Introduction to Personal Identity

1. The Afterlife: A Problem

How could God create an afterlife in which I myself exist, as opposed to someone merely *like* me existing? Some possible answers:

(a) similarity
(b) particles
(c) soul
(d) memory

2. The Core Problem of Personal Identity

A person, P, existing at t_1, is identical to a person, Q, existing at some later time, t_2, if and only if ...

For example:

... if and only if P at t_1 and Q at t_2 have the same physical appearance

... if and only if P at t_1 and Q at t_2 have the same particles as parts

... if and only if P at t_1 and Q at t_2 have the same soul

... if and only if Q remembers at t_2 things that happened to P at t_1

3. Identity

(a) Identity is an equivalence relation

reflexive: for every x, x=x
symmetric: for every x and y, if x=y then y=x
transitive: for every x, y, and z, if x=y and y=z, then x=z

(b) Numerical identity vs. qualitative similarity

4. Leibniz's Law; Identity and Change

Leibniz's Law: If x=y, then for every property, P, x has P if and only if y has P

Abbreviations:

"longhair" for "the person who walked into the salon with long hair"
"shorthair" for "the person who left the salon with short hair"

The argument from change

(i) If longhair = shorthair, then for every property P, longhair has P iff shorthair has P
(ii) Longhair has the property *having long hair*, whereas shorthair does not have this property
(iii) Therefore, longhair ≠ shorthair

5. Another Way of Looking at Identity over Time: Temporal Stages

Two stages stand in the *unity relation* for persons if and only if: there is some person of which both are stages

Person stages x and y stand in the unity relation for persons if and only if . . .