

Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity – Thomas Reid

By Judson Martin

Of Mr. Locke's Account...



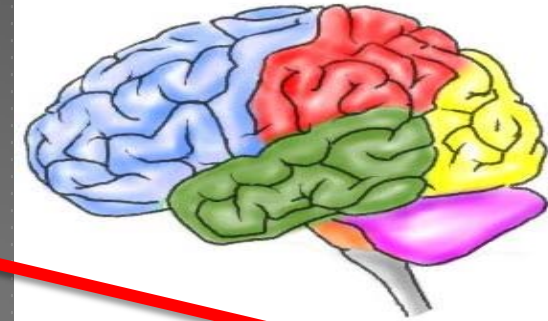
- ▶ 18th Century Scottish philosopher
- ▶ Disagreed with many of the points in Locke's essay
- ▶ Has a problem with Locke defining personal identity on consciousness and memory alone

Of Mr. Locke's Account...

- ▶ Locke makes a mistakes in his writing.
- ▶ Locke uses the word consciousness when he means remembrance. Consciousness is an immediate knowledge of the present, while remembrance is an immediate knowledge of the past.
- ▶ Just to be clear: Locke bases personality on *remembrance*.
- ▶ If you remember doing something, you were the one that did it.

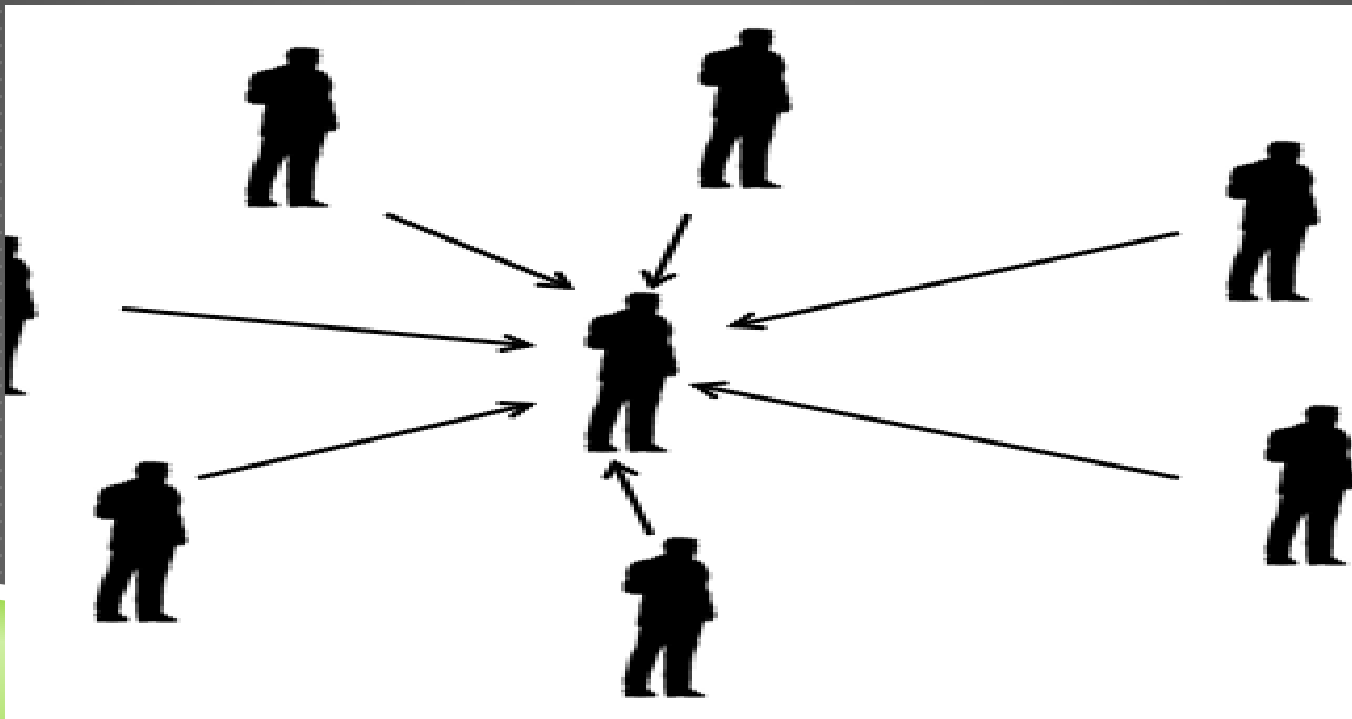
Of Mr. Locke's Account...

- ▶ Locke views the consciousness of a person as what defines their personality, the physical body having no effect.
- ▶ Reid points out that it is impossible and useless to separate the body from the mind, and it works against being able to define personal identity...



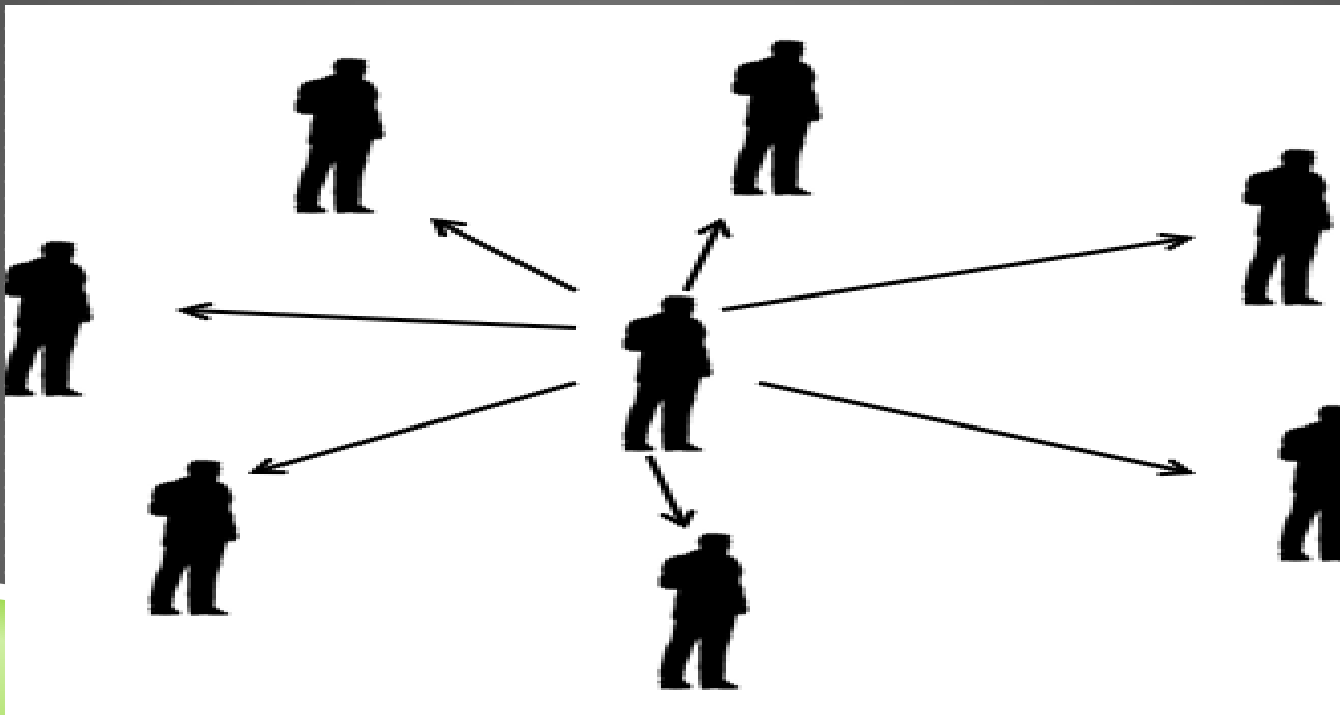
Of Mr. Locke's Account...

- ▶ If consciousness could be transferred from one person to another, then multiple intelligent beings could be the same person.



Of Mr. Locke's Account...

- ▶ Or, if consciousness that was forgotten meant it was not done by that person, then multiple intelligent beings would come from one person.

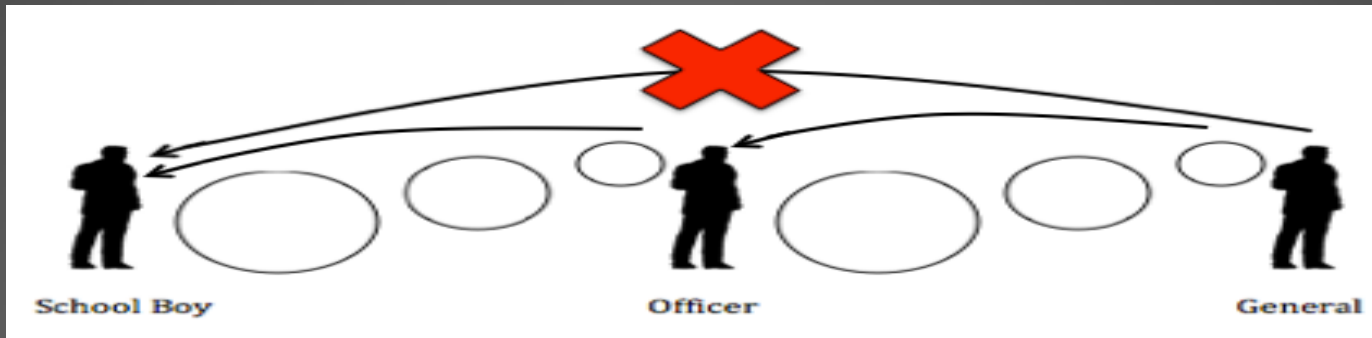


Of Mr. Locke's Account...

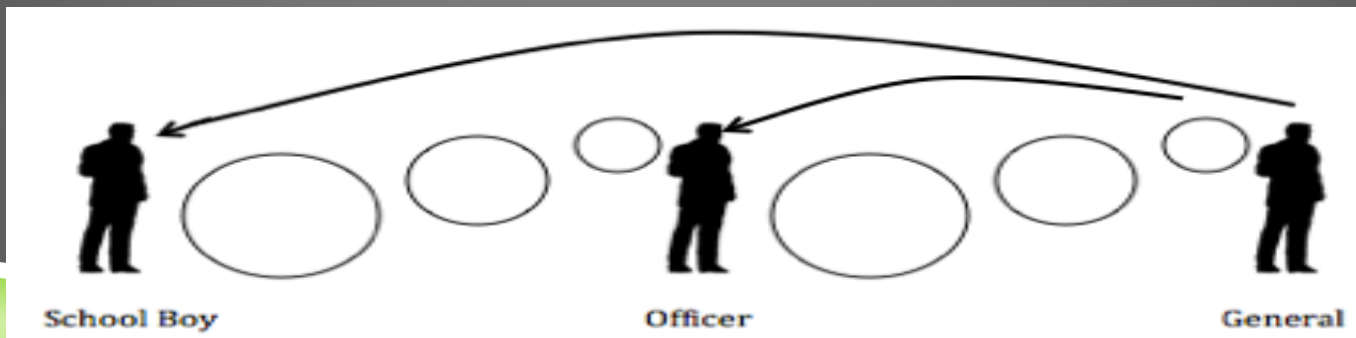
- ▶ Reid tells a story of a school boy who is flogged.
- ▶ As the school boy grows up, he becomes an army officer. As an Officer, he remembers being flogged as a school boy. According to Locke, the Officer has the same personal identity as he did when he was a school boy.
- ▶ Later, the Officer becomes a General. He remembers being an Officer, but no longer remembers being flogged as a school boy. So according to Locke, the General has the same personal identity as the Officer. But the Officer has the same personal identity as the school boy, so so must the General. But he can't according to Locke...

Of Mr. Locke's Account...

- ▶ Locke's view:



- ▶ Reid's view:

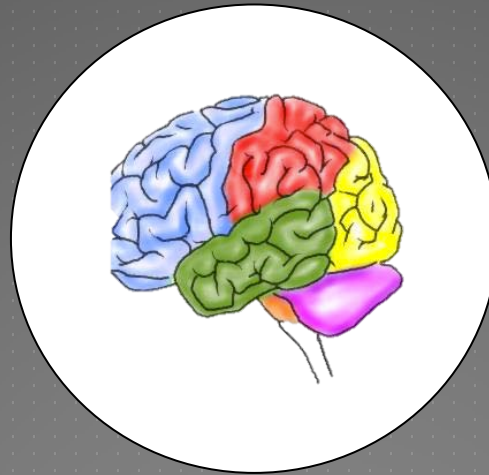


Of Mr. Locke's Account...

- ▶ Memory is evidence that you were the one to have done something. However, your memory does not *cause* you to be the person that did it.
- ▶ Locke says your memories *cause* your identity, or create it.
- ▶ Analogy: A witness to an event is evidence that it happened, but the witness did not cause the event to happen.
- ▶ Furthermore: The consciousness or memory of a person is always changing. Every moment that passes is a different consciousness.
- ▶ Is it not strange to base the identity of a person on something that is always changing?

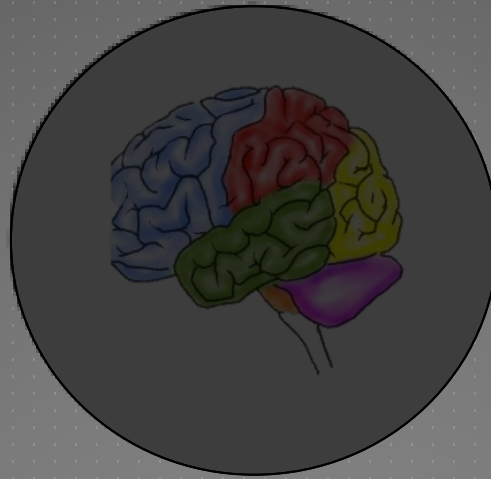
Of Mr. Locke's Account...

- ▶ A final argument against Locke:
- ▶ Your personal identity is your consciousness, so...



Of Mr. Locke's Account...

- ▶ A final argument against Locke:
- ▶ Your personal identity is your consciousness, so...



- ▶ What happens when you turn the lights out and go to sleep?
Does your personal identity cease to exist?