

# Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W

Fall 2014

Russell Marcus

Class #13 - Plato and the Soul Theory of Self

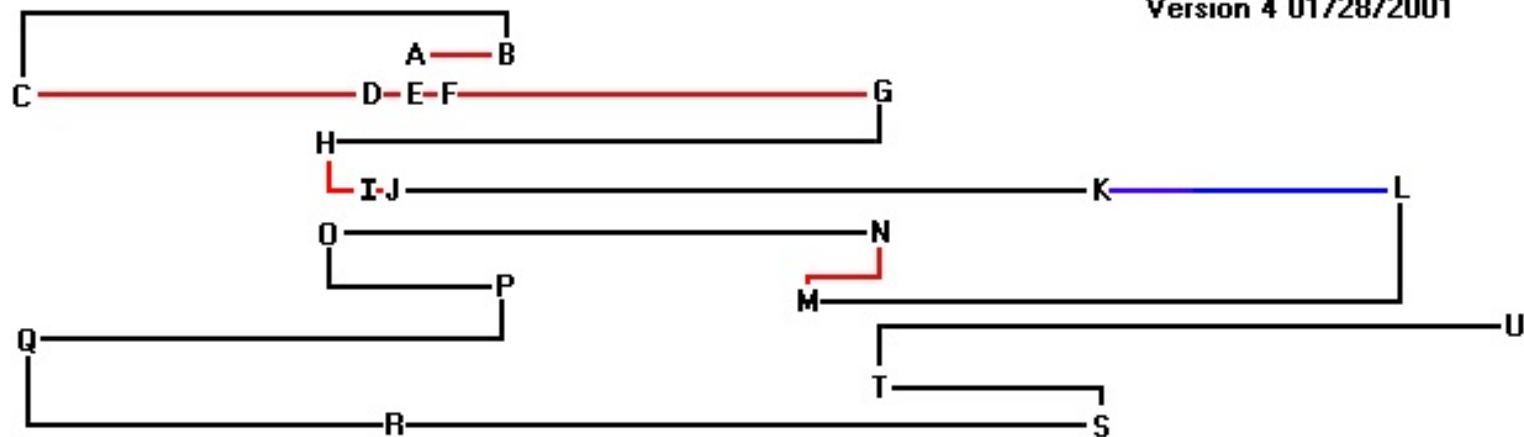
# Business

- Papers back
  - May be revised
  - Arguments!
- Parents Weekend
  - I'll be at the President's Tea on Saturday
- An Excellent Paper
- A bit on time travel and memory
- Isabel on Plato

# Time Travel and the Self

## Problems for Time Travel

- Time travel happens every moment, one moment at a time.
  - ▶ But ‘time travel’, I mean leaping around in time.
- Time-travel stories seem to presume B-theories of time, or at least a moving-spotlight version of the A-theory.
  - ▶ We travel through time, a given block, as through space.
  - ▶ The past and future must be as real as the present.
- That’s no argument for the B-theory (or moving spotlight theory).
  - ▶ Time-travel (in the way it’s depicted in science fiction) is likely impossible.
  - ▶ It even seems, as with “All You Zombies,” to erode our notion of our selves.
- An argument that time travel will never happen:
  - ▶ If people ever discover time travel, they will use it.
  - ▶ In particular, they will eventually come back here.
  - ▶ So, if it ever were to be discovered, we would already know it.



A = Baby Jane Born to E

B = Baby picked up by bartender P

C = Baby dropped at orphanage by bartender Q

D = Jane meets male self I and has sex

E = Jane has baby A

F = Jane has sex change

G = Jane as "Unmarried Mother" meets bartender N

H = UM taken to 4/3/63 by bartender O

I = UM meets female self D and seduces her

J = UM picked up by bartender R

K = UM dropped at Rockies base by bartender S

L = UM has career in Time Corps and at some point returns to M to become bartender

M = Sometime prior to 11/7/70

N = Bartender meets UM G

O = Bartender takes UM H to 4/3/63

P = Bartender returns to 3/10/64 to pick up baby Jane B

Q = Bartender returns to 9/20/45 to drop off baby Jane C

R = Bartender picks up UM J

S = Bartender drops off UM K at Rockies base

T = Bartender returns to 11/7/70 2301, arranges sale of bar

U = Bartender returns to 1/12/93 at Rockies base

Vertical lines represent same point in linear time

C - Q 9/20/45

H - O 4/3/63

D - I 4/24/63

J - R 4/24/63 (later)

A - E 2/10/64 (approx)

B - P 3/10/64

G - N 11/7/70 2217

K - S 8/12/85

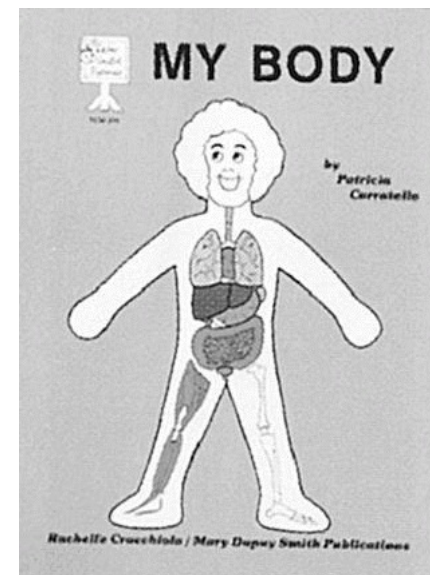
Legend — Normal time flow

— Time travel

— Normal / Other time trips

# The Body Theory of Self

- Consistent with a general contemporary preference for materialism
- Easily refuted by the observation that our bodies are changing constantly
- The constant change of the body is related to the general problem of material constitution.
  - ▶ The ship of Theseus
  - ▶ My sukkah
  - ▶ Chrysippus's Dion and Theon
  - ▶ Joan and Lump



# Problem of Material Constitution 3

- Lump and Joan
- Is Joan different from the lump?
  - They were created at different times.
  - Lump isn't destroyed, when Joan is.
- We might admit coincidental objects.



# Identity, Material Objects, and Persons

- One difference between the questions about the identity of Theseus's ship and the identity of the protagonist in "All You Zombies" is that the former concerns a material object and the latter concerns a person.
- Material objects can be divided into two kinds:
  - ▶ artifacts are things that we make
    - ships and cell phones
  - ▶ natural kinds are things that we discover
    - trees and animals
- Identity conditions for artifacts are tricky to construct.
  - ▶ We can replace a plank in the ship without much caring about whether the ship is the same one or not.
  - ▶ Insurance companies
  - ▶ Practical solutions
- Questions about the identity of some natural kinds are more interesting.

# Who Am I?

- Questions about identities of persons seem to be much more important to us than questions about the identities of artifacts.
- Am I the same person that I was when I was little?
- Is there some core of me which remains constant over time?
- Lose some skin or gain some weight
- Even if I lose a limb, it is me who is losing a limb and me who gains an artificial one.
- Or are people just like artifacts for which there may be no facts about identity over time?



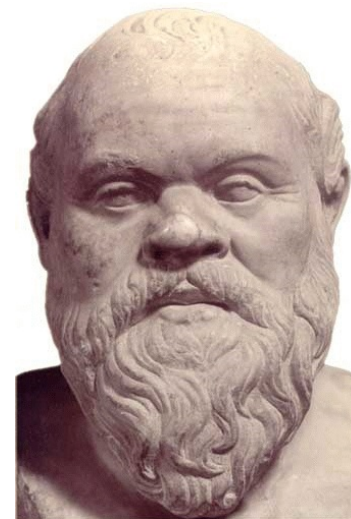
# Memory and Identity

- One phenomenon which leads us to believe that we maintain an identity over time is memory.
- No one really knows how memory works.
- But it does seem to be largely constructed; [article here](#).
- Some movies, especially *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, do a good job of evoking the reconstruction of memory.
- One question for us concerns the relation of memory to our identity, a question we will see explicitly in our discussion of Locke and Reid.

# Responses to the Problems of Material Constitution

- We might admit coincidental objects.
- We might make a distinction between artifacts and natural kinds.
  - ▶ Maybe there are no facts about the ship or the statue.
  - ▶ Maybe the ship is constantly changing.
  - ▶ We would have a merely practical problem of determining which ship belongs to Theseus.
- For our selves, we have a deeper problem.
  - ▶ We remain constant.
  - ▶ I have interests in the future of my self that I do not have for other people.
  - ▶ There seems to be an underlying haecceity.
- One way to think about that haecceity is as a soul.
  - ▶ Plato
  - ▶ Descartes

# Socrates



- Condemned to death for corrupting the youth of Athens and teaching new Gods.
- In *Apology*, Socrates defends his life.
  - Searches for truth
  - Wants to improve his city
- He pursues truth by showing engaging people in dialogue.
  - People do not know what they think they know.
  - We are ignorant of the nature of truth, and good, and beauty.
- The Athenians convicted him and sentenced him to death.
- In *Crito*, Socrates' friends arrange for his escape from Athens.
  - Socrates refuses to leave.

# The *Phaedo*

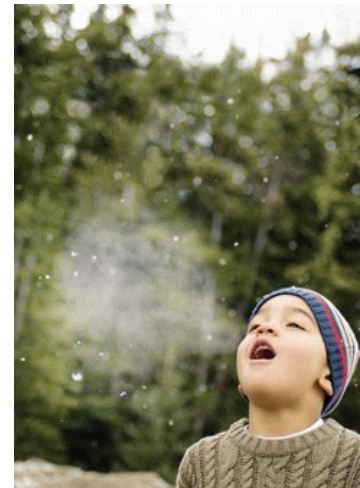
- Socrates' friends are gathered before he drinks a poisonous potion of hemlock.
- Socrates tries to comfort them by telling them about what he believes is in store.
- Death is welcome, since the death of the body does not entail the death of the self.
- What we really are, says Socrates, is our soul.



# Isabel on the Soul Theory

# Dispersion

- Maybe soul is like a breath or smoke, infused within our bodies.
- When the body dies, the soul could disperse in the air.
- If the soul disperses, then it dies with the body.
- Socrates argues for the immortality of the soul.
  - to allay fears that the ghostly substance disperses
- The immortality of the soul, with the identity of our selves and our souls, would entail that our selves are independent from our bodies.



# Sense Perception and the Forms

from *Phaedo*

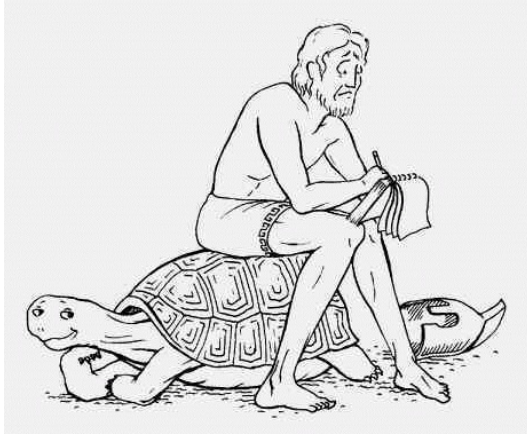
- ▶ Do we say there is such a thing as justice by itself, or not?
- ▶ We do say so, certainly!
- ▶ Such a thing as the good and beautiful?
- ▶ Of course!
- ▶ And did you ever see one of them with your eyes?
- ▶ Never... (*Phaedo* 181).

# Inconstancy in the World

- Plato believes that reality is not as we perceive it.
  - not perceivable with our senses
- The objects of our senses are constantly changing.
  - Particulars in our world are inconstant and unreliable.
  - Material constitution
  - My physical constitution







# Paradoxes

- Zeno's paradoxes of motion
- The sorites
- Sorites arguments can be run for just about any physical property.
- So, all physical properties lead to inconstancy and paradox.
- But, reality must be stable and true.



# Knowledge and Constancy

- Plato: If we are going to know something, then, it has to be something lasting, not fleeting.
- Parmenides: all change is an illusion.
- Descartes
  - Some years ago now I observed the multitude of errors that I had accepted as true in my earliest years, and the dubiousness of the whole superstructure I had since then reared on them; and the consequent need of making a clean sweep for once in my life, and beginning again from the very foundations, if I would establish some *secure and lasting result in science* (Descartes, First Meditation 61).
- If some things were stable and perfect, then we could have knowledge of them.

# The Forms

- Prototypes, universals on which the properties of particular sensible objects are based
- Causes of the qualities of things
  - ▶ Consider any two blue things.
  - ▶ They share a common property.
  - ▶ 'x is blue' means that x participates in the form of blueness.
- Perfect, unchanging realities
- Knowledge is thus always of forms.
  - ▶ beauty
  - ▶ justice
  - ▶ truth
  - ▶ love
  - ▶ other properties

# Mathematics



- We have lots of mathematical knowledge.
- We never have any sensory experience with perfect geometric shapes or numbers.
- The theorems we know hold only of perfect mathematical objects.
- Similarly, we never experience anything perfectly straight, or pitched, or just, or beautiful.
- We must have knowledge of the perfect archetypes, since we can compare sensible things to them.

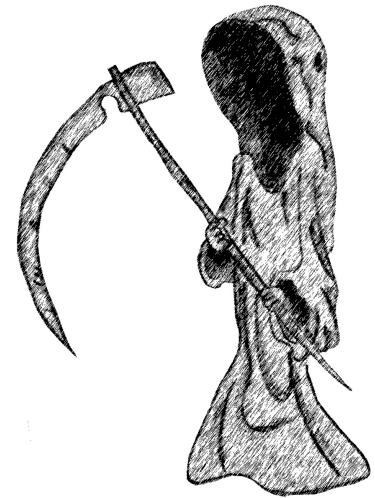
# The Hindrance of the Body

- “So long as we have the body with us in our enquiry, and our soul is mixed up with so great an evil, we shall never attain sufficiently what we desire...” (182).
- We need food.
- We get sick.
- We have emotions (love and fear and desire) which impede our philosophical progress.
- Our desires for wealth and the material goods it provides lead to conflict and away from truth.



# The Philosopher Embraces Death

- The lover of wisdom welcomes the removal of bodily distractions.
- “Those who rightly love wisdom are practicing dying, and death to them is the least terrible thing in the world. Look at it in this way: If they are everywhere at enmity with the body, and desire the soul to be alone by itself, and if, when this very thing happens, they shall fear and object - would not that be wholly unreasonable? Should they not willingly go to a place where there is good hope of finding what they were in love with all through life (and they loved wisdom) and of ridding themselves of the companion which they hated?” (182-3).
- Socrates’ argument depends on whether the soul survives the death of the body.
- It depends on Socrates’ view that the self is not the body, and is the soul.



# Socrates Can Not Be Buried

- Criton asks how Socrates wants himself buried.
- “He thinks me to be what he will see shortly, a corpse, and asks, if you please, how to bury me! I have been saying all this long time, that when I have drunk the potion, I shall not be here then with you...” (183).
- A dead body is not a person.
- It is just an empty vessel which used to contain a person.

# Four Arguments for Immortality

## The Independence of the Soul

- The cyclical argument
- The argument from recollection
- The argument from affinity
- The argument from exclusion/theory of forms, or the final argument



# The Cyclical Argument

- Any quality of a thing arises from participation in its opposite form.
- Sleeping and waking
- Bigger and smaller
- Living and death
- Irreparably unsatisfying

# Plato on Recollection

- Poverty of the stimulus/evidence
- Knowledge of the forms must precede any knowledge of particulars.
- When I see a picture of my daughter, I can note similarities and dissimilarities with my idea of her.
- In order to note the similarities and differences, I have to know both my daughter and the picture.
- I also have to know when two things are equal, and unequal.
- Real equality must be absolute identity, which I never experience with my senses.
- My knowledge must precede my birth.
- The soul has to be able to exist independently of the body.

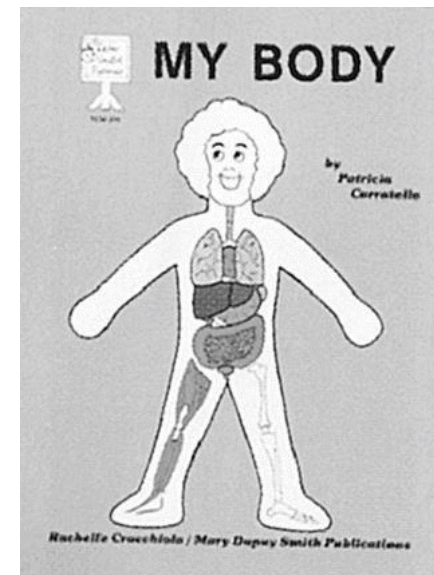
# Descartes and the Soul Theory

# Doubt and the Body

- In the Second Meditation, Descartes asserts that he exists as long as he is thinking.
- In sections after the *cogito*, Descartes claims that the only essential property of himself is his mind.
- He gives up the body theory of the self for a mind, or soul, theory of self.

# Descartes on the Body Theory

What then did I formerly think I was? A man, of course. But what is a man?...It Occurred to me first that I had a face, hands, arms, and this entire mechanism of bodily members: the very same as are discerned in a corpse, and which I referred to by the name “body.”...As to the body, I was not in any doubt. On the contrary, I was under the impression that I knew its nature distinctly” (Second Meditation).



# Descartes

## Giving Up the Body Theory

- The difference between the body and mind can be traced to doubting.
- We can doubt a lot about our bodies.
  - ▶ We mis-perceive them.
  - ▶ We could be dreaming.
  - ▶ We could be under the false impression that there is a material world.
  - ▶ Leibniz's rainbow



# Surety and the Mind

## Descartes Embracing the Soul Theory

- Doubts about the physical world do not extend to the mental world.
- We can not doubt the existence of our thoughts.
- Thus, says Descartes, we can be sure about the existence of our minds without knowing anything securely about our bodies.
- Descartes concludes from this difference that we are essentially only our minds.
- The mind is the soul.

# Descartes Full View

## Not Quite the Soul Theory

- Descartes actually believes that we are an amalgam of our minds and bodies.
- But, Descartes's view is subtle, and liable to be interpreted as a soul theory of identity.
- “It seems that the argument proves too much, and takes us back to the Platonic view (which you reject) that nothing corporeal belongs to our essence, so that man is merely a rational soul and the body merely a vehicle for the soul, a view which gives rise to the definition of man as a soul which makes use of a body” (Arnauld, *Fourth Objections*, AT VII.203).



# The Soul Theory of the Self

- The self is the soul.
  - ▶ longer-lasting than the body
  - ▶ pre-existing the body
- For Descartes, the soul is the mind, the seat of thought.
- Plato's soul is not exactly a mind.
- There are essentially two aspects of platonic souls.
  1. They are the seat of knowledge, performing the functions that we attribute to minds.
  2. They are the bringers of life; having a soul distinguishes living things from non-living things.
- The three-part division
  - ▶ a rational part
  - ▶ an appetitive part
  - ▶ a spirited part
  - ▶ Compare to Freud's id, ego, and superego