

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Locke on Personal Identity

Announcements

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- 1. No new reading for Thursday
- 2. Midterm exams returned on Thursday in tutorial or in TA's office hours
- 3. Second paper topic is posted on Thursday
 - ▣ Please watch *Shaun of the Dead* (posted on Canvas)
 - ▣ Pay attention to the character of Shaun's mother
 - ▣ Two-stage process
 - ▣ First draft due: Thursday, July 13th
 - ▣ TA will return draft in tutorial or office hours with comments on Thursday, July 20th
 - ▣ Revised draft due: Thursday, July 27th
 - ▣ On July 27th, please submit the first draft, the comment sheet, and the revised draft in office hours, or tutorial by 6pm.
 - ▣ Electronic copy of revised draft due on July 27th by 11:59pm.
- 4.

Personal Identity

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The Soul Criterion of PI

- A person P2 at T2 is the same person P1 at T1 iff P2 has the same soul (or mind) as P1 had
- Descartes: Given that the mind is indivisible, I know I will persist through time

Locke's responses to the Soul Criterion

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- 1. We don't know for certain whether we have immaterial minds.
- Locke: Substance dualism is *probably* true (*Essay*, II.27.25)
- God could have “superadded” the power of thought to matter (*Essay*, IV.3.6)

Locke's responses to the Soul Criterion

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- 2. I can't know for certain whether I have the same soul now as I did in the past
 - ▣ It is logically possible to conceive of a single person changing minds (or souls) (*Essay*, II.27.10)
 - ▣ Locke: "As to the first question, If the thinking substance is changed, can it be the same person? I answer that this can be settled only by those who know what kind of substances they are that think, and whether the consciousness of past actions can be transferred from one such substance to another," (*Essay*, II.27.13)
- 3. I can't know for certain whether my soul has been *only* my soul
 - ▣ It is logically possible for a single mind to serve successively as the soul of two persons (*Essay*, II.27.14)
- Locke: I don't know if the Soul Criterion is false but neither does anyone know it is true.

Locke's responses to Soul Criterion

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The Upshot?

- If we don't know the mind is indivisible, how do we know that it persists through time?
- If we don't know if the mind persists, why think the person is the same person over time?
- If we don't know whether the person remains the same over time, how can we hold anyone morally responsible?

Motivating Locke's view of PI: The Practical Argument (Harold Noonan)

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- Personal Identity matters to us because we have concern for our futures
- Locke: Suppose I have the same soul or same body as Nestor, without consciousness of his past actions (*Essay*, II.27.17)
- Locke: I would be “indifferent” to him and I couldn’t “own” his actions (*Essay*, II.27,17; II.27.26)
- Locke: A person “is a forensic term” because only persons are 1) concerned about their future selves and 2) capable of moral responsibility (II.27.26)

Locke's Memory Criterion

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- Locke: Separate the concept of PI from the concept of substance (II.27.10)
- Locke: Reflect further on the concept of *person*
 - “Consciousness always accompanies thinking, and makes everyone to be what he calls ‘self’ and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things; in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being; and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now that it was then; and this present self that now reflects on it is the one by which that action was performed,” (*Essay*, II.27.9)
- Locke: A person P2 at T2 is the same person P1 at T1 iff P2 has the same consciousness as P1 had
 - PI consists in continuity of consciousness, extending backward, linked by memory
- “In this personal identity is founded all the right and justice of reward and punishment; happiness and misery being that for which every one is concerned for himself, and not mattering what becomes of any substance, not joined to, or affected with that consciousness extends,” (*Essay*, II.27.18)

Locke's Arguments in defence of the Memory Criterion

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- 1. The Prince and the Cobbler argument
 - ▣ Imagine the consciousness of Prince is transferred into Cobbler's Body, and vice versa
 - ▣ "If the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the prince's past life, were to enter and inform the body of a cobbler who has been deserted by his own soul, everyone sees that he would be the same person as the prince, accountable only for the prince's actions; but who would say it was the same man?" (*Essay*, II.27.15)
 - ▣ "Whatever has the consciousness of present and past actions is the same person to whom they both belong," (*Essay*, II.27.16)
- 2. Waking Socrates/Sleeping Socrates example (*Essay*, II.27.19)
 - ▣ WS doesn't "partake" of consciousness of SS
 - ▣ It would be wrong to punish one for the other's actions

Marya Schechtman on Personal Identity

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- Schechtman's arguments:
 - ▣ 1. Locke's Memory view of PI faces serious objections
 - ▣ 2. Psychological continuity views of Personal Identity attempt to deal with these objections but aren't successful
 - ▣ 3. We ought to accept a narrative criterion of PI

Schechtman's objections to Locke's view

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Weakness Objection

- I might “remember” a past experience that wasn’t mine, and so make me the same person who had that experience
(Schechtman, 12)

Strongness Objection

- I might fail to remember a past experience was mine, and so be a different person than the person who had that experience
(Schechtman, 12)

Bibliography

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- 1. Harold Noonan, *Personal Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1998, p. 37-39.