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Lecture 4

Animalism

1. Introduction

• The psychological continuity view of our persistence entails that we are *not* identical with an animal.

Animalism is the view that we *are* identical to human animals. However, the details can vary (for instance, those concerning the force of this claim).

2. Olson's Argument for Animalism

Olson is committed to:

Animalism_{NI}: Each of us is numerically identical with an animal.

The Thinking Animal Argument

Olson then runs a version of the thinking-animal argument. It runs as follows:

- P1. There is a human animal sitting in your chair.
- P2. The human animal sitting in your chair is thinking.
- P3. You are the thinking being sitting in your chair
- **C.** You are the human animal.

The argument is deductively valid. So to refute this argument, one would need to reject at least one of **P1-P3**.

Against P1: There are no human animals

Deny that there are any human animals at all.

• Response: Implausible. Overgeneralises.

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Against P2: Human animals can't think

Deny that your human animal is thinking.

 Response: What stops the animal thinking despite having a functional brain? Denying that this suffices for thinking risks overgeneralising.

Against P3: You are not alone

Accept that there are two thinkers in your chair.

• Response: What stops the animal from being a person? If they are a person, then this has the implausible result that there are two persons where you are.

Note: we can still ask a lot of the same questions about persistence if we accept animalism. These questions become questions about what it takes for an *animal* to persist.

3. Implications of Animalism

Animalism and psychological continuity theory disagree about **the** *kind* **of** *sortal concept* the concept PERSON is.

(**NB:** I'll use SMALL CAPS to indicate that I am referring to the concept named rather than a thing that satisfies that concept.)

A concept *C* a **sortal** concept if you can sensibly ask "how many Cs are there?"

- $\circ~$ So football is a sortal, but plutonium is not.
- Compare: 'How many footballs are there?' and 'How many plutoniums are there?'

Call a concept *C* a **substance sortal** if it is the case that anything that satisfies *C* only exists when it satisfies *C*.

Call a concept *C* a **phase sortal** if it is a concept that is not a substance sortal.

Some paradigmatic examples include the following:

Substance Sortal	Phase Sortal
Dog	Рирру
Lump of clay	Statue
Human being	Student

According to animalism, PERSON is a phase sortal.

- The substance sortal you satisfy is ANIMAL
- The phase sortal you satisfy is PERSON.
- Thus, you will continue to exist after you cease to be a person.

4. Objections to the Thinking-Animal Argument

(1) The Corpse Argument

Suppose human animals are **not identical with their bodies**.

- Motivation: On death, the body remains (most of the time), but we cease to exist.
 - On animalism human persons are identical with human animals.
 - Thus, the animalist must accept that human animals are not identical with their bodies

Suppose bodies can think.

 Motivation: For every human animal that is thinking, there is a body that shares all of its microphysical features with that animal. To parallel Olson's argument, if bodies cannot think, animalists owe an explanation for *why* this is so.

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The argument:

- **P1[†]**. There is body sitting in your chair.
- **P2[†]**. The body sitting in your chair is thinking.
- **P3[†]**. You are the thinking being sitting in your chair.
- **C**⁺. You are the body.

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Objector: If the Thinking Animal argument compels us to think that we are identical to our human animals, then by parity of reasoning, the Corpse Argument compels us to think that we are identical to our bodies.

• By Modus Tollens: We should not accept the Corpse Argument, so we should not accept the Thinking Animal argument

The animalist then has a choice:

- (a) Deny that they stand or fall together, by demonstrating how the Corpse Argument can be unsound while the Thinking Animal argument is sound.
- (b) Accept that they stand or fall together, and then show how your being identical to your body and identical to your human animal are not inconsistent (as they appear to be).

(2) The thinking-parts argument

Suppose there are **human-animal parts** that are thinking.

• Motivation: We don't think an animal loses its ability to think when it loses its foot (for instance).

The argument:

- P1*. There is an animal-minus-feet part sitting in your chair.
- **P2***. The animal-minus-feet part sitting in your chair is thinking.
- **P3***. You are the thinking being sitting in your chair.
- **C***. You are the animal-minus-feet part.

Again, The animalist must either explain why the Thinking Animal and Thinking-Parts arguments come apart, or else say why their conclusions are not inconsistent.

(3) Unexplained Intuitions

Animalism seems to leave our intuitions unexplained.