



But in ancient Greece, there was a legendary king named Theseus who supposedly founded the city of Athens. Since he fought many naval battles, the people of Athens dedicated a memorial in his honour by preserving his ship in the port. This “ship of Theseus” stayed there for hundreds of years. As time went on, some of the wooden planks of Theseus’s ship started rotting away. To keep the ship complete, the rotting planks were replaced with new planks made of the same material. Here is the question: If you replace one of the planks, is

it still the same ship of Theseus? What happens if you change two of the ship’s planks? Would that make it somehow less of the original ship than after one plank is changed? What if the ship consists of a hundred planks and forty-nine of the planks are changed? How about fifty-one changed planks? What about changing ninety-nine of the hundred planks? Is a single remaining original plank enough to maintain the identity of the ship? And what if all of the planks are changed? If the change is gradual, does the ship still maintain its status as the ship of Theseus? How gradual must the change be?

