Hinduism

* The Katha Upanishad
  + - A tale,narrative
    - Characters:

1. Nachi ketas: a young man
2. His father
3. Yama:

* The story itself:
* Nachiketas criticizes his father’s sacrifice
* His father scarifies Nachiketas
* Goes to visit Yama, but Yama isn’t home
* Nachiketas waits for three days
* Yama offers Nachiketas three boons(wishes)

1. Reconciliation with his father
2. Learn the fire ritual
3. The answer to one question: What happens after death

* Yama resists answering the question, offer him anything else
* The answer to that question is something that not even the gods fully understand
* Nachiketas resists the temptation and insists that he really does want the answer
* Yama is impressed, gives him the answer
* Atman is Brahman
* Rough,crude interpretation of these terms:
* Atman: soul
* Brahman: the foundation/core of reality
* Atman
  + - Guiding question: What is it that makes a person the same person over time?
* The chair
* Nothing substantial has changed about it
* Some of the things that haven’t changed
* Shape/Color/etc
* The matter
* Can one keep “cutting a thing in half” indefinitely?
* NO
* There are atoms: fundamental, simple, indivisible things
* Now philosophers call these “simples”

A thing that exits without having any parts

* Yes
* The “gunk” view
* Matter/space/etc are infinitely divisible
* A possible claim: the chair is the same chair, if it has all the same simples
* We’d need to understand what makes each simple the same simple
* Continuous causal history (the standard suggestion)
* Concerns about this claim:
* The matter isn’t all that matters
* We could hold all the simples constant but change their fro,
* Maybe we don’t need exactly the same set of simples
* Humans
* Suggestions
* Con sciousness
* Linked memories
* Soul
* DNA
* Experiences
* Ability to create unique thoughts
* The causal history
* Body
* Consciousness
* Identity

Jan 21

* Two major suggestions regarding human personal identity
* Continuity of Body
* Continuity of Consciousness
* Including memories, personality traits, etc.
* Probably the most intuitive view, at least initially, is continuity of consciousness
* Body swapping
* **Dr Brown’s personality in Charis Hemsworth’s body**
* Dr Brown’s body with Chris Hemsworth’s personality
* A pair of cases from Bernard Williams
* Case 1

Before

Person A (you)

Person B (someone else, morally horrific, nice body)

After

1. Body (Personality of Person B)
2. Body (Personality of Person A)

You need to decide:

1. Outcome 1: A-Body person is given $1,000,000,000, B-Body person is tortured to death.
2. Outcome 2: B-Body person is given $1,000,000,000, A-Body person is tortured to die

* Case 2

You are kidnapped by a psycho-horror-murderer person

Given a choice between several possible versions of how you are going to be murdered.

Regular old death by torture

Amnesia, then death by torture

Amnesia, fake memories, then death by torture.

**Amnesia, someone else’s real memories, then tortured to death**

**Amnesia, someone else’s real memories, then tortured to death, and somebody else goes free, thinking that they are you.**

Williams believes that fear is fundamentally, first-personal

* Conclusion: personal identity is really hard.
* A neglected possibility: souls

There are objects (perhaps non-physical) that determine identity

Compatible with radical changes in a body and consciousness

* Possible for an individual to survive death, and maybe reincarnate

The Hindu Suggestion: we are souls, and souls are fundamentally simple

* No parts
* No properties
* Do not change

If souls do not have any properties, then what makes them distinct? What makes one soul different from another?

* Nothing. They are not different
* There is one soul, the soul of all things, Atman
* This might lead to belief in Monism: there is only one thing
* The obvious objection: the world sure appears to be plural, not singular
* There do appear to be real differences
* The response to the objection: that’s all an illusion
* Maybe a helpful analogy: we already accept a wide divergence between the appearances of things and their reality (see all of modern science)
* Implications of this view:
* Nothing matters-> the appearances of things to appear to matter, and we cannot escape that appearance

Brahman

* Vocabulary issue

Brahman: the ultimate reality/thing

Brahma: One of three most fundamental deities

Brahmin: the priestly caste 祭司等级

* Guiding question: What is the ultimate explanation of the world around us?

The Cosmological Argument

* We explain what a thing is in terms of where it came from
* The chain of explanations has to end somewhere, you cannot have an infinite regress of explanations.
* Why is there anything at all? Of all the things that could exist, why is this what exists?
* God is the ultimate explanation.

1/23

* Why thing that God is a better ultimate explanation than merely the universe on its own?
* Derek Parfit’s “Why Anything? Why this?”
* Imagine that the universe had some kind of special feature, perhaps that it was the greatest possible world

When philosophers use the concept” world” or “possible world” they are not talking about planets

An entire way that things can be, a complete causally connected reality

* It would be strange to say that a world is the greatest possible one, and the one that actually exists, and that these two facts are disconnected from each other

There would be some reason to believe that the world exist because it is the greatest possible world

* A Selector is a property that is special in a way that could explain why a whole reality had that property

Candidates:

Greatest Possible

Maximal

Minimal

Most beautiful

Simplest

Etc

* Parfit’s suggestion, any theory of everything that can appeal to one of these special properties is better than one which can’t, all other things being equal

A reason to think that these kinds of properties are special

They are less arbitrary than the alternatives

* Why God？
* There are just many arbitrary things about the Universe for it (the Universe) to be a satisfying ultimate explanation
* The base facts of the Universe

The speed of light, the charge on the electron, Plank’s Constant, Gravitation Constant, the structure of the law of physics, etc

Fg=(m1 \* m2) G/ r^2

* Something like God, the greatest possible thing, would do better (all other things being equal)
* An intriguing side note: the appeal to multiverses might be motivated in a similar way
* Push toward maximality, the more universes/ worlds there are, the less surprising it is that we see one like this
* Also, the idea that the most amount of worlds exist, has an intrinsic appeal

Maybe all the worlds exist

A metaphysical principle within Hinduism

* In order to explain a thing, the explainer must transcend that thing
* An implication: the explanation of all things, must transcend all things, be beyond all distinctions
* Transcendence as a selector, the thing that explains everything else does so because it is maximally transcendent
* What would it look like for something to be maximally transcendent?
* Simple
* Featureless
* Changeless
* Thus Atman is Brahman: the soul of everything is the fundamental explanation of everything, everything is God
* How are we supposed to understand these puzzling claims?
* You are not
* Your rationality will never able to completely grasp it
* Hinduism is a deeply mystical tradition
* Mystical traditional claim that the deepest features of the world cannot be understand intellectually
* However, they can be experienced
* Relatedly, unless you can experience them, perhaps nobody can explain them to you.
* Analogy: Mary and the color red
* Without the experience of the color red, you can know everything there is to know about red, except for what it looks like
* Some kinds of knowledge are fundamentally, necessarily experiential

You cannot know them except through experience

* Some more key concepts from Hinduism
* Samsara 轮回: reincarnation, the cycle of death and rebirth
* Seen are more of a burden as a blessing
* Karma 因果报应: perfect retributive justice, having done to you what you have done to others

1/28

* Moksha: liberation from Samsara
* Yoga: any set of practices that is aimed at the achievement of Moksha
* Bendy body stuff
* Many form of meditation
* More intellectual and philosophical
* More practical and ethical
* The experience of Moksha can be seen by an analogy with sleep and wakefulness
* Heightened awareness/hyper-wakefulness/flow
* Ordinary wakefulness
* Barely awake
* Light sleep
* Dreaming sleep
* Deep/dreaming sleep (Moksha is most like this)
* Moksha is an experience without qualities
* Pure existence without detail
* Pure consciousness without being consciousness of anything
* Om: the sound of fundamental reality, what Moksha, the identity of Atman and Brahman, would sound like if you could hear it
* Probably the most natural to interpret these claims is that we can approach a mystical understanding of Moksha within our lifetime, but the fully experience it requires an escape from our body

The Chandogya Upanishad

* Chapter VI
* Svetaketu is talking to his father, Uddalaka
* Uddalaka is giving advice to his son on how to live
* Uddalaka repeats one phrase several time: tat tvam asi- you are that
* Several analogies given
* If you understand a single piece of gold, you understand all pieces of gold (tat tvam asi)
* The objects of understanding have the same essential nature
* Common properties/features
* Not literal identity
* Rivers merge into one ocean (tat tvam asi)
* Components of the whole, a part/whole relationship
* The individual/the components that make up that individual will dissolve into a larger collective, losing some aspect of its individuality
* Not literal identity
* Salt dissolves in water (tat tvam asi)
* Multiple interpretation

I am like the salt dissolving into Brahman

Atman is a common component that is present in all things

* Not literal identity
* Claim: The phrase “Atman is Brahman” can be understood as a placeholder for some kind of claim about the oneness of all things
* The details, fundamental reality of the relationship, are up in the air, not fully understood
* Analogy with “fire”
* Our concept of fire is created by interacting with something that is real, even if we do not totally understand what it is
* Based on the common experience of Moksha, we can still communicate with other about the cosmic nature of reality even when our understanding is incomplete
* The exact philosophical understanding is not crucial to the practices
* This is not surprising in a mystical tradition
* Because the concepts serve that practices, not the other way around