

# Three women in one body essay

Law



Three Women in One Body Andrea, Heather and Tiffany occupy a single human body; hence they must be treated as a single individual by law.

Although multiple personality disorder is a recognized mental illness, countless experts have opined that it is not a real disorder by any means (Braude 61-64; Saks and Behnke 26-29). Therefore, when Andrea, Heather and Tiffany are heard in court, it would take psychologists and psychiatrists to convince judges and juries that Andrea, Heather and Tiffany are, in fact, multiple identities of a single person, who should not be punished for the crimes of a single identity. Even if judges and juries are convinced that Andrea, Heather and Tiffany should not be punished for bigamy, or that it is unfair to prosecute Heather and Tiffany for a crime committed by Andrea alone, the fact remains that the bigamists and Andrea, the criminal, would go on occupying the same human body regardless of prosecution. Hence, it should be considered necessary to punish all three personalities. After all, the lawbreakers and the criminal are manifested through their body alone, without which nobody would even know that Andrea, Heather and Tiffany exist. The human body that Andrea, Heather and Tiffany collectively occupy must be punished regardless of which identity commits a crime.

Daniel Dennett, a philosopher, states that persons are formed through rationality, intentions, consciousness, communication, and the fact that they are moral objects and subjects (Saks and Behnke 41-42). Who is to say that Andrea, Heather and Tiffany are a person, seeing that they irrationally fail to remember one another's existence? Saks and Behnke write that Dennett probably forgot to add the human body to his list of attributes of personhood (45-46). But, John Locke argues that it is not the human body that helps to

identify an individual; rather, psychological characteristics are of the essence in this regard (Saks and Behnke 47). Andrea, Heather and Tiffany have different psychological characteristics.

Even so, their human body should be prosecuted regardless of which of the three commits a crime. If Heather and Tiffany are not prosecuted for Andrea's crime, Andrea would never face punishment. In that case, she may go on repeating her crime, as there would be no punishment to serve as a deterrent.

As courts of law are not in the position to punish only one personality out of the three, it is reasonable only to believe that the crime was committed by the human body occupied by three personalities of the same individual. Courts of law may not find it easy to trust Heather and Tiffany that it was Andrea who committed the crime. Hence, it is logical for judges and juries to consider the crime by trusting in Velleman's understanding of self. Velleman, a philosopher, expresses his understanding of Buddhist philosophy: that human suffering results from the false belief that our selves endure in what seems to be virtually endless time, which is why people are anxious about their past and future. Human beings tend to look back on their lives with regret and nostalgia. They also feel anxious about future as they try to make strategic plans to fulfill their goals based on their own expectations as well as those of others (Velleman).

Like Einstein or quantum physicists with little belief in the ordinary human sense of time - they believe in relativity of time that Velleman explains in philosophical terms - the philosopher seeks to understand how time is

related to the concept of “enduring self” (Velleman 1). After all, Buddhists assert that individual belief in self that endures is an illusion. Buddhism encourages its followers to meditate as practice for living in the present or in the moment. One of the commonly explained methods of Buddhist meditation is to concentrate on a single word, object or thought and ignore all others. Buddhist masters also teach their followers to fully enjoy their daily chores so as to live in the moment. Velleman explains that this state of mind is also available to us when we concentrate on a task that almost completely engages our intellect.

Regardless of whether Andrea’s intellect was completely engaged in the moment she committed a crime, the fact remains that that moment was lived by Andrea, Heather and Tiffany together. All three must, therefore, be punished for occupying the same body in that moment of crime. Criminal courts are not concerned with what preceded or followed that moment.

To put it another way, the criminal body should be prosecuted even if Heather occupied the body immediately before the crime committed by Andrea, or if Tiffany occupied the body immediately after the moment of crime. Velleman writes that the future is envisioned in the following way: “[I]n anticipating a scene that I would experience in the future, I would distinguish between the anticipating ‘I’ and the experiencing ‘I’ as well” (14). Thus, multiple identities are formed.

Just the same, if the philosopher were to commit a crime in the present moment, his body would be punished regardless of whether or not his future self is a criminal in his vision. Moreover, this punishment may negatively

impact his future self in a way that the present self may or may not imagine. Of course, courts of law cannot be expected to employ Descartes' philosophical technique of "methodological doubt" to determine whether or not Andrea, Heather and Tiffany should all be prosecuted for bigamy or another crime (Albl 20). According to this technique, one must doubt everything that can be doubted, and refuse to accept anything as having been known unless it is established with certainty. As there is no certainty in any matter available to human understanding or perception, Descartes doubts the things he sees and experiences.

He even doubts his good old belief in God's greatness. After all, Descartes is concerned with a sense of having no knowledge whatsoever, given that his human understanding and perceptions have failed to meet the criteria of being certain or foolproof (Albl 20-21). Still, the philosopher's most famous statement remains as the following: 'I think, therefore I am.' In other words, the philosopher is permitted by reason only to believe in his own thoughts - or doubts, as in the case of Descartes (Albl 21).

If Descartes were a judge in the cases of Andrea, Heather and Tiffany, he may let them go without being prosecuted for their unlawful behaviors. All three identities would prove themselves to him with their individual thoughts, which would convince him that they are separate identities. As a matter of fact, Descartes, the judge, may even believe that Andrea, Heather and Tiffany occupy three different bodies. As human perception of external objects is entirely based on judgments of the mind and the conclusion it reaches, even judges and juries apart from Descartes may come to believe this (Sepper 168). It is further possible for the judges and juries apart from <https://assignbuster.com/three-women-in-one-body-essay/>

Descartes to completely disbelieve in the existence of multiple personality disorder. They may opt to trust in David Hume's philosophy instead. Unlike Descartes, Hume rejects the certainty of personal- or self-identity because he has no faith in the substance of the mind (Flage 69-71). This is because the mind does not comprehend the reality of all things that the human being perceives as external objects (Hume).

As the philosopher's brain processes information about his concept of self, taught unto him by his own reasoning process and information provided by others, he realizes that his brain is just a piece of meat. Shall he believe, therefore, that there is no self except God? If not, how shall he understand how his brain - a piece of meat - processes information as it does? In Hume's view, one may only express skepticism with regards to things that he or she has not yet seen or understood, which is why Velleman believes that it is possible to reduce or remove anxieties by being either Buddhist or Tralfamadorian. Hume further states that individuals may only know about the external world through their perceptions of it. And, these perceptions may be accurate or inaccurate, as in the case of the mirage which looks real but is not (Flage 172). Thus, Hume's philosophy leads his readers to doubt their perceptions while doubting them not.

The reader is led to doubt his or her "personal identity" as does Hume, given that the mind does not always lead the thinker to the right conclusions (Flage 130-133). If I were the first person on earth to throw an object in the air, I might have thought that that object would continue its upward movement instead of being pulled down by the force of gravity. Hence, I would have made a wrong conclusion about the object of my perception.

<https://assignbuster.com/three-women-in-one-body-essay/>

' I thought, therefore I was.' All the same, I did not want to be led to a wrong conclusion by my mind. Why did my mind mislead me into thinking that the object thrown up in the air would continue its upward movement? Seeing as I did not, even for a moment, wish to be misled by my mind, and did not desire to be untruthful to myself, my sense of ' I am' is a falsehood given that this ' I am' is in my mind, and my mind can lead me to wrong conclusions. I can make mistakes, and therefore, the substance of my mind is not truly real either! Just as the mirage, which is there and not there at the same time, my mind is with me today a perception the knowledge of which may be furthered through greater understanding with the mind alone. Thus, my mind or ' I' learned with the help of my sight that an object thrown in the air must fall. With this understanding, it is plausible that the judges and juries would consider Andrea, Heather and Tiffany as deluded rather than an individual suffering from multiple personality disorder.

If Heather and Tiffany state that it was Andrea alone who committed a crime, judges and juries may further conclude that Heather and Tiffany have misperceived reality. As their minds cannot be trusted, their separate personalities cannot be identified. Even if psychologists, psychiatrists and Descartes come to their defense, Velleman and Hume would prove them wrong by arguing that the body occupied by Andrea, Heather and Tiffany should be punished. Works Cited

Albl, Martin C. Reason, Faith, and Tradition: Explorations in Catholic Theology. Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 2009. Braude, Stephen E. First Person Plural: Multiple Personality and the Philosophy of Mind. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995. Flage, Daniel E.

<https://assignbuster.com/three-women-in-one-body-essay/>

David Hume's Theory of Mind. London: Routledge, 1990. Hume, David. An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. Ed.

Glyn Hughes. 2009. 7 May 2010. . Saks, Elyn R.

, and Stephen H. Behnke. Jekyll on Trial: Multiple Personality Disorder and Criminal Law. New York, NY: New York University Press, 1997. Sepper, Dennis L.

" Cartesian Imaginations." In A Companion to Rationalism. Ed. Alan Jean Nelson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.: 2005.

Velleman, J. David. " So it Goes.

" The Amherst Lecture in Philosophy, Lecture 1. 2006. 7 May 2010. .