

Metaphysics: Problem set 7
March 21
due date: Monday, March 26

Type and staple your answer.
NB: Use your own words. No quotation, no paraphrase.

1. On p. 183-184 of 'The Self and the Future', Williams imagines a case where before the "body-switching operation" involving A and B, A chooses that the A-body person shall receive the \$100,000 and the B-body-person the pain, and B chooses that the B-body person shall receive the \$100,000 and the A-body-person the pain. The experimenter in fact awards the \$100,000 to the A-body person and the pain to the B-body person. Williams writes,

It looks, then, as though the A-body-person has gotten what he wanted, but not what he chose, while the B-body-person has gotten what he chose, but not what he wanted. So once more it looks as though they are, respectively, B and A; and that in this case the original choices of both A and B were unwise.

(i) Explain the underlined claim. How does this claim support the conclusion that the A-body-person is B and the B-body-person is A?

(ii) What is it about the case that makes it 'look' as though the underlined claim is true?

(iii) How should someone who thought that the A-body-person was A and the B-body-person was B respond to this argument?

2. On p. 192 (first full paragraph), Williams argues that if the "body-switching operation" really is properly described as a body-switching operation, then it must be impossible for a person to survive certain far-reaching psychological changes even when these do not occur in the context of a "body-switching operation".

(i) Explain Williams' argument for this claim.

(ii) How plausible is the premise (or premises) to which Williams appeals in the argument?

3. Can Williams' argument against the view that body-switching could be achieved by transferring information from one brain to another also be used to argue against the view that body-switching could be achieved by transplanting a brain from one body to another? Explain your answer.

4. In the last paragraph of the article, Williams gives an argument for preferring 'the principle that one's fears can extend to future pain whatever psychological changes precede it' to the view that body-switching could be achieved by the transfer of information. Explain Williams' argument. Is it convincing?