

PHL 308  
Elementary  
Ethics

Lecture Nineteen  
Dr. Jeff Johnson



# Paradoxes of Dementia

- ◆ Is Margo a person?
- ◆ No, a pretty easy case
- ◆ Yes, then her current autonomy counts for something
- ◆ Is post-dementia Margo the same person as pre-dementia Margo?
- ◆ No, why should pre-dementia Margo care about or have autonomy over another person?
- ◆ Yes, why would Margo cede her future autonomy?



# Borderline Cases

- ◆ Is this an X?
  - ◆ Yes
  - ◆ No
  - ◆ You just can't say
- ◆ Pan Am case (flying boat)
- ◆ Human fetus?
- ◆ Margo as a borderline person
- ◆ Post-dementia Margo as a borderline "close enough" continuer of pre-dementia Margo



# The Range of Cases

- ◆ Janet Atkins
- ◆ Margo
- ◆ Mr. Lewis
- ◆ Miss Ramírez's sister
- ◆ Even worse cases
- ◆ Post-dementia
  - ◆ Personhood
  - ◆ Personal identity



# Dworkin's Story

- ◆ Fear of dementia
- ◆ Right to have advanced directives honored
- ◆ Autonomy
- ◆ Precedent autonomy
- ◆ Assumption about personal identity
  - ◆ Experiential interests
  - ◆ Critical interests
- ◆ Assumption about personhood



# My Story

- ◆ Share Dworkin's fear of dementia
- ◆ "My" post-dementia self as borderline person
- ◆ "My" post-dementia self as a borderline "close enough" continuer of my pre-dementia self
- ◆ Pre-dementia autonomy
- ◆ Post-dementia autonomy
- ◆ Post-dementia experiential interests
- ◆ Post-dementia critical interests
- ◆ What kind of advanced directive?



# My Advanced Directive

- ◆ My surrogate decision-maker (a philosopher?)
- ◆ Look at my current experiential interests
- ◆ Consider my pre-dementia critical interests
- ◆ Am "I" still a person?
- ◆ Am "I" the same person as my pre-dementia self?
- ◆ Borderline cases, but to which extreme?
- ◆ Respect the surrogate decision-maker's call



# My Story as Therapy

- ◆ Is dementia really that scary?
- ◆ Will “I” still be a person?
- ◆ If yes, will I still be the same person as before?”
- ◆ If no, why should I care about this other person, or have control over him?
- ◆ If yes, don't I want to preserve some future autonomy for this person?



# The Two Stories

Dworkin

- ◆ Post-dementia Margo is not a person
- ◆ Post-dementia Margo is the same person as pre-dementia Margo (is this contradictory?)
- ◆ Margo's advanced directive must be honored
- ◆ Must a surrogate decision-maker agree with Dworkin's assessments?

Johnson

- Post-dementia Margo is a borderline person
- ◆ Post-dementia Margo is a borderline case of the same person as pre-dementia Margo
- ◆ Margo needs a much more complicated advanced directive before we can decide
- ◆ A surrogate decision-maker must assess Margo's personhood and personal identity



# Your Challenges

- ◆ Explain (teach)  
Dworkin's story
- ◆ Explain (teach)  
Johnson's story
- ◆ Which story is superior?
- ◆ Why?
- ◆ What is your story on  
dementia and the right to  
die?