

Perry

"A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality"

The Scenario

- Wierob has been injured in an accident and will die soon
- She sets a task for her friend, Miller, who is there to comfort her
 - "Simply persuade me that my survival, after the death of this body, is possible, and I promise to be comforted."

First Night

What is Meant by Survival?

- "Survival means that tomorrow, or sometime in the future, there will be someone who will experience, who will see and touch and smell--or at least, at the very least, think and reason and remember. And this person will be me. This person will be related to me in such a way that it is correct for me to anticipate, to look forward to, those future experiences."
- The type of survival is survival of the numerically identical self
 - Compare to the box of kleenex
 - "I use identity to mean there is but one thing. If I am to survive, there must be one person who is here in this bed now, and who is talking to someone in your Hereafter then or a thousand years from now."

First Suggestion

- "what is fundamentally you is not your body, but your soul or self or mind"
 - these are the nonphysical, nonmaterial features of you
 - it is your consciousness
 - the soul is not identical to the body
 - "the soul cannot be seen or felt or touched or smelt?"

Clarification of the First Suggestion

- If the soul cannot be seen or felt or touched or smelt, then how does one identify the soul?
- All one can see is the body, not the soul.
- So, how can one identify the same soul
 - Miller responds that "same body, same self"

Problem of the First Suggestion

- If soul is identified by the body it resides in, then in the Hereafter there is no body with which to identify the soul
 - Miller responds that the connection between body and soul is an generalization based on observation
 - Miller is arguing that there's a correlation between body and soul

Problem of the First Suggestion

- Weirob responds: to establish a correlation between body and soul requires that one have some means of connecting experiences of the same body with experiences of the same soul
 - But, since the soul is something that cannot be seen, touched, etc. then there's no means of establishing the correlation in the first place
 - Either, Miller (i) does not know that the body in front of him is the person Weirob or (ii) what he does know (same body) is not something that tells him anything about the person Weirob
 - "Since you can never, so to speak, bite into my soul, can never see or touch it, you have no way of testing your hypothesis that sameness of body means sameness of self."

Argument Against Souls as Identity of Persons

1. "If identity of persons consisted in identity of immaterial unobservable souls as you claim, then judgements of personal identity of the sort we make every day whenever we greet a friend or avoid a pest are really judgements about such souls.
 2. "But if such judgements were really about souls, they would all be groundless and without foundation. For we have no direct method of observing sameness of soul, and so...can have no indirect method either.
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3. "But our judgements about person are not all simply groundless and silly, so we must not be judging of immaterial souls after all."

Second Suggestion

- Sameness of psychological characteristics, sameness of soul
 - "Similarity of psychological characteristics, a person's attitudes, beliefs, memories, prejudices, and the like, is observable. These are correlated with identity of body on the one side, and of course with sameness of soul on the other. So the correlation between body and soul can be established after all by this intermediate link."
- the soul is responsible for one's character, memories, beliefs, and psychological self
 - these are all aspects of the mind

Problem with the Second Suggestion

- How can one identify the soul with respect to the psychological self?
 - while the psychological self is something one can experience, the soul (by definition) is not something one can experience
 - so, there might be an indefinite number of psychologically identical souls for any one body. Any one experience of the same psychological person might be due to an infinite number of souls

How Can One Know There Is a Single Soul Connected with One Body?

- Grant that a single person has been associated with one body since birth
- How does one know that one immaterial soul has been similarly associated with one body?
 - one cannot know since the soul (by definition) is a thing about which one cannot have knowledge
 - "if the soul cannot be observed, it cannot be observed to be the same"

Second Night

Third Suggestion

- "...person-stages.' That is just a stretch of consciousness, such as you and I are aware of now. I am aware of a flow of thoughts and feelings that are mine, you are aware of yours. A person is just a whole composed of such stretches as parts...."
- "Now survival...is no problem at all once we have this conception of personal identity. All you need suppose is that there is, in Heaven, a conscious being, and that the person-stages that make her up are in the appropriate relation to those that now make you up, so that they are parts of the same whole—namely, you. If so, you have survived."
- the relation between person-stages is memory—one personstage contains memories of an earlier personstage

Problems with Remembering

- Actually remembering: being one and the same person who did the action one remembers
- vs.
- Seeming to remember: not being one and the same person who did the action one allegedly remembers
 - "So, the mere possibility of someone in the future seeming to remember this conversation does not show the possibility of my surviving. Only the possibility of someone actually remembering this conversation--or...the experiences I am having--would show that."

How Does One Know Whether One is Actually Remembering or Only Seeming to Remember?

- Hypnotist example: What's the difference between one who actually engages in an activity and the one who is hypnotized into thinking that s/he engaged in that same activity?
 - The difference in the one who actually participated and the one who only seems to have participated cannot be decided by the content of their memories (they are the same)
 - They both seem to remember
 - What extra does the one who actually remembers have that the one who seems to remember lacks?

Breaking the Circle

- The Circle: Real memory explains identity and identity marks the difference between real and apparent memory
 - How can one break from the circular reasoning?
- Cohen's Suggestion: analyze personal identity in terms of memory, analyze memory in terms of apparent memory which is caused in the right way
 - What the "right way"?

Memory-caused-in-the-right-way Does Not Explain Survival After Death

- Weirob grants this theory but denies that it can explain survival after death
- Suppose God creates a Heavenly being with the same memory states as the one of the person who just died, that person is the same person. It's the transfer of information that's important for survival of the self.
 - Counter-example: suppose God creates two beings in which he implants the information of the same person
 - if this were the case, then there are two beings that are one person, but that contradicts the assumption of the case

What Can God Do?

- Either, when God creates a Heavenly being with a brain modeled after my own he creates not a numerically identical things to me but only something that is similar to me (qualitatively identical)
- Or, God is limited to making one unique being of a token of a type
- Weirob thinks there is no good reason to have such a limited conception of God
- "He could create someone similar to me, but not someone who would be me. Either your analysis of memory is wrong, and such a being does not, after all, remember what I am doing or saying, or memory is not sufficient for personal identity."

Fourth Suggestion

- Memory Plus Lack of Competition:
 - Memory is not sufficient for personal identity
- Cohen offers a new variation:
 - What's needed for personal identity is "memory plus lack of competition, the absence of other rememberers...."
 - Existence of a numerically distinct self now depends on the non-existence of others
 - This makes identity dependent on factors extrinsic to the person

Problem with Fourth Suggestion

- Fourth suggestion gives the wrong answers
 - If what makes a numerically distinct person is that one have memories of oneself and there be no other person who has these same memories (thus allowing us to distinguish the actual person from the person who only seems to be), then that person has actual memories and is actually you
- Suppose God creates the Heavenly Weirob before Weirob dies, then God kills the Weirob in the hospital bed. Or, suppose God creates two Weirobs. Does the first cease to exist when the second is created? Which of these two Weirobs is the actual person and which the one that only seems to be the actual person?
- Even if God creates Heavenly duplicates, it is absurd to think that one person ceases to exist when the duplicate is created. Cohen's suggestion is that Weirob ceases to exist when her duplicate is created. But, that seems to be the wrong answer. There's no reason to jettison the most obvious view--that Weirob continues to exist even if God creates a duplicate.

Third Night

Weirob's Position on Personal Identity

- "Cohen: Your position seems to be that personal identity amounts to identity of a human body, nothing more, nothing less. A person is just a live human body, or more precisely, I suppose, a human body that is alive and has certain capacities--consciousness and perhaps rationality."

The case of Julia North: Julia's brain was transplanted into another's body

- Who is she? Julia or the other person, Mary?
- Cohen correctly comments that if body and psychological states are what is supposed to identify who one is, then these two criteria come to different conclusions.
 - Based on bodily identity, it is Mary
 - Based on psychological identity, it is Julia
- Cohen seems to think that who this person is is a matter of convention.
 - Weirob disagrees.

Importance of Psychological and Mental

- Cohen states that it is the psychological and mental properties that make it possible to judge one's identity without having to examine the body
 - and, that the psychological and mental properties explain the importance of personal identity
- In essence, Cohen supports the memory theory

Julia and Mary

- The bodily Mary with Julia's brain is alleged to be Julia because it has Julia's memories and psychological states
- The new Julia seems to be Julia, but Julia seeming to be the same person does not make her the same person
 - Why think some extra condition is satisfied that makes Julia's seeming memories actual memories?
 - The extra condition is that the same brain was causally involved in the formation of the memories, regardless of the body it was in

Brain Duplication and Problems for Memory Theory

- Weirob doubts that having a brain with memory traces makes for the extra condition to distinguish seeming to from actual remembering
 - After the duplication, there's A-Julia and B-Julia
 - The two are psychologically indistinguishable
 - What makes A and B identical in psychological states is identity in brain states
 - How can one distinguish the actual rememberer from the seeming-rememberer? One cannot.
 - If one does not know which body and brain are the actual brain, there's nothing about memories themselves to distinguish A from B

We are our body after all

- "You said, Sam, that I had an irrational attachment for this unworthy object, my body. But you too are as irrationally attached to your brain. I have never seen my brain. I should have easily given it up, for a rejuvenated version, had that been the choice with which I was faced. I have never seen it, never felt it, and have no attachment to it. But my body? That seems to me all that I am. I see no point in trying to evade its fate."
- Weirob dies.