

Metaphysics: Problem set 2

January 29

due date: February 5

NB: Use your own words. No quotation, no paraphrase.

1. Give an argument (based on one of the paradoxes we discussed in class) for the claim that it can sometimes happen that something is a statue at one time without always being a statue. How plausible is this view?
2. State, in your own words, the theses of Mereological Essentialism and Mereological Near-Essentialism (van Inwagen, p. 192). How should someone who held one of these views describe the sort of process we would ordinarily describe as one in which a statue continues to exist despite the destruction of a part? Does it matter if the part is not destroyed but only removed somewhere far away?
3. Give an argument, along roughly the same lines as van Inwagen's, for the claim that there is no such thing as your head.
4. Explain van Inwagen's reason for thinking that if D-minus doesn't exist, then 'there was never any such thing as Descartes' left leg.' (p. 196) Is this argument persuasive?
5. Here is a different argument against the doctrine of undetached parts:

Any undetached part of a person which included that person's central nervous system would have a mental life just like that of an ordinary person. But ordinary people do not have parts which have mental lives just like those of ordinary people. Therefore, ordinary people do not have undetached parts which include their central nervous systems.

Is this argument valid (yes or no)? Which, if any, of its premises are true? Defend your answer.