

## Williams' Thought Experiment

### Tale 1

An evil scientist has trapped you and a horrible individual who deserves to be tortured, Ted. What he is going to do is take your brain and put it in Ted's body, and take Ted's brain and stick it in your body. Then he will mercilessly torture one of the bodies. You now (before the operation) get to choose which.

### Tale 1a

As in tale one, except instead of swapping brains the evil scientist "stores" the data from your brain and "implants" it into Ted's brain and vice versa. He then tortures one of the two bodies and you get the choice now as to which. Which would you choose?

Many people in response to story (1) and (1a) say that they have changed bodies. *They go where the "information" in their brain goes.*

### Tale 2

- (a) An evil scientist is going to torture you. But to make you feel better, he will "wipe" your brain squeaky clean of all memories. Feel any better?
- (b) If not, the scientist is not only going to "wipe" your brain, but provide you with a set of "pre-fab" memories as if you were someone else. Feel better now?
- (c) If not, the scientist won't use pre-fab memories. He'll pick a real live subject (Ted, say) and manipulate you into having those real life memories. He'll leave Ted alone though. Feel better now?
- (d) If not, he won't leave Ted alone. Rather he'll brainwash Ted into having your beliefs and memories. He'll continue to torture your body. Feel better now?

Many people in response to story (2d) say that they haven't changed bodies (and hence don't feel at all very well about their circumstances). *They go where their body and brain goes.*

Williams argued that in many ways this is a reasonable and natural response because of the progression from (2a) to (2d):

- The difference between (2a) and (2b) is a matter of implanting memories in you. Brainwashing you doesn't seem to change who you are.
- The difference between (2b) and (2c) is just that the brainwashing has a new source and motivation. That can't make a substantial difference.
- The difference between (2c) and (2d) is something totally *external* to you. Extrinsic changes shouldn't affect who you are.

The differing verdicts are worrisome not only because they support different views (somatic or psychological), but because (1b) and (2d) are the *very same case*. What to make of this...