

The Narrative View of Personal Identity

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Questions of Personal Identity

- Metaphysical Identity
- Psychological/Social/Ethical Identity
 - Ericksonian Identity
 - Identity Politics
 - Character and Transformation

Bringing the Questions Together

- John Locke
 - “Person” is a forensic term.
 - Self-consciousness underlies forensic capacities.
 - Personal identity should be defined in terms of sameness of consciousness.

- Question: What is sameness of consciousness?

Narrative Account of Personal Identity

Initial Presentation

- We constitute ourselves as persons by forming and operating with autobiographical narratives with the form of the story of a person's life.
- The unity of a person is the unity of an autobiographical narrative.

Characteristics of Identity-Constituting Narratives

- Narratives are largely implicit.
- Narratives are not deeply literary.
- Narratives are largely and locally accessible.
- Narratives must be accurate – but not completely so.

Rethinking the Narrative View

- The Lockean conception of *person* is too narrow.
- Examples of non-forensic interpersonal interactions: parents and infants, adult children and parents with dementia
- Persons as units of full range of practical concerns and interactions
- Identity-constituting narrative constructed through a life lived in the network of interpersonal interactions