V71LAR: Locke: Appearance and Reality

TOPIC 5: PERSONAL IDENTITY
Test Case 1

- Is the later individual the **same** person as the earlier individual?

I **hate** Klingons and logic
I **remember** growing up in Kansas
Etc.

I **love** Klingons and logic
I **remember** growing up on Vulcan
Etc.
Test Case 2

- Is the later individual the same person as the earlier individual?

I **hate** Klingons and logic
I **remember** growing up in Kansas
Etc.

I **love** Klingons and logic
I **remember** growing up on Vulcan
Etc.
Test Case 3

- Is the later individual the **same** person as the earlier individual?

In the early time period (t1):
- I hate Klingons and logic
- I remember growing up in Kansas
- Etc.

In the later time period (t2):
- I hate Klingons and logic
- I remember growing up in Kansas
- Etc.
1. The Question of Personal Identity

- We (and Locke in Essay II.xxvii) are interested in the following question:

- **What makes it the case that a person existing at one time \( t_1 \) is numerically identical with a person existing at some later time \( t_2 \)?**

- I.e. we want to fill in the schema: Necessarily, for a person \( x \) existing at \( t_1 \) and for a person \( y \) existing at some later time \( t_2 \), \( x \) is the same person as \( y \) iff. ... ???
1. The Question of Personal Identity (ctd.)

- **Important features of this question:**
  - It is concerned with *numerical identity*, not *qualitative identity*.
    - One complication: Of course, two things cannot, strictly speaking, be identical (for then they wouldn’t be two things!). So when we talk of two things being numerically identical, what we really mean is that a thing referred to in one way is identical with a thing referred to in another way.

- It is concerned with identity over time or ‘diachronic identity’. It is the question of *survival* or *persistence*.
  - Hence answers give ‘persistence conditions’ or ‘a criterion of diachronic identity’.

- It is a constitutive question, not an epistemological one. I.e. we want to know *what makes it the case*, not *how can we know*.
  - E.g. Fingerprints may be a good way of finding out whether we have the same person, but being the same person does not consist in having the same fingerprints.
Clear?
2. Locke on Sortals

- **Sortals** are the type of classificatory term for which questions of diachronic (and synchronic) identity make sense.

- They are categories that divide the world into individuals that can then be counted and re-identified over time.

- *E.g.* We can ask: “Is this *tree* the same *tree* as the one I planted last year?”

- *E.g.* We cannot ask: “Is this *green thing* the same *green thing* as the one I saw last year?”
2. Locke on Sortals (ctd.)

- Locke’s important claim: questions of identity must be ‘suited to the idea’ (II.xxiv.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>‘Young’</th>
<th>‘Old’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is Old the same <strong>material object</strong> as Young?</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Old the same <strong>organism</strong> as Young?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Old the same <strong>person</strong> as Young?</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Locke on Sortals (ctd.)

- Locke: Many puzzles of diachronic identity can be resolved by clarity over which sortal is at issue (II.xxvii.7 & 28).

- E.g. Heraclitus
  - (H) You can never step into the same river twice
  - (H1) You can never step into the same body of water twice (TRUE)
  - (H2) You can never step into the same geographically located water channel twice (FALSE)

- E.g. Theseus’ ship
Clear?
3. Identity for Bodies of Mass

- What does it take for a body (or mass) of matter existing at one time to be (numerically) identical with a body (or mass) of matter existing at another time?

  - Locke’s answer: Necessarily, for any body of mass $x$ existing at $t_1$ and for any body of mass $y$ existing at some later time $t_2$, $x$ is the same mass as $y$ iff. $x$ and $y$ have exactly the same material constitution.

  - See *Essay* II.xxvii.3
4. Identity for Organisms

- What does it take for an organism existing at one time to be (numerically) identical with an organism existing at another time?

  Locke’s answer (II.xxvii.4-6): “…the identity…consists…in nothing but a participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized body”.
4. Identity for Organisms (ctd).

- I.e. Necessarily, for any organism \(x\) existing at \(t_1\) and any organism \(y\) existing at some later time \(t_2\), \(x\) is the same organism as \(y\) iff. \(y\) is biologically continuous with \(x\).
  - Where ‘biological continuity’ is continuity of life-sustaining functions (whatever they may be).

- Applies to all plants, animals and “men”.

- Note: This entails that an oak tree is not the same thing as the parcel of matter that constitutes it. A man is not the same thing as the parcel of matter that constitutes him. Why? Because the Oak tree/man existed before that parcel of matter came together (and will typically exist after it disperses). I.e. The objects are distinct because they have different life-histories (and possible life-futures).
  - Does this mean double-counting? See Lowe pp.101-2.
5. Identity for Persons

- Necessarily, for a person $x$ existing at $t_1$ and for a person $y$ existing at some later time $t_2$, $x$ is the same person as $y$ iff ... ???

- ‘Person’ = df. “...a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places.” (II.xxvii.9)

- ‘person’ ≠ ‘human’ or ‘man’ (II.xxvii.9)
Clear?
5. Identity for Persons (a) Somatic Views

- Locke first considers what we might call ‘somatic views’, i.e. those that take personal identity to consist in some physical (non-psychological) relation. E.g.

- **Material substance view**: Necessarily, for a person \( x \) existing at \( t_1 \) and for a person \( y \) existing at some later time \( t_2 \), \( x \) is the same person as \( y \) iff. \( x \) and \( y \) have exactly the same material constitution.

- Locke’s objection to this:
  - E.g. Losing a limb (II.xxvii.11). Shows that identical material constitution not necessary for personal identity.
5. Identity for Persons (a) Somatic Views (ctd.)

- Some more sophisticated somatic views:

  - **The Bodily criterion**: Necessarily, for a person \( x \) existing at \( t_1 \) and for a person \( y \) existing at some later time \( t_2 \), \( x \) is the same person as \( y \) iff. \( x \) has the same body as \( y \) (where ‘body’ is a particular *organisation* of matter).

  - **The Biological Criterion**: Necessarily, for a person \( x \) existing at \( t_1 \) and for a person \( y \) existing at some later time \( t_2 \), \( x \) is the same person as \( y \) iff. \( x \) is the same organism as \( y \).

Locke’s counter-examples to these:

- E.g. Socrates awake and Socrates asleep (II.xxvii.19). Shows that having the same body, or being the same organism, not *sufficient* for personal identity.

- E.g. Prince and the Cobbler (II.xxvii.15). Shows that having the same body, or being the same organism, is not *necessary* for personal identity.
Clear?
5. Identity for Persons (b) Cartesianism

- Locke next considers the view that personal identity consists in some **immaterial** relation:

- **Immaterial substance view (or ‘Cartesianism’):** Necessarily, for a person $x$ existing at $t_1$ and for a person $y$ existing at some later time $t_2$, $x$ is the same person as $y$ iff. $x$ and $y$ share the same immaterial (thinking) substance.

- Locke’s objections to this view.
  - E.g. of consciousness being transferred between immaterial substances (II.xxvii.12-13). Shows that sameness of immaterial substance is not **necessary** for personal identity....
5. Identity for Persons (ctd.)

Belief that: Klingons and logic are bad
Desire to: explore strange new worlds.
  Memory of: growing up in Kansas
  Perception of: Deck of the Enterprise
  And many more...

Immaterial substance I

Immaterial substance II
5. Identity for Persons (ctd.)

- Locke’s objections to the **Immaterial Substance View**:
  - E.g. of consciousness being transferred between immaterial substances (II.xxvii.12-13). Shows that sameness of immaterial substance is not necessary for personal identity.
  - E.g. of the thoughts of an immaterial substance being wiped at the moment of embodiment. (II.xxvii.14 & 23). Shows that sameness of immaterial substance is not sufficient for personal identity.
Clear?
Next time…

- Locke’s positive account of personal identity...
Key points for this lecture

- Questions of diachronic identity (identity over time) must be ‘suited to the idea’ i.e. We must identify the correct *sortal*.

- One sortal is that of *person*, i.e. “...a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places.”

- On the question of what constitutes *personal* identity over time, Locke:
  - Argues against somatic views (examples of Socrates awake/Socrates asleep & Prince/Cobbler).
  - Argues against Cartesian views (examples of transferring consciousness & wiping consciousness).
Reading & References


- For a full reading list for this topic, see the Module Guide (the chapter from Mackie’s Problems from Locke is particularly relevant, and available from Oxford Scholarship online).
Questions?

- neil.sinclair@nottingham.ac.uk
- Tel: 0115 95 13428
- **Office hours**: Thursdays and Fridays 12-1 (room C8a, top floor, Trent building).