

Metaphysics: Problem set 5

October 9th

due date: October 14th

Use your own words. No quotation, no paraphrase.
Please type and staple your answers.

1. According to some philosophers, it sometimes happens that an object is a statue at one time without being a statue throughout the period of its existence, just as a person can be a student at one time without being a student throughout his or her existence. Present and assess an argument for this view.

Hint: some of the premises of your argument could be similar to some of the premises of the argument against the existence of statues which we considered on Monday the 7th.

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. If medical technology were a bit more advanced, we would be able to do something that would normally be described as 'keeping a person alive despite the destruction of all of the person's body except her head.' Give an argument, based on this possibility, for the claim that there is no such thing as your head.

4. Here is a different sort argument for the claim that there is no such thing as your head:

If your head exists, it has a functioning brain. But any object that has a brain in the same state as yours has a conscious mental life indistinguishable from your conscious mental life. Therefore, if there is such an object as your head, it has a conscious mental life indistinguishable from your conscious mental life. But if this were true, you would have no good reason for believing that you are a human being rather than a mere head, which is absurd. Therefore, your head does not really exist.

Does this argument succeed? Why / why not?