

I3. SOUL AND BODY

Crystal ball shows someone here is going to break a bone tomorrow. That's sad.

Look closer; it's you. Now the response changes, to fearful anticipation.

Two questions: What is it for someone to be your future self? And how does that link up with the special concern you feel for that someone?

The general issue of identity over time vs particular issues about particular kinds of thing.

Take soccer matches. Say Zoe learns to identify soccer events = events taking place in a soccer match. What's needed in addition to have the concept of a soccer match? "I saw two clear handballs in last night's match that the referee didn't call." "The same teams played nine matches back to back." "The World Cup coverage kept cutting between two different matches." She needs to master the identity conditions for a match.

(SI) under what conditions are simultaneous soccer-events events in the same soccer match?

(DI) under what conditions are (non-simultaneous) game-stages stages of the same soccer match?

(SI) under what conditions are simultaneous person-events events in the same person?

(DI) under what conditions are (non-simultaneous) person-stages stages of the same person?

Our focus is (DI).

Locke's answer: distinguish 'same man' and 'same person.' 'Man' denotes an animal, so the criteria for sameness of man are biological 'animal of such a certain form.' In contrast 'person' denotes an intelligent being that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places. The crucial factor here is consciousness: For it being the same consciousness that makes a man be himself to himself, personal identity depends on that only. "The substance may be varied without the change of personal identity; there being no question about the same person though the limbs that were once part of it, be cut off"

Bernard Williams's example: (i) tomorrow you are going to be horrible tortured; (ii) as before, except that you are first going to have your mind interfered with. Is this any better?

Another example: teletransportation.

We want to ask: but are you the same person? Alternative answer: there is a soul that makes all the difference. Link with afterlife. Gretchen's body will quit breathing and be buried. Is it even imaginable she survives this? We're back to imagination and intuition pumps.

P1) "Imagine us meeting in heaven. Us = you and me. So you're imagining yourself in heaven."

Easier said than done. Imagine this box of tissues we're now burning to ashes sitting here on the shelf tomorrow. There might be a similar box, but it wouldn't be this one.

P2) "The difference is we have souls. Imagine the body that greets me is inhabited by the very same soul as inhabits your body now."

If it was the soul that determined identity how do you know it's me, the person you saw two weeks ago. Reidentification is by bodies, not souls.

P3) "One doesn't observe the soul directly, but indirectly through the body. I can tell it's you greeting me on that far shore because of your body."

Careful—this body will be destroyed by then. But never mind that. How do we establish the same body—same soul association in the first place? Compare chocolates. It's not like we can look inside and check that a new soul hasn't been subbed in.

P4) "It's not the identity of your body that matters. It's your personality as expressed in your behavior. The principle is same personality—same soul. That's how we know it's you in heaven."

You've got it backwards. Same soul—same personality, maybe. But a new soul could have the same personality. The river remains dark and brooding although the watery particles are constantly changing. Why not a succession of similarly disposed souls like the river's similarly behaving water molecules?

P5) "Everyone knows from their own case that new souls aren't constantly rushing in."

All you introspect is particular thoughts and feelings. How do you know that God doesn't supply you with a new soul each morning just before waking? Naturally she would try to make it very like the original.

Strange to think the foundation of a person's identity is their soul, when people are observable and easily reidentified and souls are mysterious and hidden away. A foundation should not be less secure than what it founds.

There's a deeper problem. Suppose we said that what makes this the same shirt all over is an invisible untouchable thread running through the entire thing. Never mind that we have no reason to believe in this thread, and no way of telling where it starts and stops. All the thread hypothesis accomplishes is to push the original question back a step. For now the question arises, what binds the various parts of the thread together?

Same for the soul hypothesis; it just pushes the question back a stage.

Is that to say we lack souls? Not if that means we're robots. All of us here are conscious; we have thoughts and feelings, memories and expectations. But that's not the same thing as having a soul.

Gretchen does deny having a soul. "When you look down at this bed you see me, not some bodily wrapper that I am trapped within." For her, so far anyway, personal identity is just bodily identity. An afterlife is thus pretty much unimaginable. The point for us is not that souls don't exist, more that they're irrelevant to the issue at hand. Even granting them, they give us no real insight into personal identity.

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