

Philosophy Pub at Rozz-Tox

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Wednesday 30 July 2025

“What Is Called ‘I’?”

I. Noonan - Various Criteria Of Personal Identity

1. Bodily Criterion - Olson 1997

| Person B is the same as Person A because B has A's **body**.

Strengths

- Identity is clearly measurable
- Fairly intuitive

Caveats

- Afterlife effectively impossible
 - Some body parts seem to matter more (brain v. knee)
 - Shoemaker 1963 and Parfit 1984: **Brownson case**
 - **Brownson case**: Brown's brain is transplanted into Robinson's body. The new human is seemingly Brown, just appearing as Robinson
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2. Brain Criterion

| Person B is the same as Person A because B has A's **brain**.

Strengths

- Identity is clearly measurable
- Tolerates organ transplants
- Typically preserves what we value - memories and personalities

Caveats

- Sperry 1968 and Nagel 1971: Brain hemisphere transplants - modified **Brownson case**
 - Afterlife remains impossible
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3. Physical Criterion - Wiggins 1967 and Parfit 1984

Person B is the same as Person A because B has ***enough of A's brain***.

Strengths

- Avoids issues with brain damage and the **Brownson case**
- Brain hemisphere transplants tolerable

Caveats

- Afterlife remains impossible
 - Williams 1970 and Williams 1973: Seems to take the wrong side in consciousness transplants
 - Cannot explain immaterial persons
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4. Memory Criterion - Locke 1961

Person B is the same as Person A because B has A's **experience-memories**.

Experience-memories are first-person recollections of the past.

Strengths

- No issues with material transplants
- Allows for afterlife

Caveats

- Continuity issues - it is normal to forget about some days while remembering others
 - Transitivity issues - I might share memories with Luca from 15 years ago, who shares memories with Luca from 20 years ago, but I do not share memories with Luca from 20 years ago
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5. Psychological Continuity Criterion

Person B is the same as Person A because B's memories, character traits, intentions, beliefs, and experience-memories are causally continuous with A's.

Strengths

- Captures growth and personality
- Solves memory gaps and transitivity issues

Challenge: Circularity Objection Butler 1736

Memory cannot be the criterion for personal identity because a personal identity is a prerequisite for memory.

Response: Circularity Objection Shoemaker 1963

There are **quasi-memories**, which feel real but were never experienced by the subject. So memory does not presuppose a

| personal identity.

6. Reduplication Argument - Williams 1957

| What if two people vividly remember being Guy Fawkes?

What this means

- Memory can't determine identity if multiple people could share it

Responses

- **Only X and Y Matter:** third parties are irrelevant
 - **Closest Continuer:** strongest candidate gets identity Nozick 1981 and Shoemaker 1970
 - **Multiple Occupancy:** two minds shared one body pre-fission Robinson 1985
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7. Simple View

| Identity is intrinsic, first-person known, not reducible to observable traits.

Strengths:

- Sidesteps fission puzzles
- Prioritizes subjectivity

Caveats:

- Hard to verify or apply
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8. Determinacy Thesis

| Questions about personal identity have definite answers.

Challenges:

- **Parfit:** Fission creates indeterminate identity
- **Swinburne's Dilemma:** Either identity is absurdly precise or sometimes vague

For more: Parfit 1971 and Swinburne 1974

9. Parfit's View

| Psychological continuity - not identity - is what matters.

(a) Semantic intuition

| In fission cases, the original person stops existing because identity cannot be one-to-many.

(b) Practical intuition

| It is irrational to fear fission in the way one might fear death.

Nurse Thought Experiment:

- You undergo brain fission into two people
- Option: destroy one hemisphere to "stay you."
- **Result:** irrational to prefer destruction—suggests identity is not central to survival

Responses:

- David Lewis rejects (a).
 - Jerome Shaffer rejects (b).
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II. Heller - Endurantism (3Dism) v. Perdurantism (4Dism)

Objects and persons extend in all three spatial dimensions, as well as the 4th, temporal dimension. Just as a 3D object *might* be thought of being composed of individual pieces across a given space, a 4D object is composed of individual pieces across time.

Issue of 3-Dimensionalism

3-Dimensionalists must *deny* at least one of the following mutually-inconsistent standards.

- a. There is such thing as my body
- b. There is such thing as my body without my left hand
- c. An object can continue to exist after losing a part
- d. Two distinct objects cannot perfectly spatially overlap at a given moment in time
- e. Identity is transitive

Perdurantism (4-dimensionalism) bypasses (d).

Two distinct objects do not perfectly spatially overlap at a given moment in time. Instead, there is only one temporal part which can be shared by two distinct 4-D objects.

Matters of personal identity

What marks a particular personal identity is some sort of relation between separate parts across time. So two temporal slices share a particular identity because they relate to each other across time in a particular way, not because either part meets some momentary criterion.

Heller does not take a camp about what particular way two slices relate.

III. Huemer - Permissive v. Restrictive Identity

One's existence is evidence that identity is **permissive** and **recurring**.

Permissive view: It is possible to live multiple times.

Problem with restrictive view

Assume:

1. Big Bang/Big Crunch model of universe
2. **Restrictive view:** you can only live once
3. There is nothing statistically anomalous about the present

Therefore:

- You must've already lived
- So, you cannot be alive right now

Solution:

Adopt a **permissive view**. One must be able to exist multiple times.

Objections and replies

- **Heat Death:** Entropy can fluctuate or reset; cosmology may allow recurrence.
 - **Physicalism:** Reincarnation doesn't require continuous bodies—temporal gaps are fine.
 - **Cartesian Dualism:** Souls can re-enter bodies. Even dualism fails if souls only live once over infinite time.
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