

Analysis on Spatiotemporal and Psychological continuity

There have been many discussions about personal identity and how we define it. The discussion about personal identity arises when we think of the question of what makes a person the same person over time. We can analyse this question with the teleportation case of Derek Parfit (Parfit, 1984, p.199). The case follows a guy trying to teletransport to Mars. Derek (the guy) scans his whole body and sends the signals of his molecules to Mars where the regenerator generates the exact same copy of him cell by cell. His body on Earth is completely disintegrated by the scanner. Does he survive? When the guy teletransports, is the copy of him identical to him personally? We will be analysing the two possibilities proposed for explanation of personal identity and its existence: spatiotemporal continuity and psychological continuity. My argument is that psychological continuity has more convincing account for personal identity than spatiotemporal continuity.

The spatiotemporal continuity is the idea that you are the same person because your body continues through space and time. If an inanimate object such as car moves from place A to place B, we know that the car that arrived at place B is the same car as the car that started from place A because we saw it move continuously. If a person is teletransported to Mars and personal identity is defined by spatiotemporal continuity, the person would not survive because his body is completely disintegrated. What if you broke your favourite mug and someone creates the exact same mug atom for atom. Is the new mug the same mug or just a new mug that looks identical to your favorite mug? This shows that spatiotemporal continuity gives counterintuitive results – what really matters is the psychological continuity.

The psychological continuity is the idea that you are the same person because of continuous beliefs, memories and mental states. A past person is numerically identical to the present or future person, if any, who has that past person's memories, character traits and so on. It means that a person's identity is defined by their memories, beliefs and mental states. In the case of the teleportation, even if Derek got disintegrated on Earth, if he has the same memories and knows everything about the Derek that was on Earth, the person on Mars is the same Derek. The Derek on Mars still remembers his wife, what he had for breakfast and so on. His perception and personality are still the same. The cells in body regenerate all the time, everything gradually changes about us. What matters is the continuity of consciousness and memory, not the specific atoms.

There are a few reasons as to why I argue that psychological continuity is more convincing than spatiotemporal continuity. One of the reasons is that human bodies constantly replace cells. You have entirely different atoms every 7-10 years. Whenever your body regenerates, you do not say that you have died and was born as a new person. Identity is not linked to physical change so why should rapid physical change matter? The fact that we have continuous consciousness and beliefs are more important than that. The second reason is what makes you "you" is psychological features. Psychological features would include your memories, personality, beliefs, goals and relationships. Derek on Mars had psychological continuity with the Derek on earth because he still remembered his wife and the breakfast that he ate that morning. He even remembered that in the morning he accidentally cut his upper lip. Therefore, he is mentally still Derek but just in a new body. The third reason would be that even if you teleport, if you do not feel any change yourself and nobody can tell the difference, then your identity has been preserved. Imagine you are Derek that just woke up on Mars. You remember everything and you feel like yourself. From your own perspective, you have not changed, and your wife recognizes you. If it

does not matter from the first-person perspective or those who know you, then identity has been preserved.

People may object saying that the original Derek died, his body disintegrated and the person on Mars is just a copy. However, this does not mean that he died exactly because death means the end of consciousness and psychological life. But Derek on Mars's consciousness continues seamlessly from Derek on Earth's. He only lost consciousness for a brief moment. The psychological stream was not broken and only the physical substrate changed.

The teleportation case reveals that psychological continuity, not spatiotemporal continuity, provides the better account of personal identity. As I have argued, what makes Derek the same person is the continuity of his memories, consciousness, and psychological life, not the continuation of the same physical matter. This conclusion matters because it shows that personal identity depends on the preservation of our mental lives rather than our bodies – a finding that has implications for how we understand survival, death, and what fundamentally makes us who we are.

References

Parfit, D. (1984). *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford University Press.

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