

PHIL 4603: Metaphysics
Prof. Funkhouser
Williams, “The Self and the Future”

- Thought experiment: exchanging bodies (or, is it exchanging *personalities*?). It seems to many, at least when first considering these examples, that personhood goes with the psychological traits.
 - Since memory has a causal requirement, there would still need to be a causal connection between this person’s memories and those associated with the previous body.
 - Note Williams’s “information-parking” device as an alternative to brain-switching.
- Q: If you were A, and asked prior to the procedure, which body would you want to be given \$100,000 after the procedure? Which one would you want to be tortured instead? Our reactions to these questions, and the greater concern (if any) that we show for one body over the other, can reveal our views on personal identity.
 - The subjects’ answers to various questions, if taken at face value, tell against the bodily continuity theory and in favor of psychological continuity theories of personhood.
- But consider the example of mental derangement and torture, as presented on p. 358. This is simply an alternative description of the “exchanging bodies” scenario.

Principle:

... my undergoing physical pain in the future is not excluded by any psychological state I may be in at the time, with the platitudinous exception of those psychological states which in themselves exclude experiencing pain. (359)

- What happens (or doesn’t happen) to *another* person should not affect *my* identity — personhood is a *local* matter. Focus, in particular, on the move

from (v) to (vi), on p. 360.

- We might be ambivalent about these various futures, due to confusions concerning our identity. Williams compares this to the feelings we may have toward a sentimental object that undergoes “puzzling transformations”. (362) And surely we do not want to conclude that matters of personal identity are only to be settled by conventionalist *decision*.
- Williams concludes by stating his puzzlement over personal identity in these imaginary situations.