

# A Defence of Quasi-Memory

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Is it conceptually possible for one person to 'remember' the experiences of another person? Many philosophical discussions of personal identity suppose that this is possible. For example, some philosophers believe that our personal identity through time consists in the continuation of our mental lives, including the holding of memories over time<sup>1</sup>. However, since a person's memories are necessarily memories of her *own* experiences<sup>2</sup>, a definition of personal identity in terms of memory risks circularity. To avoid this, we must invoke the concept of 'quasi-memory'. From my quasi-memory of doing *x*, I cannot infer that *I* did *x*; but I can infer that *somebody* did *x*. It is then a further question as to whether the person who did *x* is me, the answer to which will depend upon what we believe personal identity to consist in. Quasi-memory, then, allows us to separate the concept of memory from the concept of personal identity.

Quasi-memory (hereafter, 'q-memory') is also central to a startling reductionist claim famously made by Parfit in *Reasons and Persons*: that what matters in our concern for our futures is not our continued survival, but the continuation of our mental lives, regardless of whether or not we figure personally in this continuation. He argues for this claim by imagining the following fission scenario. I am one of three identical triplets, and their brains and my body are fatally injured. Surgeons successfully transplant one hemisphere of my brain into each of the remaining triplets' bodies. Since I am one of those people whose brain hemispheres

<sup>1</sup> For example, J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, P. Nidditch (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); S. Shoemaker, 'Persons and Their Pasts', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1970).

<sup>2</sup> There is a sense in which a person can remember the experiences of others. For example, if I remember my father burning his fingers whilst cooking food at a barbeque, then in one sense I am remembering an experience of my father's. However, in this case I am remembering his experience from the point of view of an observer rather than as a participant. When I say, 'a person's memories are necessarily memories of her own experiences,' I speak only of those experiences that she remembers from the point of view of a participant.

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each have the full range of mental abilities, and since all of my mental states are spread over both hemispheres, the resulting persons, following the operation, would seem to remember my life up until the accident. Each would inherit all of my mental states—my memories, habits, fears, intentions, and so on—and would have a similar body to mine.

Let us imagine that such a scenario would be possible, given the necessary medical technology. Would I survive such a process? According to Parfit, there can be no decisive answer to this question, but the best approximation is that I would not survive: the products of my fission are new people, who come into existence at the point of fission. Despite this, what happens to me would be as good as survival, since my fission products would inherit all of my mental states, meaning that my mental life would continue intact after the operation<sup>3</sup>. Parfit calls such continuity of mental states *Relation R*<sup>4</sup>, and he argues that what really matters to us in our concern for our futures is not that we survive, but that there will exist future experiences R-related to our present ones.

Let us briefly consider Parfit's argument for the claim that what matters is relation R. Parfit observes that it is possible for a person to survive the destruction of half of his brain. He also argues that a person could survive if his whole brain were transplanted into his (identical triplet) brother's body. As a result, 'I would survive if half my brain was destroyed, and the other half was successfully

<sup>3</sup> Specifically, my fission products would enjoy psychological connectedness and continuity with me. Parfit tells us that '[p]sychological connectedness is the holding of particular direct psychological connections' (D. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: OUP, 1987)), such as the connection that holds between an experience had at one time and a memory of that experience at a later time, or the persistence through time of beliefs, desires, and other psychological attitudes. '*Psychological continuity* is the holding of overlapping strands of *strong* connectedness'. For example, at time  $t_2$  I may not be psychologically connected with myself at an earlier time,  $t$ , in that I do not remember anything that I did at  $t$  and I have none of the beliefs, etc., that I had at  $t$ , but I may nevertheless be psychologically connected with myself at an intervening time,  $t_1$ , when I *was* psychologically connected to myself at time  $t$ . Such overlapping strands of connectedness constitute psychological continuity.

<sup>4</sup> '[Relation] R is psychological connectedness and/or continuity, with the right kind of cause' (op. cit. note 3, 283). Further, 'the right kind of cause' is *any* cause, since '[i]t is the *effect* which matters. And this effect, the holding of Relation R, is in itself the same' (p. 286), whatever the cause.

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transplanted into my brother's body'<sup>5</sup>. With this in mind, Parfit considers how he should view the prospect of fission, knowing that he would not survive this process:

Consider my relation to each of [my fission products]. Does this relation fail to contain some vital element that is contained in ordinary survival? It seems clear that it does not. I would survive if I stood in this very same relation to only one of the resulting people.

Therefore, '[i]t cannot be the *nature* of my relation to each of the resulting people that, in this case, causes it to fail to be survival. Nothing is *missing*. What is wrong can only be the duplication'. The relation that the pre-fission person bears to each of the fission products is, essentially, relation R. According to Parfit, ordinary survival occurs where relation R holds one-to-one over time: where a subject's earlier experiences are R-related to the later experiences of only one subject. Through fission, relation R does not hold one-to-one. It holds one-to-two, since earlier experiences had by the pre-fission person are R-related to the later experiences of two subjects, the fission products. Parfit argues that, when faced with the prospect of fission, whether relation R holds one-to-one—and therefore whether identity is preserved—does not matter. What is important is that relation R holds at all, even where 'it does not fit the logic of identity'<sup>6</sup>. In the case of fission described above, since my fission products would be R-related to me, and since nothing would be missing from my relation to them that would be present in ordinary survival, I should view the prospect of fission as being as good as my continued survival.

The claim that what matters is not personal identity but relation R depends upon the plausibility of q-memory. Memory is an important part of the mental lives of persons, and thus of relation R. If q-memory is incoherent, then it is not possible for one person to q-remember the experiences of another person. If this is not possible, then only I can be the subject of any future memories which are R-related to my present experiences. Not only does this entail, as we have seen, that we cannot give a non-circular definition of personal identity in terms of memory; but it also deprives Parfit's claim that what matters is not personal identity but relation R of any force, since it entails that relation R and personal identity must always coincide.

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit. note 3, 261.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit. note 3, 262.

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In what follows, I will investigate the plausibility of q-memory. That is, I will investigate whether the concept of q-memory is intelligible, and whether q-memory could be a source of knowledge about the past in the way that ordinary experiential memory is. We shall begin, in section 1, by looking at Parfit's initial discussion of q-memory, where he envisages memories being copied piecemeal from one person to another. We shall consider some objections from Cassam and McDowell, who argue that the sort of situation that Parfit describes implicitly involves the concept of ordinary memory, and therefore of personal identity. Then, in sections 2 to 4, we will see that piecemeal memory-trace copying—even if possible—would not provide support for Parfit's position. However, piecemeal memory-trace copying is not the only conceptually possible way in which one person could come to q-remember another person's experiences. We will see in sections 5 and 6 that the way in which a fission product would q-remember the experiences of the pre-fission person escapes the objections levelled at q-memory in the context of piecemeal memory-trace copying. As a result, we are able to salvage the notion of q-memory.

I hope, in the course of this paper, to convince the reader that the notion of q-memory is plausible, and therefore that it is conceptually possible that one person can have q-memories of the experiences of another person. It is not my intention to assess Parfit's claim that relation R can replace personal identity in our concerns. Rather, I wish to show that his claim is not undermined by doubts about the plausibility of q-memory.

### 1. Q-Memory and Piecemeal Memory-Trace Copying

Parfit defines q-memory as follows:

I have an accurate quasi-memory of a past experience if

(1) I seem to remember having an experience,

(2) *someone* did have this experience,

and

(3) my apparent memory is causally dependent, in the right kind of way, on that past experience.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit. note 3, 220. This conception of quasi-memory is more radical than that which I will eventually adopt, in that it dispenses completely with any claims of identity between the q-rememberer and the q-remembered experience. There are problems with dispensing with identity in this way: for example, Wiggins argues that without identity,

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He adds that we should see ordinary memories as ‘a sub-class of quasi-memories. They are quasi-memories of our own past experiences’.

We can probe the notion of q-memory further by drawing a distinction within it. On the one hand, as Parfit describes above, a q-memory can be a particular mental state, expressible using a sentence of the form, ‘I have a q-memory of  $x$ ’, for example, ‘I have a q-memory of laughing at Laurel and Hardy’. On the other hand, we can see q-memory as—to use an expression from McDowell—an autonomously intelligible faculty of knowing the past from a participant’s perspective but without commitment to the participant’s having been oneself<sup>8</sup>. We shall see that both sorts of q-memory must be conceptually possible in order to support Parfit’s claim that what matters is relation R. It must, as we have seen, be possible for a person to have a q-memory of another person’s experience in order for it to be the case that the notion of relation R does not presuppose the notion of identity via the notion of memory. And it must be possible for there to exist a faculty of q-memory, otherwise q-memories could not constitute knowledge as ordinary memories can. In the absence of a faculty of q-memory, a subject would have to treat q-memories either as ordinary memories that engender the false belief that they are memories of the subject’s own experiences (and which, therefore, are illusions), or as products of the imagination, which do not depict any real event or experience. In neither case can they be said to constitute knowledge.

Parfit cites the imagined possibility of piecemeal memory-trace copying—the copying of a few of one person’s memories to another person—to support his claim that it would be possible for a person to have q-memories of another person’s experiences. Let us consider his argument. He tells us that:

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there are difficulties with justifying the claim that q-memory is generically related to ordinary memory (D. Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), chapter 7). Some such problems will emerge in the discussion that follows, but since I will focus primarily on the extent to which the concept of q-memory supports Parfit’s claim that what matters is not personal identity, and since I do not rely on the definition of q-memory given here, I will background those problems that do not relate directly to my discussion.

<sup>8</sup> J. McDowell, ‘Reductionism and the First Person’, *Reading Parfit*, J. Dancy (ed.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 240.

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The causes of long-term memories are memory-traces. It was once thought that these might be localised, involving changes in only a few brain cells. It is now more probable that a particular memory-trace involves changes in a larger number of cells. Suppose that, even if this is true, neuro-surgeons develop ways to create in one brain a copy of a memory-trace in another brain. This might enable us to [q]-remember other people's past experiences.<sup>9</sup>

He then imagines the following situation:

*Venetian Memories.* Jane has agreed to have copied in her brain some of Paul's memory-traces. After she recovers consciousness in the post-surgery room, she has a new set of vivid apparent memories. She seems to remember walking on the marble paving of a square, hearing the flapping of flying pigeons and the cries of gulls, and seeing light sparkling on green water. One apparent memory is very clear. She seems to remember looking across the water to an island, where a white Palladian church stood out brilliantly against a dark thundercloud.

Parfit asks,

What should Jane believe about these apparent memories? Suppose that, because she has seen this church in photographs, she knows it to be San Giorgio, in Venice. She also knows that she has never been to Italy, while Paul goes to Venice often. Since she knows that she has received copies of some of Paul's memory-traces, she could justifiably assume that she may be [q]-remembering some of Paul's experiences in Venice.

Parfit comments that enough evidence of the accuracy of the apparent memories—for example, correlation of the apparently remembered events with others' reports—could lead Jane to conclude that she is experiencing q-memories, rather than a delusion. He adds, however, that '[f]or Jane's [q]-memories to give her knowledge about Paul's experiences, she must know roughly how they have been caused. This is not required in the case of ordinary memories'<sup>10</sup>. He adds that '[a]part from this difference, [q]-memories would provide a similar kind of knowledge about other people's past lives'.

Parfit points out that, although Jane would q-remember Paul's experiences as if they had happened to her—she would experience

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit. note 3, 220.

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit. note 3, 221.

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them in ‘the first person mode of presentation’<sup>11</sup>—this need not lead Jane to believe, falsely, that she is remembering her own experiences. She would simply be q-remembering the events from Paul’s point of view. Parfit tells us that my q-remembering or imagining an event from a particular point of view is not itself sufficient to support the conclusion that I am the subject of the q-remembered or imagined experience. He explains that:

Because we do not have [q]-memories of other people’s past experiences, our apparent memories do not merely come to us in the first-person mode. They come with a belief that, unless they are delusions, they are about our own experiences. But, in the case of experience-memories, this is a separable belief. If like Jane we had [q]-memories of other people’s past experiences, these apparent memories would cease to be automatically combined with this belief.<sup>12</sup>

Cassam argues that the concept of q-memory is parasitic on that of ordinary memory because one can conclude that one is experiencing a q-memory only on the basis of external evidence of its cause, and not on the basis of the content of the q-memory itself. For example, the subject may establish the cause of a q-memory by being told by someone else about the memory-trace copying. However, if the memory of gaining the information in this way is also only an apparent memory, then we are embarked upon an infinite regress. Therefore, Cassam concludes,

If it were always in question whether one’s apparent memories constitute access to one’s own past, such investigations could never get off the ground. The only way of blocking the regress is to concede that q-memories can only yield inferential knowledge of the past because ordinary memory is a source of non-inferential knowledge of the past.<sup>13</sup>

This suggests that q-memory cannot be the primitive type of memory, of which genuine memory is a sub-class. On the contrary, q-memory is a concept derived from that of ordinary memory.

Parfit recognises that in order for Jane’s q-memories to provide her with knowledge about Paul’s experiences she must know how they were caused. However, he does not make explicit that, unless

<sup>11</sup> This term is cited by Parfit as Peacocke’s (C. Peacocke, *Sense and Content* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit. note 3, 222.

<sup>13</sup> Q. Cassam, *Self and World* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 43.

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q-memory is to be dependent on ordinary memory, her knowledge about how they were caused should not be dependent upon ordinary memory. It is, though, difficult to see how this knowledge might *not* depend upon ordinary memory. As a result, it is difficult to see how Parfit's account of q-memory can escape Cassam's objections.

McDowell also attacks the notion of q-memory. Like Cassam, he argues that it is implausible to suppose that the concept of q-memory can be understood independently of that of ordinary memory. He rejects Parfit's claim that, in the case of experience memories, the belief that they are memories of the subject's own experience is a 'separable belief', detachable from the content of the memory. This means that whilst Jane, in Parfit's story, cannot conclude that the events that she seems to remember were experienced by her, yet according to McDowell,

that does not show that the content of this identity-involving belief is separable from the content of the impression, the knowledge that the subject seems to retain from the past. On the contrary, we have not been equipped to make sense of mere [q]-memories other than by supposing that they would present themselves as memories—that is, that they would embody an impression, which must be illusory, that the subject of the recalled state or occurrence was oneself.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore,

This kind of aetiology [of memory-trace copying] enables us to make sense of [q]-memory as yielding illusions of ordinary memory, not as reductionists require it to be: an autonomously intelligible faculty of knowing the past from a participant's perspective but without commitment to the participant's having been oneself.

Further, McDowell comments that, although it may be true that we can imagine that a particular ordinary memory is a q-memory of someone else's experience by entertaining 'suitable abnormal aetiologies'<sup>15</sup>,

this does not equip the memory impression with an identity-neutral content: the supposition one would be entertaining is that

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit. note 8, 240.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit. note 8, 241.

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an impression whose content is not identity-neutral, because it is that of an ordinary memory, is illusory in respect of that aspect of its content.

He compares this with imagining that the external world is unreal: 'the effect of envisaging the abnormal aetiology is that one conceives the experiences not as exercises of some autonomously intelligible faculty of quasi-perception, but as illusions of perception'. Similarly, thought experiments about piecemeal memory-trace copying—such as that cited by Parfit—do not provide sufficient grounds upon which to conclude that there could be an 'autonomously intelligible faculty' of q-memory. McDowell adds that the fact that q-memory is just ordinary memory minus one requirement—the requirement that the rememberer and subject of the remembered experience are identical—does not entail that q-memory is the simpler concept and therefore that it must be independently graspable, since

the dropped requirement does not simply disappear: the second notion cannot be understood apart from the idea of an appearance that the dropped requirement is satisfied, that is, in the context of the other requirements, an appearance that the first notion has application.

These remarks by Cassam and McDowell show us that the imagined possibility of piecemeal memory-trace copying gives us no reason to believe that there could be an 'autonomously intelligible faculty' of q-memory. However, perhaps all is not yet lost. Whilst it may have been over-ambitious to hope that the claim that piecemeal memory-trace copying could furnish the recipient with mental states that are qualitatively like the donor's memories itself demonstrates the possibility of a faculty of q-memory, that we can imagine a way in which one person could come to experience states that are qualitatively like another person's memories is significant. Whilst such states may not themselves provide knowledge, they nevertheless give some substance to Parfit's claim that q-memory is conceptually possible. The possibility of such states may not itself demonstrate the possibility of a faculty of q-memory, but it could be the starting point for an argument for such a faculty. We simply need to work on this argument in order to defend Parfit's notion of q-memory.

However, in the next few sections, we shall see that piecemeal memory-trace copying would not even give us this starting point. I will argue that, in most cases, a q-memory resulting from piecemeal

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memory-trace copying would lack many features of the ordinary memory of which it is a copy, meaning that a fundamental presupposition of Parfit's claim that relation R is what matters is undermined, namely, the claim that the only feature of ordinary memory which may be lacked by q-memory is the identity between the rememberer and the subject of the remembered experience.

### 2. Copying Memories

There are problems with the notion of piecemeal memory-trace copying, centring on the question of exactly what sort of mental state the recipient of a memory-trace inherits from the donor. This is a pertinent question, because our memories are typically bound up with many associations and links with other mental states. In the following two sections, I argue that in some cases—perhaps even in most or all—a q-memory resulting from a copied memory-trace would be an impoverished version of the original memory, and that as a result, the notion of q-memory in the context of piecemeal memory-trace copying cannot support Parfit's claim.

To illustrate this problem, let us return to the case of Jane's Venetian memories. Imagine that one of Paul's memories of his experiences in Italy is of overhearing an amusing conversation in Italian, which made him laugh, and which causes him to laugh whenever he recalls this incident. This memory-trace is copied to Jane, and so Jane has a q-memory of overhearing this conversation. However, whereas Paul speaks Italian fluently, Jane has no knowledge of it. Therefore, had it been Jane, rather than Paul, who had overheard the conversation, she would not have been able to understand it, and so unlike Paul she would not have found it funny. This raises questions about how much of Paul's remembered experiences we should suppose that Jane inherits. For example, we might ask whether, when the memory of this Italian conversation is copied from Paul to Jane, Jane will inherit Paul's amusement. In order for Jane to inherit Paul's amusement about the conversation, will it be sufficient for her to inherit Paul's memory of the conversation, or must she also inherit some knowledge of Italian?

There are two main possibilities. On the one hand, we might claim that, as a result of Jane's inheriting Paul's memory-trace, she will q-remember only a small part of what Paul experienced when this memory was formed—say, only his sense impressions. On this account, she will not inherit his emotional states, such as his

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amusement, and in order for Jane to inherit Paul's amusement, she must inherit mental states additional to the memory of the conversation, such as an understanding of Italian. On the other hand, we might claim that, as a result of Jane's inheriting Paul's memory-trace, she will q-remember everything that Paul experienced when he overheard the conversation. This means that, when Jane has this q-memory of Paul's experience, she q-remembers not only what Paul saw, heard, and so on, but also how he felt at the time, and how he reacted to his surroundings. That is, Jane will inherit Paul's memory of his sense impressions, along with his memory of the emotional states, moods, and so on, that he had at the time. We might call these two possible claims about what Jane will experience after she receives Paul's memory-trace the *narrow conception* of memory-trace copying and the *broad conception* of memory-trace copying respectively. We shall look at each of these conceptions in turn in the following two sections.

### 3. The Narrow Conception of Memory-Trace Copying

According to the narrow conception of memory-trace copying, piecemeal memory-trace copying will result in the recipient q-remembering only the sense impressions of the experience remembered by the donor. One might doubt that it would be possible to separate sense impressions from the other aspects of a memory, but let us ignore this worry in order to see what the consequences would be for the prospect of piecemeal memory-trace copying. Since we are assuming that this would be possible, we are assuming that the narrow conception is plausible. I shall not, therefore, attempt either to defend or disprove it. Rather, I will show that, even assuming the plausibility of the narrow conception, piecemeal memory-trace copying cannot deliver the sort of q-memories that Parfit requires in order to support his claim that what matters is relation R.

Let us consider a case where Jane inherits the sense impressions of Paul's remembered experiences, but not his emotional states, conceptualisations, and so on. We can suppose that Jane is able to conceptualise the information from Paul's sense impressions herself, by drawing on her own memories, skills, and so on.

Do the sort of q-memories that, according to the narrow conception, piecemeal memory-trace copying would deliver provide support for the plausibility of the notion of q-memory? Well, the fact that Jane would inherit only Paul's remembered sense

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impressions, and none of the other aspects of his memory, presents a problem. Whilst it may be true that the causal history of Jane's q-remembered sense impressions can be traced back to Paul, it is not clear on what grounds we would be entitled to describe Jane's experience as a q-memory of *Paul's experience*, as opposed to a q-memory of seeing, hearing, and so on, a scene that was also seen and heard by Paul. The latter description of Jane's apparent memory makes it no more intimately linked to Paul's experience than if Jane had watched a video recording made by Paul in Venice, or if she had been linked to a virtual reality machine designed to mimic the sensations one would have if one followed Paul's route through Venice on that particular day. The distinction between these two descriptions is brought out well by Nagel, when he tries to imagine what it would be like to be a bat:

It will not help to try to imagine that one has webbing on one's arms, which enables one to fly around at dusk and dawn catching insects in one's mouth; that one has very poor vision, and perceives the surrounding world by a system of reflected high-frequency sound signals; and that one spends the day hanging upside down by one's feet in an attic. Insofar as I can imagine this ... it tells me only what it would be like for *me* to behave as a bat behaves. But that is not the question. I want to know what it is like for a *bat* to be a bat.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, piecemeal memory-trace copying according to the narrow conception would, at most, tell Jane what it would be like for her to visit Venice, following a route taken by Paul, and perceiving the things that he perceived on the day he took this route. The only unusual aspect of receiving this information via memory-trace copying would be the causal origin of the information. As such, it looks as though the experiences had by a recipient of such memory-traces would be, at best, a mere shadow of the sort of experiences we usually have when we have memories, since our memories generally involve a great deal more than perceptual content.

We might, then, say that the recipient's q-memories would be *weaker* than the original memories of which they are copies, meaning they would lack some of the content that the original memories had. In what follows, I will return to the notions of weak

<sup>16</sup> T. Nagel, 'What is it like to be a bat?', *Philosophical Review* 83 (1974), reprinted in *Mortal Questions*, T. Nagel (Cambridge: CUP, 1979), 169.

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and strong memories. When I say that a q-memory resulting from a copied memory-trace is *as strong* as the original memory, I mean that the content of the q-memory is exactly the same as that of the original memory, and is not impoverished or lacking in any way compared with that of the original memory. To the extent that a copied q-memory lacks some of the content had by (is impoverished compared to) the original memory, that q-memory is weaker than the original memory. We will see that only if we could be confident that q-memories resulting from memory-trace copying would be as strong as the original memories could piecemeal memory-trace copying deliver the sort of q-memories that Parfit requires.

Does it matter that, according to the narrow conception, a q-memory resulting from a copied memory-trace would be weaker than the original memory of which it is a copy? It does indeed. Parfit needs to claim, and does claim<sup>17</sup>, that the *only* way in which a q-memory differs from an ordinary memory is in the identity of the subject of the (q-) remembered experience. In the case of q-memories, the q-rememberer need not be identical with the subject of the q-remembered experience; in the case of ordinary memory, they must be identical. My dying and being succeeded by a person who is psychologically continuous with me as a result of having received copied memory-traces of my experiences is, according to Parfit, as good as my surviving. This is because the only difference between the two cases is that, in the former case, my personal identity will be interrupted, and in the latter case it will not. There will be no difference between the two cases regarding the quality of the experiences: my successor, upon creation, will have qualitatively exactly the same mental states as I would have had, had I survived (recall Parfit's insistence that 'nothing is *missing*' in the relation between me and my fission products that is present in ordinary survival). This is what underpins Parfit's claim that it is relation R, and not identity, that matters.

If we allow that the process of piecemeal memory-trace copying results in a q-memory that is weaker than the original memory, however, Parfit's claim that it is relation R, and not identity, that matters is undermined. This is because, in the scenario described above, the recipient of my memory-traces will *not* have exactly the same mental states as I would have had, had I survived. As a result of memory-trace copying, her q-memories of my life will be weaker than my own memories of my life. This gives us reason to object

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit. note 3, 220ff.

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that dying and being succeeded by such a person is *not* as good as ordinary survival: only in the latter case could I be certain of my mental life continuing intact. Therefore, the fact that, on the narrow conception, q-memories resulting from copied memory-traces would differ from ordinary memories in ways other than the identity of the subject of the remembered experience undermines the plausibility of Parfit's claim that relation R is what matters. Memory-trace copying according to the narrow conception, then, does not provide support for Parfit's position.

It may be objected at this point that some memories would not be weakened by being copied in this way. These would be memories whose content is composed entirely of sense impressions<sup>18</sup>. Such memories would not be impoverished by isolating them and copying them to someone else in the way described above, and so we might describe them as *self-contained* memories.

Self-contained memories, however, do little to salvage the narrow conception. Even if they exist, and even if everyone has some, it can hardly be claimed that they make up most, or even many, of a person's memories. Most (perhaps, in fact, all) of our memories involve judgements and evaluations about their content, and associations with other memories, moods, skills, and so on. Therefore, even if, faced with the prospect of dying and being succeeded by a person who is psychologically continuous with me as a result of having received copies of all of my memories, I could be confident that my self-contained memories would be copied intact, this would offer little consolation since it would still be the case that most of my memories would be weakened by the copying process. In fact, providing that at least *some* of my memories are not self-contained, the recipient of my memory-traces would differ from me in ways other than identity. As a result, even admitting the

<sup>18</sup> I have some difficulty thinking of an example of a memory whose content is composed entirely of sense impressions, and which is completely unassociated with any other mental states. However, since we have accepted the premises of the narrow conception—in particular, the claim that it would be possible to isolate and copy the sense impressions of a memory from one person to another, resulting (we must suppose) in a q-memory whose content is entirely perceptual—this possibility must be allowed. To deny it would be to admit that there could exist q-memories that differ in type from ordinary memories, and as we have seen, Parfit claims that the only difference between ordinary memories and q-memories is that, in the case of the former, there must be identity between the subject of the memory and the subject of the remembered experience.

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possibility of self-contained memories, the narrow conception fails to provide support for Parfit's position.

If Parfit's claim that relation R is what matters is to appear plausible, then, it must be possible for a subject to have q-memories that are *all* as strong as the original memories—self-contained or otherwise—of which they are copies. In the next section, we will look at an account of piecemeal memory-trace copying that attempts to deliver such q-memories.

### 4. The Broad Conception of Memory-Trace Copying

The broad conception of memory-trace copying attempts to avoid the problem encountered on the narrow conception, where, self-contained memories aside, the resulting q-memories were weaker than the original memories of which they were copies due to the fact that they lacked some of the aspects of the original memories. On the broad conception, piecemeal memory-trace copying results in the recipient inheriting *all* aspects of the original memories from the donor: the sense impressions, the emotional states, and so on. The idea is that the resulting q-memories should always be as strong as the original memories of which they are copies, and that they should differ from the original memories only in the identity of the subject.

In this section, we shall look at an objection to the possibility of piecemeal memory-trace copying according to the broad conception by drawing on the work of Wollheim. We shall then look at an argument from Martin, who claims that piecemeal memory-trace copying would indeed be possible. Finally, I shall argue that although piecemeal memory-trace copying may be possible, the resulting q-memories would, self-contained memories aside, be weaker than the original memories of which they are copies, and therefore the broad conception is implausible. Therefore, we have no reason to believe, with Parfit, that q-memories would be as good as ordinary memories, and as a result, his claim that relation R is what matters is undermined for the same reasons that it was undermined on the narrow conception.

Wollheim argues that the idea of copying a memory-trace from one person to another, such that the experience of the recipient's q-remembering is qualitatively identical to the experience of the donor's remembering, is riddled with difficulties. He remarks that mental states such as memories

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form, within the psychology of a person, a web or network: they are ancillary to one another, and there seems no method for determining what in the way of other dispositions, what in the way of beliefs, emotions, desires, fears, and other memories, would have to be transferred along with it if the original memory is to [be copied from one person to another.] It seems plausible to hold that, if I am to [q]-remember my father's childhood walks, I should also have to have, and to have because he had them, a native speaker's knowledge of German: a capacity to imagine intense cold: a sense of the aspirations of a late nineteenth-century Central European schoolboy: a familiarity, which did not depend on something I had been told, with the details of my father's family, ... and many other such dispositions which would be backgrounded, if not foregrounded, in the [q]-memory.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, he would also have to lose many of his own dispositions in order to accommodate these q-memories, such as his ignorance and subsequent curiosity about his father's family. What would happen to these dispositions would require explanation. These problems lead Wollheim to conclude that piecemeal memory-trace copying would not be possible: copying a single memory-trace from one person to another would not suffice to give the recipient a mental state qualitatively like the original memory, since the quality of the original memory depends both on the presence of other mental states which are possessed by the donor but not by the recipient, and on the absence of mental states that are possessed by the recipient but not by the donor.

Wollheim's view is more holistic than that which I will adopt. His remarks suggest that, since memories are bound up with various other mental states, the notion of piecemeal memory-trace copying is incoherent. On this view, to isolate a memory from its associated mental states would be to destroy the memory. However, as we saw in section 1, Parfit's discussion of piecemeal memory-trace copying begins from the assumption that it would be possible to isolate a person's memory-traces and copy them to another person. I want to allow him this assumption in order to have a meaningful discussion of piecemeal memory-trace copying. As a result, I wish to defend a weaker version of Wollheim's position. Instead of claiming, as he does, that it would be

<sup>19</sup> R. Wollheim, *The Thread of Life* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), 113–114.

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impossible to copy memories piecemeal from one person to another, I wish to show that even if this was possible, it would weaken the resulting q-memories.

Do Wollheim's comments undermine the broad conception of memory-trace copying? Not quite. Martin, who discusses Wollheim's argument, objects to the claim that a person who inherits a memory-trace must, if he is to q-remember all aspects of the original experience, also inherit many other mental states. He points out that:

The literature on retrograde amnesia is full of descriptions of people who completely lose their memories of some period of their lives, sometimes a very long period, and then gradually recover their memories in bits and pieces. The initial memories recovered arrive substantially devoid of the psychological context<sup>20</sup> which was present when the event was originally experienced. So if this can happen, as it can, in the case of actual memory, why assume that it is impossible in the case of q-memory?<sup>21</sup>

He goes on to comment on the sort of problem that we discussed in relation to Jane's q-memories of Paul's experiences in Venice: that of receiving a q-memory of a conversation in a language that the donor, but not the recipient, understands. Martin tells us that '[m]any years ago I used to have an elementary speaking knowledge of Spanish. I have since forgotten Spanish. But I can remember having long conversations in Spanish with the cook who prepared my food'. Since he has memories of having Spanish conversations even though he does not understand Spanish, perhaps Jane could have q-memories of an Italian conversation even though she does not understand Italian.

Let us consider Martin's memories of Spanish conversations, before going on to discuss his points about amnesia. Martin claims to remember having conversations in Spanish despite the fact that, since he no longer understands Spanish, these memories have lost much of their psychological context. Does this undermine

<sup>20</sup> Martin does not explicitly define psychological context, but he seems to hold that the psychological context of a memory of an event includes all of the mental states (hopes, beliefs, dispositions, emotions, etc.) that the subject had while he was experiencing that event.

<sup>21</sup> R. Martin, 'Memory, Connecting and What Matters in Survival', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 65, No. 1 (1987), reprinted in *Personal Identity*, H. Noonan (ed.) (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1993), 340.

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Wollheim's point that in order to have q-memories of everything that his father experienced on his childhood walks, he must inherit not only his father's memories of these walks, but also their psychological context? Well, it may prove a problem for Wollheim's claim that it is impossible to isolate memories from their psychological context, but it does not undermine our weaker claim that memories are weakened when they are isolated in this way. Martin does not tell us how much of the Spanish conversations he now remembers, but it seems plausible to suppose that the fact that he no longer understands Spanish will have resulted in his now not being able to recall some of the details of the conversations. It seems generally true that a loss of psychological context results in an impoverishment in the content of a memory. To cite an example that does not involve a foreign language, I can remember being in a pub with a group of my friends as an undergraduate. Shortly afterwards, I could still remember the names of all of the people, and what we talked about. This information formed part of the psychological context of the memory. Now, I have forgotten much of that information. As a result, I have forgotten many of the details of that remembered event. Martin's example does not contradict this point: he gives us no reason to doubt that the loss of the psychological context of his memory of Spanish conversations has weakened this memory.

Given that a memory is weakened by the loss of its psychological context, we can conclude that, since copying a single memory-trace without its full psychological context would result in a q-memory that lacks some of the psychological context possessed by the original memory, piecemeal memory-trace copying would result in a q-memory that is weaker than the original memory in all cases where the original memory was not self-contained<sup>22</sup>. And, as we saw in the previous section, such piecemeal memory-trace copying cannot support Parfit's claim that what matters is relation R.

Therefore, despite Martin's claim to have memories of Spanish conversations, it remains true that in order for Wollheim to have a q-memory of his father's childhood walks which is as strong as the original memory, he must inherit mental states other than the memories of these walks: he must inherit those mental states that

<sup>22</sup> We can relax the definition of self-contained memories here to include not only those whose content is entirely perceptual, but also those which have no psychological context. Whether such memories exist, or whether they are even possible, is open to debate; I allow for their possibility here because I do not have room for such a debate.

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form the psychological context of the memories. This also means that, for Jane to understand Paul's amusement about the Italian conversation, she must inherit his knowledge of Italian. If she does not—if she inherits only the memory-trace, without any of the associated context—then we can expect her resulting q-memory to be weaker than Paul's original memory. Therefore, the broad conception is prey to the objections which led us to reject the narrow conception.

Let us turn to Martin's claim that the phenomenon of amnesia shows that memories can exist substantially devoid of their psychological context, and consider whether this shows the broad conception of memory-trace copying to be plausible. As we have just seen, where a memory loses its psychological context, we can expect it to be weaker than it would be if it had its psychological context. We might, then, claim that where amnesiacs have memories that are devoid of a psychological context, then they will be weaker; and consequently the example of amnesia does not provide support for the broad conception. However, it may be that the recovered memories of amnesiacs do not appear to be any weaker for their lack of psychological context. In this case, we have reason to believe that we could copy a single memory-trace from one person to another without the accompanying psychological context, and without thereby producing a q-memory which is weaker than the original memory of which it is a copy. However, I will show that amnesia does not provide support for the broad conception, since it is not clear that the memories of amnesiacs lack their psychological context.

Baddeley tells us that, with amnesia, the way in which the memory is defective may vary from person to person, and seems to be determined by the patient's own perception of how the memory works. He comments,

In this respect, [amnesiac patients] resemble hysterical patients suffering from glove anaesthesia, numbness in the hand which extends up to the wrist but not beyond and bears no relationship to the underlying pattern of innervation of the hand, indicating that it is of psychogenic origin rather than based on a physiological defect.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> A. D. Baddeley, 'Amnesia', *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, R. L. Gregory (ed.) (Oxford: OUP, 1987), 20.

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He goes on to conclude that, because of this, '[t]he extent to which psychogenic amnesia represents genuine inability to recall, as opposed to conscious refusal to remember, is hard to ascertain'.

This suggests that the lack of an amnesiac's memory's psychological context may be apparent rather than real. The case of amnesia does not show that memories can exist in isolation from their psychological context, it shows only that the amnesiac patient *believes* that their memories can be so isolated. In the same way, the case of glove anaesthesia does not show that the nerves in the arm can continue working while the nerves of the wrist and hand stop working, it shows only that the patient *believes* that their nerves can operate in this way. Therefore, the fact that an amnesiac's recovered memories may seem, from the point of view of the sufferer, substantially devoid of psychological context does not show that it would be possible to isolate memories from their psychological context without weakening them.<sup>24</sup>

Baddeley cites an example that demonstrates that the fact that an amnesiac patient may claim to have no memory of a past experience does not entail that no such memory exists:

A classic example is that cited by the Swiss psychologist Claparède, who on one occasion secreted a pin in his hand before shaking hands with an amnesic patient. On a subsequent day when he extended his hand the patient withdrew hers. When asked why, she could give no justification other than the general comment that sometimes things were hidden in people's hands.<sup>25</sup>

What does this tell us about what the amnesiac *does* retain? According to Baddeley,

<sup>24</sup> Baddeley's view, whilst popular now, contradicts an earlier interpretation of amnesiacs' failure to recall. Yarrell and Lynch claimed that the amnesiacs' failure to recall is due to a failure of the memory-trace to consolidate, rather than a failure of the patient to retrieve an intact memory-trace (P. R. Yarrell and S. Lynch, 'Retrograde Memory Immediately After Post-Traumatic Amnesia', *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* **19** (1970)). Miller and Springer, however, suggested that the problem may be one of retrieval rather than of corruption of the memory-trace (R. Miller and A. Springer, 'Implications of Recovery from Experimental Amnesia', *Psychological Review* **81** (1974)), and this view has been supported by later studies; cf. for example M. Van der Linden and F. Coyette, 'Acquisition of Word-Processing Knowledge in an Amnesiac Patient: Implications for Theory and Rehabilitation', *Broken Memories*, R. Campbell and M. Conway (eds.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Op. cit. note 23, 21.

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This is still a controversial issue, but broadly speaking the tasks seem to be ones in which the patient simply has to use the information available in his memory store, without needing to worry about how it was acquired.

This suggests that amnesiac patients do remember things, but may be unable to recall them. Claparède's patient must have remembered that he had secreted a pin in his hand the last time they met, since this information affected her later behaviour. However, she was unable to recall the incident. As a result, the fact that an amnesiac is unable to recall an event or fact does not entail that this event or fact has not been stored in the amnesiac's memory, or that the stored memory is not being used, for example, in shaping the patient's behaviour.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, the phenomenon of amnesia does not provide any support for the broad conception of memory-trace copying. Baddeley's remarks about amnesia suggest that the fact that a patient cannot recall a piece of information does not entail that this information has not been stored in the memory. As a result, Martin's observation that a person may seem to have a memory that lacks its psychological context does not show that memories can exist independently of their psychological context without thereby being weakened. At most, it shows that this might seem to be the case, from the point of view of the patient.

As a result, Martin's comments on amnesia give us no reason to doubt that the loss of the psychological context of a memory results in an impoverishment of its content. If we want memory-trace copying to deliver q-memories that are always as strong as the original memories, then in many cases—perhaps in all—we would have to copy a lot more than the memory-trace of any remembered event. We would also have to copy those mental states that form the psychological context of the memory: the states that the rememberer had whilst he was experiencing the event. Therefore, the broad conception of memory-trace copying—where the copying of an isolated memory-trace always yields a q-memory of everything that was experienced by the donor at the time of the remembered event—is implausible.

<sup>26</sup> Van der Linden and Coyette (op. cit. note 24) arrive at a similar conclusion. They describe an experiment during which an amnesiac patient was taught complex word-processing skills. The subject was able to perform tasks which depended upon knowledge gained via vanishing cues, which he claimed not to be able to recall later.

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From the discussion in this section and the previous one, we can see that piecemeal memory-trace copying does not support Parfit's claim that what matters is relation R. Parfit introduces the phenomenon of piecemeal memory-trace copying to show that relation R could hold even through interruptions in personal identity. Further, he argues that as long as relation R holds, interruptions in personal identity should not matter.

However, if the holding of relation R must be brought about through piecemeal memory-trace copying, then there are very good reasons to believe that it is identity, and not relation R, which matters. First, as we have seen in section 1 from considering Cassam and McDowell, the possibility of piecemeal memory-trace copying does not show that q-memory could be the fundamental sort of memory. On the contrary, the possibility of q-memory seems to depend upon the fundamentality of ordinary memory. This means that the possibility of piecemeal memory-trace copying does not allow us to dispense with considerations of personal identity, since the concept of ordinary memory involves personal identity. Second, we have seen that piecemeal memory-trace copying cannot deliver q-memories that are always as strong as the original memories of which they are copies. In order to support Parfit's claim that relation R is what matters, we need q-memories that differ from ordinary memories *only* in that in the case of ordinary memories, but not in the case of q-memories, the subject of the remembered experience must be identical with the rememberer. Since, self-contained memories aside, piecemeal memory-trace copying results in q-memories that differ from the original memories in ways other than the identity of the subject, it does not provide support for Parfit's claim that what matters is relation R.

## 5. Wholesale Psychological Continuity

From the discussion in the previous sections, we can see that if Parfit's claim that it is relation R and not identity that matters is to appear plausible, then his notion of q-memory had better not depend wholly on the possibility of piecemeal memory-trace copying. In this section, I argue that the notion of q-memory need not be understood in this way. Indeed, much of Parfit's discussion suggests that this is not the sort of q-memory that he has in mind. We can imagine other ways in which a person could gain q-memories of another person's experiences, and these ways are not

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prey to the problems that arose for piecemeal memory-trace copying. Since we can see relation R as being constituted by these more substantial q-memories, this lends fresh hope to the reductionist's aim of replacing identity with relation R in our concerns.

Although Parfit introduces the phenomenon of q-memory using the example of Venetian Memories, most of his subsequent references to q-memory are in the context of what we might call *wholesale* psychological continuity: that is, where a subject inherits *all* of another person's memories—rather than merely an isolated set of them as would happen in piecemeal memory-trace copying—along with the original person's character, likes and dislikes, habits, phobias, and so on. Moreover, in these cases, the recipients have no existing mental states of their own prior to inheriting another person's mental states. Such wholesale psychological continuity would occur in the division of the brain and the subsequent transplanting of each hemisphere into separate bodies that we considered earlier. In such a case, the new subjects are meant to be so similar to the original person with whom they are psychologically continuous that, in the absence of additional information about their personal identity (either through being told by someone else or through philosophical consideration of the implications of the processes they have undergone), they would believe themselves to be identical with the original person. In other words, the content of their experience would not itself lead them to conclude that an interruption of personal identity had occurred<sup>27</sup>. In this section and the next, we will see that q-memory in the context of wholesale psychological continuity escapes all of the objections to q-memory that we have discussed. We will end up with a notion of q-memory substantial enough to support Parfit's claim that what matters is relation R.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis has argued that such a case of fission would not involve an interruption in personal identity (D. Lewis, 'Survival and Identity', *The Identities of Persons*. A. O. Rorty (ed.) (California: University of California Press, 1976)). Instead, he argues that the best (i.e. most preserving of common sense) interpretation of fission would be that there are two qualitatively identical persons existing all along in the same body, who diverge at the point of fission. If this is right, then the notion of q-memory need not be involved at all, since each product of the fission would have ordinary memories of their own life prior to fission. A defence of Parfit's interpretation of fission against Lewis's account is a task for another paper, however, and so I will not discuss it here. I begin from the assumption that fission represents an interruption in personal identity.

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We saw that there are many problems with the notion of q-memory in the context of piecemeal memory-trace copying. Let us consider these problems again, and see whether they also apply to q-memory in the context of wholesale psychological continuity. In the previous two sections, we discussed the problem of the extent to which a recipient of a memory-trace would q-remember the experiences of the donor. The difficulty arose because the idea of piecemeal memory-trace copying presupposes that it is possible to isolate a certain set of a person's memories from their other mental states. This, we saw, is not possible if we wish to preserve the strength of the memories, as our memories generally contain many links with other mental states such as further memories, emotions, judgements, and skills. As a result, piecemeal memory-trace copying cannot deliver the sort of q-memories required by Parfit.

When we turn to q-memory in the context of wholesale psychological continuity, this problem is no longer relevant. Because wholesale psychological continuity involves transferring *all* of a person's mental states to another person, one person can inherit q-memories of another person's experiences without breaking the links between these memories and any other mental states that make up their psychological context. This problem arises only if we wish to claim that it would be possible to copy *piecemeal* memories from one person to another. Since q-memories in the context of wholesale psychological continuity are not a result of piecemeal copying, this problem does not arise.

We also noted Wollheim's worry that, if he were to inherit some of his father's memories, then he would have to lose some of his own dispositions in order to make room for the new dispositions that would accompany the new q-memories. For example, he would have to lose his ignorance and subsequent curiosity about his father's family. There would be questions about how this could happen: what would happen to his lost dispositions? Would they return at the times when he is not conscious of the q-memory?

In the case of wholesale psychological continuity, however, this problem does not arise. Fission products would, upon creation, have no existing mental states other than those that they inherit from the person with whom they are psychologically continuous, and so Wollheim's worries about how the inherited mental states would be accommodated among the existing ones need not arise.

The problems that arose regarding q-memories in the context of memory-trace copying, then, do not arise regarding q-memories in the context of wholesale psychological continuity. Because of this,

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q-memories in the context of wholesale psychological continuity provide support for Parfit's position. The fact that, in the context of wholesale psychological continuity, a person inherits another person's memories along with their full psychological context means that the resulting q-memories will be as strong as the original memories. As a result, we can claim that the only respect in which the q-memories differ from the ordinary memories is in the identity of the subject. This in turn supports Parfit's claim that what matters is relation R.

However, as we saw in section 1, it is not enough that q-memories should be as strong as ordinary memories. It must also be true that there could exist an 'autonomously intelligible faculty' of q-memory. We saw that Cassam and McDowell doubt that there could be such a faculty. However, they do not argue that such a faculty could not exist, only that the possibility of piecemeal memory-trace copying would not provide evidence for it. We shall now consider whether the possibility of wholesale psychological continuity would provide evidence for it.

### 6. 'An Autonomously Intelligible Faculty' of Q-Memory

In section 1, we looked at some reasons for doubting that there could be, to quote McDowell, 'an autonomously intelligible faculty of knowing the past from a participant's perspective but without commitment to the participant's having been oneself'. The reasons for doubting that there could be such a faculty are, roughly, threefold. We shall look at each of these reasons in turn, following which I shall argue that these reasons apply to q-memory only in the context of piecemeal memory-trace copying, and that, in the case of q-memory in the context of wholesale psychological continuity—especially in the case of fission—they do not constitute forceful objections to the possibility of a faculty of q-memory.

The first reason for doubting that there could be a faculty of q-memory is that such a faculty could not alone provide the subject with knowledge about the past. We have seen that Parfit concedes that q-memories could not provide the subject with knowledge about the past unless the subject knows how they were caused. And Cassam's remarks highlight the point that, if such knowledge depends upon ordinary memory—which it invariably would—then q-memory is parasitic upon ordinary memory. Therefore, q-memory cannot be said to be an autonomously intelligible faculty

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of *knowing the past* from a participant's perspective but without commitment to the participant's having been oneself.

The second reason for doubting the possibility of a faculty of q-memory, like the first, centres on the point that the concept of q-memory is, in an important sense, a derivative of the concept of ordinary memory, and therefore it cannot be a fundamental type of memory, of which ordinary memory is a special case. Parfit tells us that, in the case of ordinary memory, the belief that the remembered events happened to oneself is 'separable' from the content of the memory. McDowell, however, gives us reason to doubt this. To reiterate, he tells us that 'we have not been equipped to make sense of mere [q]-memories other than by supposing that they would present themselves as memories—that is, they would embody an impression, which must be illusory, that the subject of the recalled state or occurrence was oneself'<sup>28</sup>. And, as he goes on to remark, 'the concept of illusion, of whatever kind, is secondary to the concept of what the illusion misrepresents itself as being'<sup>29</sup>. As a result, the notion of q-memory is intelligible only via the notion of ordinary memory. Because of this, it is not the case that q-memory is an *autonomously intelligible* faculty of knowing the past from a participant's perspective but without commitment to the participant's having been oneself.

The third point against the possibility of a faculty of q-memory has not, as yet, been made explicit. If q-memories are produced by piecemeal memory-trace copying, then there is no restriction upon the range of possible persons whose memories could be copied into the brain of a given person. To put this point another way, if I am told that I have had someone else's memory-traces copied in my brain, then this fact alone gives me no clue as to whose memories they might be. It is worth stressing that my being told that I have had *somebody's* memory-traces copied into my brain will not suffice for the q-memories to provide me with knowledge about the past: I must also find out certain things about the donor of the memories<sup>30</sup>. For example, if I find that I have apparent memories of Clacton-on-Sea, and I am told that I have had someone's memory-traces copied into my brain, I will not be able to conclude from this that my apparent memories of Clacton-on-Sea are q-memories of the experiences of the person whose memory-traces

<sup>28</sup> Op. cit. note 8, 240.

<sup>29</sup> Op, cit. note 8, 240–241.

<sup>30</sup> This point has been made by Strawson (P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* (London: Methuen, 1966)) and Shoemaker (op. cit. note 1).

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have been copied to me, even if I know that I have never been to Clacton. This is because, without further information, I could not know that these apparent memories are q-memories resulting from memory-trace copying. It may be that the donor of the memory-traces has never been to Clacton either, and so in this case these apparent memories would be products of my (or her) imagination, perhaps arising from my (or her) having seen scenes of Clacton on the television. On the other hand, if I discover that the donor of the memory-traces is a regular visitor to Clacton, and perhaps that she remembers seeing an unusual event that is depicted in my apparent memories, then I could reasonably conclude that my apparent memories are q-memories of the experiences of the donor of the memory-traces.

The fact that, in the case of q-memories resulting from piecemeal memory-trace copying, there is no restriction on whose memories may be copied to a given person highlights the extent of the problems mentioned in the explanation of the first consideration above. In order for a subject to gain knowledge from a q-memory, she must know how the q-memory has been caused, and this information must include something about the donor of the memory-traces in order to identify her apparent memories as q-memories of the donor's experiences. This knowledge would not, of course, be provided by the q-memories themselves. Therefore, it is not merely the case that the recipient of copied memory-traces would not be entitled to conclude, on the basis of the resulting q-memories, 'I did that'. It is also true that she would not be able to conclude, of any person, *X*, '*X* did that'.

In the light of the discussion above, we might elaborate on McDowell's description of the faculty of q-memory thus:

**Faculty of q-memory (1):** an autonomously intelligible faculty of knowing the past from a participant's perspective but without commitment to the participant's having been *anyone* in particular.

As we have seen, Parfit introduces the notion of q-memory using the example of piecemeal memory-trace copying. As a result, much of the criticism of his account of q-memory focuses on what he says about piecemeal memory-trace copying. We have seen that q-memories in the context of piecemeal memory-trace copying are not the sort of q-memories that he can rely upon to support his claim that what matters is relation R. However, Parfit also provides arguments for his reductionism that do not rely upon the possibility of piecemeal memory-trace copying, but which, instead, rely on the

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possibility of fission, and the products of a fission would enjoy wholesale psychological continuity with their fission ancestors. In the previous section, we saw that many of the objections against q-memory apply to q-memory in the context of piecemeal memory-trace copying, but not to q-memory in the context of wholesale psychological continuity. This lends hope to Parfit: perhaps the notion of q-memory in the context of wholesale psychological continuity can support his claim that what matters is relation R. First, however, we must ascertain whether q-memory in the context of wholesale psychological continuity can support the possibility of a faculty of q-memory. We shall do this by looking at each of the three points cited above as reasons to doubt the possibility of a faculty of q-memory, and considering whether they apply to q-memory in the context of wholesale psychological continuity.

Before we start, a preliminary remark. Wholesale psychological continuity need not be peculiar to fission. Parfit also discusses the possibility of Teletransportation, where a person has a 'blueprint' made of all his mental and physical states, and this blueprint is used to create an exact mental and physical replica elsewhere. Such a replica would enjoy wholesale psychological continuity with the person from whom the blueprint is created. However, since we are concerned primarily with fission, I will not discuss Teletransportation. From this point, my discussion of wholesale psychological continuity will be confined to the case of fission. It may be that some of my remarks about the relation between a person and her fission products cannot be applied to the relation between a person and his replica, and so I will dispense with talk of q-memory in the context of wholesale psychological continuity, and talk instead of q-memory in the context of fission.

The first point that we looked at above concerned the ability of a faculty of q-memory to furnish the subject with knowledge about the past. Cassam's remarks give us reason to believe that it would not. Cassam's objection, however, does not hold in the case of q-memories in the context of fission. If I were one of the two products resulting from Parfit's imagined fission, it would be possible for me to wake up from the operation and conclude that all of my apparent memories of those experiences which occurred before I woke up are in fact q-memories of another person's experiences. But I would not need to rely upon ordinary memory in order to draw this conclusion. It may be that the deceased person, one of whose brain hemispheres was transplanted into a body to form me, knew about her proposed fission and transplant before

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she died. Since I have inherited all of this person's psychological traits, I find that I now have apparent memories, from her point of view, of a conversation with the surgeon who told her the details of the operation. I could infer from this information that, since I know that the operation—assuming it went according to plan—resulted in two psychologically exactly similar survivors, this means that I am not the only person to have these apparent memories: there exists a fellow inheritor. As a result, neither of us is identical with the person whose experiences I seem to remember. From this I can conclude that the apparent memories that I have are not ordinary memories of my own experiences. They are q-memories of another person's experiences.

It may be objected here that, since I am inferring that my apparent memories are genuine q-memories on the basis of further apparent memories, my conclusion is invalid. I am trapped in a vicious circle of justification, and without further information, I cannot know the real status of my apparent memories. However, this sceptical objection takes a familiar form, which we can counter by appealing to a coherentist view of justification. If my apparent memories, as I wake up after the transplant operation, offer a plausible account of the causal chain of events leading up to my current predicament, and if this account implies that the apparent memories are q-memories of another person's experiences, then in the absence of serious flaws in this account, I should conclude that I am experiencing q-memories. This is the way in which we justify many other beliefs, such as those about the existence of an external world. As a result, q-memory in the context of fission can successfully be defended against Cassam's objection that q-memories, unlike ordinary memories, cannot be a source of non-inferential knowledge about the past. This means that the first reason cited above for doubting the possibility of a faculty of q-memory does not apply to q-memory in the context of fission.

The second point against the possibility of a faculty of q-memory centred on Parfit's claim that in the case of ordinary memory, the subject's belief that she remembers her own experiences is 'separable'. As we have seen, McDowell denies this, and argues that q-memories present the illusion that the q-remembered experiences were one's own.

In order to decide whether this point applies to q-memories in the context of fission, let us consider exactly why McDowell claims that q-memories are illusions of ordinary memory. In the case of an ordinary memory, which presents the past from a participant's perspective, one is entitled to claim that the participant is oneself.

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As a result, on the basis of a memory of, for example, the participant going to the bank, the subject of the memory is entitled to assert, 'I went to the bank'. On the other hand, if I am the recipient of memory-trace of John's memory of going to the bank, although I would seem to remember having gone to the bank, I would not be entitled to assert, on the basis of this q-memory, 'I went to the bank'. For, although this q-memory comes to me in the first-person mode, I am not the subject of the q-remembered experience. This is what McDowell means when he says that q-memories are illusions of ordinary memories.

Does McDowell's objection hold in the case of q-memory in the context of fission? On one way of looking at it, it does. A fission product who asserted, 'I did  $x$ ' on the basis of a q-memory of her fission ancestor's experience of doing  $x$  would be speaking falsely. However, we can imagine a scenario where McDowell's objection would not apply. Let us imagine a society of persons who fission on a regular basis. For such persons, q-memory would be a familiar phenomenon. We might suppose that a large portion of the society would be fission products, and so they would have a large number of q-memories. In this case, these persons would not be in the habit of automatically concluding, 'I did  $x$ ' on the basis of their memories or q-memories of experiences of doing  $x$ . However, that does not entail that their beliefs about the identity of the subjects of their (q-)remembered experiences are separable from the content of the (q-)memory. Rather, it may be that, instead of their memories and q-memories leading them to conclude, 'I did  $x$ ', they would lead them to conclude, 'I did  $x$  or one of my fission ancestors did  $x$ '. This would not be a separable belief: it is one that would be true and justifiable in all cases of memory and q-memory. (Unless, of course, they began to dabble in piecemeal memory-trace copying, but perhaps they would be no more likely to do this than we are.)

In this case, the q-memories that fission products would inherit from the pre-fission person would not be illusory. It is simply the case that, because fission would be an everyday occurrence for them, the conclusion that they would automatically draw from their memories and q-memories would be different from the conclusion that we automatically draw from our memories. And since their conclusion would be true, it would not be the case that their q-memories would be illusory. As a result, McDowell's objection would not apply to the sort of q-memories that they would have. Moreover, there would be a case for claiming that q-memory is the fundamental type of memory, of which ordinary memory is a special case. This is because 'I did  $x$  or one of my fission ancestors

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did  $x'$  would be true in all cases of ordinary memory and q-memory through fission. It is just that the latter disjunct is, in fact, superfluous, since none of us has any fission ancestors.

Let us turn to the third, and final, point that we discussed above. This point stated that, in the case of q-memories in the context of piecemeal memory-trace copying, there would be no restriction on whose memory-traces could be copied to a given person. As a result, if I was the recipient of copied memory-traces, then in order for the resulting q-memories to furnish me with knowledge, it would not be enough for me to learn that memory-trace copying had occurred. I would also need to know something about the donor. The q-memories themselves would contain no information about the subject of the q-remembered experiences.

In the case of q-memory in the context of fission, this would not be the case. Fission would not enable anyone to q-remember anyone else's experiences. For a fission product to discover the identity of the person whose experiences he q-remembers, he would not need to look very far, for there would be only a few possible candidates. The subject of the q-remembered experiences would be either the q-rememberer himself, or the person who fissioned to form him, or—if the person who fissioned to form him was himself a fission product—the person who fissioned to form *him*, and so on. And the fission product would not need to rely on ordinary memories to work out the causal origin of this information. As we have seen from the discussion of Cassam's objection, the fact that wholesale psychological continuity would exist between persons and their fission products means that the fission product could verify q-memories by assessing their coherence with other q-memories and memories.

This means that q-memory in the context of piecemeal memory-trace copying is unlike q-memory in the context of fission. In order for my q-memories resulting from piecemeal memory-trace copying to furnish me with knowledge, it would not be sufficient for me to learn that memory-trace copying had occurred. I would also need external knowledge about the causal origin of the memory-trace. On the other hand, in order for my q-memories resulting from fission to furnish me with knowledge, it would be enough for me to know that fission had occurred. This is because, from my knowledge that I am a fission product, I can conclude that there are only a few possible persons whose experiences I q-remember. And I can work out the causal origin of the q-memories on the basis of their content.

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This discussion shows that q-memory in the context of fission is not as startling a phenomenon as q-memory in the context of piecemeal memory-trace copying. Consider again McDowell's characterisation of the faculty of q-memory as 'an autonomously intelligible faculty of knowing the past from a participant's perspective but without commitment to the participant's having been oneself'. I suggest that McDowell's reluctance to accept that there could be a faculty of q-memory is not due merely to the fact that such a faculty would not commit the subject to the belief that the participant was himself, but to something stronger, namely, the fact that such a faculty would not induce the subject to arrive at any beliefs about the participant *whatsoever*. The idea of piecemeal memory-trace copying does not support the claim that there could be such a faculty. As McDowell remarks, it is more natural to see the q-memories that would result from piecemeal memory-trace copying as illusions of ordinary memory.

However, it is not the case that q-memory in the context of fission would not induce the subject to arrive at any beliefs about the participant whatsoever. On the contrary, the subject of such q-memories would be committed to the participant's having been himself or one of his fission ancestors. We might, then, reformulate McDowell's characterisation of the faculty of q-memory to reflect the sort of faculty that, *ex hypothesi*, the possibility of fission gives us reason to believe could exist:

**Faculty of q-memory (2):** an autonomously intelligible faculty of knowing the past from a participant's perspective with commitment to the participant's having been oneself or a fission ancestor.

This description differs from what might be seen as an accurate description of ordinary memory only in that the end of it—'or a fission ancestor'—would be omitted in a description of ordinary memory. They both come with commitment about the identity of the participant. They differ only in the nature of this commitment<sup>31</sup>. As a result, we have good reason to believe that q-memory

<sup>31</sup> That this formulation of q-memory does not dispense with identity is itself significant. Wiggins argues that it is not possible to arrive at a definition of q-memory that both dispenses with identity *and* retains the required similarity with ordinary memory. He tells us that '[o]ne major role of experiential memory ... is that it supplies unmediated (albeit fallible) information that *one can take oneself to have got on the basis of one's own experience in the past.*' (op. cit. note 7, 219) Eliminating identity, then,

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in the context of fission could be ‘an autonomously intelligible faculty’. Therefore, q-memory in the context of fission would be like ordinary memory in all respects except that the subject of the q-memory need not be identical with the subject of the q-remembered experience. This is true both of *states* of q-memory—q-memories in the context of fission would be as strong as ordinary memories—and of the *faculty* of q-memory—such a faculty would deliver q-memories which would furnish the subject with knowledge, and which would engender non-inferential beliefs about the subject of the q-remembered experiences.

### 7. Conclusion

We have seen that q-memory, understood in the context of fission, escapes all of the objections to q-memory that we have considered. These objections apply only to q-memory in the context of piecemeal memory-trace copying. As a result, providing that q-memory is construed in the context of fission, the claim that relation R is what matters is not undermined by such objections. And, since Parfit focuses on the example of fission in his argument for this claim, we can conclude that he does understand q-memory in this way, despite introducing it by discussing an example of piecemeal memory-trace copying. As a result, the conception of q-memory that Parfit uses to support his claim that what matters is relation R is substantial enough to support his argument.

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would remove an essential part of what memory is, and what we understand by it. On our current formulation of q-memory, however, we need modify Wiggins’s claim only slightly, so that we claim instead that q-memory supplies unmediated (albeit fallible) information that *one can take oneself to have got on the basis of one’s own experience in the past or that of a fission ancestor*.