John Perry (1943-)

Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality

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Immortality to Personal Identity?

- Could I survive death?
- Could some being after my death be me?
- What are the conditions for personal identity?

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Resurrection Stories

- Mark 16:12—Jesus shows himself under a different form.
- John 20:14—Mary didn’t recognize him until he spoke her name.

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Immortality to Personal Identity?

- What makes the “Risen Christ” the very same person as the Jesus who was crucified?
- What makes Commander Riker on Star Trek: Next Generation the very same person after he is transported as he was when he stepped into the transporter machine?

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Personal Identity

- Despite some small differences, what is it about me now that makes me the very same person as the person who was here last week?
- What are the conditions of personal identity?
- Could they extend across the point of death?

Theories of Personal Identity

- **Same Soul Theory**: A person at one time is the very same person as a person at a later time if and only if they have the very same immaterial soul.
  - Same soul → same person.
    - Sufficient condition.
  - Different soul → different person.
    - Necessary condition.

Necessary & Sufficient Conditions

- Necessary conditions: Conditions that have to be there.
- Starting your car

Necessary Conditions

- Car won’t start:
  - Gas
  - Battery
  - Alternator
  - ?
  - If it’s missing, the car won’t start.

Necessary & Sufficient Conditions

- “To pass the course you must pass the final exam.”
  - Necessary Condition
- “If you pass the final, then you’ll pass the course.”
  - Sufficient Condition.
- “Passing the final is the only way to pass the course, but that’s all it takes.”
  - Necessary & Sufficient Condition.

Sufficient Conditions

- What does it take for the car to start?
  - Gas, Battery, Alternator, + ?
- All those things working together constitute a sufficient condition.
- Doesn’t preclude other sufficient conditions
- Jump start.
Theories of Personal Identity

• **Same Soul Theory**: A person at one time is the very same person as a person at a later time if and only if they have the very same immaterial soul.

• Problems?
• I can tell if you are the same person, but I can’t tell if you have the same soul. So sameness of soul can’t be relevant.

Theories of Personal Identity

• But even if you can’t tell if I have the same soul, *I can*.
• Can I? How do I tell?
• Perhaps the soul I have now is exactly like the one I had yesterday, but it’s not the very same one.

Theories of Personal Identity

• Being the very same one doesn’t mean being exactly alike.
  – It can change in its accidental properties.
• Being exactly alike doesn’t mean being the very same one.
  – There can be duplicates.

“**The Same**”

• Qualitative Indiscernibility:
  • “Just alike” “Exactly alike”
• Numerical Identity:
  • “The very same one”
• Spatio-Temporal Continuity:
  • Traces a continuous path through space and time: “It’s the one that was here before.”

“**The Same**”

• All I could tell is that my soul was *just like* the one yesterday, not that it’s the *very same one*.
• With souls, we can’t get beyond qualitative indiscernibility to numerical identity.
• But with people we can distinguish between qualitative indiscernibility (“identical twin”) and numerical identity (“It’s you!”).
Theories of Personal Identity

- **Same Soul Theory**: A person at one time is the very same person as a person at a later time if and only if they have the very same immaterial soul.
- **Same Body Theory**: A person at one time is the very same person as a person at a later time if and only if they have the very same living material body.

**Same Body Theory**

- How do we know if it is the same living material body?
- Molecules completely replaced every 7 years.

**Heraclitus**

(536-470 B.C.)

“You can’t step into the same river twice.”

**Who is “The Platters”?**

- “The Original Platters”
- Who is “The Platters”??