

# “Personal Identity” by Derek Parfit

## Concepts

- Personal identity: what lets us say whether two people (perhaps at different points in time) are the *same* person
- Q-remembering: remembering an experience, but without the connotation that *you* had the experience (15)
- **Psychological connectedness**: when two people share “direct psychological relations”, such as one q-remembering the other’s experiences (20)
  - *Past/future selves*: people you are psychologically connected to (22)
- **Psychological continuity**: when there is a direct or indirect chain of psychological connectedness between two people (20)
  - *Ancestral/descendant selves*: people you are psychologically continuous with (21-22)

## Key Claims

- Sometimes, questions about personal identity have no answer. (3)
- Whether a person survives an event does not depend on whether the same person exists after the event. Rather, it depends on whether continuous or connected people exist after the event. (21)
- Since psychological connectedness is a matter of degree rather than a yes-no question, so is survival. (21)

## Implications

- “[T]he principle of self-interest has no strength of its own.” (27)
- We have less reason to feel “[e]goism, the fear ... of distant death, [and] the regret that so much of one’s *only* life should have gone by....” (27)

## Thought Experiments

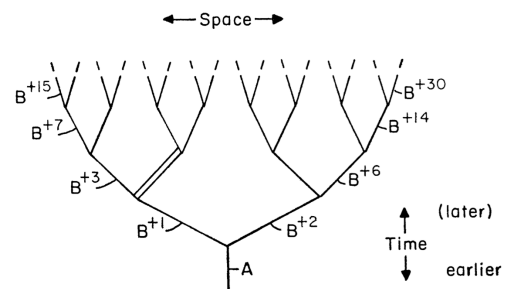
### 1. Wiggins’s Case (5-6)

- Your brain is divided
- Each hemisphere is put in a different body
- “Both resulting people have my character and apparent memories of my life.” (5)

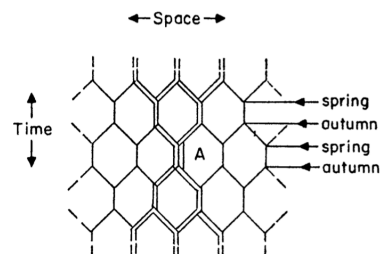
### 2. Math Exam (6-7)

- Your brain is *temporarily* divided
- After working on a problem in two different ways for a while, your hemispheres reunite

### 3. Dividing Beings (19-22)



### 4. Fusing-and-Dividing Beings (22-23)



### 5. Everlasting Beings (23-24)

