

Personal Identity: Complex or Simple?

What is it for a person existing at one time to be identical to a person existing at another time? There are basically two philosophical approaches to this question: the *complex view* and the *simple view*.

The complex view claims that personal identity through time can be analysed in terms of bodily and/or psychological conditions. This view seems to imply an understanding of personal identity that is gradualistic in the sense that the relevant conditions can be stronger or weaker. Hence, borderline cases seem to be possible.

Gradualism for its part might be taken to imply that personal identity is a matter of convention; for if personal identity admits of degree, there does not seem to be a determinate answer to the question about personal identity. If this is the case, one might ask whether questions about personal identity must have a determinate answer.

Some philosophers reject the complex view and thereby reject the analysability of personal identity. They argue that personal identity is a given primitive metaphysical fact. Does this mean that there is nothing interesting to say about personal identity? Advocates of the simple view underline that much can be said about why there are no informative necessary and sufficient conditions for personal identity. Furthermore there are various approaches explaining why human persons are unique in what constitutes their individual nature. Do these answers suffice, however?

We aim to tackle these and other issues concerning the analysability of personal identity at our conference.