

Our next question: "what makes one person at an earlier time the same as a person at a later time?"

Qualitative v. Numerical Identity

A and B are *qualitatively identical* when they are perfectly similar.

The 130 copies of this handout are all "the same handout". They're *qualitatively* identical with each other.

A and B are *numerically identical* when they are *one and the same thing*.

Mark Twain is *numerically* identical with Samuel Clemens.
The 5th president of the US is *numerically* identical with James Monroe.

We're asking about the second kind of identity.

Numerical Identity of Things over Time

Objects are extended in space (consider a train with many train cars)
We must sometimes talk about things by pointing to or talking about their *spatial parts*.

Similarly, objects are *also* extended in time (consider my car or a baseball game).
We sometimes talk about temporally extended objects by talking about their *temporal parts*.

By doing this second thing we can ask whether two temporal parts belong to the same (i.e. numerically identical) temporally extended object.

Sometimes these questions can be tricky because we don't know enough about an object's history. But these questions can also be tricky *even though* we know everything there is to know about that history.

Ship of Theseus. A ship made of wood is maintained very well over time. So whenever a plank of wood gets a little worn, it gets removed and replaced with another plank. Eventually every plank gets replaced. But a purist boat enthusiast surreptitiously collects all the old planks and makes them into a boat *exactly* like the "old" ship. Now we have two ships: the newer and older looking one. Which is *numerically the same* as the original ship?

Does this question even have an answer?

Problem of Personal Identity

Our question refined:

What makes a person at an earlier time *numerically identical* with a person at a later time?

When we ask this we're asking what *constitutes* identity for humans over time. For most ordinary physical objects, for example, the answer to this question seems to be something like "being roughly the same hunk of physical matter." Are humans different?

Importantly we are *not* asking: How do people *identify* who I am? The answer to this question might be (for example) by fingerprints, my passport, my DNA, my appearance, etc. These are not what *makes* me who I am. They're just reliable indicators that a given person is me.

Why care about what it takes for us to endure or persist through time?

- (A) Typically if a future person is me, it makes sense for me to "anticipate" being them. For example:
- to feel apprehensive if that person is going to be seriously harmed or tortured.
 - to feel psyched if that person is going to experience something wonderful.

In connection with this:

- (B) Answering questions about identity over time will tell us about *survival*.

Many people think they can survive the destruction or decay of their physical body and brain. What would it mean for some person, long after your body had deteriorated *to be you*? If we can answer this question, we would know what it would take for you to survive the destruction and deterioration of your body. For a very many people in the world, nothing could be more important than this possibility.

Three Loosely Specified Views

Somatic (Body) Theories: a future person is me if we share a *body* or some part of it (like our *brain*).

Dualist/Soul Theories: a future person is me if we share a *soul* or *mind*.

Psychological Theories: a future person is me if they have the right kind of *psychology* (e.g., the right memories, character, etc.).