

Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W
Fall 2014
Russell Marcus

Class #17
Dennett, "Where Am I?"
Finish the Self Unit

Business

- Philosophy Movie Night is on!
 - Next Monday, November 3, at 8pm: Looper
 - Thanks, Juliet!
 - Snacks? Pizza?
 - Feel free to invite friends.
- Philosophy courses for next year
- Hamilton Speaks: Improve Your Public Speaking Skills in Six Minutes or Less
 - Tomorrow: Wednesday, 10/29, noon-1pm
 - The Annex
- Thursday: Paper #3 is due
 - Defending a thesis
 - **Bring hard copies** to class.
- Rewrites of Papers 1 or 2 (optional) are due on November 20
- Today:
 - Wrap up discussion of the self
 - Dennett



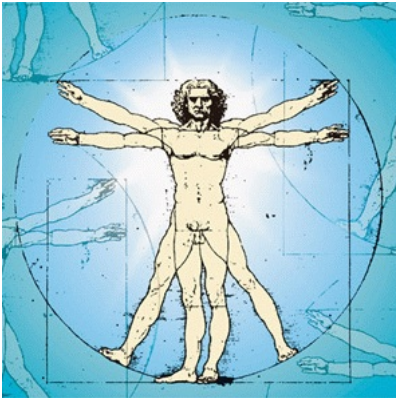
Seven-and-a-Half Theories of the Self

- Body theory
- Biological (functional) theory
- Soul theory
- Consciousness theory
- Irreducibility theory
- No-self theory
- Bundle theory
- Kripke's composition and ancestry conditions ($\frac{1}{2}$)

Body Theory

We are our material constitution.

- Our constitution is constantly changing in a way that our selves are not changing.
- Ship of Theseus

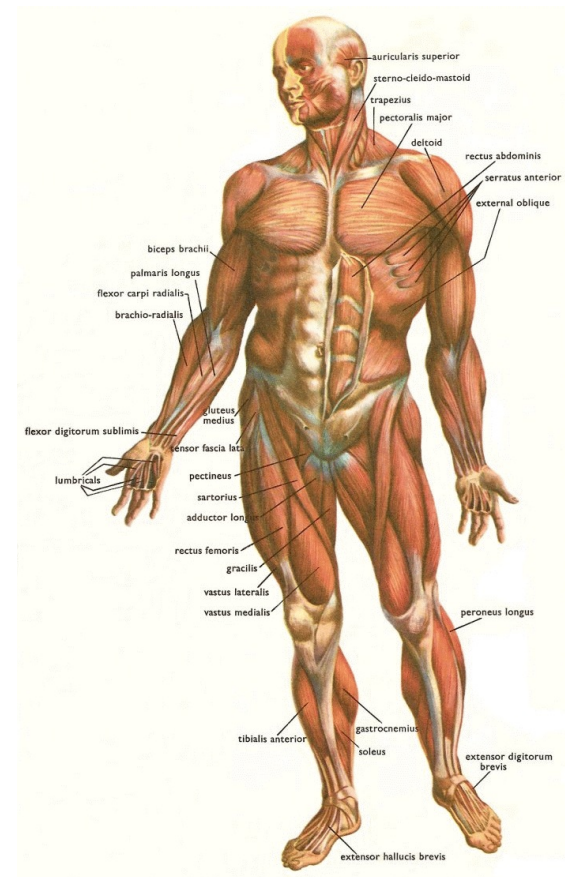


Biological Theory

We are our biological selves.

the body considered according to its functional organization

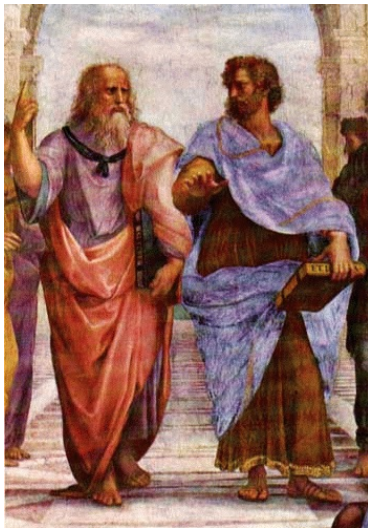
- Locke's identity of man
- The same identity conditions for people as for other individual animals
- More plausible than body theory
- Can add:
 - ▶ Kripke's ancestry condition: genetic heritage.
 - ▶ Genetic information (rather than genes themselves)
 - ▶ Microbiome: "ecological community of commensal, symbiotic, and pathogenic microorganisms that literally share our body space"
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2792171/>
- Locke provides thought experiments which ask us to consider the possibility of transferring consciousness among biological entities.
 - ▶ The Prince and the Cobbler
- Our intuitions support the claim that the self transfers with consciousness and memory.



Soul Theory

We are immaterial souls.

- Descartes and Plato
- The soul it exists prior to birth and after death.
- Similar arguments, from Locke, to those against the biological theory
- We can imagine two different souls inhabiting the same person.
- Two different persons can house (or whatever) the same soul.

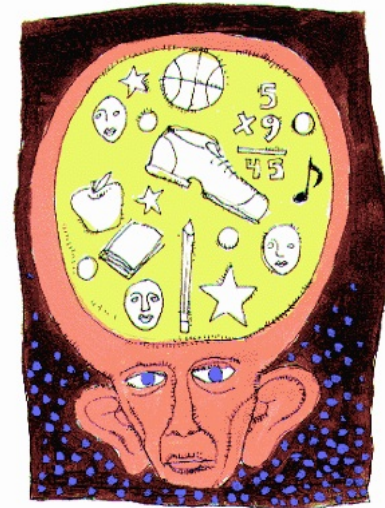


René Descartes 1596 - 1650

Consciousness or Memory Theory

psychological continuity

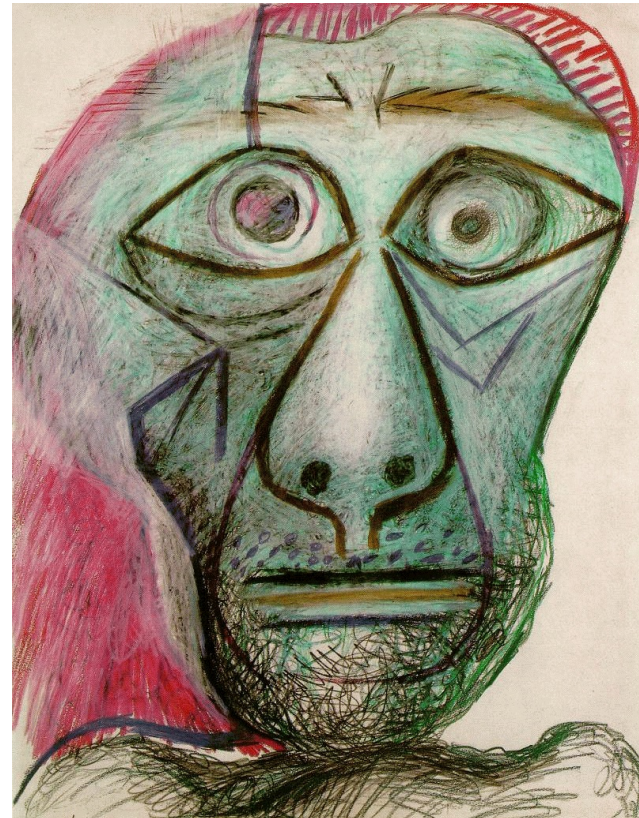
- Locke
- Reid showed that problems with memory and gaps in consciousness entail that we would be disjoint.
- The old general is not the same as the young child, if his memory is discontinuous.
- We can try to save Locke's theory by appealing to psychological continuity.
 - A neurological account of subconscious thought and memory?
- Worries about the construction of memory can undermine even the fortified Lockean theory.



Irreducibility Theory

The self can not be reduced to any other property or substance.

- Reid
- Accepts the existence of a self
- Denies that we can do anything but characterize our selves, in various ways
- The lack of a reduction makes the irreducibility theory awkward.
- It gives up explaining the identity of the self while at the same time asserting that we have personal identity.



Constraints on a Theory of Self

- Many philosophers agree that a self would have to remain constant over time
 - Reid, Hume, Parfit, et al.
 - That's a contentious constraint on our theories of selves.
- Kripke presents two related constraints
 - A particular person could not have different parents than s/he does.
 - The Queen of England example
 - ancestry?
 - genetic constitution?
 - Essential constitutive properties
 - Ice table
 - Again genetics?
- Other possible constraints
 - gender?
 - core sets of beliefs?

The No-Self Theory of the Self

There is no self.

Nothing satisfies the constraints.

- Hume's negative argument
 - ▶ "It must be some one impression, that gives rise to every real idea. But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference. If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same through the whole course of our lives, since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable."
 - ▶ "When I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception and never can observe anything but the perception" (Hume 349a-b).
- This argument relies on a kind of naive empiricism: to believe that something exists, we should be able to have a sense impression of it.
- Berkeley: since all ideas must come from sensation, we have no idea of the self.
 - ▶ "There can be no idea formed of a soul or spirit; for all ideas whatever, being passive and inert... they cannot represent unto us, by way of image or likeness, that which acts... The words *will*, *soul*, *spirit* do not stand for different ideas or, in truth, for any idea at all, but for something which is very different from ideas, and which, being an agent, cannot be like or represented by any idea whatsoever - though it must be admitted at the same time that we have some notion of soul, spirit, and the operations of the mind, such as willing, loving, hating, inasmuch as we know or understand the meaning of those words" (Berkeley, *Principles* §27).
- Parfit: Questions about the true self (e.g. teletransportation) are empty.
 - ▶ "If there are no such Egos, there is nothing else to ask a real question about" (Parfit 354b).

Bundle Theory

A positive spin on the no-self theory

- Hume: We have perceptions.
 - A series of loosely-related conjunctions of experiences
- Parfit:
 - “In split-brain cases, there are two streams of consciousness” (Parfit 352a).



Speed Dating for Theories of the Self

1. Body theory
2. Biological (functional) theory
3. Soul theory
4. Consciousness theory
5. Irreducibility theory
6. No-self theory
7. Bundle theory

In your group:

- ▶ Main motivation for the theory
- ▶ Strongest argument against the theory

Then, meeting other groups

Dennett's "Where Am I?"

- 1. After the surgery: Where am I? (311)**
2. Attempting to convince himself that he is suspended in the vat (312)
3. Considering alternative 1: He is his body (Hamlet) (313)
4. Considering alternative 2: He is his brain (Yorick) (313)
- 5. Considering alternative 3: The point-of-view theory (314-5)**
- 6. Another alternative: He is in two places at the same time (316)**
7. The death of Hamlet (317)
- 8. A new body (Fortinbras) is synchronized with Yorick (319)**
9. Hubert, the computer back-up for Yorick, is introduced (320)
- 10. Flipping between Hubert and Yorick (320)**
11. Considering synchronizing a new body with Hubert or Yorick (320)
12. A conundrum: I survive if either pair survives, but I may not want both. (321)
13. Disembodied Hubert/Yorick (321)
14. Asynchrony (322)