

18. Reid 1785, Against the memory criterion

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Recall that we are looking for a criterion of *strict identity* between persons across time. Locke endorses:

Memory criterion: Person A at t_1 is person B at t_2 iff B at t_2 remembers A 's actions and experiences at t_1 .

Reid's first objection: This is circular!

You can only *remember* things that happened to *you*; so to say that you remember A 's actions and experiences is to presuppose that you *are* A .

The fix? Say that you *quasi-remember* doing X iff you *seem* to remember doing X , i.e. you are in a mental state that is intrinsically just like the one that you would be in if you had done X and remembered it.

Quasi-memory criterion: Person A at t_1 is person B at t_2 iff B at t_2 *quasi-remembers* A 's actions and experiences at t_1 .

Reid's second objection: This isn't strict identity!

A *relation* R is a condition that can either hold between two entities, or not: either x bears R to y , or x doesn't bear R to y .

A relation R is *transitive* if: whenever x bears R to y and y bears R to z , then x bears R to z .

A transitive relation: 'taller than'. If x is taller than y and y is taller than z , then x is taller than z .

A *non-transitive* relation: 'sees'. If x sees y and y sees z , it doesn't necessarily follow that x sees z .

Reid: strict identity must be a transitive relation.

If x is identical to y , that means that x and y share all the same properties. So if y is identical to z , then x must have this property too! It must also be identical to z .

But the quasi-memory criterion makes personal identity *non-transitive*.
→ Boy who stole apples; officer who captured an enemy standard in battle; general who gets an award.

The fix? We can *make* a transitive relation out of a non-transitive one.

Say that A at t_1 is *memory-connected* to B at t_2 iff B at t_2 quasi-remembers being A and t_1 .

Say that A at t_1 is *memory-continuous* with B at t_2 iff A at t_1 is memory-connected to someone who is memory-connected to someone who is... (etc.) who is memory-connected to B at t_2 .

Remember why we care...

E.g. psych experiments that produce false 'memories' of being lost at the mall. You might *seem* to remember it; but if it didn't happen, you don't actually remember it.

? 'I remember being lost at the mall, but I've never been lost at the mall'

If Clark Kent is Superman, and Superman is that dude in the phone booth, then Clark Kent is that dude in the phone booth.

If $7 + 5 = 12$ and $12 = 3 \times 4$, then $7 + 5 = 3 \times 4$.

The general remembers capturing the standard; the officer remembers stealing the apples; but the general doesn't remember stealing the apples.

The boy is memory-continuous with the general, since the boy is memory-connected to the officer who is memory-connected to the general.

More generally, we can make any psychological criterion transitive in this way:

A at t_1 is psychologically connected to B at t_2 iff A and B share many desires, beliefs, (quasi-)memories, and other mental states, and A's mental states cause B's mental states.

A at t_1 is psychologically continuous with B at t_2 iff A at t_1 is psychologically-connected to someone who's psychologically-connected to someone who's... (etc.) who's psychologically connected to B at t_2 .

The psychological criterion: Person A at t_1 is person B at t_2 iff A at t_1 is psychologically continuous with B at t_2 .