

Who do you think you are?

THE PROBLEM OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

What is the problem?

There are *many!*

Problems of Personal Identity

- Which person am *I*?
- What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of *personhood*?
- How does a person persist through time?
- How do we count persons?
- What are the properties essential to me?

Problems of Personal Identity

- Which person am *I*?
- What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of *personhood*?
- **How does a person persist through time?**
- How do we count persons?
- What are the properties essential to me?

Why should we care?

Implications

- Are we always a person?
 - Fœtuses?
 - Persistent vegetative state?
- To whom do we owe ethical duties?
- Who (or what) owes ethical duties?

Some Possible Answers

I. PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW

The Memory Condition

Memory Condition

For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls self; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal Identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational Being: And as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that Person....

(Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding)

Memory Condition

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Memory Condition

A past or future person is you just in case you can now remember an experience she had then, or she can then remember an experience you are having now.

Memory Condition

Objection #1: Forgetting

Memory Condition

1. A young boy steals some apples.
2. The young boy grows into a middle-aged man who joins the military.
3. The middle-aged man remembers the young boy stealing apples.
4. The middle-aged man grows into an old man.
5. The old man remembers the middle-aged soldier, but *forgets* the young boy stealing apples

Memory Condition

∴ By the Memory Condition:

- the *middle-aged man* is the same person as the *young boy*
- the *old man* is the same person as the *middle-aged man*
- BUT the old man is NOT the same person as the young boy!

Memory Condition

Problem:

Identity is **transitive!**

Memory Condition

The memory condition leads to a **contradiction**.

Therefore, the condition is **false**.

Memory Condition

Argument by *reductio ad absurdum*.

Memory Condition

Objection #2: Fission

Memory Condition

1. Suppose the two hemispheres of my brain can operate independently of each other.
 2. Suppose that, tomorrow, one hemisphere is transplanted into one body (call her 'Lefty') and the opposite hemisphere is transplanted into a different body (call her 'Righty'), *such that Lefty and Righty will have all of my memories after the surgery.*
 3. After the surgery, suppose Lefty is thirsty and Righty is not.
- ∴ By the Memory Condition:
- Lefty will be the same person as me
 - Righty will be the same person as me
- ∴ *I will simultaneously be thirsty AND not thirsty!*

Memory Condition

The memory condition leads to a **contradiction**.

Therefore, the condition is **false**.

I. ANIMALISM

Animalism

“...all human people are animals...”
(Olson 2003)

Animalism

The Thinking Animal Argument

1. Suppose you are *not* identical with a human animal.
 2. You are thinking.
 3. There is a human animal sitting in your chair (namely, the animal made up of your body).
 4. The human animal sitting in your chair is thinking.
- ∴ (From 1, 2, 4) *There are two thinkers sitting in your chair!*

Animalism

...but surely this is absurd!

Animalism

Where does it go wrong?

Animalism

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Reductio ad absurdum.

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Animalism

Objection #1: Animals don't think

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Animalism

Objection #2: Teleportation

Animalism

Suppose you step into a teleportation machine. This machine scans your body, making a blueprint of all of the physical facts about you. But in this process, your body is destroyed.

The data in the scan is then sent to the corresponding machine on Mars. There, the machine uses Martian matter and creates a duplicate of you on the basis of the blueprint. The process is nearly instantaneous.

Once complete, the person on Mars has all of your memories, beliefs, desires, etc. They believe they are you.

But (arguably) they are not the same animal as you.

Questions? Thoughts?