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### **Lesson topic: Personal Identity**

**Goal:** discuss if and how one's personal identity endures over time, losses of important components, and throughout different contexts.

### **Lesson Outline:**

- Introduce personal identity.
  - Assign an exercise where students identify the most fundamental aspects of their respective identities.
    - Ask: “what’s THE thing that makes you who you are?”
    - Give students 1 minute to think silently and / or write in their philosophy journals before reconvening.
  - Students will go around and present the most fundamental components of their identity (also works as a good icebreaker / bonding activity).
  - Question why these things are so important to their identity.
    - Ask: “if you lost \_\_\_\_, would you still be the same person?” and “how would you change after losing \_\_\_\_?”
- Discuss sameness.
  - Ask:
    - “What constitutes sameness? Is it what someone thinks of himself, what others think of him, or neither?”
    - “What makes someone the same person over time?”
    - “Is someone even the same person over time?”
    - “Are you the same person no matter what happens to you in life (sometimes amnesiacs and victims of trauma report not feeling like the same person)?”
    - *See below for segue to personhood \**
- Discuss personhood.
  - Ask: “what constitutes personhood?”
    - *See below for candidates. \*\**
- Discuss the sleepwalking defense.
  - Establish the context.
    - *See below for context. \*\*\**
  - Ask: “Are sleepwalkers responsible for what they do when they sleepwalk?”
  - Give students 1-2 minutes before reconvening.
- *If time permits:* examine object-based metaphysics.
  - Watch the clip from WandaVision that explains the Ship of Theseus.
  - Ask: “is the refurbished ship the same or different than the original ship?”
  - Give students 1-2 minutes before reconvening.
  - Have students present their thoughts / writings (no need to establish a firm conclusion).

- Ask: “are there any differences between what makes an object the same over time and what makes a person the same over time?”

**Props:**

- WandaVision clip (0:00-0:40):
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldoh71uNZmk>
  - *Contingent on Internet access.*

**Discussion Questions / Prompts:**

- \* Question: “There seems to be a contradiction: even though we change, we’re still the same person. But how can someone change yet also be the same?”
  - Answer: “while someone can change, there are some aspects of him that remain the same, and those are what make him the same person (segue to what constitutes personhood).
- \*\* Candidates for what constitutes personhood: physical attributes, mental characteristics, memories, experiences, behavior, personality, etc.
  - Responses to candidates: one certainly does not look the same as he does when he was born, one can lose his memory through amnesia, one’s behavior / personality changes upon context (talking to your parents vs. talking to your friends), etc.
- \*\*\* Scott Falater was arrested for murdering his wife but maintains that he was sleepwalking.
  - Two of the world’s leading sleep experts took the stand and testified that they believed he killed his wife in his sleep.
  - Studies show that violent behavior being displayed in a sleepwalker’s sleep is common (58%).
- What are the minimum conditions needed to establish the continuity of someone’s identity?
- The role of others:
  - “Does the perception of others matter to your own personal identity? “
  - “Is there a truth about one’s identity that exists independent of the way he is perceived?”
  - “Are you the same person that you present yourself as on social media?”