different beings, which seems wrong. Here we see two different 'men,' but only one identity.

Jennifer Coolidge 1 wouldn't say that Jennifer Coolidge 2 is her; she is herself after all. Locke could perhaps respond that due to the different locational properties of the two Jennifer Coolidges, they wouldn't actually share an exact identity. At the

[6] Gardner (2001), "Unreliable Memories and Other Contingencies: Problems with Biographical Knowledge"

moment of duplication, they would begin to form new memories relating to the different locations, fixing our issue. However, if identity is memory-based, let's say we put Jennifer Coolidge 2 into an experience machine at the exact time of the supposed duplication. This machine would project Jennifer Coolidge 1's experiences in real time onto Jennifer Coolidge 2's brain. So, even after duplication, they would continue to form the same memories. Locke would have to agree that their consciousness and memories are the same, meaning that they'd share an identity until the experience machine was disconnected.

Locke could bite the bullet and say that, although strange, this result is a plausible sacrifice given the merits of the theory. However, our intuition of wanting identity to be unique is important. If you are Jennifer Coolidge 1 in this scenario (the original one), you have a strong sense of "That's not me, I'm right here!" That is because you can't see through Jennifer Coolidge 2's eyes and you can't feel what she feels; you only have *your* point of view. The aspect of personalized experience, in that case, is a necessary feature of identity for those who share this intuition.

Let's unpack Locke's discussion of Nestor and Thersites from the siege of Troy. When defending his argument for memory, Locke raises the idea of a consciousness-carrying soul shared between a man (let's call him Bruno Mars) and Nestor or Thersites. It is assumed that awareness transfers via this soul and that the soul operates by moving to a new body at death, similarly to reincarnation. Bruno Mars has no recollection of any of Nestor or Thersites' memories and has no idea that they have a shared soul. Who would say that Bruno Mars, having no awareness of any of Nestor's or Thersites' experiences or actions, is the same person as either? Can memories of past

actions be transferred from one soul[7] to another? Locke would say no, Bruno Mars and Nestor or Thersites are not the same person. Bruno Mars shares none of Nestor's or Thersites' consciousness or memory, so they cannot be identified as the same people.

I would disagree. Sure, they are not the same person considering personality or memories; you could not recognize them as the same person externally. If I were Nestor or Thersites, however, and I had some sort of futuristic knowledge that predicted that my perspective, but not my memories, would continue in the body of Bruno Mars through the soul transfer, I would be comforted in the fact that my existence would continue. To clarify, this comfort does not rest in the possibility of shared memories. It also has nothing to do with what my body would do after death, although I may also find solace knowing my body will give nutrients to other living beings. My comfort relates to the knowledge that my death will not result in utter nothingness; I will have an entirely new life to live out in a new body once this one stops supporting life. Because *I* should expect to continue experiencing, I say that my identity also continues. Of course, this scenario relies on there being a soul and the ability to transfer perspective across bodies (both of which I reject), but it does illustrate a key difference between my and Locke's ideas of what *about* consciousness is important when it comes to identity.

C. Epistemology

Let us return to one of the merits of his theory, namely epistemology. Locke's theory appears to be very clear in this regard. Your identity only stretches as far as what *you know* to be you, as exhibited through your memories. This knowledge does make the nature of your identity fragile as it changes based on what you can currently

[7] Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, chapter 27 p. 338

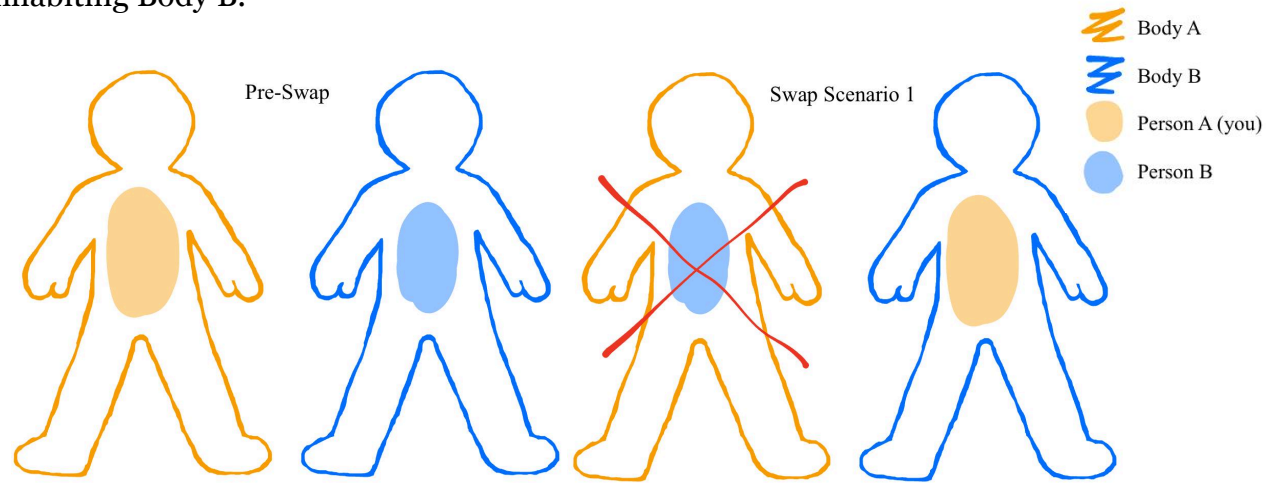
remember, but you are never in doubt about who you are. One can presume that epistemology is an important facet of this theory given that connecting consciousness with memory emphasizes the epistemological aspect of conscious experience. The conditions for identity are straightforward, and you internally know at all times how those conditions apply.

I wouldn't agree that epistemology is as important as Locke makes it out to be. Knowledge of one's self is often heavily distorted, as stated before with memories, and a theory that relies on the accuracy of one's self-perceptions may not be reliable. Granted, having no internal knowledge of identity seems to be counterintuitive, but I argue that it is a reasonable consequence given intuitions regarding first-hand experience. If point of view is the true mark of identity, it may (ironically) be hard to tell whether your identity remains continuous. If point of view were in fact transferable,[8] it would remain independent of the rest of your mental states.[9] This is because point of view isn't a state such as emotion or memory, it is what you experience emotion or memory through. As Thomas Reid states in chapter four of *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man. Essay Three: Of Memory,* "I am not thought, I am not action, I am not feeling; I am something that thinks, and acts, and suffers."[10] The 'something' that Reid refers to appears to be what I name point of view, for it is the thing that experiences[11] thought, action, and feeling. These three, if not attributed to identity, are attributable to the body or brain. So, if we are somehow able to transfer your point of view to another person[12] and it is

[8] Which I do not think it is.
[9] Assuming the other mental states are grounded in the physical matter of your brain.
[10] Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, p 230
[11] This description partially relies on point of view being transferable and thus not a mental state in itself. Hence, the description here sounds like a Cartesian ego, but I will argue against this via a more precise description of the theory later.
[12] Assuming that the person's point of view ends at that time.

independent of phenomena of the body and brain, it makes sense that you would have experiences within whatever body and brain you were transferred into.

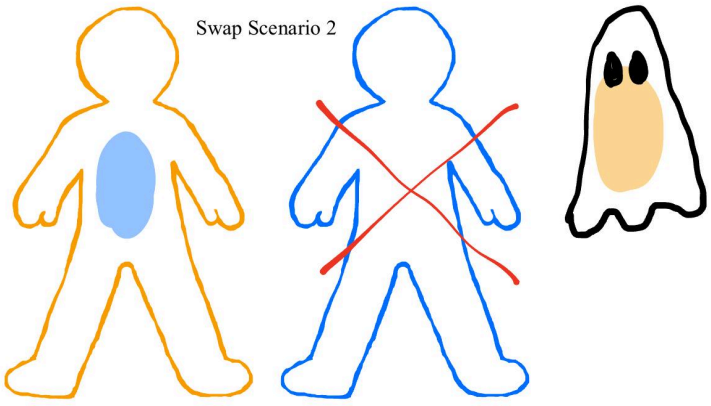
Let us call the body that your point of view goes into Body B and its original point of view Person B. We can call your point of view Person A and your original body Body A. In this scenario, the swap ends with you (Person A) in Body B, and both Body A and Person B out of existence. You would not retain your memories, feelings, thoughts, etc. through the switch because said mental features are a part of the brain.[13] If we isolated our perspective and placed it into a new brain (and body), we would have access to all of the memories gained by the original person who inhabited that brain. With no memory of the switch and no memory of your past body, there would be no reason to presume a change in identity. You continue to experience through the eyes[14] of Body B, so the body is a part of you, but you do not know who you used to be and you have no idea that you used to exist in Body A. You would think that you lived an entire life as the person inhabiting Body B.



[13] Point of view is also dependent on the brain, but this thought experiment is an attempt to explain what would happen if it could be removed from the brain and placed into another. I, however, do not think that this is actually possible.

[14] Metaphorically, a literal description would be all the senses and spatio-temporal location.

If you intuitively disagree with this analysis, let me paint you a different picture. Instead of being the one who is transferred into the new body, imagine that you are the new body that Person B is switching into. The moment Person B transfers into Body A, you, Person A, go out of existence. For the sake of argument, let's say you turn into a ghost and can observe the aftermath of this switch with all of the memories and other states of your old body remaining continuous.[15] The extent of your ghosthood is that Person A exists without a body, meaning your point of view continues isolated from physical matter. As I believe that point of view and all of these mental states rely on the physical brain, I do not believe this is possible, but bear with me. After the transfer occurs, you watch Body A live on as if nothing happened. Person B has all of the memories and traits of Body A and thus thinks she is you; she has no reason to believe otherwise. Everyone around Body A also thinks it is you, Person A. Ghost you is the only one who can recognize, "That isn't me, I am right here!" Of course, if you take out the ghost part then the eviction from your old body functions more like death would. You would have no awareness that your point of view has ended because you would have no point of view at all.



[15] Again, I do not think this is plausible. But it is difficult to illustrate this point without going a bit paranormal.

This is to say that if the transfer of point of view could function as described, it would be impossible to tell from an internal or external perspective that identity has changed. Pure perspective does not carry with it the traits and functions that we typically assign to personhood. If a perspective were to somehow change bodies and thus gain access to new memories and personality traits while losing access to old ones, it would be impossible to know that any sort of change has occurred, both internally and externally. The above example, when fully grasped, should convey this idea and allow the reader to somewhat picture what this kind of swap would look like and how, intuitively, it connects to your identity.

III. Bernard Williams - "The Self and the Future"

A. Brain Extraction and Swapping

Let us pivot to another view, the view that a person's identity rests in their body. That is, if there is bodily continuity, identity is also continuous. Bernard Williams, in "The Self and the Future," argues for this account of identity through a scenario where two people, A and B, are said to have exchanged bodies. At the end of the swapping process, A's body has all of B's memories, character traits, mannerisms, etc., and vice versa. For the swapped features to be genuine, they must not be "artificial,"[16] meaning they must have a causal chain linking them to the experiences of that person. For example, person B's memories are linked to the experiences of B's body, as are B's

[16] Features not gained first-hand. For example, memory requires a causal chain from the experience itself to the memory formation for it to seem genuine. If someone was manipulated into forming a false memory, through hypnosis, say, then that memory would be artificial.

character traits and mannerisms. The experiences of B's body cause the memories and traits to be characteristic of B.

Williams proposes a hypothetical that the information in someone's brain could be "extracted"[17] while she, let's call her Tina Fey, underwent brain repairs or a renewal of some sort. It seems plausible, according to Williams, that the extracted information could be put back into Tina Fey's brain while remaining genuine. That is, she would not be learning of the memories of the previous Tina Fey; it would be the same Tina Fey who experienced everything that led to this information being characteristic of her in the first place. The same could be said for cases where the information is put into a different brain. If we imagine Tina Fey's brain post-extraction to be more or less a blank slate, why would it matter if it were a different blank slate that the information was put into? This is how Williams sets up this thought experiment: the information from A and B's brains is extracted and put into the brains of the other, resulting in what is said to be a genuine swap.

This is where Williams introduces talk of expectations. He describes how, as a part of this body-swap endeavor, persons A and B are asked to choose which of their bodies they would like to receive $100,000, and which they would like to be tortured after the swap takes place. If A and B anticipated this to be a genuine swap, A would most likely choose B's body to receive the money and A's body to be tortured (and vice versa). This is because A would expect to end up in B's body and thus experience getting the money and not being tortured. Since A and B cannot both get what they wished for, we can expect that upon receiving the money post-swap, B's body (with A's brain information) would be happy and exclaim, "This is what I asked for!" But upon being

[17] Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future", p. 162

told that they were going to be tortured, A's body (with B's brain information) would be disappointed that the outcome they requested did not come to fruition. Similar things can be said for variations in the requests and reactions: A-body's and B-body's reactions will align with what would appear to be a genuine exchange of bodies.

This is where Williams introduces a new thought experiment also having to do with anticipation. He describes various situations having to do with memory/trait alteration preceding torture. A basic example is being told you will be tortured, but beforehand you will undergo something that results in complete memory and personality alteration. He claims that no amount of change in character or memory would mitigate the fear of being tortured; you can still expect to be tortured despite not remembering your life or having different traits. It is easy to picture, Williams says, waking up in an amnesiac state and in pain. Amnesia would not change the fact that it will be *you* being tortured. Upon being told your fate, you would likely not be consoled by the prospect of altering traits that have nothing to do with pain. You expect to experience the pain even if it would be a very different version of the "you" being told of the torture.

But how is this different from the body exchange described above? William believes it is not. In fact, describing the body swap in terms of alteration mentioned above is consistent with the expectation that it will still be A in A's body post-swap, even if A believes that they are B. Williams believes that the information put into the brains of A and B during the "exchange" process would be no different than creating illusory memories and traits. This advancing list of cases intends to clarify why:

(i) A is subjected to an operation which produces total amnesia;

(ii) amnesia is produced in A, and other interference leads to certain changes in his character;

(iii) changes in his character are produced, and at the same time certain illusory "memory" beliefs are induced in him; these are of a quite fictitious kind and do not fit the life of any actual person;

(iv) the same as (iii), except that both the character traits and the "memory" impressions are designed to be appropriate to another actual person, B;

(v) the same as (iv), except that the result is produced by putting the information into A from the brain of B, by a method which leaves B the same as he was before;

(vi) the same happens to A as in (v), but B is not left the same, since a similar operation is conducted in the reverse direction.[18]

William claims that if we accept cases (i)-(iv) as still being person A, we have no reason to accept that cases (v)-(vi) result in a body exchange. The former cases appear to be isolated alterations: they do not *directly* involve another person. While case (iv) does involve another person, B could not know of her traits' use in this brain alteration. This is distinct from case (v) which involves taking B's memories and traits directly from B. If you are person A, Williams believes that you would expect to continue existing after undergoing the changes described in (i)-(iv), as you can imagine existing with different memories or different personality traits. Case (v) can hardly be viewed as a swap since B remains the same. It also implies that the 'extraction' Williams describes functions more as a copying of B's mental information rather than a removal of it. The only distinction between case (iv) and (v) is the method by which A's brain is altered. If the method used in (v) doesn't change B's identity, the method does not seem to make a difference in

[18] Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future", p. 172

whether A's identity is changed since there is no swap. So, the same operation happening to person B at the same time as A would not produce a swap either since the result of both operations does not necessitate a change in both people. This would mean that both A and B remain the same person despite their changes in character. This result produces doubts that identity is wholly linked to the psychological features targeted in the alterations.

To pivot to his positive argument, Williams claims that identity must be connected to the body. Specifically, he discusses how the body *cannot* be omitted from the discussion of identity. Let us continue our discussion of persons A and B, specifically in case (v). This process would result in two different bodies possessing exactly similar psychology. If we want to maintain that A and B cannot have the same identity, Williams says that their bodies must mark the difference. If two people are exactly the same aside from their bodies, their identities must be distinguished by their only distinguishable features. This view still holds if, say, two bodies were cloned. Despite the two people being exactly similar in terms of body and psychology, their different physical matter and different spatio-temporal locations are sufficient to distinguish their bodies as separate. The same cannot be done for psychology, as psychology in the purest sense is an abstract entity without a determinate spatiotemporal location. Unless we attach psychology to something physical, we cannot distinguish two of the same psychological states from one another. Williams thus concludes that "any claim that bodily considerations can be absolutely omitted from the criteria of personal identity must fail."[19]

[19] Bernard Williams, "Personal Identity and Individuation", p. 242

B. My Analysis

I agree with Williams's analysis of the situations described above, but would like to add my take on why. Williams's discussion of anticipation in these thought experiments is valuable in that it isolates point of view from other psychological states. You can still anticipate experiencing pain despite a complete change in your memory and personality, meaning that the person experiencing is separable from that being experienced. Memory and personality cannot be embedded in experience because that would mean alteration of such would result in a changed experience, meaning we wouldn't be able to conceive still existing, say, post amnesia. It is what Williams describes as the anticipation of experience in the second case that implies that point of view is the mark of identity.

What constitutes this point of view, however, is not answered by this analysis of the thought experiments posed above. If it is not memory or personality, then what is it? The cases having to do with brain alteration that do not result in a changed identity suggest that there is something about brain continuity that plays a role in identity. As will be further elaborated on in my discussion of Thomson, I claim that it is specifically the neurological activity in the brain that retains continuity through alteration *and* gives you a point of view through which you experience the world. The continuation and uninterruption of these neurological events, despite potential interruption in experience itself, is what allows for the continuation of identity. This view is in line with Williams', but it focuses more on the brain's continuity of neurological activity rather than its matter. While Williams does not distinctly separate the brain from the body in his argument, it is reasonable to discuss the brain separately given its focus in the above discussion, despite Williams ultimately arguing for a holistic bodily account.

So let us go back to the original thought experiments. Williams describes the possibility of body swapping through the possibility of information extraction from the brain. For an adequate analysis of this process, there would need to be more information about how exactly this extraction process works. In its first description, Williams describes extraction as if it were about completely removing the information of the brain so as to preserve it during repair. But in the description of case (v), he describes brain information as something that could be copied and replicated into another brain while preserving the information in the original. My interpretation of what actually happens in terms of swapping depends on what the "information" being extracted is. If it is merely a scan and "download" of the brain, I would say that since nothing interrupts the flow of neurological activity, identity would be retained. In terms of literally extracting this activity from the brain in an attempt to "download" a point of view to transfer to another brain, I have doubts. As the brain's neurological activity relies on neurons and the brain's structure, it is hard to imagine that it could be extended or transferred out of what gives rise to it. Thus, there is no way that the point of view of A and B in the body-swap scenario could have *actually* swapped without swapping the physical brain as well. The people involved would think that they had swapped, but A should expect to continue existing in A's body, and B should expect to continue in B's. In deciding who should be tortured, assuming selfish intent, they should pick the other's body since they will continue to retain the perspective of their own.

Williams and I thus agree on the result of each case but disagree on why the results occur. This is displayable if we were to say that the extraction described above *could* transfer neural activity to another brain in a way that somehow preserved point of

view.[20] The only plausible way to do this would presumably be to remove and transfer the physical brain to another body, which is not akin to the extraction process described above. For the sake of illustrating the differences between my and Williams' views, let us momentarily present that we can transfer one's point of view to another brain without disrupting the brains themselves. Given that Williams endorses a holistic body account of identity, this transfer of point of view would not be enough to transfer identity. Persons A and B in the above cases remain themselves because their bodies stay the same, according to Williams. If their bodies were not disrupted, then they would retain their identities. I, however, believe that if it were possible to swap only A and B's point of view, their identities would swap despite the continuity of their bodies. This is in line with Williams' discussion of anticipation of survival, but he does not go far enough in naming point of view to be the cause of said anticipation. We agree on the reasoning, but not on the result.

IV. Judith Jarvis Thomson- "People and Their Bodies"

A. Brown, Robinson, and Dickinson

Given this evaluation, we can now discuss Judith Jarvis Thomson's thoughts on psychological versus bodily identity theories. In her work "People and Their Bodies,"[21] Thomson presents and evaluates four hypothetical body-swap cases involving three characters: Brown, Robinson, and Dickinson. She does this to ultimately conclude that

[20] I am skeptical as to whether this is possible. As will be described in the subsequent chapter, I believe that parts of the brain are necessary for the continuity of the capacity for point of view, and the same point of view could thus not exist without its original brain.
[21] Thomson, "People and Their Bodies", 158-163

despite the indeterminacy it can produce, the view that people are their bodies is correct. Here is a summary of each case:

> **Brown-Case-One**: the brain of Brown's body is transplanted into Robinson's body and the rest of Brown's body is destroyed. The survivor believes he is Brown and has all of Brown's previous memories, beliefs, personality traits, etc.
>
> **Brown-Case-Two**: the brain of Brown's body is transplanted into Robinson's body and the rest of Brown's body is destroyed. The survivor is given drugs that prevent the body from rejecting the transplant, and the drugs alter the brain so that the survivor believes he is Robinson and has all of Robinson's previous memories, beliefs, personality traits, etc.
>
> **Brown-Case-Three**: the brain of Robinson's body is reconfigured to have Brown's psychology. Brown's body is entirely destroyed. The survivor believes he is Brown and has all of Brown's previous memories, beliefs, personality traits, etc.
>
> **Brown-Case-Four**: the brains of Robinson's body and Dickinson's body are reconfigured to have Brown's psychology. Brown's body is entirely destroyed. The survivors both believe he is Brown and have all of Brown's previous memories, beliefs, personality traits, etc.

B. Theses and Criteria

To discuss each case, it is important to introduce the terminology that Thomson uses in her evaluation. Thomson introduces the Physical Thesis, the view that people are their bodies, as an ontological thesis: a view of what people *are*. An ontology defines what literally exists in the world; we can imagine it as a giant list of everything that

exists. When we give an ontological definition of a person, we are identifying the nature of said person's existence. If a person is ontologically their body, then their body is what is on this 'list' accounting for their existence. Identity, rather, is a relation that something holds with itself. Questions of identity ask whether two things are actually one thing. In the case of personhood, these questions embody how we identify the same person at different times. Thomson introduces the Physical Criterion as a means of answering questions of identity. The Physical Thesis is said to entail the Physical Criterion: x=y if and only if x's body=y's body.[22] These combined claim that people are their bodies and that people's bodies give them their identity. Thomson says that a person, as an entity, is identical to their body.

An alternative to the Physical Criterion is the Psychological Criterion (Connectedness): x=y if and only if there are times *t* and *t'* such that y is at *t'* psychologically connected with x at *t*.[23] In plain English, this criterion says someone is the same person at multiple points in time if they are psychologically connected at those points in time. The category of psychological connectedness is broad; it could include memory, mental states, personality traits, or any other psychological phenomena. If we take psychological connectedness to include consciousness, the Psychological Criterion is similar to Locke's memory theory. Thomson, however, believes this view to be incorrect. She uses the cases described above to evaluate both the Physical Criterion and Psychological Criterion, ultimately claiming that the Psychological Criterion is incorrect.

C. Thomson's Analysis

[22] Thomson, "People and Their Bodies", p. 158
[23] Thomson, "People and Their Bodies", p. 159

Thomson believes that in Brown-Case-One, the common intuition is that Brown would end up as the survivor.[24] This intuition supports the Psychological Criterion, as the survivor is psychologically connected and continuous with the original Brown. The brain, in this case, is said to act as a "carrier of a person's psychology."[25] Brown's physical brain sustains Brown's psychology through the swap and results in Brown as the survivor. Those who endorse the Physical Criterion, however, do not have a clear answer to who survives in this case. The survivor has Brown's brain but the rest of Robinson's body, meaning it does not have all of Brown's *or* Robinson's body. If we treated a brain transplant like any other organ transplant, say, a liver, then the physicalist could maintain that Robinson is still the survivor.[26] But most would agree that there is something special about the brain compared to any other organ when it comes to identity. So if we do accept that the survivor in Case One is Brown, we are forced to give up the Physical Criterion.

Brown-Case-Two results in different intuitions according to Thomson's analysis. Rather than the brain transplant producing Brown's psychology, Brown's brain is altered to resemble that of Robinson's. So psychologically, the survivor of Case Two resembles Robinson despite having Brown's brain. Because the survivor would act the same as before, believe he was Robinson, and have all of the traits that were attributed to Robinson, "Everyone, I think, would say that the survivor is not Brown in Brown-Case-Two."[27] Thomson uses this intuition to question our conclusion in Brown-Case-One; if we hold everything but the psychological features constant between

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[24] Thomson, "People and Their Bodies", p. 158
[25] Thomson, "People and Their Bodies", p. 159
[26] This operates under the assumption that the Physical Criterialist would accept that people can retain their bodily identity through minor changes to their anatomy.
[27] Thomson, "People and Their Bodies", p. 158

the two cases but have different conclusions as to who the survivor is, it seems as if the brain may not necessarily carry psychological connectedness after all.

Thomson then introduces Brown-Case-Three, which simply alters the psychology of Robinson's brain to resemble Brown's while keeping all of Robinson's brain the same. If one maintains that psychology is the sole determinant of identity (call this the *pure psychological criterion for body-switching*),[28] they would have to say that the survivor in Case Three is also Brown. However, some deny this according to Thomson; they say that both the brain and the psychology must be transferred for a true body swap to occur. We shall call this view the *impure psychological criterion for body-switching*.[29]

Thomson does not entertain the latter view, as she finds it unreasonable to claim that the brain alone is necessary for psychology-transplanting (as demonstrated by the different intuitions regarding Cases One and Two). That is, why couldn't we give someone a drug that causes the brain to imprint on the liver so that if the liver is transplanted, it results in psychological alteration?[30] Just because the brain is normally responsible for psychology, according to Thomson, does not mean we ought to accept it as a necessary feature for identity. So in further evaluation, she (and I in my description of her argument) will only reference the pure version.

Those who accept that the survivor is Brown in cases one and three likely agree with the Psychological Criterion (Connectedness). However, Brown-Case-Four may cause issues for those who accept the Psychological Criterion account in Case Three. Recall that Case Four takes the same process of alteration that results in Brown's psychology in Case Three and also alters Dickinson's brain to resemble Brown's. If

[28] Thomson, "People and Their Bodies" p. 159
[29] Thomson, "People and Their Bodies", p. 159
[30] Thomson, "People and Their Bodies", p.159

Robinson's altered psychology would result in Brown as the survivor, then surely Dickinson's altered psychology[31] would also result in Brown as the survivor. But this means that there are now two Browns! Though we could add a 'uniqueness' clause to the criterion, the identity of an individual should not be reliant on the identity of anyone else. If we do not want to accept that both Browns hold the same identity, then we may have to reject the pure psychological criterion.

But if the psychological criterion is unacceptable, what should we do? Thomson says that the main barrier to accepting the simple Physical Criterion is that it results in indeterminacy in the above cases. In Cases One and Two, the resulting body is not wholly Brown's or Robinson's, which means that it is unclear which, if either, identity survives under the Physical Criterion. Most people, Thomson asserts, have a strong inclination to reject any view that would result in indeterminacy. But as with our analysis of the above cases, wouldn't the Psychological Criterion also result in indeterminacy? If this is the case, Thomson thinks that the straightforwardness of the Physical Criterion makes it an attractive option given that both can result in similar uncertainties.

As further support for the physicalist view, Thomson describes how there is an intuitive connection between personal ontology and personal identity. She believes that from ontology you can infer identity: what a person *is* entails how they are the same over time. It is difficult to claim that people *are* their bodies, for example, and yet assert that their identity lies in their psychology. The consequence of this mismatch would be that a person could exist in the bodily sense but not retain their identity if, say, they suffered from sudden and total amnesia. So they would and would not exist at the same

[31] Altered to resemble Brown's

time, which is contradictory. Accepting the ontological link to identity, Thomson moves on to describe a potential issue with psychological identity criteria. Namely, what ontological thesis ought we to accept if we take a psychological feature to be the mark of identity? If we must infer identity from ontology, Thomson believes that a pure psychological account of identity would require us to say that a person *is* their psychological features. We can easily say how someone stays the same person over time when referring to psychological features. But how can we claim that there is such an entity as memory or consciousness?[32] Accepting a psychological ontology would mean that these features are independent entities, but it seems implausible to claim that psychological features can exist independently of the brain.[33] Thomson thus asserts that we ought to accept a physical account of identity. Specifically, due to her disregard of the brain as only being a carrier of psychology, she argues for a holistic bodily account of identity.

D. My Analysis

In her evaluation, I believe Thomson has made a significant oversight. Thomson's immediate rejection of the brain's distinctiveness led her to fail to consider certain physical features of the brain that may rule out cases of indeterminacy. Beginning with her justification, let us assess her liver example. Thomson believes that there is nothing special about the brain in terms of identity: if we could alter the liver to result in the same psychological changes that a brain swap would cause, then the brain isn't the only thing that has to do with psychology. However, if we were to make it so a liver transplant

[32] Thomson, "People and Their Bodies", p.156

[33] This objection from Thomson appears to be relatively weak if one does not share her intuitions. Perhaps she intends to question the fundamentality of psychological states and claim that a non-fundamental entity cannot exist without what grounds it.

contained all the information a brain carries, that would mean we are just turning the liver into another brain. Yes, we could say that any organ could be changed to carry psychology. But the extent to which they would have to be altered in order to do so makes it clear that there *is* something special about the brain when it comes to mental faculties. I can make it so a rock contains all the information of a computer, but that would entail turning it into another computer. There is no weight to this concept.

While I agree with Thomson that psychology is not what makes up identity, I believe that there is still something special about the brain when it comes to being a sort of control center for psychological (and non-psychological) mental phenomena. The brain plays a huge role in both keeping our bodies alive and giving us the experiences that categorize complex life. While the liver is replaceable and even removable in some cases, the brain is not. We can easily imagine being the same person after bodily alteration, but I believe the intuition that the brain is not so easily replaceable is one we ought to listen to. Thomson presents us with two, polarized and strict options: either the whole body is what makes up identity, or something psychological does. Given the brain's distinctiveness and its virtues when it comes to resolving the above indeterminacy (as I will describe below), I believe that it is worth exploring further. Accepting the indeterminate results of the Physical Criterion in the above cases does not feel as necessary with viable alternatives.

One of these alternatives, and the one which I wish to defend, is that people are, ontologically, the continuity of neurological activity within their brain: x=y if and only if x's active brain=y's active brain. Dependent on this activity is the ability to experience through a point of view, and I thus claim that point of view is the carrier of a person's identity. Neurological activity (i.e. neurons firing) operating within the complex

structure of a brain results in the ability to have experiences through a unique perspective (the brainstem also proves to be necessary and important to this, but that is a later discussion). The continuity of this activity in the brain allows experience to potentially occur at any time when parts of the brain that produce higher order cognition are fully operational, i.e., when neurological activity has full access to them. This theory means that we can say that someone is the same person over time via the continuity of their neurological activity while saying that they are *them* based on whether their point of view remains the same. It describes people in terms of their neurological events rather than only a physical *part* of the brain, which makes it easy to track who is who in tricky cases such as the ones Thomson describes. The only aspect that must be transferred with the brain in a swap would be this continuity of point of view, which would be transferred so long as the brain remains neurologically active.

This view thus only requires that the brain remains continuous and active for the preservation of identity. Let us go back to the Brown cases. Brown-Case-One, assuming such a transplant is possible, would result in Brown as the survivor because Brown's point of view would transfer to Robinson's body through the brain transplant. Brown-Case-Two is the same; despite the psychological difference, Brown's point of view would remain continuous through the activity in the brain *through* the alteration process, meaning that his identity would also remain continuous. In Brown-Case-Three, Robinson is the survivor. Robinson's brain stays the same and his brain activity remains continuous, meaning the alteration of his brain's psychology would not matter. Using the same reasoning, Brown-Case-Four results in Robinson as the survivor in Robinson's body and Dickinson as the survivor in Dickinson's body. While this result would not be

intuitive to someone observing the results of the experiment,[34] I maintain that the survivor in each case has a continuous point of view; despite a new body or psychology, they should expect to keep experiencing. I will elaborate on this view in the subsequent chapter.

Thomson's Thought Experiment

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
Psychology: Brown or Robinson	Brown	Robinson	Brown	Brown
Brain: Brown, Robinson, or Dickinson	Brown	Brown	Robinson	Robinson / Dickinson
Body: Brown, Robinson, or Dickinson	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Robinson	Robinson / Dickinson
Common view (according to Thomson)	Brown	Not Brown	Purist: Brown Impurist: Robinson	n/a
Thomson's view (survivor)	Indeterminate	Indeterminate	Robinson	Robinson / Dickinson
My view (survivor)	Brown	Brown	Robinson	Robinson / Dickinson

V. Conclusion

I have analyzed one psychological and two bodily theories of identity in an attempt to demonstrate how typical theories fall short in regard to identity. Specifically,

[34] Because the survivor may assert that they are someone different than they are, an outsider looking in may not have an intuitive gauge of the survivor's identity.

I addressed where the concept of point of view falls into each theory. Locke's memory theory is inconsistent in numerous ways; I notably disagree with the idea that there must be epistemological upsides to a theory in order to make it plausible. I agree with Williams's analysis of his discussion of body swapping, but he does not go deep enough into what it is about the body that allows for identity to remain continuous. While I agree that discussions of the body cannot be omitted from talk about personal identity, I emphasize the importance of a body's mental faculties in determining identity. Thomson's dismissal of impure views led her to gloss over analyses of the Brown cases that would untangle indeterminate survivor cases. A physical view that prioritizes the mental process of point of view would work more or less like a brain theory in simpler cases like these; whoever's brain it is is whoever the survivor is, which clears up each of Thomson's cases. While I have demonstrated the upsides of this theory in terms of clearing up analyses of difficult thought experiments, the subsequent chapter will aim to provide more comprehensive arguments for the theory and will delve into more detail as to what the theory entails.

Chapter II. Physical Perspectivism

I. An Introduction to the Theory

A sensory deprivation tank is a pitch-black, soundproof pod filled with water heated to the temperature of human skin. Being inside the tank is said to eliminate nearly all sensory input, making it feel like you are floating in nothing surrounded by empty space.[35] Despite this lack of sensory input, you can still be aware that you exist. Your knowledge of your existence is not reliant on external input; you can be surrounded by a black void and still be able to experience said void. You would still feel the nothingness that a sensory deprivation tank invokes because, despite the lack of experiential content, you still exist. What you experience in the absence of sensory input is perhaps as close as you can get to having a pure point of view. Point of view is not the culmination of experiences, but rather the mental faculty that allows one to experience. It is having a perspective; it is the perspective in which you have *your* experience of the world and your thoughts and feelings.

Now imagine that you are in one of these sensory deprivation tanks. There is a second tank to your left, also containing someone floating inside. We can imagine, for the sake of argument, that this neighbor has the same external experiences as you and that these experiences are of nothingness. We can also imagine that you are both in a deep meditative state so that your internal experiences of thoughts and feelings are temporarily minimized. We can even say that the person next to you is your clone, so any internal experiences will be exactly the same. Despite possessing the same internal and external experiences, you are still two distinct people. You are unable to see through

[35] This setup is similar to a thought experiment proposed by Avicenna named “the floating man”

the other person's eyes, both metaphorically and literally. This is because you have two distinct points of view which are actualized in the physical brain: your brain produces the point of view that gives rise to your experiences, and their brain produces the point of view that gives rise to theirs.

This theory needs to account for continuity of identity over time, however. The brain itself changes over time; despite the comparative sameness of neurons relative to cells in the rest of your body, the brain's structure alters with each new memory, each new experience, and each new development. This means that we cannot necessarily rely on the sameness of the brain to produce the same point of view from one moment to the next. This is why I wish to claim that it is the continuity of neural activity within the brain that produces the continuity of identity. For the brain to stay alive, it must remain at least partially active at all times. Even if the parts of the brain that result in experience are inactive,[36] the reliability of there being *some* activity within the brain is enough to retain point of view. The neural activity that point of view equates to is continuous, meaning there is a connection between instances of experience through interruption. Due to the theory focusing on the physical features that result in a perspective through which one can experience, it will henceforth be called *physical perspectivism*.

To return to the sensory deprivation tank, the meditative state of you and your neighbor demonstrates the difference between consciousness and point of view. Meditation is said to be an altered state of consciousness, but I argue that this does not mean meditation (or other conscious states for that matter) causes an altered point of view. We can imagine point of view as an umbrella that includes various types of

[36] I will later claim that this is impossible due to the region of the brain that relates to the production of point of view, but consider this for sake of argument.

experience,[37] particularly conscious experience. This makes consciousness a subsection of point of view: all conscious experiences are within your point of view, but not everything in your point of view is necessarily a conscious experience. Take subliminal messaging, for instance. If you find out that a Coca-Cola ad flashed in the middle of a movie trailer prompting you to spend money on a Coke, you may be angry (after learning it occurred) because it subliminally affected *you*, even though experiencing the ad wasn't conscious. It was still experienced in your point of view, which is how it took effect, but it was not within your realm of conscious awareness. Point of view thus acts distinctly from consciousness, and unconscious[38] activities or experiences are still within your point of view. Intuitively, this is because when we experience something unconsciously, we still attribute it as having happened to us. There is an egoistic concern for subliminal messaging even though we do not consciously experience it because it still affects us, and point of view being distinct from consciousness accounts for this.

II. What the Theory Is

A. Explanation and Defense

The purpose of this chapter will be to provide an account of what people are identically and ontologically. I will defend the claim that a person's identity lies in having a first-person perspective, which I will refer to as their point of view. Under this definition, the re-identification question discussed in Chapter I can be answered as such:

[37] Sensory experiences, experiences of higher order cognition, etc.
[38] I will explain this more later.

Criterion for Re-Identification: person x at t_1 = person y at t_2 *iff* x's point of view at t_1 = y's point of view at t_2

People thus persist by having a point of view. So long as one's point of view remains the same, despite perceived interruption,[39] they can be identified as the same person. A point of view equates to all of the neurological activity in the brain, and the continuity of this activity allows for first-person experience to be interrupted at times of dreamless sleep or amnesia (etc.) yet remain the same. It does not necessarily matter whether we continuously experience through our point of view; the fact that the neural activity remains as long as we are alive means that our point of view exists.

Some physical part of the brain is responsible for producing the neurological activity that I attribute to point of view. This part of the brain may or may not be biologically fixed,[40] but I claim that the brainstem is at least partially responsible (and necessary) for point of view. Specifically, I claim that the brainstem's role in neural signaling renders it at least partially responsible for *producing* a point of view. More on this later.

Physical perspectivism thus involves two things: neural activity (point of view) and the parts of the brain that produce said neural activity. The relationship between neural activity and the parts of the brain is the most straightforward: neural activity occurs between neurons, and neurons are a part of the brain's matter. It is a relationship of production. The relationship between point of view and neural activity is more difficult to justify as the way we experience point of view is distinct from point of view

[39] People presumably cease to have experiences in times of dreamless sleep or anesthesia, but I will not definitively claim that this is the case. We may very well have experience during instances that seem unintuitive, but our restricted memory formation during the instances may prohibit us from knowing whether experience has occurred.

[40] If said part of the brain is damaged, another part of the brain may or may not be able to take over its function.

itself. Nevertheless, I claim that this relationship is one of *identity*: your neurological activity is identical with your point of view.

To explain why, it will be helpful to return to my earlier mention of consciousness. I will define consciousness from this point forward as active awareness. For an experience to be conscious, it must be within your realm of awareness, but it must also be within your control, so to speak. You may be aware of a dream, for example, but you experience that dream passively, making it unconscious. In contrast, the act of reading this paper is conscious because you are aware that you are reading it and you are moving your eyes across the paper voluntarily. If an evil neuroscientist was somehow controlling your brain so as to control all of your thoughts and movement, we would not say that you are having conscious experience despite still having experience. Being puppeted and forced to read this paper would be unconscious because you would not be *actively* aware, only passively.

This implies the definition of unconsciousness, but allow me to elaborate and give a few caveats. I wish to define two types of unconsciousness, the first of which is passive awareness. This type of unconsciousness accounts for dreaming, implicit memory, awareness of involuntary movement, and other experiences that you are aware of but don't actively 'want' to happen, necessarily. You are not in control of these types of experiences; they happen *to* you, so to speak. The other type of unconsciousness involves a complete lack of awareness; it is both passive and completely hidden from your awareness. The neural activity allowing your liver to function, for example, is not even remotely in your awareness. The same goes for your heart, stomach, kidney, etc. You do not experience these things in ordinary circumstances. The signals to and from

these organs fly under the radar unless a problem arises, in which case you are made aware of them through pain, hunger, etc..

This relates to physical perspectivism in that all types of neural activity, conscious and unconscious, encompass your point of view. I will preface this by acknowledging that this may be counterintuitive to some; it seems as though our perspective relates directly to our experience. If the second type of unconscious mental phenomena is effectively barred from our awareness, how could we say it is a part of our point of view? To answer this, I'd like to reiterate a quote from Thomas Reid: "I am not thought, I am not action, I am not feeling; I am something that thinks, and acts, and suffers."[41] If 'I' is point of view, as I claim, then it must be the thing doing the thinking, acting, and suffering. Mental phenomena involving experience emerge when neurological activity 'lights up' a portion of the brain. Recalling a memory, for example, occurs when neurological activity flows through regions of the brain that arrange themselves in such a way to encode said memory when the object of it occurred. The recollection of a memory, and any other mental state that you are aware of, is thus grounded in a combination of neurological activity and the regions of the brain that are associated with their respective mental state.

The same type of neurological activity that gives rise to conscious mental phenomena also results in both types of unconscious phenomena. Neurological activity in each respective region of the brain is responsible for all unconscious activity that keeps your body functioning. While there are certain regions of the brain that tend to produce more conscious mental phenomena then others,[42] there is nothing particularly

[41] Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, p. 230
[42] Ojemann, "Brain mechanisms for consciousness and conscious experience," p. 158–168

special about certain types of neurological activity that make them more likely to produce mental states within our awareness.[43] That is to say, the distinction between awareness and unawareness is arbitrary when it comes to neurological activity.

The reason that we are aware of certain mental phenomena but not others is likely evolutionary: we are primarily conscious of things requiring our attention. Our visual field, for example, is often in our realm of awareness because we must use it to keep us out of harm's way or to interact with our surroundings. We must attend to our visual signals and react accordingly; sight is used for decision-making. My liver, however, does not need me to decide how it should function. It does not need me to want it or will it to work; it just (hopefully) does. I will not claim that conscious mental phenomena *could never* be unconscious and react to input in a similar way to most organs. I *will* put forward the idea that we are aware of some mental phenomena and not others because the brain filters out neural activity that does not require our attention.[44] This filter is not always entirely accurate, as demonstrated by unconscious phenomena that are brought before our awareness, and is often at the whim of where we direct our attention. This is to say that there is no 'hard line,' per se, that dictates what is conscious and what is unconscious. It is fluid and based on the individual.

Let us return to my distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness. The notable difference that I say distinguishes between the both of them is passivity; consciousness is active neural activity while unconsciousness is passive neural activity. We can equate the terms 'active' and 'passive' to 'requiring attention' and 'not requiring attention,' respectively. In terms of point of view, we cannot say that it includes only conscious mental phenomena because then we would rule out passive mental

[43] Nadra et al. "Unconscious Neural Activity Predicts Overt Attention in Visual Search."
[44] Grinde, "The Evolutionary Rationale for Consciousness," p. 227–236

phenomena that we are aware of. I believe that it would be extremely unintuitive to say that experiences you have while dreaming, for example, are not experienced through your point of view.

Because we have shown that there is no significant neurological difference between mental phenomena that you are aware of and mental phenomena that you are unaware of, we would have to claim that there is something metaphysically distinct between the two in order to reject the latter as being a part of point of view. One could claim that experience itself is the difference, but without a plausible difference in what experience is grounded in (neural activity), then this claim gives up the theory's physical basis and reduces identity to experience itself. The fluidity of awareness leads me to believe that we have to thus accept all types of neurological activity as embodying point of view. Experience is included in that point of view does the experiencing, so to speak, but point of view cannot be reducible to experience if we want identity to be more than just stimuli.

The continuity of identity rests in the continuity of neural activity in the brain, which I claim is identical to point of view. Point of view is not the experience of having a perspective; it is the literal perspective through which you experience. While our experience of having a perspective may allow us to perceive our identity, I nonetheless maintain that it is the perspective itself that gives and retains identity. Point of view is not psychological, but it is psychologically experienced. When we have concern for the continuation of our existence, the concern primarily lies in wanting to continue having experiences. So although identity is not reliant on experience, the role of our experience in having a sense of identity does make it important. Experience is not necessary for

identity, but it is important enough for identifying point of view that we must still consider it in our discussion of identity.

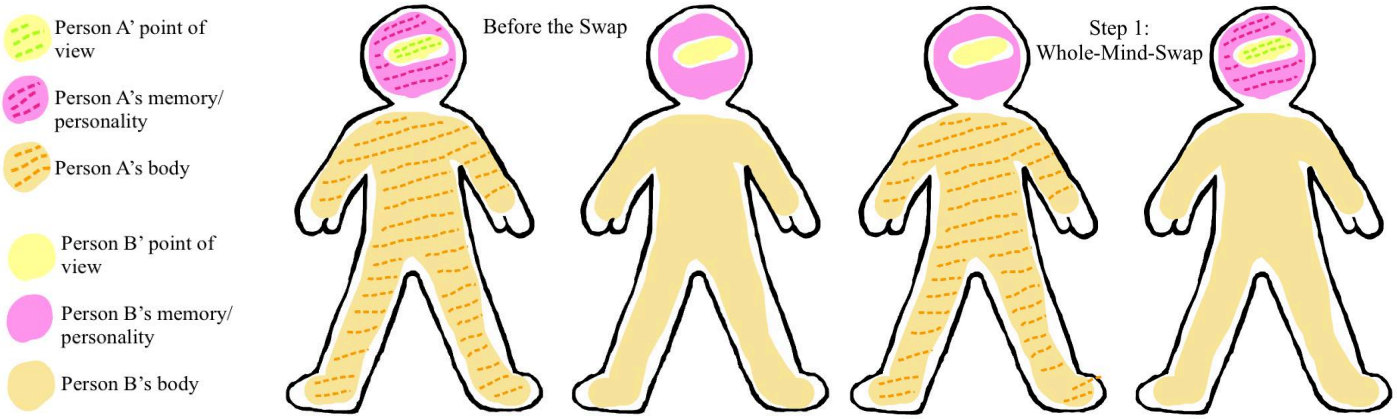
B. More Thought Experiments

This view plays on what Williams describes when he discusses anticipation of survival. When considering whether our identity will continue, we consider whether we should anticipate experiencing a continued existence. Again, this experience isn't necessary for the continuation of identity, but it is how we would recognize this type of swap. In a true body-swap scenario, we should anticipate "waking up" in the other person's body. What constitutes the swap has to do with your point of view switching over to another's body, not just your traits. If you woke up in your body and your brain had been changed to resemble that of someone else's (eg, your memories and personality changed), we would not say that a swap had occurred. Instead, we would consider it an alteration. Without your first-person perspective switching to a new body, any changes would remain just that: changes.

An initial objection to this concept takes into account other aspects of intuitive body swapping, namely memory and personality. Recall my discussion of the epistemological features of Locke's memory theory in the previous chapter. In science fiction movies, part of how we *know* that people have swapped bodies is that they remember who they used to be: they have the memories and personalities of their previous selves. To say that these aspects do not matter when it comes to identity is to isolate point of view from these other mental features.

To do this, we must imagine a scenario where *only* your point of view is swapped to another body. The following scenario describes something impossible; we must

imagine that point of view is separable from the brain in order to demonstrate how it is both important and distinct from personality and memory. To do this, we can say that two steps occur: a whole-mind-swap and a partial-mind-swap. The whole-mind-swap includes point of view, personality, and memory, while the partial-mind-swap only includes personality and memory. Imagine two people, persons A and B, who undergo this type of swap. Let us say that A is, by nature, kind-hearted and empathetic. By contrast, person B is rash and hateful. During step 1 (the whole-mind-swap), persons A and B appear to immediately change personalities. The being inhabiting person A's body is now rash and hateful, while the being inhabiting person B's is now kind-hearted and empathetic. Both bodies also report possessing the memories previously assigned to their respective counterpart bodies.

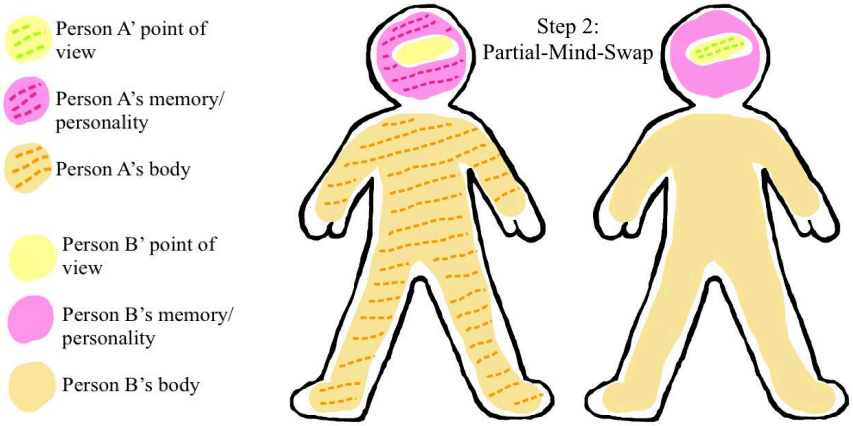


Step 2 (the partial-mind-swap), however, complicates matters from an outside perspective. Because the 'visible' mental traits[45] have gone back to their original bodies, persons A and B appear to go back to the way they were pre-swap. Person A's body once again is kind-hearted and empathetic, and person B's body is rash and hateful. For all they know, they have always existed in their new bodies; they have all the memories of

[45] Personality traits are externally visible and one can report having certain memories, making them visible compared to point of view.

existing in the bodies they have swapped into and all of the corresponding personality traits. The only thing different from their pre-swap state is that their point of views are different.

Because after step 2 their point of views remain swapped, it would still be person A in person B's body and vice versa. If you were person A, here is what you should expect to experience: Step 1. You wake up in person B's body. You can see your old body across from you exhibiting traits that are not your own. You have all of your old memories and feel like yourself, despite your new body. Step 2. You wake up again, this time feeling like person B. In fact, you believe that you have never been anyone else. You have no memory of your previous self. All of your mental traits are that of B's. You continue to experience the world through the perspective of B's body despite having previously experienced the world through the perspective of A's body. While there is no discernable external difference between the pre and post-swap bodies, person A switches from experiencing within A's body to experiencing within B's body. If you are person A, you would go home that night to what used to be person B's house and be none the wiser to the fact that just hours before you had left from person A's house. The perspective in which you experience the world would change, but nothing else would.



Could your identity (as person A) possibly survive this type of swap? I say yes. I will provide two reasons for this answer: anticipation of your continued existence and the person in your old body. Beginning with the former, it is simple to say that you should expect to exist as this new person due to your point of view having been swapped. You should expect to have experiences through this new body's eyes, have this new body's memories, and have all of this new body's traits. Your awareness ceases to exist within your old body; it continues with completely new traits (to you). We should say that some aspect of our existence continues in this case because we can anticipate experiencing, although not in the same manner as before. The mere fact that we have this anticipation of survival if our point of view is preserved signals that we already have a conception of point of view. Intuitively, we expect to survive in such cases because we expect to have a continued perspective. If our capacity for experience continues, how could we not exist?

The latter reason, the person in your new body, has to do with the fact that your body and psychological traits can exist without them being assigned to you. Some may be tempted to say that it is the continuation of your body that is what matters in swap situations such as these, emphasized by the fact that your psychological traits remain unaltered within their original bodies. But let's say that instead of being swapped into a new body, your point of view simply goes out of existence at the time the other point of view enters your original body. This is, again, hypothetical as I maintain that your point of view cannot exist without being produced by a physical substrate. As a continuation of the above thought experiment, however, you can imagine that a 'swap' does not occur. Instead, person B's point of view replaces yours in your old body, effectively booting you out. You should now expect to not experience anything, as *you* will be functionally dead.

Your point of view is not attached to a body, meaning it cannot function (as point of view is a mental phenomenon, so it must be attached to a mind), and there is someone else inhabiting your old body. How can we possibly say that the survivor with your old body is you when you have gone out of existence? You should expect to experience nothing, you should expect to not survive the swap. If we take survival to be indicative of identity, this means that your identity cannot continue if your point of view does not continue. Since point of view is isolated in this case, we must say that point of view is the *only* marker of identity.

III. Ontology and Further Explanation

When I say what a person is ontologically, I refer to what exists in the world; I refer to what people exist as. Because, as Thomson states, it is difficult to claim that there is an entity such as an experience, I will claim that people are ontologically the parts of the brain that produce the neural activity + said activity itself.

Ontological Criterion: x=y *iff* x's active brain = y's active brain

This claim rests largely on my account of identity due to the inseparable link between claims about identity and claims about ontology, as established by Thomson. Because we define personhood in terms of point of view itself rather than the experience of point of view, it is not necessary that a person be constantly having experiences for them to remain the same person over time. So long as their point of view remains continuous (i.e., their brain stays active),[46] they are ontologically the same person. Because identity is defined in terms of the neural activity that constitutes point of view,

[46] "Active" is vague here intentionally. The necessary activity that gives rise to point of view will be narrowed down later in the chapter.

we are not forced to claim that there is such an entity as 'experience.'[47] By directly linking the physical to our psychological experience of it, we can claim that personal ontology and identity are physical while retaining the intuition that our experience of our existence is distinctly mental.

I say that point of view is the neurological activity in the brain rather than a physical part of the brain for a few reasons. The first has to do with point of view's supposed separation from mental states. It seems as though our point of view is what experiences[48] mental states such as emotion, senses, and thought, which links it to all parts of the brain. While point of view may rely on a separate part of the brain, it extends to other parts, meaning it must be connected through neural activity. For the purposes of relating it to our experience of point of view, I will focus on this activity as an *event*. To be clear, my discussion of experience is not intended to reduce point of view to our experience of it. Rather, it is easier to explain how point of view relates to the brain itself through examples we can picture.

When neural activity 'illuminates' a part of the brain and results in a respective mental state, our experience of that mental state is an event. Pain, for instance, is a phenomenon. Although the physical substrate that results in pain may always exist in the body, we refer to pain as a temporary phenomenon characterized by our experience of it. Because of this, pain and other feelings/mental states can be characterized as events. Neurological activity is also an event as it does not refer to a 'thing' but rather a collection of temporary processes occurring within the brain. This event of neural activity directly correlates to the event of mental phenomena. We are thus able to say

[47] I employ Thomson's use of the word 'entity' here. There being such an entity as experience would entail it being its own, distinct thing. As experience cannot exist without the brain, this would not make sense.
[48] I use the term 'experience' loosely here, as I do not wish to claim that point of view can have experiences itself, making it some sort of Cartesian ego. More on this later.

that our experience of point of view is grounded in this signaling; the event of this mental phenomena is gounded in the event of neural signaling.

To further establish this, take how the sections of the brain correspond to different mental functions. Memories are stored in the structure of neural tissue, as are different sensory centers. The storage of said memories does not require your attention; you are not aware of every memory you have access to at any given moment. It is only when attention is directed to memories that you experience them through your point of view. The difference between having an experience of these different brain centers is whether there is activity in the brain present. The flow of this activity enters different parts of the brain and thus allows different features of your mind and body to enter your awareness.

Your point of view is thus limited to the structure of your brain, and the structure itself accounts for personality changes or amnesia in cases of brain damage. If neural activity no longer has access to or cannot function in a part of the brain, your point of view no longer has access to whatever features were assigned to that part of the brain. As this neural activity acts as an observer of sorts,[49] it can only observe what is there and what it has access to. If, say, the matter of the memory section of the brain is altered so that it is very different than before, the activity within those sections functions within this changed matter and perceives different memories. The content that you experience through your point of view is restricted to the matter it functions within.

[49] Again, I do not think that neural activity is an observer itself. I rather use this term to establish how neural activity reaches parts of the brain.

IV. A Similar View

This view is somewhat similar to McMahan's embodied mind account from *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*. While he uses the term 'consciousness' instead of point of view, the theories are easily comparable:

> What matters, or what provides the basis for egoistic concern about the future, is continuity or sameness of consciousness—continuity, in my case for example, of this consciousness. Of course, what is required is not continuous consciousness—one does not have to remain perpetually awake—but continuity of the capacity for consciousness… The notion of "same consciousness" is equivalent to the notion of the same mind… A mind, it seems, is individuated by reference to its physical embodiment, just as an individual mental state is.[50]

To begin with the most obvious difference, I use the term point of view rather than consciousness for a few reasons. Firstly, the notion of consciousness within philosophy is subject to immense debate; there is not a widely accepted definition used among philosophers. McMahan himself appears to utilize a few different definitions of consciousness[51] when providing his account. In the excerpt above, he maintains that the capacity of consciousness does not require that one "remain perpetually awake," implying that consciousness has to do with wakefulness. His theory also relies on the "reappearance of the same consciousness,"[52] following a period of unconsciousness, further supporting the idea that the definition of consciousness McMahan seems to employ straightforwardly translates to the term 'wakefulness.'

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[50] McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*, p. 67

[51] McMahan's use of the term consciousness is very different from Locke's use and does not seem to have the same emphasis on memory.

[52] McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*, p. 67

Later on the same page, however, McMahan claims that the term 'same consciousness' is equivalent to the notion of 'same mind.'[53] He appears to employ the term mind as a broader notion that encapsulates all mental states and further establishes how a mind is individuated via reference to its brain, aka its physical embodiment. This contradicts the idea that consciousness is equivalent to wakefulness. Dreaming, for example, occurs within the mind despite being an unconscious activity. It is unclear whether McMahan would agree that this function of the mind would fit within conscious experience, but in order to maintain consciousness's connection to wakefulness, he would need to exclude certain mental activities. This would mean that 'same consciousness' could not be equivalent to 'same mind,' as there would be mental activity that is not conscious activity. I will use the term 'consciousness M' to distinguish between McMahan's and my definition of consciousness.

For the sake of attempting to stay as true to what McMahan had in mind as possible, I will assume that he uses the terms 'conscious' and 'unconscious' similarly to how I contrast 'aware' from 'unaware.' Because consciousness M must reference the mind of an individual and reference of the mind typically refers to mental activity that we are aware of, McMahan appears to employ a definition of consciousness that more or less equates to awareness. This is distinct from my definition of consciousness in that I maintain that there can be unconscious mental states that you are also aware of. So, McMahan's theory appears to be concerned with our capacity to have mental states that we are aware of.

Maintaining the connection between same consciousness and same mind has additional implications for how consciousness is employed here. McMahan refers to the

[53] McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*, p. 67

mind via the tissues of the brain that it is realized in. Continuity of the functionality of this neural tissue allows for the mind to remain the same even through the interruption of conscious activity.[54] He discusses this in seeming separation from mental states or objects of consciousness. The contents of one's mind are not the same at multiple given moments, meaning that the mind McMahan refers to is distinct from the functions the mind carries out. If equated with consciousness, this means that experiences or objects of awareness are also distinct from consciousness itself.

This definition of consciousness is very similar to how I define our experience of point of view, and it is the second reason why I use the latter term rather than the former. I believe that consciousness in much of philosophical literature is used confusingly; its lack of a concrete definition often muddles its intended use. When people refer to consciousness, they do not intend to simply refer to awareness or experience (most times). I assert that the intent is to refer to the perspective that someone experiences within. Pure experience is impersonal. Yes, it includes a perspective that the experience is had through (a vantage point, put simply), but it does not attach that perspective to a person.

The experience of walking a dog, for example, is distinct from the perspective you have while walking a dog. The experience picks out all things included in the action of walking a dog: the sight of the dog, the feeling of holding the leash, the smell of the fresh air. The perspective, rather, picks out the thing having that experience; it picks out *you* seeing the dog, *you* feeling the leash, etc. Care for your existence does not have to do with experience itself, as anybody can experience. It has to do with the perspective that allows *you* to experience. When people refer to consciousness as a basis for identity, I

[54] McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*, p. 67

believe that point of view is thus what they often mean. This is not to say that consciousness cannot be used in a way that also includes perspective, but the use of the term point of view, I believe, conveys what I wish to utilize more clearly. McMahan's description of the mind and consciousness appears to fit this intuition, at least hypothetically.

Although it appears we are (mostly) in agreement with consciousness/point of view's role in identity, a relevant distinction between the views is McMahan's criterion for personal identity itself: "The criterion of personal identity is physical and minimal functional continuity of the brain."[55] He uses the brain to refer to the parts of the brain that support consciousness,[56] meaning his theory claims that the minimal functional continuity of these parts of the brain that support consciousness decides identity. This view shifts the emphasis from the activity within the brain, as I claim is identical to point of view, to the physical matter of the brain. We agree that a physical aspect of the brain supports the key pillars of identity, but my focus on the neurological events within the brain more directly connects identity to the faculty of experience through which we experience point of view. Claiming that a region of the brain decides identity raises some troubling questions, namely, what happens when that region of the brain is altered? When regions of the brain relating to memory are altered, new memories form or old memories change. If we were to modify the structure of the part of the brain in which consciousness is realized, it stands to reason that identity, if based on this region, also changes. I thus believe it is stronger to claim that identity is something that works within the brain, not a part of the matter of the brain itself.

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[55] McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*, p. 69
[56] McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life*, p. 67

V. Parfit Objection

A. Division Case

As demonstrated by the previous chapter, physical perspectivism clears up controversial and indeterminate cases that question identity. There is one notable case, however, that has not been discussed. At first glance, Derek Parfit's description of division cases initially appears to be a major issue for this theory. To describe his thought experiment, Parfit begins by assuming that brain transplantation results in identity transplantation. If Brown's brain was put into Robinson's body and the survivor had all of Brown's traits and memories, most would agree, he claims, that the survivor is Brown. Parfit also describes the plausibility of removing a hemisphere of the brain, a feat possible in rare procedures such as hemispherectomies. So if a hemisphere was removed from Brown's brain and destroyed while the remaining hemisphere was transferred to Robinson's body, it follows that Brown's identity would survive in the rest of Robinson's body.

As an expansion on this conclusion, Parfit describes a situation where the brain is severed into two identical halves and placed into two separate bodies. Let's continue with our names from Thomson and say that the original brain comes from Brown and the two bodies are Robinson and Dickinson. Presupposing that survival with one-half of the brain is possible,[57] he deems it plausible that both bodies survive after the transplant with only one hemisphere of the brain. In this case, the question that Parfit is concerned with is what happens to Brown? He outlines four possible outcomes:

I. He does not survive

II. He survives as body 1

[57] Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, p. 254

III. He survives as body 2

IV. He survives as both bodies.

The issue with outcome I, he says, has to do with inconsistency with the described possibility above. Parfit's argument goes as follows:

P1: Brown can survive if his brain is successfully transplanted

P2: Brown can survive if half of his brain is destroyed

C1: Brown can survive if half of his brain is successfully transplanted and the other half is destroyed

C: Brown can survive if both halves of his brain are successfully transplanted

Given this description of the transplantation case, it is not plausible that Brown did not survive. As he puts it, "How can a double success be a failure?"[58]

Outcomes II and III, Parfit claims, are not satisfactory because each half of the brain is said to be exactly similar. So, if both halves survive and they are no different (aside from being different halves), how can we say that Brown survived in one body but not the other? We have accepted that Brown can survive with half a brain and that Brown can survive if that half is transplanted to a different body. So if both halves are the same and can survive transplantation, how could we possibly say that one is Brown and one is someone else? There appears to be no reason that one of the survivors would retain Brown's identity while the other wouldn't. The other, if it survives, would have to have a fully new identity, which is perhaps more puzzling than figuring out which half's identity remains continuous with Brown. Where did this new identity come from, and how is it different? These questions lead to Parfit's rejection of outcomes II and III.

[58] Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, p. 256

This leaves option IV, that both survivors retain Brown's identity. There are two interpretations of this that Parfit suggests, the first of which is that one Brown splits into two Browns. If survival implies identity and both halves of Brown's brain survive, then there are two Browns. This possibility feels troubling to Parfit, and he rejects it outright, saying, "You cannot be two people."[59] If identity is your point of view, as I claim, how can you expect to have two simultaneous perspectives in two different locations? This option does not give the two survivors any overlap in conscious experiences or physical autonomy, making it impossible to deny that the survivors have two distinct identities. And if survival does not imply identity, then this thought experiment is irrelevant to its discussion.

Alternatively, outcome IV could result in two bodies with a divided mind rather than one identity splitting into two people. This would mean that Brown retains only one identity, that identity is just split between two different bodies. Parfit believes this is more plausible, as you can imagine someone having two simultaneous experiences "in having each of which he is unaware of having the other."[60] We can picture this as someone having two consciousnesses existing independently from each other. The person experiences both but is unaware of experiencing more than one as they are completely distinct from one another. For example, one-half of Brown in Robinson's body could go to the grocery store while the other half in Dickinson's body attended a yoga class. Brown would experience both, but each half would be unaware of the other half's experiences.

Parfit says that this is unsatisfactory, and I agree. If the two bodies have individual experiences that are completely separate from one another, it is difficult to

[59] Parfit, "Personal Identity," p. 5
[60] Parfit, "Personal Identity," p. 6

deny that they are two separate people. For one, employing my view of identity concerning point of view interconnects experience in a way that makes it impossible to separate experience from identity. If one of the survivors cannot expect to experience what the other survivor experiences, they cannot have the same identity. The two survivors can go to opposite ends of the universe and have no idea what the other is up to. This does not seem conducive to the idea that they have the same identity. So, even if Brown's mind *is* divided among the survivors, the survivors cannot retain Brown's identity. But if they aren't Brown, who are they?

Parfit concludes that none of these four exhaustive options has a clear survivor, which provides Parfit with backing for his claim that personal identity is not important. We can say that someone survives, sure, but we cannot say what identity that survivor holds. If you are Brown and are about to undergo this procedure, this should seem troubling. You have no idea who you will wake up as or if you will even wake up at all. Parfit began his discussion of identity with the assumption that there must be clear answers to questions about personal identity.[61] The reasoning for this makes sense: in determining your continued identity, you should either expect to survive or not; there are no in-between cases. If all questions of identity must have an answer, yet all possible answers to the above case are implausible, it is difficult to maintain that there must be identity at all. Given that the above scenario does *not* have a clear answer, the assumption we began with must be false. Because there are no clear answers to questions of personal identity, according to Parfit, it must not be important.

B. Neural Activity within Division Cases

[61] Parfit, "Personal Identity," p. 3

My criterion for personal identity, as stated above, does not give a clear answer to this case. It appears as though neurological activity can exist in both hemispheres of the brain, even when divided, meaning that the same point of view could split into two at the time of division. Parfit's troubling analysis of the thought experiment thus still follows. This appears to be an issue for my theory, as per my rejection of indeterminacy cases within Thomson's thought experiment. So, let me attempt to refute Parfit's conclusions.

I'd first like to address the setup of Parfit's proposed thought experiment. Recall his reasoning for the notion that there must be multiple living products of the division case:

P1: I can survive if my brain is successfully transplanted

P2: I can survive if half of my brain is destroyed

C1: I can survive if half of my brain is successfully transplanted and the other half is destroyed

C: I can survive if both halves of my brain are successfully transplanted

I have no objections to premise one, as though currently impossible, it is not difficult to imagine a distant future in which we can accomplish such a complex procedure. Premise two, however, misses some details that make the argument unsound. Parfit provides backing for premise two with a real-life example, namely a procedure named an anatomical hemispherectomy. This is a rare procedure in which a part of a hemisphere or a full hemisphere of the brain is removed to prevent seizures. So, it is plausible to imagine a case where a hemisphere of the brain is removed and the patient survives. By severing the corpus callosum, the two hemispheres can also be severed from one another so as to prevent communication between the two, perhaps suggesting that the

two hemispheres could be severed and placed into two separate bodies while remaining alive.

While the two hemispheres can be severed, however, the brainstem cannot be. Parfit himself admits this in *Reasons and Persons*, although he says that it is irrelevant to his discussion.[62] I would like to suggest that it is relevant. Any damage to the brainstem, never mind a complete severing of it, results in an extremely low likelihood of survival. The brainstem is responsible for keeping the body and the rest of the brain alive, so any damage to it leads to death or a vegetative state. It also does not have hemispheres like the rest of the brain; while other parts of the brain can make up for portions removed in a hemispherectomy, the same cannot be said for portions removed from the brainstem. It must remain whole to be functional. This means that it is not plausible to imagine a case where the brain is completely bisected and placed into two separate bodies with any rate of survival. So, Parfit's thought experiment would result in one or zero survivors depending on whether the hemispheres with or without the brainstem are split, respectively.

But let's say that we somehow *were* able to split the brainstem successfully without killing the brain. The brainstem is not symmetrical as the upper brain is, meaning even if the entire brain is severable, the two halves could not be exactly similar physically or in terms of functioning. This means that anatomically, there may in fact be reasons to privilege one half over the other in terms of which retains identity, especially given the brainstem's role in neurological signaling.[63] Also, the basis for this proposed thought experiment is that the hemispheres could be split and survive without any additional parts. The brainstem cannot be split while remaining alive independently,

[62] Parfit, *Reasons and Persons,* 255
[63] Hansen, et al. "Integrating Brainstem and Cortical Functional Architectures"

meaning that some sort of prosthetic would need to be attached to the half of the brainstem in order for it to remain functional. This goes against Parfit's reasoning for the thought experiment, as it is not plausible to imagine that the brain could be severed in this way without alteration.

I, however, wish to reject this as a plausible setup as a whole. Parfit dismisses the anatomical impossibility of dividing the brainstem because "It is merely technical."[64] He believes that it does not matter as an impossibility, as the more surprising phenomenon of a split consciousness has already happened in real life. I will address the split consciousness portion later, but I first wish to address the 'merely technical' argument. Particularly, I'd like to suggest that technical impossibilities ought to have philosophical implications. For one, the acceptance of a more surprising phenomenon should not make it so we must accept a less surprising one. It being true that clownfish can change sex from male to female does not entail that they can develop extra stripes, for one. Secondly, recall the earlier suggestion of identity's connection to neurological events originating from the lower brain, or the brainstem. Suppose personal identity is contained or is inseparably connected to the very thing that Parfit claims you can effectively destroy without anatomical consequence. In that case, he has left out the one thing that could explain the troubling results of the above scenario. Parfit frames this experiment in a way that suggests there must be a survivor; it is just a matter of whether both or one of the survivors share an identity with the original. Yet, the severing of the brainstem would result in no survivors. Parfit thus creates a false dilemma as he incorrectly rules out the option that there are no survivors. If the lower brain is connected to identity in this way, damaging it in a way that would kill the person and

[64] Parfit, *Reasons and Persons,* 255

thus their identity should not create complications for questions of identity. Of course the identity of the survivor, in Parfit's scenario, would be indeterminate if the part of the brain most connected to identity is destroyed. You cannot change a variable that must be held constant and expect plausible results.

In fact, Parfit's thought experiment strongly suggests that the lower brainstem *is* heavily connected to identity. The introduction of hemispherectomies to the discussion of identity is troubling to the brain theorist, as it goes against a relevant intuition that replaceable or removable parts of the body are not connected to identity. A liver transplant, intuitively to most, would not cause an identity crisis as we do not picture it to be necessary to our existence in the sense of our identity. A brain transplant, on the other hand, raises questions of who will wake up after the procedure. The possibility of a hemispherectomy of either half of the brain suggests that the upper brain may not be as integral to identity as some have thought.

I want to quickly distinguish between the types of survival here, as discussion of the replacement of vital organs may be confusing. The heart may be necessary for survival, for example, but this particular heart is not necessary for survival. We can plausibly infer, based on past procedures, that the heart can be replaced with identity remaining constant. However, the replacement of the brain seems more controversial in terms of whether the identity of the survivor is the same as before.

What I wish to suggest with hemispherectomies is that they potentially rule out the upper brain as being sufficient, or even necessary, for identity. The potential to remove most other parts of the body with identity survival thus leaves only one contender: the brainstem. Given that the brainstem is integral to life,[65] it must be

[65] It maintains breathing, heartbeat, etc

connected to our identity somehow; you can't have an identity without life, after all. I'd like to argue that this connection is a rather strong one. All activity in the brain is connected to and originates from the brainstem, so without the brainstem, there cannot be brain activity that supports higher-level brain functioning or consciousness.[66] Imagine the activity in the brain similar to the branches of a tree. You can picture the brainstem as the trunk and the branches are the networks of neural activity splaying into the higher brain. All of the branches remain connected to the trunk at all times, giving the tree a singular identity retained by this connection. The same, I will claim, is true for brain activity. The activity itself gives rise to our experiences: the event of brain activity is the event of experience. Because this activity is inseparably connected to the brainstem, point of view is as well. This provides reason to discredit Parfit's suggestion that a bisected brain could function in two separate bodies. As the brainstem must remain intact to function, there is no way to split the brain in a way that could result in two separate functioning beings in different bodies, as the thought experiment suggests.

C. Split Consciousness

Let us now return to the suggestion that the possibility of a split consciousness also creates trouble for personal identity. A split-brain procedure is when the corpus callosum, the neural network connecting the two hemispheres of the brain, is severed, nearly cutting off all communication between the two halves. This procedure is done in order to contain the electrical events that cause epileptic seizures to one hemisphere. In experiments run by Michael Gazzaniga, this operation seemingly caused two separate streams of consciousness, one in each side of the brain. Patients experienced conflicting

[66] By the definition of brain death; Hansen, et al. "Integrating Brainstem and Cortical Functional Architectures"

phenomena in parts of the body controlled by different hemispheres, a striking example being one arm of a patient attempting to pick out clothing while the other pushing the conscious picks away in favor of other fashion choices.[67]

Some take these results literally, claiming that two separate streams of consciousness are housed in the same body. I do not think this is correct. I, rather, am more inclined to take the stance that Tim Bayne supports in his article "The Unity of Consciousness and the Split-Brain Syndrome." Without explaining the data in depth, Baye presents evidence that there is partial integration of information of data between hemispheres and the streams of consciousness cannot be fully split. He thus endorses what he coins to be "the switch model" which entails a single stream of consciousness that switches back and forth between the two hemispheres depending on the task at hand. The explanation of behavioral disunity can be described through which brain centers the stream is operating within depending on the hemisphere it has primary access to (Bayne, 2008). In sum, this means that division would not result in two separate streams of consciousness, or active awareness by my view. While there could still be brain activity in a hemisphere not possessing the stream, it would not be activity that constituted a separate point of view. There being unconscious activity that is not within one's awareness is perfectly consistent with a singular point of view, even if the activity does not have further access to the part of the brain with neural activity resulting in active awareness.

[67] Wolman, "The split brain: A tale of two halves," 260–263

VI. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have established a theory of personal identity and personal ontology whose basis lies in point of view and the parts of the brain that produce the neural activity identical with it, respectively. I described how point of view is identical to the neurological events within the brain: the event of neural signalling directly correlates to the event of experiencing through a point of view. I claimed that our anticipation for survival is based on whether or not we have a continued point of view, meaning that identity, if implied by survival, must also be based on point of view. I compared and contrasted this theory with a similar theory posed by Jeff McMahan that focuses on the capacity for consciousness as the basis of identity. Specifically, I discussed how the use of the term 'consciousness' confuses the theory and how his apparent use of the term implies point of view. Consciousness and point of view are distinct, however, as point of view includes things that affect you even if they are not within your realm of awareness, like subliminal messaging, for one.

As a means of further explaining the physical components of the theory, I discussed Parfit's famous division thought experiment. This thought experiment describes the possibility of separating the two hemispheres of the brain and placing them into two separate bodies, effectively "dividing" a singular identity into two. The indeterminacy and absurdity of this thought experiment poses an issue for my theory if the part of the brain that produces point of view is not specified. Neurological events could hypothetically remain continuous through the division process and thus result in the same point of view in two separate bodies, which is impossible by the definition of point of view. To remedy this, I introduced the idea that the brainstem is at least partially responsible for the production of neurological events that are point of view.

Due to the brainstem's role in survival and its wiring being to transmit signals to the upper brain, it makes logical sense that it has some connection to the production of point of view. The brainstem is not symmetrical and cannot be divided without causing certain death, meaning that Parfit's thought experiment is not physically or hypothetically plausible. And if the brainstem *does* have this necessary connection to identity, then Parfit's thought experiment effectively disregards the one thing that could resolve its indeterminacy, making its implications for this theory obsolete.

To say it concisely, your identity lies in your point of view. Your point of view is identical to the neurological activity occurring within your brain, and this activity is produced by the brainstem. This means that identity is at least partially dependent on the brainstem and its activity.

Chapter III. Objections, Replies, and Further Considerations

I. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present potential objections to this theory and provide my response. Notably, I aim to refute the idea that point of view, as it is presented, acts as some sort of Cartesian ego. As this account is strongly driven by its intuitive aspects, I also anticipate many objections having to do with targeting its surprising features in an attempt to reduce it to absurdity. Point of view and how it operates may also be a point of contention, so I intend to clarify and defend why the view provides the best explanation of identity and how we perceive it.

II. Cartesian Ego

A. Initial Suggestions

The objections I anticipate being the most prevalent to this theory are those concerning a Cartesian ego or theater. The objection may go as follows: my description of neural activity giving rise to experience involves a part of the brain "observing" the other parts of the brain. The phenomenon of neurological activity in the brain shows different aspects of the brain (memories, thoughts, feelings, etc) to a centralized "you"- a Cartesian ego. Point of view, as I describe it, thus simply acts as an observer. But if this is the case, then the homunculus problem arises: we have created a new self inside the self and thus recreated the problem we are meant to explain. If we explain our point of view through something doing the observing in our heads, then we must also explain how that something can observe. If we explain that through another observer, we have the same problem for that observer, *ad infinitum*. If identity lies in this point of view

that rests on observation, we would thus have a point of view inside of a point of view *ad infinitum*.

I wish to push back on this by clarifying what I mean when I say that our experience of point of view is grounded in neurological events in the brain. For this theory to invoke a homunculus problem, there needs to be an observer within another observer. This observer needs to be the explanation as to how the original observer (in this case a person) is able to observe. Observation must be explained with more observation. This is, however, not what is suggested when I say that point of view acts as an observer. Because your identity lies in your point of view, you as an observer and your point of view as an observer are not separat; they are one and the same. The neurological activity within your brain[68] 'observes' because it illuminates the physical matter in your brain, causing awareness (in some cases). These neurological events *are* what we experience in our minds; our minds are not things over and above them. This means that there is only one observer within this theory, so you are not a Cartesian ego and your neurological signaling is not an observer separate from you.

B. Point of View Clarification

It may be helpful here to clarify how a point of view could compose a single identity. In accordance with Thomas Reid's intuitions of identity, I maintain that point of view is the "thing" that thinks, acts, and suffers. However, neurological activity in the brain is numerous and variable; we cannot rely on its sameness or consistency to maintain a singular identity. Concern regarding a Cartesian ego, by this account, relates to my suggestion that there is a centralized 'thing' that is your perspective when there

[68] Specifically the ones conducive to producing point of view.

are actually a multitude of 'events' that are supposedly acting as one. To rephrase, how could what I claim is point of view act as a point through which experience occurs when it is not composed of a singular thing? How could point of view, when defined as an event, function as a point?

I do not have much to say to remedy worries about this concept, other than that I think those concerned with it are taking the phrase "point of view" too literally. For it to constitute a singular perspective, point of view does not need to be something small within the brain. It does not need to be a *part* of the brain to function as a perspective. It is ok that neurological activity is not consistent or unchanging; so long as it originates from your brainstem, the experience (or lack thereof) the activity produced is within your point of view. The important part of the neurological activity, in terms of maintaining a singular point of view, is its origin and its continuity. Your point of view can encompass separate experiences (and non-experiences) that aren't necessarily neurologically connected with each other so long as the neurological activity producing said experiences comes from the brainstem. The continuity of this activity and its production maintains the singular identity; identity is not retained by a specific, singular neurological event.

Picture a single strand of neural activity. A little electric current[69] goes from the brainstem, through the thalamus, and into a region of the upper brain. Let us say that this strand goes through a region of the brain that stores a memory of you eating ice cream. Let us also say that the brain does not filter out the activation of this memory, meaning that it enters your awareness. *You* perceive this memory because this strand of neurological activity happened to possess the property of awareness. There is not a

[69] This is phrased for illustration purposes, I do not intend to make neuroscientific claims.

separate *you* perceiving it; your remembrance of eating ice cream is based solely in that strand of neural activity. This strand is a part of the whole of neurological activity from the brainstem, and this whole is point of view. What happens within this whole is thus (potentially) experienced through your point of view.

III. Intuitions and Thought Experiments

The second objection I can anticipate would arise from someone who does not share my intuitions on what constitutes survival in the thought experiments I have described in the previous chapters. Namely, they may disagree on whether survival occurs when everything but point of view is lost. The body/personality swap, in the previous chapter, is a good example of this; a swap that included both brain and personality would result in seemingly no difference in the swappers than how they started. If you are in this scenario, your brain would be swapped into another's body. You would exist in that person's body, but you would initially retain all of your psychological traits. The next part of the swap, however, would alter your brain to resemble the original brain of the body you have swapped into. This means that you would believe you were/have always been the person whose body you swapped into and that you would have all of their traits. The only difference between pre and post-swap would be that your point of view would remain continuous with your original body. So, the point of view the two swappers began with would swap even though the psychological features of the two swappers would match the bodies they end up in. This isolates point of view, and its physical embodiment, from all other candidates for identity.

In the previous chapter, I conclude that your identities nevertheless swap despite both swappers believing that they have not swapped. This may seem counterintuitive to some, and I do not deny that it is a surprising claim to say that you can be mistaken in who you believe you are. It also may be the case that the results of this swap would not seem sufficient for survival if you were one of the swappers. Intuitively to some, the complete loss of memory, personality, and your body would equate to death, even if point of view somehow continues on. A swap like this may involve so much change that one could not possibly identify the initial identities with the end products. In this case, my conclusions from the thought experiments may mean little, as those who do not share the same intuitions would simply not agree with my claim. Let us call these people critics, for the sake of ease.

To respond, I'd like to emphasize the difference between identity on a superficial level and identity on a metaphysical level. The former involves personality and appearance. Exclamations such as "She's a completely different person now!" and "Wow, it's like I can't even recognize you." are expressions having to do with superficial identity. Someone's personality can completely change over the years so there is very little, if any, similarity in personality from one point in time to another. The same person could dye their hair, get plastic surgery, get a spray tan, and look completely distinct from what they once looked like. These changes relate to identity superficially; you can change your perceived identity in every way and yet still remain the same person metaphysically through said changes. There is still a singular 'you' existing between changes in supposed identity, as there could not be change without a singular object to persist through the change. This is what I mean by identity on a metaphysical level: what constitutes the 'you' that can persist through changes so drastic?

This is why I am inclined to reject intuitions that say the proposed scenario above does not result in survival. For when one believes that a complete personality and appearance change causes identity to be lost, I cannot imagine how they would be referring to metaphysical identity. It seems as if those who believe this type of change would result in identity loss would also believe that a small child and an elder would not retain the same identity. Most people do not remember anything from infancy, and any personality traits a baby possesses are ill-developed. As that baby gets older, they are less and less likely to remember their old self or possess any of the same personality traits they did as a baby. That, and physical characteristics from infancy are almost entirely lost. How could the critic who believes that the case above results in loss of identity maintain that these are the same people?

Maybe they would maintain that it is bodily continuity that preserves identity in this case but not the former. But in this case, I'd like to remind the reader that the cells in the body completely switch out every seven years or so. Neurons last longer, but the case above preserves the brain of the original identity, meaning that there is no relevant distinction here either. So it seems as if the only difference between these two cases is the speed at which change occurs: the former instantaneously and the latter over the course of eighty or so years. Even so, we can imagine a case where someone gets into a severe car crash, giving them irreparable damage to the brain resulting in complete amnesia and personality change. Compare the car crash victim to themselves seven years prior. If we take the time it takes for all of the cells to switch out at face value and say that it takes seven years exactly, this means that the victim underwent the same amount of change as the infant did in the eighty years it took for them to become an elder in only seven years.

This is meant to demonstrate that metaphysical change in identity ought not to be dependent on time alone. If the changes occurring in the swap case, the baby case, and the car crash case all involve complete physical and mental change, this means that the only differences between the cases are the time it took for the changes to occur and the manner in which they occurred. The manner in which they occurred does not appear to be significant, as we can imagine the same three processes with only partial change. So it seems like the relevant factor in these cases is the amount of time each change took. If the critic wants to claim that the amount of time it took for the complete change to occur is what makes identity preserved in the baby case and not the swap case, they would need to draw the line of when is enough time for identity to be preserved. There does not seem to be some metaphysical fact about the world that designates a certain span of time as sufficient for identity preservation, so I am not inclined to accept this as a plausible explanation for the conclusions in the above cases. For me to consider the critic's case as a troubling objection to my theory, they would need to spell out when and how identity is or isn't lost through changes such as these.

IV. Why not a Mental Theory?

But if our perception of point of view is so important, why bother with the physical stuff at all? Even if it means we have to reduce point of view to our experience of it, wouldn't that retain the same intuitions motivating the theory? This objection pushes the idea that point of view *feels* like a mental phenomenon, so it should constitute a mental theory and not a physical one. Though I have hinted at the downsides to this in previous chapters, I will lay out a few more in depth here.

Firstly, ridding point of view from its physical components eliminates the possibility of continuity. We are not always experiencing through our point of view, meaning we cannot rely on the mental phenomena of experience to retain identity over time. Without neurological activity to ground experience, it cannot remain continuous in any capacity. This may not initially appear to be an issue, as the sameness of the perspective through which we experience would still allow for re-identification. However, the results of thought experiments like the ones discussed in the previous chapters become troublesome and indeterminate when continuity and the loss of physical components are removed from the equation.

Take Williams's body-swap thought experiment, for example. Once the mental features of a person are "extracted" and put into a different body, the lack of necessary continuity and physical components means that the different body could be identified as the person whose mental features were extracted. This is a different result than the above physical theory would suggest, and one I do not find intuitive or likely to be correct. For one, this result falls prey to the potential for identity duplication due to the nature of replicating mental states. If continuity isn't necessary and we identify point of view as something separate and removable from the physical brain, that means that you could hypothetically replicate the same point of view in as many people as desired. By the definition of point of view, this is impossible.

The lack of continuity in the above case also makes it impossible to be sure whether point of view was swapped. Whereas with other mental phenomena such as memory and personality you can tell from an outside perspective whether a swap has occurred, point of view is externally undetectable when detached from its physical components. Earlier, I emphasized epistemology's lack of importance when it comes to

the theory presented, both internally and externally. However, this is not to say that identity ought not to be detectable through biological means. If my physical account of identity is correct, this means that a neuroscientist could hypothetically (given the right technology) detect the sameness of identity through the continuity of its neurological events. In the body swap scenario, we can tell that a genuine swap has occurred because the neurological events remain continuous throughout the swap, allowing the point of view to be identifiable as the same. Without continuity or a brain that point of view is attached to, there is no way to tell whether a genuine swap has occurred. This increases the likelihood of indeterminate cases in thought experiments such as these, which I believe to be a significant disadvantage.

Lack of continuity also causes a bit of an ontological nightmare. If identity is housed in experience of point of view as a phenomenon and not point of view itself, then the identity of that person only exists when point of view is instantiated. This means that said identity would go in and out of existence somewhat often (during dreamless sleep, anesthesia, etc). It seems surprising that I could go in and out of existence thousands of times throughout my lifetime, and I would be hesitant to accept a theory that posited that existence was so fragile. Given that the alternative physical theory eliminates this issue, it does not seem plausible to reject the physical theory in favor of a mental theory with more consequences.

Somewhat predictably, reducing point of view to our experience of it makes it nearly impossible to characterize identity with point of view at all. As stated in Chapter II, experience is impersonal. There is nothing about experience itself that makes it *your* experience. It is only when point of view is brought into the equation that we can identify events as being experienced through our perspective. Without a physical

component dictating what point of view is, there are two possibilities: we say that identity is a culmination of experiences, or we posit a different way to characterize point of view. To begin with the former, I will not indulge the thought that pure experience constitutes identity more than I already have. To do so would result in a fragile, indeterminate, and at times contradictory account of identity that loses all intuitive aspects of the original theory. In terms of the latter, I maintain that any sort of psychological account of point of view results in the Cartesian ego described above. A non-physical 'thing' that observes the brain is about as close to the definition of a Cartesian ego you can get without stating the definition itself. I encourage anyone persuaded by a psychological account of point of view to describe how it works and how it would be better than a physical account.

V. Suggestions for Further Research

I will now briefly name and describe a few topics related to this theory that would be worth further exploration. I am particularly interested in topics that seem to emerge as a consequence of theories of identity as well as ones relating to the inner workings of physical perspectivism itself.

The first issue that emerges from the nature of the theory is free will. As I describe identity in terms of neurological activity, physical perspectivism does not entail that free will is necessarily a part of your identity. To say that you, as an identity, has free will would be to assert that neural activity, or the brain stem, is able to direct itself to the parts of the brain that correspond to things you 'will' yourself to do. If I make a decision by my own free will, it would mean that my point of view has somehow directed itself to the prefrontal cortex and activated the part of it corresponding to said decision.

It seems more plausible to say that the prefrontal cortex, in responding to stimuli, directed your point of view to the respective decision rather than the other way around. What we consider to be 'will' is actually just a domino effect of stimuli and brain states that you simply experience. I do not commit myself to this view, but I do think that it is interesting to consider both when defining identity and considering what free will truly means.

The second topic is one I touched on briefly in my initial description of Locke's memory theory. Identity relates to moral responsibility in that when we hold someone morally responsible for something, we to attribute responsibility to that identity. This is no revelation, but what I am interested in exploring is how closely moral responsibility and identity are connected and what other phenomena are involved. My description of passivity, particularly, seems to complicate matters when holding an identity morally responsible, as how can we blame someone for something not done by their own volition. Free will, as always, also complicates matters, and I am curious to see how the above point interacts with discussions about moral responsibility.

As with many metaphysical theories, I am curious to see how neurological developments affirm or deny the presented theory, particularly how I describe point of view. I am not sure how this would be empirically verifiable both on the end of the neuroscientist and the test subject themself, but new developments in the field may very well serve to challenge the view as I presented it. I am also interested in the emergence of mental states from neural activity operating within the matter of the brain. While this would not necessarily pose an issue for physical perspectivism (unless, of course, everything we know about neural activity proves to be wrong), it would still be

interesting to see what the learned material suggests about point of view and how it works within the mind.

VI. Conclusion

In the previous chapters, I have presented and described a theory of identity that I name physical perspectivism. I first analyzed three theories of identity posed by John Locke, Bernard Williams, and Judith Jarvis Thomson. Locke's memory theory resulted in numerous contradictions and strange consequences, leading to its rejection. The thought experiment posed by Williams aimed to demonstrate how bodily considerations cannot be omitted from theories of personal identity. I agreed with his analysis, but argued that his explanation did not go far enough in its explanation of the thought experiment's results. While he posits a holistic bodily account of identity to explain our anticipation of survival, I argue that our anticipation of survival rests in the continuation of our point of view. Thomson also argues for a bodily account of identity, claiming that the indeterminacies of a holistic bodily account are acceptable given the indeterminacies of its psychological counterpart. I argue that focusing on the continuity of events, namely neurological activity, rather than the matter of the body resolves these indeterminacies, making Thomson's suggestions less appealing.

In Chapter II, I presented a detailed account of physical perspectivism. Physical perspectivism is an account of personal identity that names point of view as the indicator of personhood. Point of view is identical to neurological activity within the brain, meaning that it includes both conscious and unconscious mental phenomena. The continuity of this point of view is what accounts for the sameness of identity over time. I claimed that this theory accounts for numerous intuitions regarding identity, specifically

our anticipation of survival and our perceived separation from our mental states. I then discussed Derek Parfit's famous division case and the potential issues it poses for physical perspectivism. I argued that his description of division conveniently leaves out the technical impossibility of dividing the brainstem, making both the setup and results of the experiment implausible. Given the role of the brainstem in neural activity and life itself, it is unreasonable to effectively destroy it and expect survival, never mind the continuity of identity. I claimed that this suggests that the brainstem is necessary for identity, meaning that Parfit's thought experiment could not apply to physical perspectivism with any meaningful result.

Chapter III puts forward and refutes three potential objections to physical perspectivism: the idea that it posits a Cartesian ego, the idea that it is unintuitive, and the proposition that a mental account of point of view would be better. In terms of a Cartesian ego, I clarified the definition of point of view and described how it does not posit a separate observer. As your point of view is identical to you, it 'observing' parts of the brain through neural activity is not an observer that is separate from you. My response to an intuition objection is relatively straightforward; I believe that those who believe in different criteria for personhood likely have a different definition of identity than I employ. This isn't necessarily a problem for physical perspectivism in particular, but rather a potential issue for any theory that does not share its audience's intuitions. Defining point of view in terms of psychology strips physical perspectivism of nearly all of its merits, namely continuity, prevention of duplication/division, and personhood's distiction from other mental states. I argued that point of view thus could not be reduced to a mental phenomenon.

I look forward to further exploring the implications of physical perspectivism and seeing how it interacts with adjacent philosophical theories. Given its neurological basis, I also look forward to seeing how physical perspectivism fits into scientific developments and evolutions of our understanding of neural phenomena. I believe that as it stands, physical perspectivism presents a promising notion of personal identity that is worth further exploration.

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