

Personal Identity

Throughout the semester, our class has struggled with establishing a clear-cut definition of what a person truly is. Although many varying themes have been brought to the attention of the class, the idea of identity seems to always breach its way into conversation. Personhood seems to be a very abstract, if not impossible, term which describes what gives someone an identity. Ideas have challenged our class many times throughout the semester and personal identity is an idea which I believe has yet to be defined. In my paper, I intend to formulate a response and support to the following questions: "What is personal identity? Is personal identity a function of the human mind, a mind of any species, or simply an overall subjective idea which cannot truly be defined?"

During my first semester of my Wabash education, my brain was taxed on multiple days, if not every day, in which I attended my freshman tutorial, "Me, Myself, and My Brain." The course focused strongly on the human mind and how we interpret it. I came to the conclusion that personal identity relies solely on psychological continuity. I won't delve into the concept considering it took me 12 pages to break only the concept's surface. However, this enduring questions course has forced me to rethink my take on the concept completely. For one, my freshman tutorial focused only on the aspects relevant to human beings. For this reason, my ideas never brought into account nonhuman persons. I intend to use *In Defense of Dolphins*, *The Extended Mind*, and *Blade Runner*.

For *In Defense of Dolphins*, I will take the stance that nonhuman persons do exist. The minds of nonhumans, in some cases such as dolphins, do have the capacity to be what I call "psychologically continuous." In the summary, it is evident that dolphins do have many similarities to human beings and the author has quite a definitive definition for personhood and how dolphins have the requirements to fit that definition.

Using *Blade Runner* and The Extended Mind, I will argue that the idea of personhood is too vague and too subjective. In terms of the The Extended Mind, it is clear that there truly are too many factors to any species' minds which allow humans to even define how the mind works. If we cannot establish definitively how the mind works, how can we establish how that mind defines an identity? *Blade Runner* is especially important in answering this question. In the movie, people, replicant or not, are analyzed using a series of questions to determine if they are human. However, like we have so often agreed upon, humans can put on a mask which conflicts with analysis such as this in many aspects.

I am aware that this is quite vague, but to elaborate would obviously require much more space, 6-8 pages to be exact. However, my intention was to be quite vague as to warrant an abundance of opinion and response to the questions I have posed. In what ways do agree or disagree with the texts I have chosen to take a specific stance on the idea of personhood? Do you all have any other texts, I have pondered the idea of using Gilgamesh, which could effectively take a stance on personal identity?