

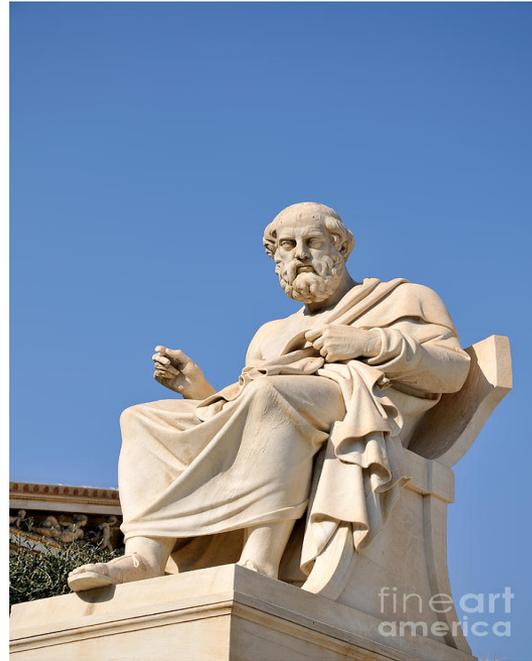
The Ship of Theseus

September 2016

Presentation by Peggy Verrall

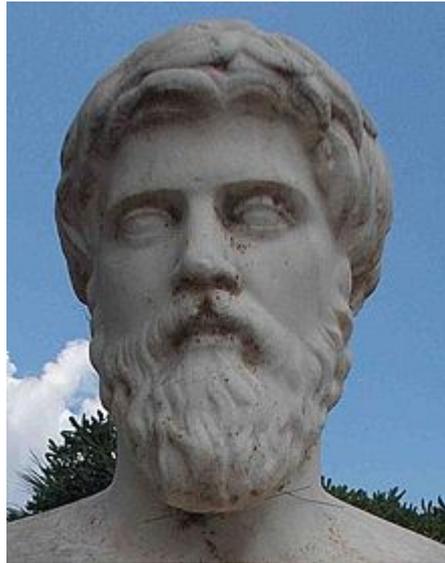


Heraclitus roughly 6 century BCE



Plato 5th-4th

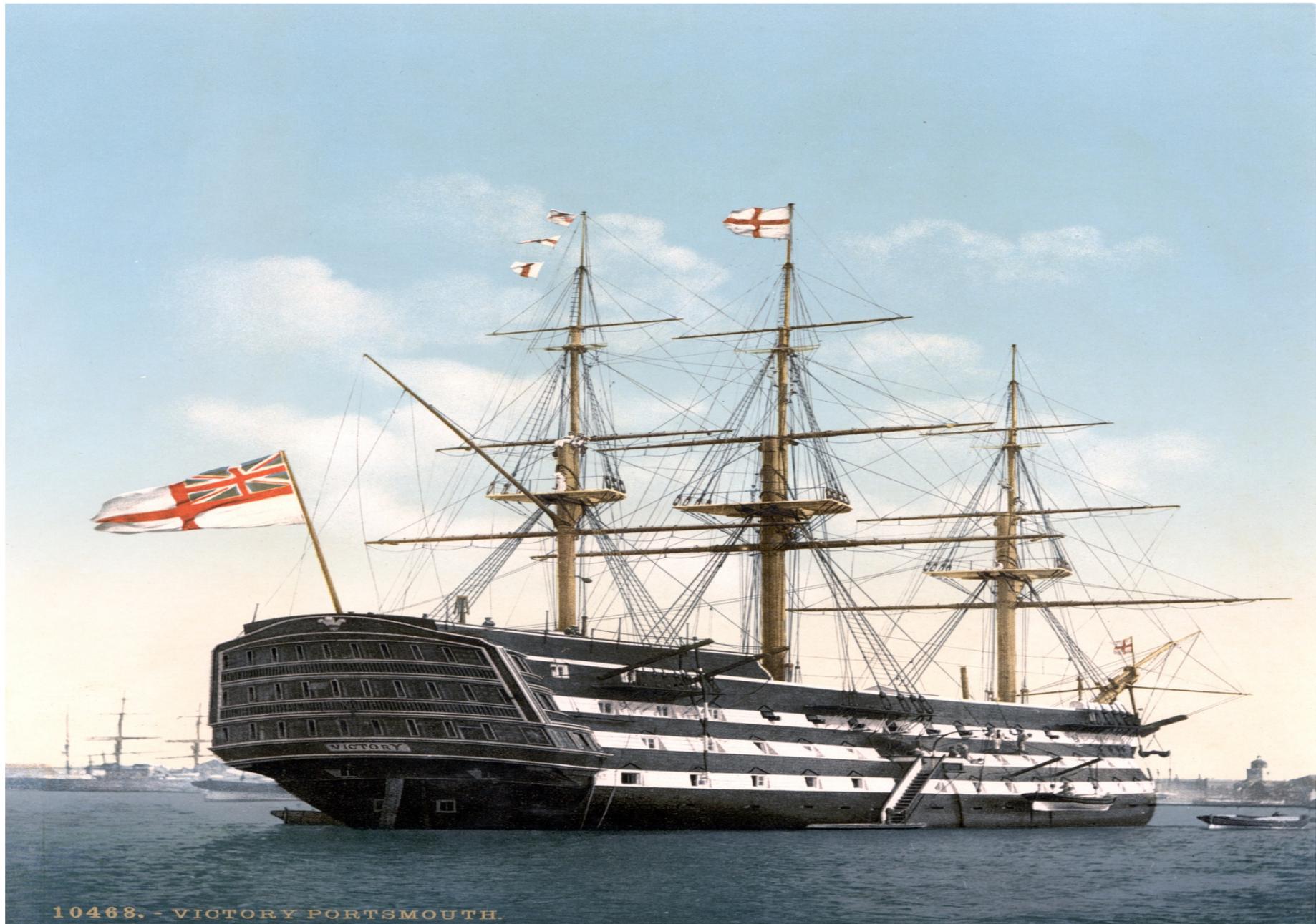
Plutarch











10468. - VICTORY PORTSMOUTH.



Questions.

If Theseus takes his ship in for repair each time he docks, then sails with one or more new parts, is he still sailing the Ship of Theseus ?

However, if it is preserved, like the Victory, after his death, with every conceivable part being replaced over time, and possibly more than once and by different people, is it still The Ship of Theseus?

One possible solution is to hold to what is known as
The Mereological Theory of Identity

Hereinafter called MTI

Where does this leave us?

In only one of our stated scenarios does
The Ship of Theseus have all parts identical
with the original.

MTI too severe.

How about Spatio/Temporal Continuity.

Hereinafter known as STI

To summarize:

Theseus sets sail on his ship, Ship A

He arrives on his ship, which we can now call ship B

because it has had all its parts replaced.

According to STC this is The Ship of Theseus.

Then along comes Ship C, the reconstituted one.

MTI allows this to be the original.

But neither allows for disassembly and reassembly of an object.

What do we mean by
Identity?

What is Identity?

One's physical body ?

- So what about people who have replacement legs?
- Arms?
- Hearts?
- Damaged but unreplaced bodies?
- Unusable bodies? (Stephen Hawking)
- What about the scifi favourite – just a brain-?

One's mind ?

- What is the mind?
- Is it separate from the brain?
- Is it separable from the body?
- Is there something which common sense tells us is there, even if it is difficult to describe exactly?

Would that mean my
identity is also an illusion?
What about yours?



Books read and/or consulted.

Thought experiment On the Power and Limit of Imaginary Cases

Tamar Szabo Gendler 2000

The Outer Limits of Reason *Noson S. Yanofsky 2013*

The Life of Theseus *Plutarch*

The Stanford Online Encyclopaedia of Philosophy

Various books in The Great Philosophers series by Phoenix Books

Time and identity *Edited by Campbell, O'Rourke and Silverstein.*

The Problem of Knowledge *A.J.Ayer*

Key Themes in Philosophy *Edited by A Phillips Griffiths*

What is Life? *Erwin Schrodinger*

The Philosophy of Time *Editor Richard M Gale*

And of course Wikipedia