

“Personhood and Personal Identity” by Marya Schechtman

A. Parfit and others want to define personal identity in terms of **psychological connections**.

For example, to answer the question: “Is Y the same person as X?”, one thing Parfit would want to know is: “How many quasi-memories of X’s life does Y have?”

B. They must use connections that can be defined without reference to personal identity, otherwise the definitions would be **circular** and unhelpful.

He cannot ask “How many memories of X’s life does Y have?”, because a memory, by definition, must be from one’s own life (p. 42), so you could not answer this unless you already knew whether Y was the same person as X. (see p. 38)

C. One type of connection is called a “quasi-memory”.

Schechtman’s goal: prove (A) is the wrong approach, by showing that (B) is impossible because “**presuppositions about who has a psychological state ... are necessary to defining those states as well**” (p. 48)...

To do this, she looks at (C) in detail. She argues that quasi-memories are problematic and that the problems would affect any other type of connection trying to satisfy (B). (p. 37, 49)

When you seem to remember something, that **apparent memory** may be categorized as follows (pp. 42-43):

Do you believe it’s your own experience?	Is it actually your own experience?	Then it’s called a...
Yes	Yes	memory
Yes	No	delusion
You hold no belief either way	Yes or no	quasi-memory

CORE QUESTION
In principle, could a memory be copied from one person to another as a quasi-memory, without losing part of what makes it relevant to personal identity, or becoming a delusion?

A quasi-memory copy of this memory is implanted in JANE. (p. 46)

CASEY remembers seeing a movie with his family. (p. 45)

The memory includes many feelings and details which make sense only in the context of his life and relationships.

What does this feel like for her? Two possibilities

So, What Instead?

Schechtman suggests abandoning the psychological criterion of personal identity in favor of two approaches:

- When viewing people as *objects*, use a *bodily criterion* (p. 50)
- When viewing people as *subjects* and moral agents, “take persons ... to be **constituted by their own self-conceptions**” (p. 53)

1. She has his *sensory impressions only*, but not the context or emotions (p. 47)
 - Problem: This is too different from Casey’s experience. If this is what quasi-memories are, they can’t function as a ground for personal identity.
2. She feels *all the details* replicated perfectly (pp. 47-48)
 - Problem: either:
 - i. She’ll notice that details like remembering a spouse don’t fit with her own life. Then she’ll feel things Casey didn’t, which again undermines the goal of using quasi-memories as a ground of personal identity.
 - ii. Her awareness of the incongruities is suppressed. Then the quasi-memory becomes a delusion.