

Philosophy 500: Contemporary Problems
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First Assignment

As noted in the syllabus, you must do at least five of these short assignments. There will be at least eight offered to choose from. Your answer should be one to two pages long.

Heraclitus said: "You can never step in the same river twice, for new waters are ever flowing upon you." The puzzle is this. Suppose you step in a river one day, and then go back and step in (what we would ordinarily call) the same river the next day. Suppose also, as seems natural, that a river is nothing over and above the water that makes it up. Since when you go back the next day you are stepping in different water, doesn't it follow that you are stepping in a different river?

Using the framework of "unity relations" (from Perry's introduction) and the notion of a "river-stage", explain how the puzzle can be resolved. (Hint: you need to consider two different unity relations.)