



Ball State Philosophy Outreach Project Lesson Plan

Topic: Philosophy of Identity

Time: 45-60 min

Materials:

1. [Thought Experiment Video](#)

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will identify and analyze philosophies of identity through a discussion format.
2. Students will build on one another's ideas pertaining to identity and philosophy of identity.
3. Students will reflect on their own identities and beliefs about identity.
4. Students will develop justifications for their beliefs and statements.

Introduction: 10-15 minutes

Ask students the following questions.

- What is identity?
 - What makes up our identity?
 - Is our physical body an aspect of our identity?
- Can our identities change with time?
 - Have you ever heard someone say, "I'm not the same person anymore"? Do you think that's possible?

Then show students this [video](#) about the Ship of Theseus. After watching the video, discuss the following questions in a student-led discussion.

- Do you think the ship is still the same ship after all of the original wood is replaced?
 - If not, when do you think the ship becomes a new ship?
- How might we compare the boat to a human being?

Content: 10-15 minutes

Share the key figures with students and facilitate a discussion based on the questions below.

- John Locke believed that identity is made up of the nonphysical stuff (consciousness), but even that changes over time.
 - Memory theory – we maintain our personal identity because we create memories over time that are each connected to the one before it
 - Any version of yourself that you can remember what it felt like to be is part of your identity, even though you don't have the experience of being that person anymore
 - Do you agree or disagree with this theory?
 - Why or why not?
 - If not, then what do you believe?
 - Do you see any potential problems with this theory?
 - Example: memory loss, false memories
- David Hume believed that identity does not stay the same from birth to death. He believes self is an illusion, and we have no enduring essential properties.
 - Do you agree or disagree with this theory?
 - Why or why not?
 - If not, then what do you believe?
 - Do you see any potential problems with this theory?

Discussion Questions: 25-30 minutes

- How much can we change without becoming a “new” person?
 - Why do you believe this?
- Brain Transplant – if my brain were to be swapped with yours, am I now you and are you now me?
- Do you think there are any things about us that will always remain the same?
 - Do you have any essential properties?
- If our identities can change with time, which version of ourselves is the truest version?
 - Is our identity when we die more “accurate” to our true selves than the identities we have now?
- Can we hold people responsible for their actions if their identity is changing? What about promises?
- What does it mean to have a “new” identity or to be a “new” person?
 - Does new mean “better” or does it mean “different” or does it mean “fresh start”?
- Do you think there are nonphysical aspects of physical things?
 - In the example of Theseus’ ship the nonphysical may be the journeys that the ship took and the sea monsters it encountered



- If so, what types of things have nonphysical aspects? Just humans? Humans and animals? What kinds of animals?
- If nonphysical aspects of things exist and are aspects of identity, are nonphysical aspects and physical aspects equally important?
- Does identity describe the journey of creating it?
 - An existentialist might say that our identity is really our essence. We create it for ourselves as we create our own values and beliefs by experiencing new things, finding new interests, challenging our perspectives, etc.
 - Can the changes we experience in ourselves attribute to our identity rather than change it?
 - Why or why not?

