

Class #16 - Personal Identity: A Case Study

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

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

There are at least fourteen different points in Dennett's article which could be useful to discuss in light of our various theories of personal identity. We are going to focus on the five boldfaced ones: 1, 5, 6, 8, and 10.

- 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)

In groups, consider what a proponent of the theory your group is assigned would say about the situation at each of the five selected moments of the story. Be prepared to present your theory's view at each point to the class during discussion.