Personal Identity

1. Who Am I? — What Is It To Be a Person?
   a.) "A thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking and, as it seems to me, essential to it." — John Locke (1632-1704),
   b.) The "I" as a mere bundle of perceptions. — David Hume (1711-1776)
   c.) The very idea of the essential: what makes something what it is and not some other thing.
   d.) The idea of the human soul
   e.) The Aristotelian notion of "substance."
   f. What runs through things of the same kind: the notions of continuity and persistence over time and place. Wittgenstein's rope.
   g. Kant's (1724-1804) objection to Hume's "bundle" idea of the self.

2. What is Identity?
   a.A=A . . . Why a definition may not help.

   b. What is it to be the same thing over time? Forget you and me: what is it for any sort of thing, a table, a boat, a river, a car, to be the same over time?

   c. Your car is linked by a series of spatio-temporal events over time from its manufacture in Detroit to its sitting in your driveway. So, continuity over time appears to be key.

   d. But take another example: the New York Yankees or the Seattle Mariners. Say they are playing each other and then there's a baseball strike and to keep playing each team calls up players from the Minor Leagues and resume their series where they left off. Are the same two times still at play? Perhaps the resumption of the series should begin after the baseball strike?

   e. Locke's Oak Tree. An oak tree sits in your front yard when you are young and it is still there when you inherit the house and come back to live in Yonkers when you retire from the dry cleaning business. Same tree? The cells, molecules sap and leaves which have come and gone have all changed. Locke says, however, the tree, this tree, has all the while been "partaking of the same life." Its identity might more simply be called "an organizational unity."

   f. The Ship of Theseus: How much change can the identity of a thing tolerate? Theseus goes on a long sea voyage and various bits of his ship need replacing, some planks, the rigging, then the sails, until the whole ship has been replaced with new materials after three years at sea: it sails back into port. The same ship? Say an early entrepreneur has been trilling Theseus's ship and picking up the pieces and he reconstructs the ship and docks it down the coast and sells tickets to the real (ancient) ship of Theseus. Who has Theseus' ship? Theseus or the entrepreneur?

3. What is Personal Identity?
   a. The psychological states criterion
   b. The body criterion
   c. The capacity to extend one’s consciousness back through time: the memory criterion.
   d. Thomas Reid's (1710 - 1796) objection to Locke's theory of personhood.
   e. The brain criterion. (Parfitian hypotheticals)