

PHI 315 Oct 11 : PI continued

Last time we left off with Leibniz's law, Identity of Indiscernibles and Indiscernability of Identity. I want to today pick that back up, and get the point of identity problem across. But first I want to share a piece of media that I find a great example for this topic. The creator of this, I have met, and while they used to be an okay and interesting person, they have become an ugly and horrible human being who advocates for gulags, guillotines, and antisemitic violence, both in private and on the internet. I met them at a philosophy conference, for context. So, in sharing this piece of media, I do not mean to endorse the creator. There is an interesting debate as to whether art is separable from the artist, but I do not have the answer. Dali had fascist leaning, but we still collectively admire his art. Marquise de Sade tortured and killed people, he is where Sadism comes from, but his books are quite interesting.

Here is the media, click on this sentence, for it

Resuming

Recall what we wrote on the board last time:

(LL):

$$\forall x \forall y ((Px \iff Py) \iff (x = y))$$

This is actually two laws, one controversial and one not.

The non-controversial law is the indiscernability of identicals:

(InI):

$$\forall x \forall y ((x = y) \implies (Px \iff Py))$$

The controversial law is the identity of indiscernibles:

(IdI):

$$\forall x \forall y ((Px \iff Py) \implies (x = y))$$

The idea is this. InI means the following: for any x and y, if x is identical to y, then anything that is a property of x must necessarily be a property of y, and vice versa. Property here means predicate, meaning that which can be predicated of x and y, said of them. Crucially, the property in question must be an essential or intrinsic property that is crucial to x or y being what it is.

For example, say you have a baseball that at T_1 is not covered in paint, but at $T_{1.5}$ it is dipped in red paint, such that at T_2 it is covered in red paint. That baseball is identical to itself overtime. So $B@T_1 = B@T_2$. Color is different, but fundamentally it is the same thing, just painted. But suppose that intrinsic to the Statue of David is being made of marble, and that this statue is scientifically transformed into Bronze. Then, that statue becomes essentially different, and the original statue is no longer there. A better example is this. Suppose that "Kitty" is a cat. Thus, intrinsic to "Kitty" is being a cat. But suppose that Kitty is transformed into a dog. Then, $K@T_1 \neq K@T_2$ since the intrinsic property is changed.

In humans, this is tricky—nobody knows for sure what makes us who we are. Some think that it is the particular physical arrangement. Meaning that all of your particles arranged exactly the way that they are is what makes you who you are. However, this view is not sustainable. It is not sustainable because our particles change over time, and moreover, our physical structure changes over time as well. Perhaps there is something to be said about gradation, but it is unclear what it is that is to be said. Perhaps if all of our particles change suddenly, then we do indeed become different. But if they are changed piecemeal, then there is continuity. Again, remember that all of your particles change in your life time, your structures change as well, and you are not physically the same, neither in structure nor in assembly.

Others think that what accounts for personal identity is psychological continuity. If there is some kind of psychological identity over time, then you are the same person that you were. If your psychology and in turn behavior radically changes, then perhaps you are no longer identical to who you once were. But this view is not sustainable. Sometimes when people get into accidents and get amnesia, they become radically different people. We still, however, view them as who they were. Perhaps we no longer love them, but they are in a sense still self same, or maybe not. I do not know about amnesia. I think amnesia severe enough is equivalent to the death of the person. Maybe not. Moreover, if psychological continuity is the principle, consider the following scenario:

A teleporter malfunctions, and now there are ‘two’ Nikitas, one that comes out on the other end who thinks nothing has gone wrong, and one who did not get de-materialized and who is groggy. On the psychological continuity view, the one who stepped out, since he is not groggy, is more continuous with me who entered, and hence is the real me, while me who stepped in, since I am groggy, am less continuous with who stepped in.

Again, there are no answers to this quandary, and since this is metaphysics, we simply do not have the answers to these questions.