

Class 16 - Dennett, "Where Am I?"

We have discussed at least six different theories of personal identity:

- Body theory
- Biological theory
- Soul theory (Plato/Descartes)
- Consciousness/Memory theory (Locke)
- Irreducibility theory (Reid)
- Bundle theory/no-self theory (Hume/Parfit)

You will be writing your papers on this topic.

One option is to write a compare-and-contrast paper on two or more of the readings: Locke and Reid, say, or Reid and Kripke, or Hume and Parfit.

Another option would be to apply one or two theories to an interesting case or set of cases, like that of Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*.

Yet another, more-difficult, but perhaps more-rewarding, option would be to formulate your own theory of personal identity out of the criticisms of one or more of the standard theories, the ones we have read. In any case, your paper should show significant exegetical effort.

For today's class, I asked you to read a whimsical piece by Dan Dennett on personal identity. Here are fourteen points in Dennett's piece that are worth considering in light of our theories.

1. After the surgery: Where am I? (311)
2. Attempting to convince himself that he is suspended in the vat (312)
3. Considering alternative 1: He is his body (Hamlet) (313)
4. Considering alternative 2: He is his brain (Yorick) (313)
5. Considering alternative 3: The point-of-view theory (314-5)
6. Another alternative: He is in two places at the same time (316)
7. The death of Hamlet (317)
8. A new body (Fortinbras) is synchronized with Yorick (319)
9. Hubert, the computer back-up for Yorick, is introduced (320)
10. Flipping between Hubert and Yorick (320)
11. Considering synchronizing a new body with Hubert or Yorick (320)
12. The conundrum: I survive if either pair survives, but I may not want both to survive (321)
13. Disembodied Hubert/Yorick (321)
14. Asynchrony (322)

Let's think about them in a little bit of detail.