

Lesson: Metaphysics and Personal Identity

Goals

- Question: What makes You *You*?
 - Persistence & Change
- Students will be able to understand and identify essential and accidental properties of objects and people
- Students will critically examine and develop hypothetical scenarios in which questions of personal identity is uncertain
- Students will critically evaluate the way they stay the same or change over time

Logistics

- Be sure to arrange desks in a circle and include space for instructors to sit during discussions
- Philosophy Journals and writing utensils

I. Opening Activity (5 min)

- Free write: Have students write down 5 properties that described them when they were 5 years old, and 5 qualities that describe them now.
- (Turn and Talk/Pair and Share) are there any repeats? Is the list completely different?
 - If the lists are totally different: can you say you're the same person?

II. Activity Agree/Disagree Sides of the Room

Are you the same after...

- A haircut, Dying your hair, Getting a piercing, Getting a tattoo
- Losing a limb, Losing 2 limbs
- Personality change, Losing all your memories
- Having your brain/memories put into a robot to impersonate you

III. Discussion

- Essential vs. Accidental Properties
 - Essential: Property that an object *must* have
 - A book must have pages in it
 - Accidental: Something an object has but could lack
 - A book could have a jacket or not
- Talk about essential vs accidental Properties
 - Brainstorm essential vs accidental qualities of a person
 - **In groups or Free write?**
- Hypotheticals to illustrate
 - Zoe's Hypothetical: Different presentations of self online
 - A lot of us use multiple social media platforms to communicate/broadcast ourselves, but each platform has a different tone/aesthetic/etc. Which

online iteration is the most “You”? Are none of them you? Are all of them you? What do your online representations of yourself say about you?

- Replication of a person
 - *Swan Song* “When a loving husband and father is diagnosed with a terminal illness, he's presented with a controversial alternative solution to shield his family from his loss - replace himself with a carbon copy clone.”
 - Robot that has the same personality as you that would live forever
 - Marvel’s WandaVision
 - REAL Vision (w/ memories) vs. VISION 2.0 (w/o memories)
 - When REAL Vision gives VISION 2.0 the memories, who is the real Vision?
- Have them offer hypotheticals!

IV. Conclusion

- Using what you’ve learned about personal identity, try to answer the question:
 - What makes YOU *you*?
 - Essential vs. accidental properties
 - Philosophy journal free write
 - If time permits and students are comfortable, share!