Non-Branching Clauses

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Suppose, following Parfit, that $R$ is the relation of temporally ordered psychological continuity.

That enables the boy to be $R$-related to the general in

**The Brave Officer**

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{boy} & \rightarrow & \text{officer} & \leftarrow & \text{general} \\
\text{\,} & \rightarrow & \rightarrow & \rightarrow & \\
\text{\textit{t}_1} & \rightarrow & \text{\textit{t}_2} & \rightarrow & \text{\textit{t}_3} \\
\end{array}
\]

But it does allow the officer to be $R$-related to the general in

**The Senile General**

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{boy} & \rightarrow & \text{officer} & \rightarrow & \text{general} \\
\text{\textit{t}_1} & \rightarrow & \text{\textit{t}_2} & \rightarrow & \text{\textit{t}_3} \\
\end{array}
\]
Because identity is a one-one relation and $R$ can hold from one to many, we cannot accept the straight-forward view that

A person $P_1$ who exists at $t_1$ is identical with a person $P_2$ who exists at $t_2$ if and only if $P_2$ is at $t_2$ is $R$-related to $P_1$ at $t_1$.

In My Division, Lefty is not identical to Righty, yet both Lefty and Righty is $R$-related to Parfit.

*My Division*
Parfit (1984, p. 267) suggests that

A future person will be me if he will be $R$-related to me as I am now, and no different person will be $R$-related to me.

In terms of perdurance, this proposal can be stated as follows:

$xIy$ if and only if $xRy$, and there is no person-stage $z$ such that either (i) $xRz$ and not $yIz$ or (ii) $yRz$ and not $xIz$.

Problem: This approach seems circular, because it analyses the $I$-relation in terms of the $I$-relation.
Parfit (1971, p. 13), however, has another proposal:

*The criterion might be sketched as follows. “X and Y are the same person if they are psychologically continuous and there is no person who is contemporary with either and psychologically continuous with the other.”*

In terms of perdurance, this proposal can be stated as follows:

\[
\text{Parfit 1971} \\
x \equiv y \text{ if and only if } xRy, \text{ and there is no stage } z \text{ such that either (i) } xRz, y \text{ is simultaneous with } z, \text{ and } y \neq z, \text{ or (ii) } yRz, x \text{ is simultaneous with } z, \text{ and } x \neq z.
\]
Parfit 1971

$x I y$ if and only if $x R y$, and there is no stage $z$ such that either

(i) $x R z$, $y$ is simultaneous with $z$, and $y \neq z$, or
(ii) $y R z$, $x$ is simultaneous with $z$, and $x \neq z$.

This yields the right results in the previous cases.

Lefty and Old Lefty are $I$-related, and Righty and Old Righty are $I$-related. No other person-stages are $I$-related.
Parfit 1971
\( x I y \) if and only if \( x R y \), and there is no stage \( z \) such that either

(i) \( x R z \), \( y \) is simultaneous with \( z \), and \( y \neq z \), or (ii) \( y R z \), \( x \) is simultaneous with \( z \), and \( x \neq z \).

But the proposal does less well in a slight variation of the case.

Problem: Parfit is \( I \)-related to Old Lefty, Old Lefty is \( I \)-related to Lefty, but Parfit is not \( I \)-related to Lefty.
Temporally unordered psychological continuity

The Senile General

To get that officer is I-related to the general, we might want $R$ to not be temporally ordered.

One might object that psychological connectedness does not just hold when there is a direct memory connection; it also holds when a belief or a desire continues to be had. But the problem is that, in My Division, Lefty and Righty also share a lot of beliefs and desires.
Anthony Brueckner (2005, p. 298) suggests:

*Brueckner (4)*

\[ x I y \] if and only if \[ x R y \], and there is no stage \( z \) such that either (i) \( x R z \) and \( \neg (y R z) \) or (ii) \( y R z \) and \( \neg (x R z) \).

But this yields the wrong result in

*My Division*

Since Parfit, Lefty, and Righty are all \( R \)-related (unordered), they are all \( I \)-related on this proposal.
Brueckner (2005, p. 298) then considers another proposal:

*Brueckner (5)*

\( x I y \) if and only if \( x R y \), and there is no stage \( z \) such that either (i) \( x R z, y \) is simultaneous with \( z \), and \( y \neq z \), or (ii) \( y R z, x \) is simultaneous with \( z \), and \( x \neq z \).

This yields the right result in

*My Division*

![Diagram](image)

We get that none of Parfit, Lefty, and Righty is \( I \)-related to each other.
Circularity?

*Brueckner (5)*

\( x I y \) if and only if \( x R y \), and there is no stage \( z \) such that either

(i) \( x R z \), \( y \) is simultaneous with \( z \), and \( y \neq z \), or

(ii) \( y R z \), \( x \) is simultaneous with \( z \), and \( x \neq z \).

Brueckner (2005, pp. 298–299) objects, however, that this proposal is circular: How do we know, for example, whether Lefty and Righty are different person-stages?

That seems to depend on whether Lefty and Righty are \( I \)-related.

Harold Noonan (2006, p. 166) replies:

*Since Brueckner is working within Lewis’s framework we can take over Lewis’s notion of a person stage: a short-lived physical object which comes into existence abruptly, ceases to exist abruptly and does many of the things a person does: it walks and talks and thinks, it has beliefs and desires, it has a size and shape and location*
Brueckner (5)
$x I y$ if and only if $x R y$, and there is no stage $z$ such that either
(i) $x R z$, $y$ is simultaneous with $z$, and $y \neq z$, or (ii) $y R z$, $x$ is
simultaneous with $z$, and $x \neq z$.

Yet this proposal still yields counter-intuitive results. Consider a
fission case where Lefty lives longer than Righty:

Here, we have that Parfit and Old Lefty are $I$-related yet neither
Parfit nor Old Lefty is $I$-related to Lefty or to Righty.
A further problem in the search for an adequate non-branching clause is that it sometimes hard to have a clear intuition about which person-stages are part of the same branch.

Does the branching occur before or after $t_2$?
So far, we have only considered non-branching clauses in psychological-continuity account of personal identity. If, however, personal identity is not what matters in survival, perhaps we should not be worried about this problem.

Is there a need for a non-branching clause in a psychological-continuity account of what matters? It might seem obvious that it is not needed. The relation that matters in survival need not be a one-one relation.

\[ \text{My Division} \]

\[ t_1 \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Parfit} \quad \leftarrow \quad \text{Lefty} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Righty} \quad \rightarrow \quad t_2 \]

\[ \text{The Senile General} \]

\[ t_1 \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{boy} \quad \leftarrow \quad \text{general} \quad \rightarrow \quad t_2 \quad \rightarrow \quad t_3 \]
The greater-success argument

In his discussion of My Division, Parfit (1971, p. 5) gives the following argument:

*I could survive if half my brain were successfully transplanted and the other half were destroyed. But if this is so, how could I not survive if the other half were also successfully transplanted? How could a double success be a failure?*

This suggest the following argument:

If $x$ and $y$ are related by what matters in survival and $u$ and $v$ are related by the same type of relations in the same pattern and also by some more relations of this type, then $u$ and $v$ are related by what matters in survival.
The Senile General

Intuitively, the officer and the general are related by what matters.

My Long Division

Intuitively, Lefty and Old Righty are not related by what matters.
So we have a choice between

biting the bullet in My Division and My Long Division,
biting the bullet in The Senile General,
adding a non-branching clause to the account of what matters in survival and be susceptible to the greater-success argument, or

giving up the psychological-continuity approach.
References


