

Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W
Spring 2012
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Class #11 - Introduction to Personal Identity

Who are We?

- What makes us the same people that we were when we were young?
- What makes us the same as we grow older?
- Is there a core set of properties that are consistent over our lives?
- Is there even something called the self, or are we just a bundle of properties, with no unifying thing?
- Haecceity: thisness

The Body Theory

- One answer is that we are identical with our bodies.
 - consistent with our general, contemporary preference for materialism
- But our bodies are changing constantly.
 - skin
 - hair
- Every seven years, all (or so) the cells in our bodies are replaced.
- If we identify ourselves with our bodies, we are not the same persons we were, say, a moment ago.
 - You are what you eat
- The debtor's paradox

Problem of Material Constitution 1

- The ship of Theseus
- We can replace any rotten plank without making a difference to the object; it's still Theseus's ship.
- But what if we replace all of the planks, one at a time?
 - ▶ Each replacement yields the same ship.
 - ▶ All the material in the ship is different.
- Imagine that the planks we replaced were not rotten.
 - ▶ We can reconstruct the original ship with the planks we removed.
 - ▶ Now we have two ships.
 - ▶ Which one is Theseus's ship?
 - ▶ If they are both the single ship of Theseus, then it seems as if the same material object can exist in two places at once.
- My sukkah



Problem of Material Constitution 2

- Chrysippus's Dion and Theon
 - Dion is a normal person.
 - Theon is all of Dion except the right foot.
- Remove Dion's right foot.
- No two material objects can be in the same place.
 - If Dion remains, we violate the principle that one place can't house two different objects.



Problem of Material Constitution 3

- Lump and Joan
- Is Joan different from the lump?
 - They were created at different times.
 - Lump isn't destroyed, when Joan is.
- We might admit coincidental objects.

