

Contemporary discussions on personal identity

The topic of personal identity is having special place in philosophy. Its most important characteristic is that it is about us, persons, who we are. Although it can be understood in many ways – for example psychological - and it may concern our internal integrity, but (what is crucial in dissertation) it also refers to the search for an answer to the question of whether we are the same persons at different moments in time, and if we are or not, on what our identity depends on.

Usually, philosophical works reflecting the subject of personal identity can be divided into two groups. The first group analyses the concept of identity in a very specific, technical, where the methodological approach is exposed. Then, on the basis of very abstract considerations, the conclusions are also transferred to human persons and it is stated whether the identity of persons in time is possible or not.

The second group of philosophical works focuses on the criteria of personal identity and these can be called traditional in the context of the discussion on the conditions of the duration of persons in time. Usually, within the second category can be distinguished three other positions, what will be done in the presented doctoral dissertation.

The first positions are the so-called Simple View, where the concept of personal identity is considered to be something primary, basic, impossible to analyse further. The second group of positions is so-called Complex View, which also can be called the reductionist position, in which the personal identity is reduced to the identity of the body or memory. The third group in this dissertation is distinguished on the basis of the intentions of the Lynne Rudder Baker, who, when creating her concept, wanted it to be above the traditional discussion around personal identity, identity depends either on the factors mentioned in Complex View or is something elusive, metaphysical, as in Simple View.

Although the beginnings of the discussion on the issue of the identity of objects in time can be traced back to antiquity, contemporary positions refer to Locke, Hume, Reid, Butler, and especially to Leibniz in case of methodological considerations.

Contemporary discussions are nothing more than "footnotes to these fifth authors", which are based on the results of their work, but develop them to some extent, which is due to, inter alia, influences from specific sciences, including, for example, the cognitive science.

This dissertation begins with a discussion of technical issues, the task of which is to introduce the discussion around personal identity and to draw attention to the multidimensionality of the issue. Then, the dissertation presents the beginnings of contemporary discussions around personal identity, referring to the research of the above-mentioned authors, thanks to which the background of historical research will be outlined, which has a far-reaching impact on contemporary research by consolidating the existing division of existing concepts of personal identity.

The next chapter presents contemporary discussions around personal identity, referring only to selected authors, where the selection was made due to the clearest display of views, including the possibility of classifying a given author into one of the groups - the Simple View, Complex View or the Not-so-simple Simple View.

The last chapter can be considered as an authorial chapter, in which a meta-analysis of the subject of the conditions of the identity of persons in time will be performed. On the other hand, the intentions of the dissertation should be treated quite carefully and this was also their purpose, although one can get the impression that the existing concepts of personal identity cannot lead to the any of the solution in the matter and on the other side potential conclusion maybe, that all existing personal identity concepts are true, although it depends on the situation. The context makes certain criteria of the identity of persons over time more appropriate. On the other hand, one cannot get the impression that the discussion on personal identity and all its incompatibilities is a result of previous assumptions. Well, if the author by assumption "believes" in a pure naturalism view, he will not opt for the Simple View position. If, on the other hand, the world also consists of a spiritual element, then the concept of personal identity will be incongruous with reality, however philosophy is about seeking truth, regardless of the cost of one's own beliefs. So, the revision of the existing personal identity concepts is necessary to move further looking for the ultimate solution.

