Mariella Sypa

Professor Jaworski

Debate Paper: Animalism

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**Animalism**

Animalism states that we are human animals, members of the primate species Homo sapiens. The argument for animalism is: (1) I am the one and only individual who is speaking at the front of the room; (2) A human animal is speaking at the front of the room; Therefore, I am a human animal. I believe that animalism is true.

Premise (1) is true because there is no other individual speaking in front of the room other than me. I, Mariella, am the only one in the front of the room using their physical body parts, their vocal chords and ears, to talk and hear myself talk. Premise (2) is true because there is a human animal speaking in front of the room. Human animals are capable of standing in front of the room, producing sound that is assembled into sentences, and listening to the produced sound. Science, specifically biology, is able to prove that the individual speaking in the room is a human animal, me. The conclusion that I am a human animal must be true. Since both of the premises are true, then the argument for animalism true.

Critics of the argument for animalism reject premise 1. Constitutionalism rejects premise 1 because, according to its argument, there are two individuals speaking in front of the room, not one, I and the animal that constitutes me. Constitutionalists say that we are mental beings that are constituted by human animals. In order for one thing to be constituted to another the two objects have to share the same parts, but don’t have to be identical. X is constituted by Y only if X and Y have all the same parts and X does not equal Y. An example of this would be when constitutionalists say that statues are constituted by lumps of clay. The statue and the lump have all the same parts, yet the statue and the lump are not identical because they have different properties. The lump has existed longer than the statue and it can survived being squashed. Constitutionalists argue that I am constituted by an animal because the animal and I have all the same parts but different properties. An argument that supports constitutionalism states that: (1) It is possible that I could have all my parts replaced by robotic parts; (2) It is not possible that this animal could have all its parts replaced by robotic parts; Therefore, I am not this animal; (3) I have all the same parts as this animal; Therefore, I am constituted by this animal.

Premise (I) of this argument is defended by the conceivability argument, which says that (1a) If it is conceivable that I could have all my parts replaced by robotic parts, then it is possible; (1b) It is conceivable that I could have all my parts replaced by robotic part; (1c) Therefore, it is possible that I could have all my parts replaced by robotic parts. Premise (II) of this argument says that it it’s not physically possible for the human animal body to have all its parts replaced by robotic parts. If replaced entirely by robotic parts, the animal would no longer be the same human animal because it loses its human parts and essentially becomes a robot. Since the human animal would no longer be an animal, but I, my nonphysical body, would be, the two of them cannot be identical. By proving premise (I) and (II), constitutionalists assume that I am not this animal, I merely have all the same parts as the animal. Therefore, constitutionalists say that I am constituted by this animal. Animalists reject premise (I) of this constitutionalism argument by rejecting premise (1a) or (1b). According to animalists, the conceivability achieved by constitutionalists is not a reliable indicator of possibility because it is possible that they could be wrong about what they conceive.

Constitutionalism appeals to psychological persistence conditions. According to constitutionalism, I exist over periods of time because of psychological continuity. Psychological-continuity theory claims that our personal identity remains the same as long as we maintain psychological continuity over a period of time, no matter what happens to our physical body. If I, Mariella, enters a Matter-Energy-Matter Converter (MEM Converter), then my body would undergo extreme physical change. For example, it would reach 1 million degrees Celsius and ultimately be destroyed. Afterwards, in the machine, my body is reassembled and released from the machine. The outputted person is named, Mary. The question at hand is whether or not Mary shares the same personal identity as Mariella. According to the constitutionalist viewpoint, Mary would still be the same person as Mariella because, no matter what happen to her physical body, she maintained the same psychological continuity. Animalism rejects the psychological continuity theory by saying that our identity over time depends on whether or not we’re the same animal over time. Animalists reject this theory because they support biological continuity, which claims that I exist if and only if the life of this animal continues. The life of this animal can continue without psychological continuity, and even without any psychological capacities at all. Therefore, psychological continuity is irrelevant to my continued existence. For example, a human brain-damaged adult is still the same human even after they suffer from psychological discontinuity from brain damage. A person with a brain injury can suffer from memory loss and/or amnesia, which makes them no longer psychologically continuous with how they were before the injury. The person suffering from brain-damage or other injuries is no longer psychologically continuous, but he is still the same person as before due to his body remaining the same, or biological continuity. Therefore, we do not exist over time because of psychological continuity, but because of biological continuity. This argument proves that animalism must be true.

The brain transplant scenario is another argument for psychological continuity endorsed by constitutionalists. If Person A and Person B both exist at the same time, and Person A’s cerebral hemispheres were transplanted into Person B, then which person would have the mental capacities of person A? Constitutionalists would say that (1) Person A’s beliefs, desires, preferences, memories, and other mental states would go where the cerebral hemispheres were transplanted; (2) The best explanation for that claim is that Person A exists over time because of the continuity of his psychological states; Therefore, Person A exists over time because of the continuity of his psychological states. Animalistic would reject premise (1) by claiming that Person A would remain the same human animal even after the cerebral hemisphere transplant. Person A would merely be incapacitated, which, according to animalists, doesn’t affect biological continuity.

Animalism is true because the argument for animalism is valid and sound. The counter arguments formed by constitutionalism are false because they are based on psychological continuity, which is not a valid way to determine personal identity.