In the Mind of Theseus
or Hobbes and the Paradox of the Second Ship

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Abstract

The philosopher Plutarch, recalling the life of the Greek hero Theseus, proposed an anecdote. What if during his voyage home, the ship in which Theseus sailed suffered progressive damage and wear, and the crew of the ship replaced each time the part that got damaged. And if the damage was so extensive that by the time it reached Athens, virtually all parts of the ship have been replaced. This begged the question Is that the same ship that left Crete?

A millennium later, in his work De Corpore, Thomas Hobbes expanded Plutarch's anecdote further. Assuming that someone followed the ship, collecting all of the original parts, and eventually reassembled the ship. Which of these two is now the original ship? Are they both the same ship with the new one an extension of the old? Or none of them, for there was never a real ship to begin with?

If we consider Hume's theory of identity, that all we are is a bundle of thoughts, beliefs and experiences that we acquire from, and give back to, the world, this modularity we can apply to the human mind. As modern technologies become more advanced, we find new ways to store parts of ourselves outside of us. Thoughts that we write down, memories that we capture in pictures, or even going so far as saving backups of our minds on hard drives. Where is then the limit of one's self, when we augment ourselves with technology? Can we consider devices like our cell phones as (natural) adaptations to our new environments' demands? And, if we live in our modern, permanently connected world, is there any place left for individuality? How far are we from becoming a gestalt conscience that combines the sum knowledge of all humans, living, and dead?

Keywords: *Mind, identity, self, paradox, technology.*

A recount of the paradox as debated by the ancients

For as long as fear could be felt, there was no step in the history of humankind that did not ebb this fear. Yet it relentlessly dogged us throughout the ages. For every new discovery that brought a faint, but warm, glow of light into the darkness that is

our understanding, there was a reaction from said darkness to swallow us whole again in the cold grasp of our ignorance. There was never an action without a reaction.

We sought to conquer nature inasmuch as we have sought to conquer ourselves. Moreover, for every battle we have won against those external forces of nature that would have seen us dead, another such battle had to be won against our inner selves. Technological progress most often comes with a psychological and sociological price. We fear change as we fear fear itself.

We recall the wisdom of the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus who said that change is the only constant in this life, and in this universe. Much sadness and awe did this bring onto old Parmenides' brow, for he proposed, as Plato later will, that there is a *being*, an existence of things, that never suffers change.[1] The universe for him was perfect, thus finite, and perfectly ordained by a superior reason, a *logos*, one that the Abrahamic religions will later attribute to their God. And in this perfection, change as we mortals see it was considered imperfection, and thus it had no reasonable place in this universe.[2] But Heraclitus also tells us that although everything is in motion, the universe is perfectly balanced by strife, as the back of a bow with its string attached, holds into place by the tension of two forces that otherwise would break it apart. This state of perfect equilibrium for him could not be achieved without a state of perfect chaos. What we now call in a thermodynamic system the state of maximum entropy.

This impermanence Plato later presents from the mouth of Cratylos who says that everything moves, and that nothing remains the same, and more famously, going beyond his master's doctrine, that one cannot bathe twice in the waters of the same river. Heraclitus called this principle *panta rhei*, that everything flows. Plato himself uses *choros*, the concept that everything changes place.[3]

But we know that Plato rejected this impermanence. He thought, *how can one thing be real, and true, if everything that that thing is, and everything that we know about it is, and will be, subjected to change?* There must be something in the being of a thing that most certainly is unchanging, an *essence* of sorts.

Plato's solution was simple, you split the world into two dimensions. A dimension of ideas and a separate dimension for material things. An idea was thus the immortal, perfect, unchanging essence of a thing, that acts like an imaginary prototype for said material counterpart.[4] Thus for a chair to take shape, a carpenter must first

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[1] Plato, "Parmenides," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9 trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1925), 138.

[2] Plato, "Republic," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vols. 5 & 6, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 7.511-520.

[3] Plato, "Cratylus," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 12 trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921), 402-404.

[4] Plato, "Symposium," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9, 207-208.

have the idea of a chair in his mind. And where does the carpenter acquire this idea form? Well, from an already existing chair of course. And how does the carpenter acquire it? Through his senses. Then, using Aristotle's words, the process of building a new chair involves taking an already existing object, that has a material identity of its own, wood, and changing its formal and final causes. In fact, we are overwriting an object's identity with another's. Wood does not naturally become a chair, and chairs do not exist on their own, they require an intelligence to build them and a mind in which the ulterior derived idea of a chair to be stored.[5]

We see that Plato's reasoning here is flawed. He proposes that ideas live in a world of their own and that the human mind either accidentally stumbles upon them, thus making an unwanted, but fortunate discovery, or reaches them through will and contemplation, what today we might call systematic research. Yet Heraclitus responds to this by telling us that we are wrong in thinking that the chair is the final cause for wood. That ash might be its final form, if unfortunately said chair was to catch fire.

What we have here is in fact a very complicated and layered dilemma of identity, whose origin we see dates from Antiquity and which until now has failed to produce a definitive answer. As I have presented earlier both Heraclitus and Plato argue in an unescapable paradox. How can something change and still remain the same? If it ultimately changes, what happens to its identity? For modern philosophy, this is known as the paradox of Theseus' ship.

There are many versions of this story, but the core idea remains the same. It was first presented by Plutarch in his *Parallel Lives*, and has been debated for millennia by philosophers, one of whom, Thomas Hobbes, I shall invoke, but later.

The story goes on like this. That Theseus, the young Greek hero, the one who defeated the Minotaur in his Labyrinth in the Isle of Crete, had a ship. That ship Theseus used to voyage from his home in Athens to Crete, and back home again. Whether during the journey, or after returning home, Theseus' ship suffered extensive damage. Skilled carpenters progressively replaced the damaged parts with new ones, eventually replacing all the original ship's parts. Another version of this story tells us that the original wooden parts of the ship were completely replaced by more durable, metal ones, thus making the distinction between the two even starker.[6]

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[5] Aristotle, *The Organon*, trans. Harold P. Cooke and Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univiversity Press, 1955), 1.1-15; Aristotle, "Metaphysics," in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vols. 17 & 18, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 5.1013.

[6] Plutarch, "Theseus," in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 1.1-2

Hobbes and the paradox of the Second Ship

In Early Modern times, the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes preoccupied himself with this problem and expanded the paradox even further in his work *De Corpore*. *What if,* he said, *the carpenters that repaired the boat kept all the original parts? And what if, someone, sometime later, decided to reassemble the original ship?* So now we have not one, but two actual ships. Hobbes' question is the same as the ancients', only that now we have both a problem of identity, between the initial ship and the repaired one but also a problem of originality, between the repaired ship and the reconstructed one. We have one ship that preserves the essence of Theseus' ship, but not its material, and one that preserves its material, but not its essence.[7]

To begin trying to solve this paradox we must analyze how the ship got to be, and what defined its identity in the first place. We should start by saying that it was designed by a certain Athenian shipbuilder, who most certainly was, given the importance of his task, an experienced one. And being an experienced shipbuilder, many other ships have been designed and built by his hand. So the Platonic idea behind Theseus' ship might have been shared between these ships because the mind that contained it most certainly made use of it.

Secondly, the materials the ship was built from must have been local, plentiful and readily available, for the ship was built very quickly. So other ships could've been sharing these materials with our ship as well, thus multiple ships having the same material cause. Wood from the same trunk, iron from the same ore, conversely. If we take into account the story where the wooden ship is replaced with a metal one, the ship doesn't share the same material identity even with itself. And what if, in repairing the ship, the builders used nails, or rope different from the original? What if, not recalling the shape of an original piece, or trying to improve it, they did not respect the original design?

Thirdly, the reason why the ship was built, so as to transport the young Athenians to King Minos' Labyrinth, was shared with at least more than one vessel. For Theseus' was the last of a series that had, at least one precedent, for we know, the sacrifice to the minotaur happened at least one more time.

And lastly the ship's crew. The only thing that made Theseus' ship truly unique was the composition of its crew. For nowhere else do we see it assembled in this format.

We see that we cannot derive a sufficient argumentation for defining the ship's identity neither by invoking Plato's idea, nor neither by comparing Aristotle's causes.

[7] Thomas Hobbes, "De Corpore," in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, vol. I, ed. Sir William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1840), 132-138.

Yet we only have a finite number of answers we can give. Either the first ship is Theseus's ship, the second one is, both of them are, or none of them is.

Hobbes tries to give an answer to this problem in *De Mundo Examined* where he says the following, that *if some part of the first material has been removed or another part has been added, that ship will be another being, or another body altogether. For, there cannot be the same body whose parts are not all the same, because all a body's parts, taken collectively, are the same as the whole*.[8]

We see that in his reasoning Hobbes applies a principle of transitivity. The ship of Theseus is equal to the sum of its parts, of its original parts. If we replace but one of these parts, the ship in question is no longer our original ship, but another, closely resembling it, but not identical. So by this account we should consider the second ship the original one, for it has all the pieces of the original ship, and thus it has a direct claim of identity between the two. But, as we know from Plutarch's story, the people of Athens still regarded the repaired ship as Theseus'. Albeit they did not have Hobbes' continuation.

Hobbes himself, just a paragraph later, gives us another, wholly different answer. He says that: if one asks whether a man is, when old and young, the same being, or matter, it is clear that, because of the continual casting of existing body-tissue and the acquisition of new one, it is not the same material that endures, and hence not the same body, yet, because of the unbroken nature of the flux by which matter decays and is replaced, he is always the same man.[9]

So by this second account, the first one is the original, and the only real ship. For the second one we know, was damaged, and thus it was no longer a functioning ship.

But we see here in Hobbes' account an idea of continuation. That our ship's identity has persistence through time because of the graduality of the repair process. If the builders were to bring a different, completely new ship, to replace the old one, then it would've been obvious for everyone that the second ship was a very different one. But because the process was a very long one, lasting for centuries, the line between the two was heavily blurred.

Sadly, in reality we face the unforgiving touch of decay. And this experiment can only be performed in thought. The reason why the pieces have been replaced in the first place was that they were expired, rotten, rendered unusable. Hobbes' continuation has sense only if the ship was upgraded, say from wood to iron or brass,

[8] Thomas Hobbes, *De mundo examined*, trans. Harold Whitmore Jones (London: Bradford University Press, 1976), 140-142.

[9] Hobbes, „De Corpore," 132-138; Plato, "Symposium," in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9, 207-208.

for then the wood could have still be of use, for it was not replaced because of its decay.

The metaphor of the ship as a loss of humanity

The logic behind this story has both amazed and intrigued scientists and philosophers alike, all the while inspiring fear in equal amounts. The fear of change, and more importantly, the fear of loss. The loss of identity, the loss of humanity. For Theseus' ship stands as a metaphor, one for permanence, and change. And we can use this metaphor on humans, or, as we will see, on what humans can become.

One modern such example of a story, fictional of course, albeit very plausible, I have seen being explored by Adam Savage, famous co-host of Mythbusters, designer, engineer and tech enthusiast. In 2011, the 11th episode of the 2nd season of *Curiosity*, a Discovery Channel documentary, was released. It was named *Can You Live Forever?*. In it, Adam proposed a simple, but very familiar hypothesis. What if we can extend our lives by gradually replacing the parts of us that cease to function properly?

The story of his transformation I shall relate as following. First he replaced his lungs, that were pierced during an accident, with lungs grown from his own tissues as to avoid rejection. Then he replaced his right arm, which became paralyzed, with a rudimentary mechanical one, and after that with a very advanced and very sophisticated prosthesis, virtually undistinguishable from his biological arm. When conventional medicine could not save him from a blood clot in his brain, he used nanotechnology to find and repair any internal damage, and kept the microscopic robots inside of him on a constant patrol to prevent any future problems of this kind. And so on and so forth.

But he soon realized that his natural body was reaching its biological limit. He could rejuvenate his skin, renew his blood, extend his memory into external hard drives, but he could not fully stop ageing, but merely delay it. Therefore, he thought, he should altogether abandon his body and built a new, improved one from scratch and simply transferred his mind into it. This is fantasy of course, but what if he was right? Instead of struggling with repairing the body attached to his mind, he would find a way to attach that mind to a new body. If he managed to extend parts of his memory outside of his actual biological brain, what could stop him from migrating the rest of his mind to this new synthetic storage?

This story is most obviously farfetched. A mere dream for us today. It implies not only that we fully understand our physiology and biology, but assumes that we have the ability to recreate it. This raises many questions that we should better start answering before his fantasy becomes our reality. Besides the technical questions of whether we could do it or not, there are rather many ethical questions of whether we should do it or not that we have to settle even before we start experimenting.

So let us consider Adam's body, or any other human body, as our own Theseus' ship. We know that by ageing, and Hobbes agrees, that we eventually replace every part of our ship, our body. Medical anecdotes tell us that we replace every single cell in our body every 7 years. So during an average human lifespan we replace the amount of more than 10 bodies. Yet our identity, our Self, remains unscattered, or does it?

But what if, as Adam did, we no longer wait for nature and begin to take control over our body. If we replace our organs with organs that are derived from our own tissues, we preserve our material identity wholly. There is no new or foreign material in our bodies. It is just as natural as regenerating a scar, only that on a larger scale. And our damaged parts, as was the wood from the ship, can no longer be used, so they cannot be transplanted into another. So that we will never have to face the possibility of a second ship emerging from our wasted parts.

This idea is flawed as well, for it assumes that, firstly our identity will not suffer changes. And secondly, that that organ will be considered a part of us, rather than an independent object or being. Our Self does suffer change, as our body does. It matures, and it degenerates as we age, and simply stopping physical ageing will not stop psychological ageing. And secondly, what if we grow a whole body and not just organs? What if, as has already been explored by Kazuo Ishiguro in his 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go*, we grow backup clones of ourselves? Clones that already have a mind of their own and are not just the sum of their biological parts. This path we see has its own ethical problems, which are as complex as, if not more complex than our original paradox.

However, what if we just start to enhance ourselves with mechanical augments. This way we do not potentially harm any other living being. But this path has a very hard question to answer. Can a human, that is no longer 100% human, be considered human still? And where do we trace the border between human and nonhuman?

There is an intrinsic conflict of causes in the problem of defining what a human in this case might be. On one hand we have the formal cause that says that if it looks like a human, performs like a human, feels like a human, then he is human. Then we have the platonic version of this definition, that even if by all empirical means it is human, it no longer bears a relation of identity between the idea of a human and its biological reality. For we have clarified earlier that only that ship which has all the original parts can identify itself with Theseus's ship, and by any deviation from its ideal prototype a new and wholly different being is produced.

If the mechanical enhancements are light, and barely noticeable we call them simply enhanced humans. A hearing aid, a titanium joint, an electronic heart. These are subtle technologies that most often help those that have a defective organ live normal lives. A different category of humans, but very closely related to it. So close in

fact that it does not present any major ontological difference. And we already enhance ourselves with wearable gadgets and tools, like the very rudimentary glasses that allow us to see better, or the paper and pen that allows us to store thoughts, going as far as smart mobile phones that grant us an ability very closely resembling telepathy. Only that we see them as tools, and not part of our bodies. For we can detach them from us without effort, or without damaging our corporal structure or integrity. But they are enhancements still.

But as it was the case with Adam's story, people began to voluntarily amputate their organs to replace them with better functioning ones. Faster legs, stronger hands, better eyes. What do we call those? And what if they become more machine than human? Say they replace both their hands and their legs with augments? We have a special category for these people. We call them cybernetic organism, or more archaically, machine-men. This may sound like science fiction, but these people really exist in our present.

For example the Irish-born artist Neil Harbisson, who has a lamp-like extension on his head. He was born with an extreme colorblindness and he could only see in shades of black and grey. He is the first human to be legally recognized as a cyborg.

Another example is Jesse Sullivan. He is a double amputee who lost both his arms and who was fitted with so-called bionic prostheses. These pair of advanced robotic arms were attached to his shoulders and he can operate them with implants in his spinal cord. They are yet far from being as precise as biological arms, but cybernetics as a science is just only at its beginning.

Another great example is Professor Kevin Warwick. He is a professor of cybernetics at the University of Reading in the United Kingdom, and he has done multiple experiments on himself. He implanted microchips in his arms and in his head so that he could remote control robots and electronic devices with his mind.

As much as it amazes us, and myself personally, the idea of meeting such person is fear inspiring. Sigmund Freud described this phenomenon in a 1919 essay as *uncanniness*, or *unheimlich*. The un-familiar. The feeling of something being not unknown or foreign, but strangely familiar, yet not fully recognizable. We are capable of identifying the likeness, but we are unable to acknowledge that likeness as a person such as ourselves. We may accept someone that uses a peacemaker, because we cannot see it, but would we shake hands with someone that has USB fingers? We fear a robot that looks like a human, we fear more a human that looks like a machine.

Here we have an ontological separation that is most evident. We do not allow, for example, transsexual women to compete in feminine sports because of the unfair advantage that their biological bodies offer them. How would we, to continue the example, accept a football match between a team of baseline humans versus a team of

enhanced humans? As a curiosity, maybe. This separation between augmented and non-augmented humans has a huge potential for conflict in the future if it ever becomes a reality.

We have seen scenarios of humans persecuting cyborgs and androids in books like *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*? written by the brilliant American novelist Philip K. Dick. From the natural fear of the different, to the stigma of augmented humans being considered more machine than human, and thus more akin to objects than beings, to more elaborate phobias like the fear of an AI totalitarian regime that is wholly mathematical and rational without any regards form human life, or a superior augmented human master race driven by Darwinian ideals that will seek to eliminate the now inferior and obsolete, biological humans.

Fortunately, we do not have such hard criteria of separation. We still have a cohesive and unitarian human identity that we call humanity. But we have to ask, what if, again in the future, these augmented humans decide that they no longer adhere to their human identity? What is Theseus' ship no longer wants to be his ship? We already have transhuman and posthuman movements that advocate surpassing our so called human limitations. One excellent advocate of embracing technology as the next natural step in our evolution was Julian Huxley, the 1st Director-General of UNESCO and an accomplished biologist. Ironically, his own brother Aldous Huxley has written many novels criticizing Julian's views, especially those on eugenetics.

It is commonly said about these people that they have lost, or abandoned, their humanity. Whether judging from a quantitative or qualitative point of view. Whether they renounced the quality of being human, or by exceeding a limit in their physiology, the rest of human beings no longer consider them a part of us. Thus, in their eyes, meaning that they have lost their true identity. They [the trans and post humanists] in return consider other humans that reject technology as technophobes and luddites, superstitious and backwards. Usually transhumanist range into the atheist and materialist spectrum of thought, whereas those who reject technology usually do it on moral and spiritual grounds.

Solving the paradox

As we have seen an answer to Hobbes dilemma, and a possible resolve to Theseus's paradox is very hard. John Locke made an attempt. Although and evasive answer that was greatly expanded upon by Noam Chomsky. He proposes that the identity of Theseus's ship was not residing in the ship itself, as the ancients believed, but in the minds, the consciousness, of the people that looked at that ship and acknowledged it as being as such. Thus, he moved the problem of the ship's identity

from an ontological to a cognitive level.[10] But this answer can only apply to inanimate objects. The ship could not develop an identity all by itself. If the Athenians decided that the materials from the ship could better serve as building materials, the ship was helpless to stop them, as it was helpless to stop them from repairing it.

This is why we should actually ask what was in the mind of Theseus. Because there is, and never was a ship. The only thing that gave that ship its identity was Theseus's mind. Without Theseus, there would have been no ship.[11] And without the minds of his fellow Athenians that stored this ship's identity, Heraclitus would have been right all along, the final cause of this monument would have been rot or ash.

This is the final problem that Adam also faced in his quest for immortality. His family, who refused to live an unnatural lifespan, chose to die as unaugmented humans. The world in which he lived passed through literal Apocalypse. No one and nothing remained of his past life. Though he solved all his biological challenges, the psychological and sociological ones remained. He was facing depression, boredom. After he has done everything that a human being could do in 1000 years, he was struggling with grasping what was left of his Self.

David Hume comes with an even more undaunted theory, that our mind is nothing more than the sum of all its experiences bundled together. It is not a proper metaphysical object, but rather a collection of perceptions, thoughts and memories that have no intrinsic cohesion, nor sense, nor unity outside of our minds. This theory tells us that an object is only the sum of all its properties and relations, and nothing more. That there is no substance in which its properties are inherent, only acquired.[12]

So, based on what Hume has theorized, we can elaborate that there is no inherent nature to the Self. The Self *is* in no way something, it only *possesses* certain *qualia* at certain times. That which I possess becomes part of what I am. Thus, the Self is defined not by *being* something, but by *having* something.

If the Self acquires something, then this raises two sets of questions. First of all, from where does it acquire the things that it acquires? And if another Self happens to acquire a certain set of properties as another, would that establish a certain relation of identity between them, or at least between them and an original, let's say prototype? And the second set of questions follows that if a Self manages to acquire something from somewhere, would a latter Self be capable of acquiring the same thing as the former from it? And if true would this happen by means of inheritance or by

[10] Noam Chomsky, *Of Minds and Language. A Dialogue with Noam Chomsky in the Basque Country*, eds. Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini, Juan Uriagereka and Pello Salaburu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 382.

[11] Chomsky, *Of Minds and Language.*

[12] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Sir Lewis Amherst Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 251-263.

means of imitation? Or in other words will the first Self be forced to renounce its quality and pass it on to the second Self, or will the second Self create its own quality based on the one the first one had?

Our identity is, for the moment being, in essence, linked to our physical body. We cannot leave, per se, the body that we are born with, nor can we exchange it with another's. And this fundamentally shapes our notion of individuality and identity. But what if we have spare bodies, like in Adam's case? Thus, we no longer identify with our body. We no longer *are* the body we inhabit, but we merely *commandeer* it as a vehicle. So what if someone else besides us manages to acquire one of these bodies? He who manages this has access to all of our memories, and to our body. So, does that person becomes us? This possibility of identity theft becomes a reality the moment we break our ontological link to our body, as we can see explored in the 2009 American movie *Surrogates*, or the Japanese series *Ghost in the Shell*. Or more gravely, what if we are forced in a body that is not our own as an intended punishment, as we see in South African director Neill Blomkamp's short movie series *ADAM: The Mirror*.

This critique of this radical mind-body dualism we see in Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*, where he tries to argue against Descartes' reasoning that the mind and the body are separate entities, a duality he [Ryle] derogatory calls the "ghost in the machine". He argues that the Platonic, and later Cartesian distinction between a mental and a material world is an illusion, a colossal "categoric mistake", because it mistakenly assumes that a mental act could be, and is, distinct from a physical act. There is no entity called a *mind* inside a mechanical apparatus called *the body*, but they both are parts of the same entity and cannot exist one outside the other. For example that there can be no mind as a metaphysical object in the absence of a biological brain to host it. And that all experiences of the mind are, in fact, mediated by, and of, the body.[13]

This correlates with Locke when he says that we come unto this world as blank blackboards. He postulated that at birth the mind is empty, blank as a piece of paper on which nothing was written as of yet, a *tabula rasa*. He continues by saying that not only are we born with a blank mind, we are born without any innate ideas. The only property that this blank mind has is the capacity of acquiring and storing knowledge. Knowledge, which is shaped by the experience, it has with the perception of the senses that go into contact with the outside world and from the inner reflection of the mind on said impressions. We have thus no inherent identity and no inherent humanity until we go forth into, and interact with, the world.[14]

[13] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 11-24.

[14] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Ward, Lock And Co, 1689), 12-26.

We form our identity in a two-step process. By affirming what we are, and denying what we are not. By associating with that which we have something in common with, and dissociating from that which differs from us. And this process always requires both a psychological and sociological context. And, more importantly, that we have a choice in choosing said associations.

Thus, the problem of the ship's identity becomes a problem of consensus. The ship is what it is because other people chose to grant upon it its identity. As such, the same consensus decides what, if anything, is human.

The quest for a new identity

And here we ask your final set of questions. What if all of humanity becomes like Adam? What if virtually all humans in this universe become immortal, interconnected beings? What if all the consciousnesses pool together in a network that shares all the collective experiences and memories between all of its members? Do we not then become a collective consciousness? And where is the place of our Self in this prospect of an ontological ascendency?

We are closely connected by our means of modern communication even today. We have projects of building rudimentary collective vaults of information to be readily accessed by all. And we do this every time we use the internet. But we have access only to that which others cared to share with us willingly. Whether texts, pictures or videos, we have access to parts of others' memories and thoughts. The only thing that stops us from assimilating these memories as our own is the fact that we are conscious that these are but mere products of a labor. They are *artefacts*. We do not experience them neither exactly *when* they happen, neither exactly *how* they happened. Thus we recognize them as ulterior, and, us not being present at their formation, we clearly identify them as foreign, and not ours.

But let's say that by having unlimited, unrestricted, and immediate access to the whole of human knowledge. What if we no longer use tools to communicate with one another, but instead build artificial "organs" of the body to do so? What if through this magical-like technological telepathy, we, and our Selves, go so far as to no longer reside in our own bodies, but in a shared network of interlinked conduits, both synthetic and biological.

Here we can give but merely tree solutions. Either we become a collective consciousness, a *consensus*, thus being one with both Theseus and his ship. Second, we become silent voices, subordinated under the indentity of a superior will, either of an individual, or collective, that will emerge. Or, we embrace the second ship, and radically rethink from the fundaments our concepts of identity to build new borders to differentiate ourselves, our now wondering, nomadic *ghost*, inside our new machine.

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