



Identity & Literature (Summer 2013)

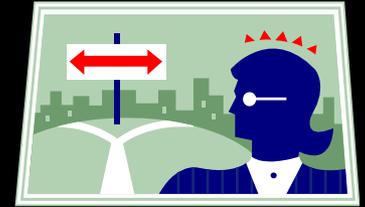
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PROBLEM OF FISSION

Fission

- *Possibility of someone being psychologically continuous with multiple persons in the past or future—simultaneously*
- *Challenge case (from Olson):*
 - *Split brain hemispheres, put each half into a “vacant” body*
 - *Lefty and Righty eat at separate times, end up having different experiences*
 - *If I am both Lefty and Righty, then at time t_1 I am in two places at once, perhaps having contradictory desires.*

One Solution: Multiple-Occupancy



- *If fission is possible, then there is no singular unified person at any point*
- *Before the operation, I am Lefty and Righty. We just don't notice it because they have the same physical location, present as one self.*
- *I appear to myself and to others as one person, until my multiple selves are revealed.*
- *What is problematic about this solution?*

Another Solution: No-Branching

- *“you are identical with a past or future being only if she is then psychologically continuous with you and no other being is” (Olson)*
- *Before experiment: One person*
- *After the experiment: Two persons who are not identical to the original*
 - *Lefty and Righty are newly created persons*



No-Branching View



- *Consequence: Fission is death.*
 - *Even if the brain is wholly preserved in different bodies.*
 - *But if the scientist only destroys your left hemisphere, you're still you...*
 - *And if the scientist duplicates your brain, so someone else could claim to be psychologically continuous with "you," YOU no longer exist.*
- *What is problematic about this solution?*
 - *How would this shape our preferences, faced with certain technologies?*

Reject Psych. Continuity?

- *The problem of fission might give us compelling reasons to reject psychological continuity as evidence of personal identity.*
- *Are there other ways to resolve this issue?*
 - *Are you inclined to reject this view, given this dilemma?*
- *Does surviving as me really matter? Or does having someone who is psych. cont. matter more?*

Unger's Wrench

- *Challenge: Am I really concerned about surviving as me in fission cases?*
- *“the focus of my life is a precondition for certain things that I value” (185)*
 - *When I fission, the forward-looking basis of value gets weakened*
 - *(Unless the fission descendents are discounted because they do not have lives that are significant to me)*
- *What matters most to me is having a focused life*
 - *So yes, I have special concern about surviving as me*
 - *Fission might not result in death, but it does lessen the significance of my life.*



Questions? Comments?

