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Identity? Metaphysical Approach



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A Few Remarks About Personal Identity

In this text, I would like to examine just a few claims about personal identity concerning psychological criterion of personal identity. Such a view is classified as a Neo-Lockean view of personal identity and the most famous advocates of such a view are Sydney Shoemaker and Derek Parfit. They proposed a view which takes psychological criterion as a criterion of personal identity and it is a reductionist view. Parfit's view is a reductionist view because Parfit thinks that persons are just brains and bodies and their functioning.¹

Parfit (1984), in a thorough analysis of the implications of such a criterion and its ingredients through a certain number of imaginary cases or thought experiments, concludes that the answers on questions about personal identity can be indeterminate and that personal identity is, surprisingly, not what matters. What matters most, according to Parfit, is psychological continuity/connectedness.

Parfit (1984, p. 215) says that „What matters is relation R: psychological connectedness and/or continuity with the right kind of cause“; and he adds that „the right kind of cause can be any cause.“

In the first part, I will present some of the most important definitions, arguments and examples which are advanced by Parfit (1984) in his book *Reasons and Persons*, part III, concerning psychological continuity which contributes to the psychological criterion. It will be done in a condensed form because I assume some familiarity with this material so it is not necessary to expose every detail. In the second part I shall try to show that certain claims Parfit develop are not at all sound. Parfit tries to show that psychological continuity is preserved and is that what matters in cases of teletransportation and replication. I would like to show that, in the cases of teletransportation and replication, psychological continuity *is not at all preserved*.

So, let us see what is important and in what consists Parfit's Neo-Lockean view about the question of personal identity. It uses some (basic) psychological notions like memory, intention, belief, experience, their relations, and their continuity, for

¹ I do not think that persons are just brains and bodies but in this text I take it for granted, just for the sake of ongoing debate and to show that even if we accept reductionism, we shall see that psychological continuity is not retained.