

John Perry
(1943-)

*Dialogue on
Personal
Identity and
Immortality*



Immortality to Personal Identity?

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

Immortality to Personal Identity?

- What makes the “Risen Christ” the very same person as the Jesus who was crucified?

Resurrection Stories

- Mark 16:12--Jesus shows himself under a different form.
- Luke 24:13-31--On the road to Emmaus disciples don't recognize him.
- John 20:14--Mary didn't recognize him until he spoke her name.
- John 21:4--Disciples didn't recognize him.

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?



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

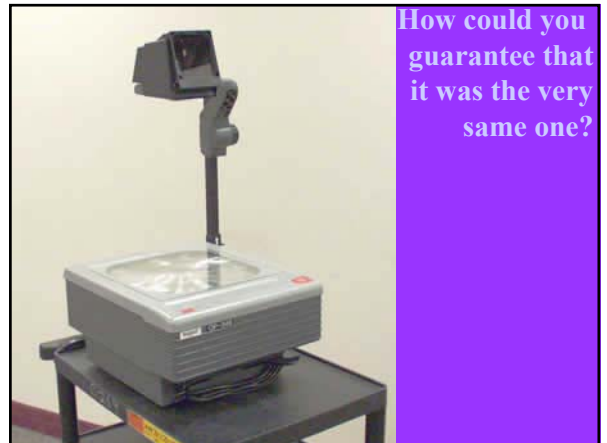
- **Same Soul Theory:** A person at one time is the very same person as a person at a later time *if and only if* they have the very same immaterial soul.
- Problems?
- I can tell if you are the same person, but I can't tell if you have the same soul. So sameness of soul can't be relevant.

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.

Theories of Personal Identity

- **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 living body → same person.
 - Sufficient condition.
- Different body → different person.
 - Necessary condition.

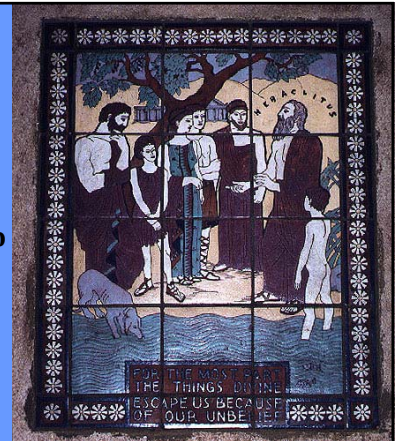
Same Body Theory

- 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.”

?



Same Body Theory

- How do we know if it is the same living material body?
- Spatio-temporal continuity.
- Gradual replacement of molecules over 7 years vs. Sudden change of all molecules?
- Heart-transplant?