Edited by

Michael Bruce and Steven Barbone

JUST THE ARGUMENTS

100 of the Most Important Arguments in Western Philosophy

WILEY-BLACKWELL

A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

This edition first published 2011

Blackwell Publishing was acquired by John Wiley & Sons in February 2007. Blackwell's publishing program has been merged with Wiley's global Scientific, Technical, and Medical business to form Wiley-Blackwell.

Registered Office
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

Editorial Offices
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK
The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services, and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book please see our website at www.wiley.com/wiley-blackwell.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Just the arguments : 100 of the most important arguments in Western philosophy / edited by Michael Bruce and Steven Barbone.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-4443-3637-5 (hardcover : alk. paper) – ISBN 978-1-4443-3638-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Philosophy–Introductions. I. Bruce, Michael. II. Barbone, Steven.
BD21.J87 2011
190–dc22
2011012212

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This book is published in the following electronic formats: ePDFs 9781444344400; Wiley Online Library 9781444344431; ePub 9781444344417; mobi: 9781444344424

Set in 10/12pt Sabon by Toppan Best-set Premedia Limited

Printed and bound in Singapore by Ho Printing Singapore Pte Ltd

1 2011

21

Split-Case Arguments about Personal Identity

Ludger Jansen

Parfit, Derek. *Reasons and Persons.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
Shoemaker, Sydney, and Richard Swinburne. *Personal Identity (Great Debates in Philosophy).* Oxford: Blackwell 1984.

In the empiricist tradition, it is a common move to account for the diachronic identity of a person in terms of shared mental properties or continuity of memories (e.g., Locke) or in terms of shared matter, especially of the brain. But all these criteria allow for "split cases," that is, for two or more candidates fulfilling the requirements, which cause trouble with the formal properties of the identity relation (i.e., reflexivity, symmetry, and transitivity). For example, a brain can be divided and both halves implanted in different bodies: which of these, if any, is the same person as the original one? Two individuals could even share most of their memories – but this does not make them the same person. Thus, none of these criteria can be the decisive factor for personal identity. Some philosophers, such as Richard Swinburne (#24), argue for dualism and conclude that there must be some immaterial factor, the soul, that accounts for personal identity. Others, such as Derek Parfit, conclude that we should discard the concept of personal identity altogether and rather replace it with a nonsymmetric successor relation that allows for such split cases.

Just the Arguments: 100 of the Most Important Arguments in Western Philosophy, First Edition. Edited by Michael Bruce and Steven Barbone.

> There are no logical difficulties in supposing that we could transplant one of [a person] P_1's [brain] hemispheres into the skull from which a brain had been removed, and the other hemisphere into another such skull, and that both transplants should take, and it may well be practically possible to do so. [...] If these transplants took, clearly each of the resulting persons would behave to some extent like P_1, and indeed both would probably have some of the apparent memories of P_1. Each of the resulting persons would then be good candidates for being P_1. After all, if one of P_1's hemispheres had been destroyed and the other remained intact and untransplanted, and the resulting person continued to behave and make memory claims somewhat like those of P_1, we would have had little hesitation in declaring that person to be P_1. The same applies, whichever hemisphere was preserved [...]. But if it is, that other person will be just as good a candidate for being P_1. [...] But [...] that cannot be – since the two persons are not identical with each other. (Shoemaker and Swinburne, 15)

P1. A_1 and A_2 are two distinct persons.
P2. At $t_2 > t_1$, A_1 and A_2 are such that each of A_1 and A_2 share exactly the same amount of the X that A had at t_1.
P3. X is the decisive factor for personal identity (e.g., body mass, brain mass, memories, character traces), that is, for any persons A_1 and A_2 and any times t_1 and t_2, if A_2 has at t_2 most of the X that A_1 had at t_1, then A_1 and A_2 are the same person (assumption for *reductio*).
C1. A_1 is the same person as A (*modus ponens*, P3, P2).
C2. A_2 is the same person as A (*modus ponens*, P3, P2).
P4. If X is the same person as Y, then Y is the same person as X (symmetry of identity).
C3. A is the same person as A_2 (*modus ponens*, P4, C2).
P5. If A_1 is the same person as A and A is the same person as A_2, then A is the same person as A_2 (transitivity, C1, C3).
C4. A_1 is the same person as A_2 (*modus ponens*, conjunction, P5, C1, C3).
C5. No such X can be the decisive factor for personal identity (*reductio*, P1–C4).