Parfit draws on the experimental findings in split brain cases in support of the Bundle Theory of personal identity and the claim that persons or egos, in some sense, don’t exist. Parfit’s underlying point is that the unity of consciousness cannot be accounted for in terms of personhood (as Locke or Reid might have argued) but can be accounted for according to the Bundle Theory (as Hume might have argued).

**Ego Theory:** A person’s continued existence can only be explained as the continued existence of a particular Ego, or subject of experiences (the self) which also serves to explain the unity of a person’s whole life.

**Bundle Theory:** A person’s continued existence cannot be explained as the continued existence of a particular Ego or self nor can we explain the unity of consciousness at any time or the unity of a whole life by referring to a person.

A Bundle Theorist does not deny the existence of persons but claims that personhood is a fact about our grammar or language and not a fact about the nature of reality or what exists (that is, it is a linguistic fact and not a metaphysical fact). The existence of something over and above this grammatical fact, a separate personhood or Ego or Self, is denied.

But if there are no persons or selves what are there? Long series of different mental states and events (thoughts, sensations, and the like) which make up one life.

What accounts for the unity of this series? Each series is unified by various kinds of causal relations, such as the relations that hold between experiences and later memories of them.

Consider the strong similarities between Hume’s theory of personal identity and Parfit’s Bundle Theory of personal identity.

What is the evidence that supports the Bundle Theory against the Ego Theory?

- Cross-cultural and historical evidence (84)
- Evidence from psychology and neuropsychology (84)
- Various thought experiments (85)
- The analogy to a club (86)
- Split-brain patients (87)

How strong is Parfit’s argument? In order to critically assess his position there are several things you might do:

- Criticize the evidence in support of the Bundle Theory
- Consider the implications of his position and argue that they are unacceptable
- Present evidence directly in support of the Ego Theory