Dialogue on Personal Identity & Immortality

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.

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**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?

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**Same Body Theory**

- Objections?
- I can imagine waking up with a different body.

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“The Platters”

Who is “The Platters”? 

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“The Original Platters”
Franz Kafka  
“Metamorphosis”

Same Body Theory

- I can imagine waking up with a different body.
- So it is false that:
  - Different body → different person.
- Same body is not a necessary condition for personal identity.

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 material body.
- **Psychological Continuity Theory**.

Psychological Continuity

- **Psychological Continuity Theory**: A person at one time is the very same person as a person at a later time if and only if the person at the later time remembers experiences of the person at the earlier time?
- No: Then I wouldn’t be that child who went to kindergarten, or whatever I don’t remember.
Psychological Continuity

• Psychological Continuity Theory: A person at one time is the very same person as a person at a later time if and only if the person at the later time is psychologically continuous with the person at the earlier time.

• Psychological Continuity: There is a chain of person-stages connected by episodic memory.

Psychological Continuity

• Psychological Continuity: There is a chain of person-stages connected by episodic memory.

• A, B, and C, are psychologically continuous with each other. So: A, B, and C are all person-stages of the very same person.

• Psychologically continuous → same person.
  – Sufficient condition.

• Not psychologically continuous → different person.
  – Necessary condition.

Psychological Continuity

The case of Clive Wearing

• Viral Encephalitis in 1985

• Significant brain damage to hippocampus.

• Episodic memories reach back less than 30 seconds.

Requirements for Memory

• What is memory?
• I (really) remember X:
  • I have an experience as though I remember x.

Memory

• Is it possible to subconsciously remember something without realizing it?
• After about 7 years Clive developed some few episodic memories which he couldn’t consciously recall, but could be displayed in what he said or did.
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• X has to have happened to me.

 Requirements for Memory

• What is memory?
• I (really) remember X:
• I have an experience as though I remember x.
• X has to have happened.
• The memory of x has been produced in the right way.

Memory

• Account of memory can’t presuppose personal identity.
• No false memories: If it didn’t happen, you can’t remember it.
• E.g., hypnotism, psychotherapy?

Memory

• No implanted memories: You have to remember it in the right way.
• E.g., No repeated retellings.
• What is “the right way”?
• Experience registers in brain.
• What about Star Trek transporter machine?
• God?
• Experience reliably, not arbitrarily, reproduced.