**The Ship of Theseus**

“The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned had thirty oars and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.”

 --Plutarch, *Vita Thesel*

Simply Stated:

Over the course of several years the Athenians replaced planks in the original ship of Theseus as the planks decayed and rotted. Eventually, there was not a single plank left of the original ship.

So, was the ship still the original ship of Theseus?

Just for Fun:

What if another ship followed behind the Theseus, picked up the pieces Theseus threw overboard, and used them to build a boat? Eventually, the “new” boat is made entirely of the parts that composed the ship that originally was the Theseus.

If the two ships park side by side, which one is the ship of Theseus?

The Philosophical Issue:

People grow/change. If we are a composite of our parts, then are we the same person now as in the past? Are we someone else?

If we are the same person, despite the change, then what is it that makes us, US? If we are not US, then what have we become?