The Importance of Being Identical (?)

Relativism, Reason, and Reality
Spring 2005

"What matters" in survival is the aspect of it we intrinsically care about

Hypothesis: "He" preserves what matters in my survival iff it makes sense for me to look forward to that life *in a first-personal way*: apprehension about bad parts, anticipation about good parts

I don't dread (except in a vicarious way) my kids' pain after I am gone. I do dread my own pain. So is what matters just the surviving itself?

The startling claim

Whether you survive some event is of *derivative* importance only: survival (even survival with health and wealth) may be valuable as a means, but not as an end in itself.

Analogy

Having (biological) eyes is only of derivative importance. It is valuable only as a means to the valuable end of seeing. Seeing is of intrinsic value (perhaps), but having (biological) eyes has only instrumental value. Nothing of value would be lost if one's biological eyes were replaced by good enough artificial ones.

Stage One

1. A person can survive radical hemispherectomy -- the loss of half of the brain.
2. <u>A person can survive a body transplant.</u>
3. A person can survive hemispherectomy followed by a body transplant.

Stage Two

Imagine your brain is divided and placed
into separate receptive and debrained bodies
A and B. Let "Lefty" be the A-body person
and "Righty" be the B-body person.

Stage Three

4. There are four possibilities: (a) you do not survive; (b) you survive as Lefty; (c) you survive as Righty; (d) you survive as both. The non-branching clause tells us that (a) is correct.

5. If you were to bribe the nurse to drop the right hemisphere, or put it in the next day, then by 3., you would survive as Lefty.

Stage Four

6. Nothing of (intrinsic) value is lost if you don't bribe the nurse.

7. So nothing of (intrinsic) value is lost if you don't survive, that is, there is no longer anyone identical to you.

8. Personal identity is not what really, intrinsically, matters.