

Abstract

Paper #4

The topic of my paper will discuss the issue of human identity. Using three works that we have discussed in class I will create arguments on both sides for questions that discuss issues of human identity. The first subtopic will consist of questions that address things such as what is a human? What qualities distinctly define us as humans? Are there nonhuman persons? With this question I will discuss both arguments that there are nonhuman persons and that there are not nonhuman persons. To close I will tie this back to the overhead issue of how it contributes to human identity.

In the next subtopic I will discuss questions such as how do humans behave in their natural state? Do we prefer to behave in ways that are to our own benefit or in ways that benefit others? How would humans behave in a perfect world? In a perfect world would there be structure and authority? Would our behavior change if there was no “system?” Is our behavior inherently good or inherently bad? In this paragraph I will also discuss whether the “good” things humans do can ultimately be bad and whether the “bad” things people do can be seen as good in the long run, in other words do the ends justify the means? I may also mention the idea of heroes and vigilante justice and how that contributes to the natural behavior of humans.

I plan on using multiple works to help illustrate and support the claims made in the arguments. When discussing the identity of a human, I intend to refer to Steve

Pinker and the idea of the *Blank Slate*, and *In the Defense of Dolphins* by Thomas White when discussing the idea of a nonhuman person. When discussing the concept of how humans behave in their natural state I will again refer to Pinker’s *The Blank Slate* and *Inconsistency of our Actions* by Michel De Montaigne. When discussing the controversy of a structured society vs. an unstructured society I will likely refer to the *Daodejing of Laozi* and point out how it instructs people to follow “The Way.” I will then move on to discussing the idea of heroes and vigilante justice. This argument is important to the topic of human identity because it reveals a possible characteristic of humans in the sense that some of us would like to sometimes take matters into our own hands rather than leaving the work to be done by higher authorities with the fear that the situation will not be handled the way we want. This also speaks to the question of do the ends justify the means i.e. If we were to take matters into our own hands at the moment, will the result be worth the actions that had to be taken. For this discussion I will heavily refer to *The Watchmen*, but I may also mention segments from *Gigamesh*.

The closing paragraph will tie everything together and restate the original topic of human identity. In my paper I don’t necessarily take a stance on what exactly a human is or how we behave because all humans are different and our behavior is too complex to simplify down to one general description. Rather I present arguments on both sides of what human identity is and what human behavior is and leave it up to the reader to decide for themselves on which side of the fence they wish to lie.