

Addendum to the philosophical puzzle of Theseus' ship

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Imagine that the castle of the city of EG, the “EG Castle”, is being rebuilt by replacing the original stones with new ones. The old stones are transported elsewhere, say to the town of PB, and the castle is rebuilt using the original stones in its original form. In EG, the castle will also be preserved, not by using the original stones but with new ones. Is there still an EG castle at that time, and if so, which of the two?

1. If the main identity criterion of a castle is its location and continued existence, therefore, there is still the Castle of EG, only renewed: original castle = renovated castle.
2. If the main identity criterion of the castle is the original stones within it, therefore, there is still an EG castle; it has just moved to a new location: original castle = restored castle.
3. If both the place and the stones are essential to its identity, therefore, the Castle of EG has ceased to exist and no longer exists: original castle \neq renovated castle \neq restored castle.

We need to know what we are talking about when referring to the “Castle of EG”. Because no such strange occurrences have happened, everyday language provides no answer to the question; therefore, we cannot give a satisfactory answer to the puzzle.

Next, let us look at Ship of Theseus and the philosophical puzzle that goes with it. The criterion for the identification of the ship was that Theseus

had boarded the ship and was sailing across the sea towards his destination. During the long voyage, many parts of the ship were replaced, but there was no question whether it was Ship of Theseus because the criterion for reidentifying the ship was not done by looking at the parts of the ship but by the fact that Theseus had travelled on it. The continued existence of the ship and the hero's continued travel on it reidentifies the ship in time. I could not speak of a "ship of Theseus" if the hero had changed ships during the voyage.

The criteria for identification and existence are different between a ship on a voyage and a retired ship. They can replace all the parts of the ship during the voyage; this is not an identification problem. The identity criterion for Ship of Theseus is that the hero is travelling on it. If he were to change ships on the way, there would be no point talking about his ship. A ship on a road is like a living creature; all the parts built into it become part of it, but the parts thrown out of the ship do not. However, the situation is different with a ship on exhibition, wherein the aim is to remain unchanged. Ship of Theseus on the way home is a *means of transport*. Once it has been dismantled, it becomes a *relic of the past*, and it ceases to be a means of transport. The ship that was exhibited was the Ship of Theseus, but now it is no longer his ship; the hero, having returned home, has a new ship. We have to decide how far and to what extent of deterioration we should consider the exhibited ship to be a descendant of the ship that made the famous voyage. Afterwards, we can say that the remaining ruin resembles the original ship, but we deny that they are the same. To formulate the similarity and uniformity, we assume that we can measure the difference between two ship examples from the previous state and the original state.

Following Amie L. Thomasson's investigations, the alternatives arise as follows:

1. application condition – it is a vehicle or an object memory;
2. identification criterion – the ship was named The Ship of Theseus when he boarded it;
3. re-application criterion – a ship (or an object memory) when it is the same ship (or object memory) as before.

Imagine while walking along a beach, a friend points at a ship: "See, that is Theseus' ship, he sailed it to defeat the Minotaur." The ship's name was

marked on a small sign with the inscription, “This is Ship of Theseus.” This is the first time I saw the ship as a *memory*; the identifying criterion for the ship.

Many years later, I passed by again and found the sign and the ship behind the sign. The boat looked like it had been repaired a lot over the years, and to tell you the truth, I did not remember what it looked like when I first saw it. However, seeing the sign made me believe that the ship in front of me was the ship of Theseus. Meanwhile, I learned that it no longer possesses any of its original parts; they had all been replaced. However, someone had rebuilt the ship in its original form from the old parts in another place with only slightly rotted planks. He thinks he has the Ship of Theseus. Now who is right: which ship is Ship of Theseus? We need to know what we are talking about and what the logical proper name “Ship of Theseus” means, otherwise, the question is meaningless.

1. If the ship is a vehicle, its identity criterion is the place where it was originally placed, and its continued existence next to the sign, therefore, Ship of Theseus exists and is there next to the sign, only renewed: original ship = renovated ship.
2. If the ship is a memory, and its main identity criterion is the old planks in it, therefore, Ship of Theseus still exists, not at the sign but in the new location: original ship = restored ship.
3. If both the place at the board, the continued existence, and the parts of the ship are relevant to its identity, therefore, Ship of Theseus has ceased to exist: original ship \neq renovated ship \neq restored ship.

As shown in a previous paper (<https://ferenc.andrasek.hu/papers/notes-sth9.pdf>), we can decide that Ship of Theseus, as an exhibited memory, exists only as long as, for example, we have most of the original parts, or if we are stricter, we have 70% of the original parts. The change must be measured against the original state because only in this case we obtain an equivalence relation. If we measure the change to the previous state, we get a similarity relation, which is not transitive, only reflexive and symmetric.