

Reading Guide #3 - Personal Identity

Plato, from *The Phaedo*

1. How can we get closest to knowledge? What does this imply about the relationship between mind and body?
 2. How does the body distract us from knowledge?
 3. How does Socrates describe death? Why, according to Socrates, should the philosopher welcome death?
 4. Why does Socrates claim that he can not be buried?
 5. Why does Socrates not delay drinking the potion?
 6. Did Plato believe Socrates' claims about the soul and death? Explain. (This question is asking you for a critical analysis of the reading.)
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Locke, "The Prince and the Cobbler"

7. Why is an account of personal identity based on the soul not tenable?
 8. How is the idea of the self, "Nothing else but of an animal of such a certain form" (341)?
 9. What is a person? What attributes are essential?
 10. What is the relationship between consciousness and personal identity? Consider the role of memory.
 11. Distinguish 'soul', 'man', and 'person'. What are their different identity conditions?
 12. Describe the case of the prince and the cobbler. What does it show?
 13. What problem arises from memory-loss for the view of the self as continued consciousness? How does Locke solve this problem?
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Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity"

14. What is the relationship between identity and continuity?
 15. How, on Locke's account, might two or twenty intelligent beings be the same person?
 16. How, on Locke's account, might one intelligent being be two or twenty different persons?
 17. Describe the case of the old general. Why is it a problem for Locke's account? Be specific.
 18. How does Locke confound consciousness and memory? Why is it important to distinguish them?
 19. How does Locke confuse personal identity with evidence for personal identity? Consider the stolen-horse example.
 20. "Is it not strange that the sameness or identity of a person should consist in a thing which is continually changing, and is not any two minutes the same?" (348). Explain.
 21. Why does Reid say that Locke can only conclude that we are the same kind of individual, and not the same individual?
 22. How does sleep create a problem for Locke's view?
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Reid, "Of Identity"

23. How is a belief in our own identity indispensable to our use of reason? How is it indispensable to our memories?
 24. What, in general, is identity?
 25. What is the relationship between identity and continuity?
 26. Why can't our identity be applied to our conscious experiences?
 27. Can persons have parts? Explain.
 28. "I am not thought, I am not action, I am not feeling; I am something that thinks, and acts, and suffers" (344). Explain.
 29. How does memory function as evidence for my identity? What are the limits of appeals to memory?
 30. How is personal identity, "Perfect in its kind" (345)? What kinds of identity are imperfect?
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Kripke, from *Naming and Necessity*

31. Could Queen Elizabeth have been the daughter of the Trumans?
 32. Could the Trumans have had a daughter who became the Queen of England?
 33. How do the answers to questions 31 and 32 differ?
 34. Could a person have been born to different parents than their actual parents? Explain.
 35. Could a table be made of different materials than it is? How does this claim relate to the thesis that personal identity is material?
 36. What do Kripke's considerations tell us about personal identity?
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Hume, "The Self"

37. Do we have an idea of our selves?
 38. "It must be some one impression, that gives rise to every real idea. But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference" (349). Explain
 39. What do we think about when we think about our selves?
 40. What are people?
 41. How is the self an exemplar of diversity?
 42. How is resemblance a cause of confusion about the self?
 43. Why do we call people (or ships or churches) identical? Are they really identical?
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Parfit, "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons"

44. How do split-brain cases undermine a view of the self as undivided?
45. How might someone defend a unary view of consciousness against Parfit's interpretation of the split-brain cases? How does Parfit respond?
46. How many persons are present, according to Parfit, in split-brain cases?
47. Distinguish the ego theory of the self from the bundle theory.
48. How does the bundle theorist explain-away intuitions about a single self?
49. What is the Buddhist view of the self? How does Parfit assess this view?
50. Is teleportation transportation or death? How do the ego theorist and the bundle theorist view the case?
51. How do gradual-replacement cases support the bundle theory's no-self view?
52. How does the cases of a revived club support the bundle theory?
53. "Ordinary survival is about as bad as being destroyed and having a Replica" (355). Explain.
54. How could an ego theorist describe split-brain cases by distinguishing persons and subjects of experiences? How does Parfit respond?
55. Explain Parfit's analogy between memory and awareness of multiple experiences. How does this analogy support the bundle theory?
56. How do Wiggins' divided-brain cases support a bundle theory?