

Psychological Theory of Diachronic Identity

Even if we cannot answer the synchronic question completely, let's assume **there are some metaphysical persons**.

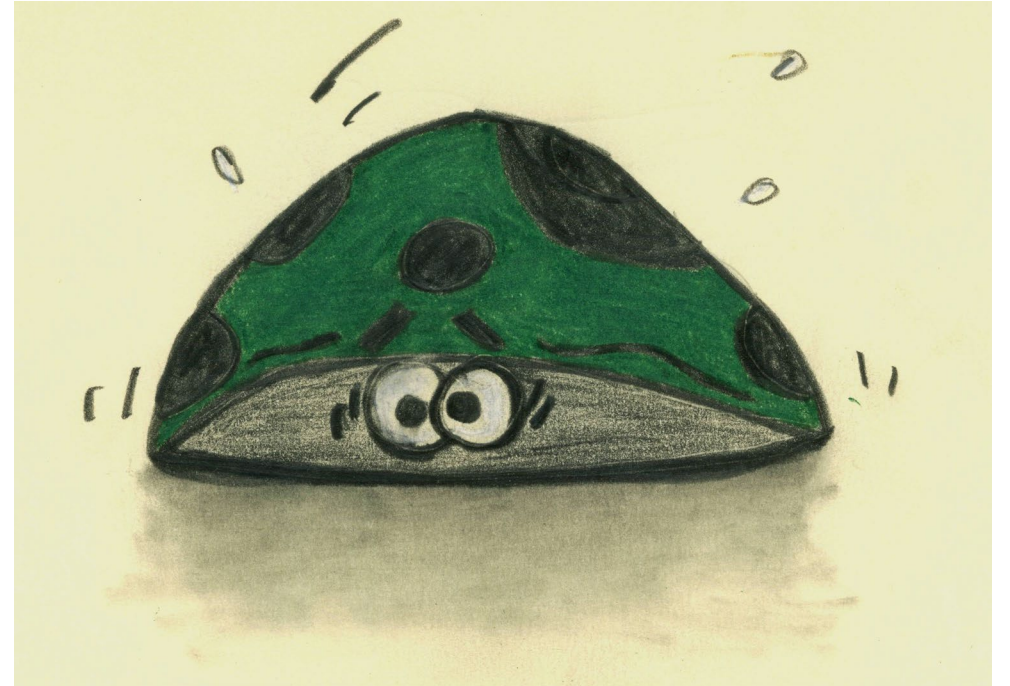
- One feature of persons is that they exist at multiple instants of time.
- David Agler exists as a person at t_1 and David Agler exists as a person at t_2

- If an object can exist at multiple times, then we will say that that object **persists** through time.

Persist through time: S persists through time if and only if S can exist at different times.


What is the question of diachronic personal identity?

1. Can you think of any cases of why having a notion of persistence might be **practically important**?



Being able to say that a person S is the same person at t2 that they were at t1 *seems* **practically important**

- **Promise-making:** Suppose Tek tells you on Monday he will meet you at Starbucks on Tuesday. For the promise to make sense, Tek needs to be the same person on Tuesday as he was on Monday
- **Responsibility:** Suppose Liz murders Tek. We want to hold Liz responsible for her earlier actions but we can't if she's not the same person.



The Question of Diachronic Personal Identity

Clarification about the question

In talking about persistence through time, we want to be clear about *what* we are asking. To sharpen our question, we will answer three questions

1. What is the question of diachronic personal identity?
2. What is meant by saying two persons are identical?
3. Is this a metaphysical or epistemological question?

What is the question of diachronic personal identity?

Here are two questions:

1. **General persistence (persistence of objects)**: If A is a being at t_1 and B is a being at t_2 , what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for A to be the same being as B?
2. **Identity of persons (persistence of persons)**: if A is a person at t_1 and B is a person at t_2 , under what conditions is A identical to (one and the same person as) B?



What is the question of diachronic personal identity?

General persistence (persistence of objects): If A is a being at t_1 and B is a being at t_2 , what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for A to be the same being as B?

- Question is **general** since it asks about the persistence of any object (not simply persons)
- If X is a rock at t_1 , then what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for Y at t_2 to be the same rock as X at t_1 ?

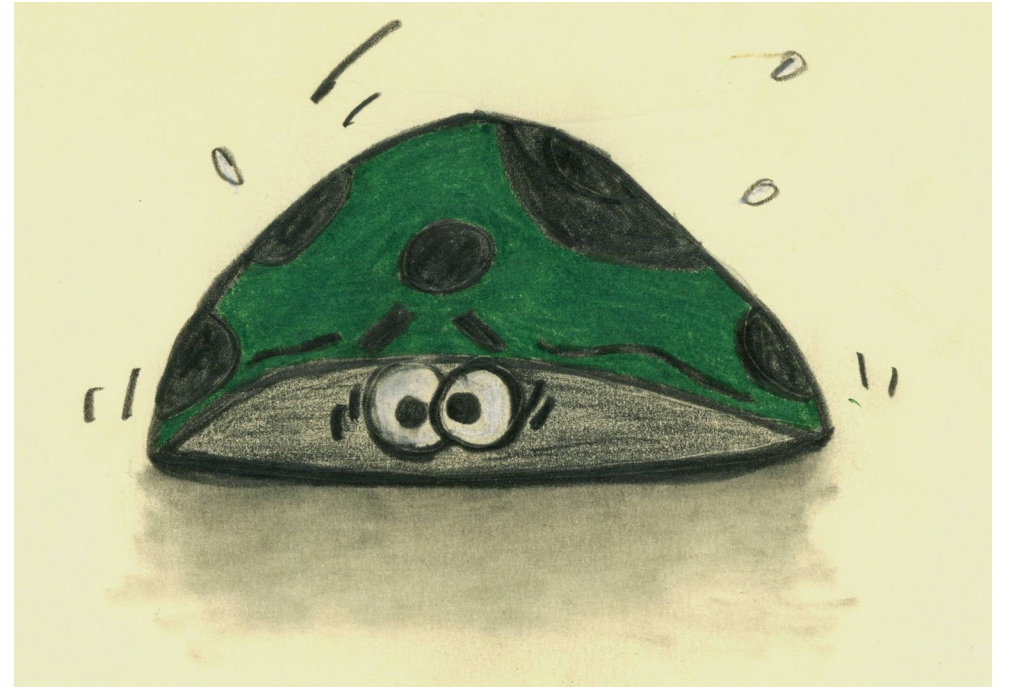
What is the question of diachronic personal identity?

The **persistence of objects** has implications for the persistence of persons since we can ask about **our** persistence as an object *even when we are not a person*

1. Let's say I am an object. Call me E.
2. Suppose I am born and am a fetus. Assume I'm not a metaphysical person. Even if I'm not a person, I am an object. Call me E1.
3. Now suppose E1 grows into a ten-year old child. Call the ten-year old child E2.
4. E1 is not a person, E2 is a person.
5. We might try to give an account of my existence at various times: times when I was not a person and times when I was a person

What is the question of diachronic personal identity?

1. In the general question of persist, we discussed how you could persist through time although not be a person at one point in time (e.g. when you were a fetus)
2. Can you give another example of how you could persist but not be a person?
3. Does it make sense to talk about yourself as existing without being a metaphysical person?



What is the question of diachronic personal identity?

Identity of persons: if A is a person at t_1 and B is a person at t_2 , under what conditions is A identical to B? (necessary and sufficient conditions for A and B to be one and the same person)

- In contrast to the general persistence question, this question concerns the **persistence of *you as a person***.
- We want to know what it means for you to be the same metaphysical person over time

What is the question of diachronic personal identity?

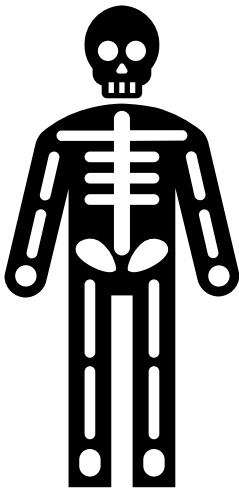
Intuitively we think that persons **can persist**

- David Agler at 10/8/2019 and David Agler at 10/9/2019
- You at one moment and then you at the next moment

Tek on Monday

Tek on Tuesday

Tek on
Wednesday



What is the question of diachronic personal identity?

Intuitively, we also think that there are conditions such that persons can **fail to persist**

- **Death:** Tek at t1 and a bag of Tek's ashes at t2. Tek is not the same person as the bag of Tek's ashes since *the bag of ashes is not a person*
- **Certain kinds of radical transformation:** Tek at t1 and Tek at t2 after undergoing a radical operation that transplanted all of Tek's organs (including Tek's brain). Tek at t2 is not Tek at t1.

What is meant by identical?

The **question (and problem) of diachronic personal identity** then is what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for person A at t_1 and person B at t_2 to one and the same person.

What is meant by identical?

1. What is the question of diachronic personal identity?
2. **What is meant by saying two persons are identical?**
3. Is this a metaphysical or epistemological question?

What is meant by identical?

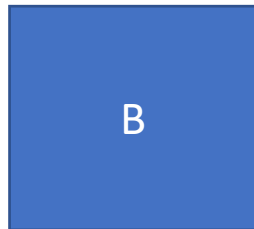
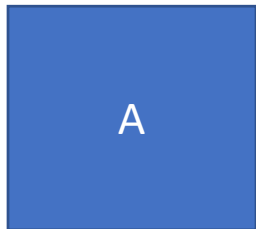
When we say A is identical to B, we mean *numerical identity* as opposed to qualitative identity.

Qualitative Identity: For some limited set S of qualities (properties) under investigation P1, P2, P3, ..., Pn, an entity A is qualitatively identical to B if and only if A and B have, as their properties, some are some subset of S

- Qualitative identity is a matter of degree: things can be more or less qualitatively identical

What is meant by identical?

- Qualitative identity: Take two blocks A and B that are sitting next to each other. These two blocks are not one and the same thing. They are different things.
- However, these blocks share the same intrinsic *qualities*, e.g. both blue, both cubes, both hard, etc.



What is meant by identical?

Hard to give a precise and unproblematic definition of numerical identity (so we won't)

- Example 1: reflexive relation everything has to itself and nothing else
- Example 2: the smallest equivalence relation (relation that is reflexive, symmetric, and transitive)
- Example 3: reflexive relation that obeys Leibniz's Law
- **Intuitive definition of numerical identity:** X and Y are numerically identical if and only if they are one and the same thing

What is meant by identical?

Example 1: You at an instant of time

- Take you and all of your qualities at an instant of time. Label this YOU at t1.
- YOU at t1 = YOU at t1 (numerical identity)

What is meant by identical?

- As an *individual*, YOU at t1 and YOU at t2 are different. YOU at t2 may have lost a hair, or undergone some chemical process
- As a *person*, however, the claim is that YOU at t1 and YOU at t2 can be numerically the same. One and the same person.

Assumption is that you can be one and the same person over time



What is meant by identical?

Example 2: Morning star and evening star

- I look up in the sky in the morning and see a shining star. I call it the ``morning star``.
- I look up at the starry night and see a shining star. I call it the ``evening star``.
- Later I discover that Morning Star = Evening Star = Venus

Clarification about the question

The **problem of diachronic personal identity** needs clarification

1. What is the question of diachronic personal identity?
2. What is meant by saying two persons are identical?
3. **Is this a metaphysical or epistemological question?**

Metaphysical or epistemological?

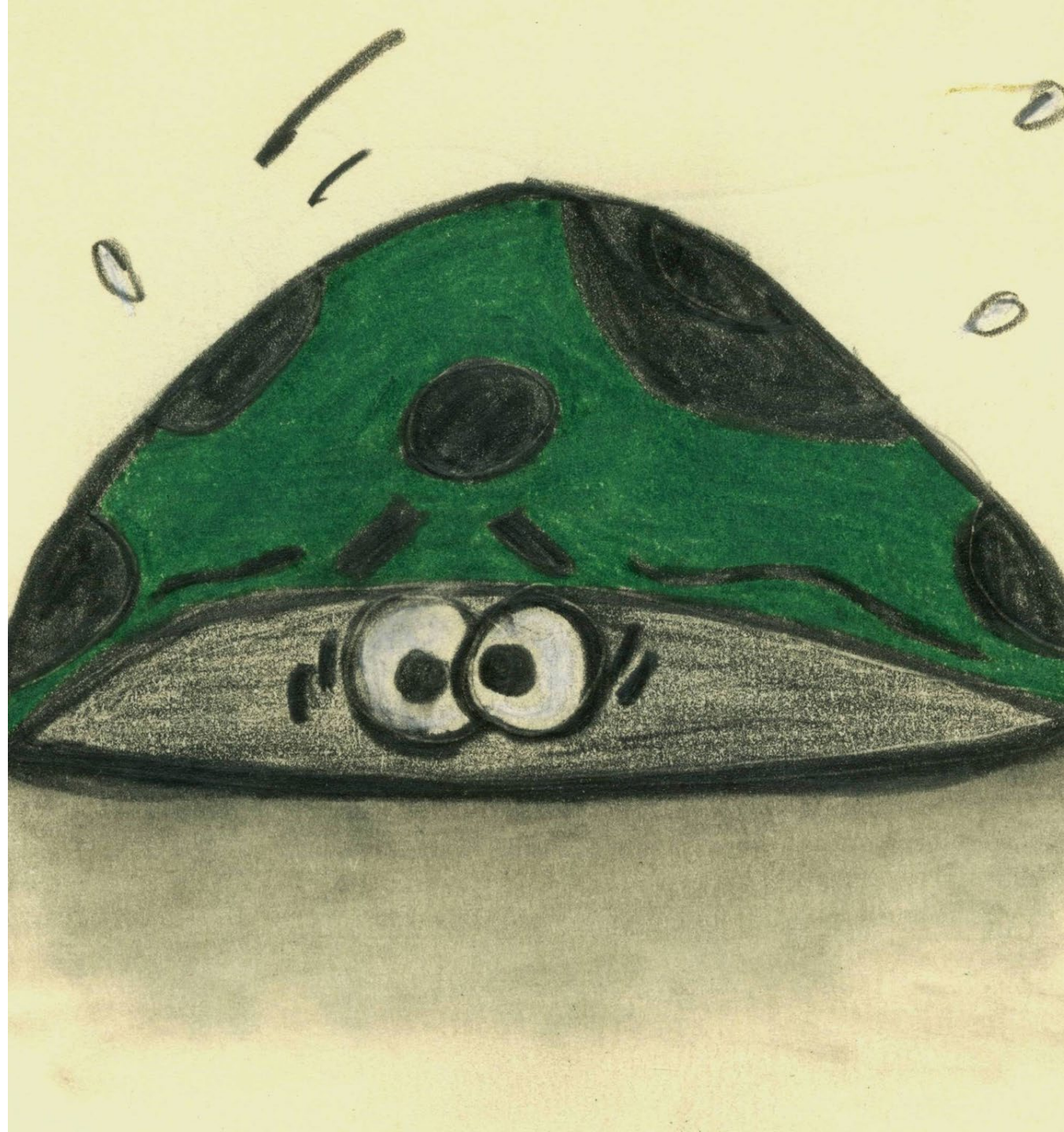
The problem of diachronic personal identity is a **metaphysical** problem, not an epistemological one.


- **Metaphysical question:** *What (about the world) makes it the case that A at t1 and B at t2 are one and the same (numerically identical) person?*
- **Epistemological question:** *How do we know that A at t1 and B at t2 are one and the same (numerically identical) person?*

One way to think about the problem of diachronic personal identity is as follows.

1. Turn to your neighbor and point at them. Wait a moment, then point at them again?
2. Now answer this question

Have you pointed to the **same object twice** or have you pointed to **two different objects**?





Psychological theories of personal identity

Psychological theories of personal identity

Let's look at some theories of diachronic personal identity.

- In this lecture, we'll look at theories that center around a similar theme: **some feature of our psychology offers the necessary and sufficient conditions to account for persistence.**

Psychological theories of personal identity



SUPER SIMPLE MEMORY
THEORY




SIMPLE MEMORY THEORY



PERSONALITY THEORY

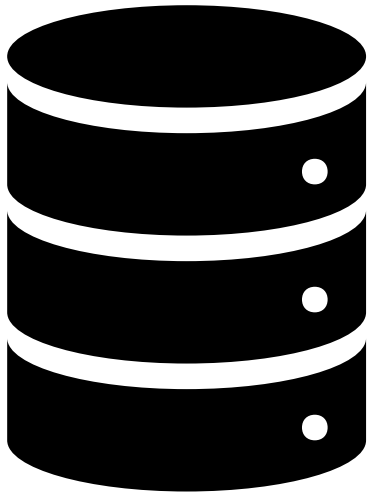


PSYCHOLOGICAL
CONNECTEDNESS THEORY



The memory
account of
personal
identity

Super simple memory theory of personal identity



- Perhaps what makes me the same person over time is **my memory**
- I remember waking up in the morning yesterday.
- So, perhaps what makes me the same person at t_2 and t_1 is that at t_2 I remember the events at t_1 .

Super simple memory theory of personal identity

Super simple memory theory of personal identity: If A is a person at time t_1 and B is a person at t_2 , then B is the same person as A iff B at t_2 remembers the actions of A at time t_1 .

Super simple memory theory of personal identity

Objection: The super simple memory theory is too simple.

- I remember waking up yesterday (my action)
- But so does my wife
- This would mean that my wife and I are the same person
- My wife and I are different people

Simple memory theory of personal identity

Let's revise the super simple memory theory!

- My wife remembers me waking up yesterday
- But she doesn't remember the *experience of me waking up*.
- She remembers
 1. The experience of seeing me wake up
 2. Maybe experience of telling me "get up!"
 3. BUT NOT: the experience of me actually waking up

Simple memory theory of personal identity

Simple memory theory of personal identity (SMT): If A is a person at time t_1 and B is a person at t_2 , then B is the same person as A iff B at t_2 has the *memories of the experiences* of A at time t_1 .

- Tek at t_2 is the same person as Tek at t_1 if and only if Tek at t_2 *remembers an experience* had by Tek at t_1 .

Simple memory theory of personal identity

Some qualifications

1. We don't expect Tek at t2 to have a **perfect memory** of every detail of what happened at t1. We just expect Tek to remember *something* (the gist) of what happened at t1.
2. We don't expect Tek to be **actively remembering** what Tek did at t1 (**an occurrent memory**) for Tek at t2 to be Tek at t1. Persistence of Tek doesn't require that Tek is *constantly* thinking of every prior experience Tek had.
3. We only expect Tek at t2 to be **capable of remembering** what Tek did at t1 (**non-occurrent memory**)

Simple memory theory of personal identity

Objection: imperfect memories (gaps). We don't have even a rough memory of every moment of every day (not even the gist).

- Say you remember the experiences you had on the following days:
 - Yesterday
 - Two days ago
 - Two years ago
- But you don't remember what you did:
 - five days ago
 - three months ago
 - Three years ago
- According to the simple memory theory:
 - you are the same person as you were yesterday, two days ago, and two years ago,
 - you are not the same as the person who was alive five days ago, three months ago, or three years ago.

Simple memory theory of personal identity

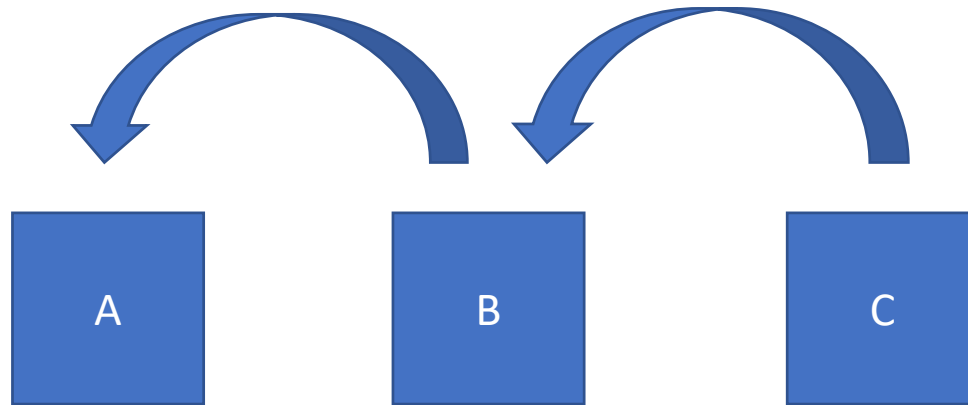
Objection: violates the transitivity of identity

Transitivity: a relation R is transitive if and only if A is R to B and B is R to C, then A is R to C.

- **P1:** Identity of personhood is intuitively transitive (If Tek-t1 is identical to Tek at t2 and Tek at t2 is identical to Tek at t3, then Tek-t1 is identical to Tek-t3)
- **P2: Remembering** is not transitive (If A has a memory of being B and B has a memory of being C, it is possible that A **does not** have a memory of being C).
- **IC:** According to the SMT: personhood is not transitive.
- **C:** Therefore, SMT is false.

Simple memory theory of personal identity

Objection: violates the transitivity of identity



- C remembers B,
- B remembers A,
- but C doesn't remember A

- So C is B
- B is A
- But C is not A

Simple memory theory of personal identity

- Problem with the SMT is that it is sufficient but not necessary
- It is too restrictive
- We can revise this theory by keeping it as a sufficient condition but adding other conditions

Modified memory theory of personal identity

Let's revise the simple memory theory!

Modified memory theory of personal identity (MMT): If A is a person at time t_1 and B is a person at t_2 , then B is the same person as A iff either

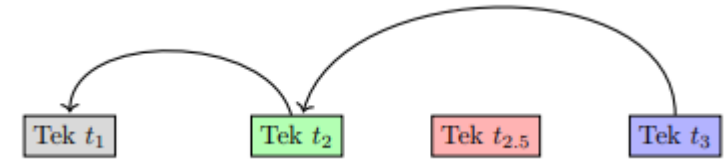
1. B has the memories of the experiences of A at time t_2 OR
2. There is some person C between A- t_1 and B- t_2 who (i) A- t_1 has memories of experience of and (ii) who remembers the experiences of B- t_2 .

Modified memory theory of personal identity

- MMT says that two persons A and B are the same person if B remembers A or if there is a **continuity** of memory between A and B.
- In other words, while you might not be able to directly remember your experiences five days ago, three months ago, or five years ago, you are the same person if you were able to remember the experiences of a prior-you who is able to remember said experiences.



Modified memory theory



Objection: Gaps Again!

MMT suffers from the fact that if there is a **gap (missing link)** in your memory, then you cannot claim identity with a person with whom you don't have any memory of their experiences.

Examples: being asleep, intoxicated, spacing-out, being unconscious, being in a deep meditative state, suffering from a brain injury or amnesia

Modified memory theory

Example: Brain injury

- Tek suffers a brain injury, recovers, but there is a significant gap in his memory.
- It is 2017 and while he remembers what he did prior to 2008, he does not remember anything between 2008-2016.
- MMT says:
 - Tek-2017 is the same person as Tek-2007 BUT
 - Tek-2017 is not the same person as Tek-(2008-2016).

Modified memory theory

Example: Heavy drinking

- Suppose Tek is out drinking (heavily)
- Tek does some embarrassing things that Tek does not remember.
- Tek remembers the night before drinking but not the night of drinking
- MMT says Tek-hangover is not the same person as Tek-drinking

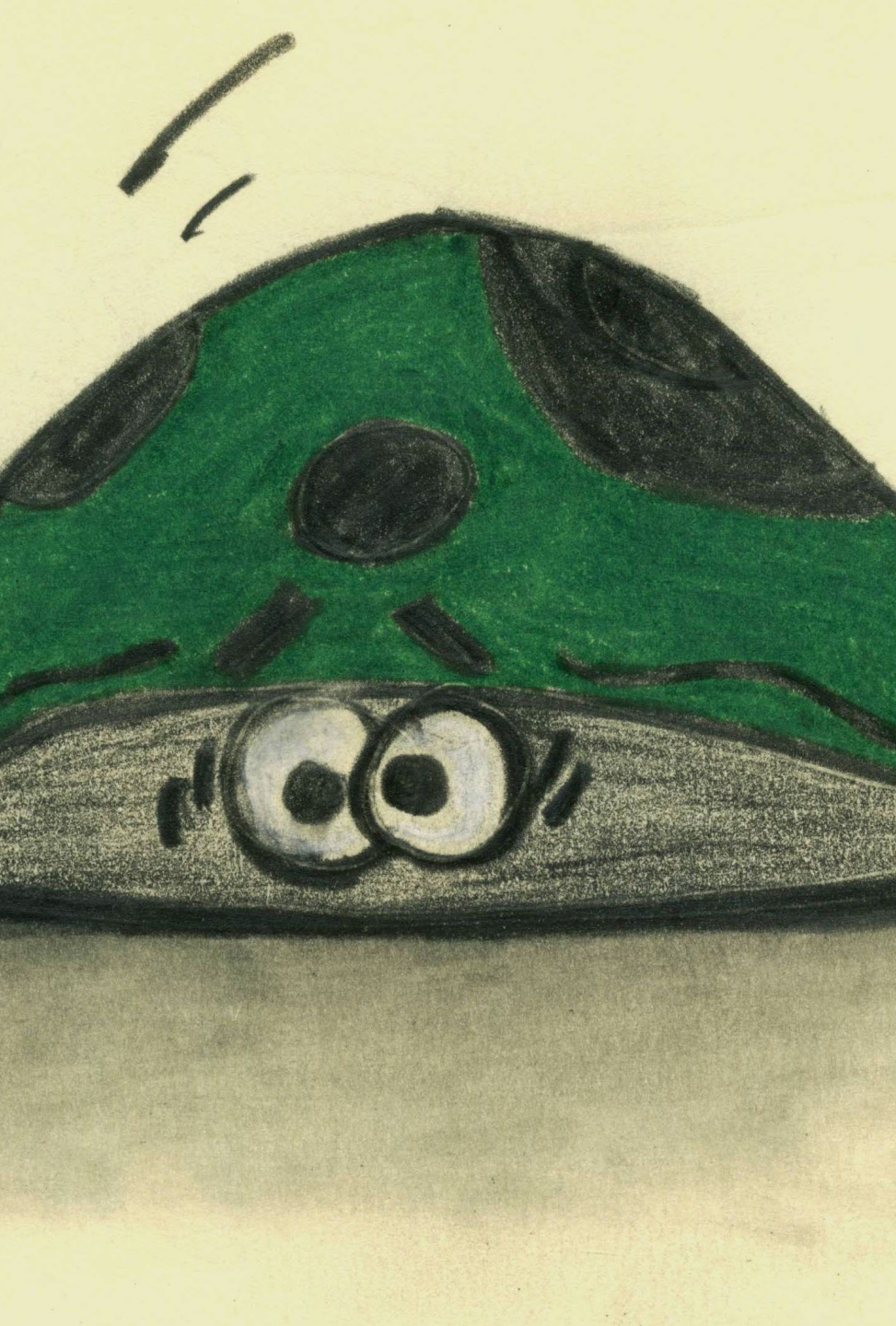
Modified memory theory

Example: Daydreaming

- Tek is bored in class, not thinking of anything for a solid 5 minutes
- Liz asks him what he is thinking about
- Tek doesn't remember, there isn't a middle person who can remember of what Tek was daydreaming
- Tek-after-daydream is the same person as Tek-before-daydream
- MMT says: Tek-daydream is **not the same person** as Tek-before-daydream

Modified memory theory

- Memory (even with our revision) might be **sufficient** for being the same person over time but **not necessary**.
- Anyone who remembers having had certain experiences in the past may be the same person *but one can retain their personhood without remembering*




Modified memory theory

Task 1: Create a new (and improved) memory theory. Let's call this the improved modified memory theory (IMMT). On a piece of paper (and in a group) state the IMMT in the style of prior memory theories.

OR

Task 2: Memory theories seem sufficient for personhood but not necessary. This suggests that memory has no importance for sameness of identity (it isn't necessary). State some aspect of memory that is necessary for persistence.

The best theory will receive an extra credit point



Personality theory of personal identity

Personality theory of personal identity

Perhaps what makes us the same person over time is not our memories but our **personality traits**.

- We might forget certain experiences but so long as *we retain our personality*, we remain the same person

Example

- Suppose Liz is prone to tell stupid jokes, laugh at certain things, feel certain ways given certain circumstances
- Liz may forget what he did yesterday but provided he keeps these core personality traits, she stays the same person

Personality theory of personal identity

Personality theory of diachronic personality identity: If A is a person at time t_1 and B is a person at t_2 , then B is the same person as A iff either

1. B has the memories of the experiences of A at time t_2 or
2. there is some person C who between t_1 and t_2 such that A remembers the experiences of C and C remembers the experiences of B, OR
3. A has the **same personality** as B.

Personality theory of personal identity

- The personality theory of personal identity **keeps the memory-conditions** from the memory theories (since we recognize this as a sufficient condition)
- It adds a further condition in the case that there is a memory gap between A and B.
- If B does not remember A, but if A and B have the same personality then A and B are the same person.

Personality theory of personal identity

Objection 1: Unclear. False under clarifications

- What does it mean to “have the same personality”
- Suppose we clarify it using one of the following
 - Having the same beliefs
 - Having the same intentions
 - Having the same habits and/or character traits
 - Having the same desires

Since beliefs, intentions, habits, etc. **change over time**, this would mean any change in belief would result in a new person.



Psychological connectedness theory

Psychological connectedness theory

- Perhaps the personality theory is right at its core but what matters is not A and B having the same property but being **psychologically connected**.
- What matters is not having the exact same beliefs or desires but there being an **overlapping chain of psychological connections**. A causal chain of beliefs. $B1 \rightarrow B2 \rightarrow B3$.
- A and B are the same given all of the memory conditions hold and there is psychological continuity between A and B.

Psychological connectedness theory

Psychological-connectedness theory: If A is a person at time t_1 and B is a person at t_2 , then B is the same person as A iff either

1. B has the memories of the experiences of A at time t_2 , or
2. there is some person C who between t_1 and t_2 such that A remembers the experiences of C and C remembers the experiences of B,
3. there is psychological continuity between B and A

Psychological connectedness theory

Why would anyone ever accept the psychological theory?

Besides the intuitive nature of the theory and that it is preferable over memory accounts, the psychological theory seems to deliver the **right result in two thought experiments**.



Psychological connectedness theory

Thought Experiment 1: Brain transplants

- Suppose that you are skeptical that the psychological-connectedness theory is true. You are inclined to think that what makes a person the same person over time is **having the same body (keeping most of your body parts)**.
- Call this the **body theory of personal identity**.

Psychological connectedness theory

Thought Experiment 1: Brain transplants

- Take two persons Tek (t1) and Liz (t1)
- Suppose at Tek and Liz undergo brain transplants
- A surgeon puts Tek's brain in Liz's body and Liz's brain in Tek's body at t2
- According to the body theory:
 - Tek-body w/ Liz's brain t2 = Tek t1
 - Liz-body w/ Tek's brain t2 = Liz t1

Psychological connectedness theory

Thought Experiment 1: Brain transplants

- But this gets things wrong!
- And, the psychological-connectedness theory tells us **why** it gets things wrong. It should be:
 - Tek-body w/ Liz's brain t2 = Liz t1
 - Liz-body w/ Tek's brain t2 = Tek t1
- This should be the result since Liz at t1 is *psychologically connected* to Tek-body w/ Liz's brain t2.

Psychological connectedness theory

Thought Experiment 2: Consciousness transfer

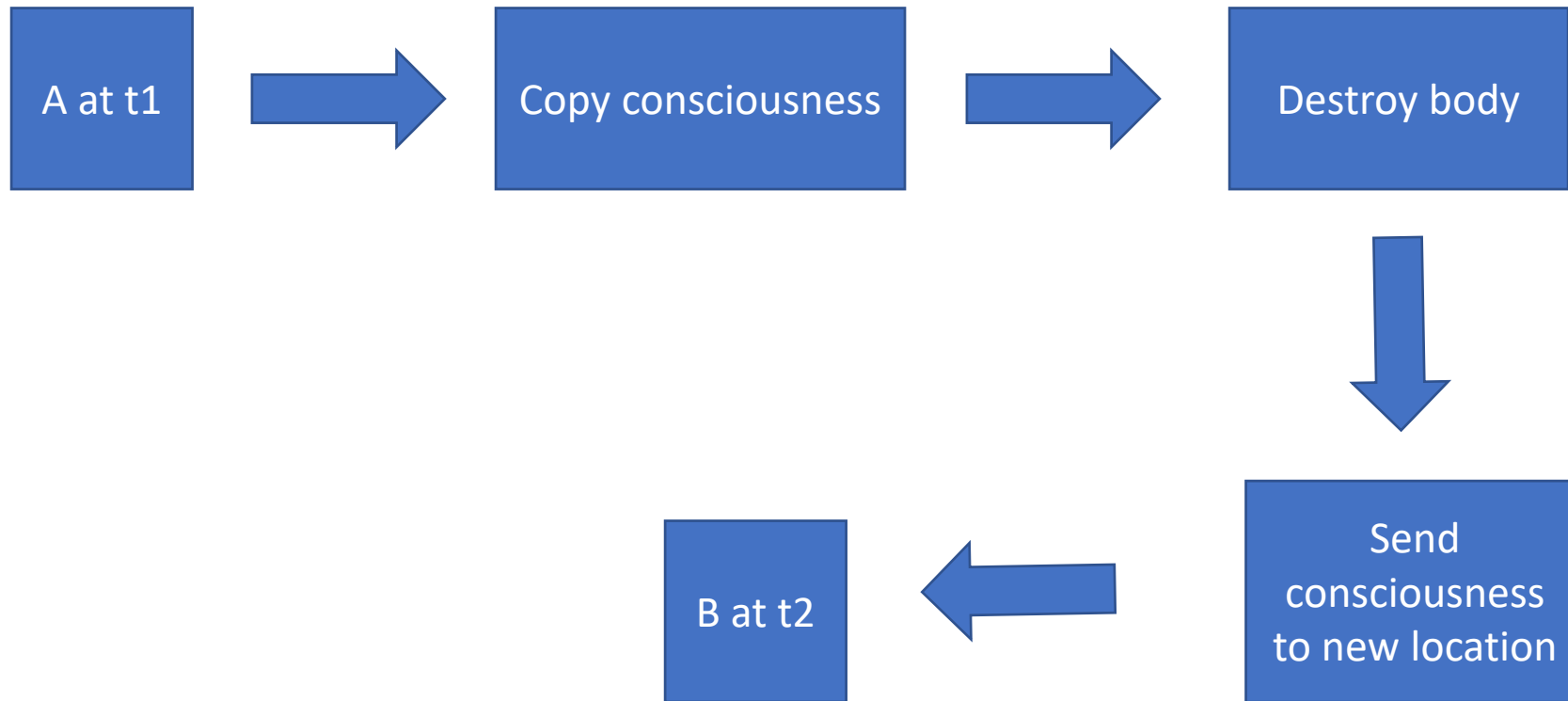
- Suppose you are not convinced. You are inclined to think that what makes a person the same person over time is **having the same brain**.
- Call this the **brain theory of personal identity**.

Psychological connectedness theory

Thought Experiment 2: Consciousness transfer

- Suppose we are living in a future society where several new ways to travel are available.
- People no longer wish to drive or take the bus and instead use a new way to travel.
- What occurs is that a piece of technology scans A's brain at t_1 and then destroys A's body (including A's brain), sends a detailed model of A's brain to A's desired location, then at t_2 another piece of technology uses new brain material (or something functionally equivalent) to reconstruct a brain with the same configuration as A's brain.

Psychological connectedness theory



Psychological connectedness theory

Thought Experiment 2: Consciousness transfer

- B at t2 is psychological connected with A at t1 (memories, same beliefs, same flow of ideas, etc.)
- The **brain theory** would say that B is *not the same* (since there is a different brain)
- The **psychological connectedness theory** says A at t1 and B at t2 are the same person (psychological connection)

Psychological connectedness theory

Thought Experiment 2: Consciousness transfer

- Consciousness transfer used in a lot of movies
- In an episode of Black Mirror (San Junipero) individuals can have their consciousnesses uploaded to a simulated reality where they can spend the rest of their lives
- If psychological-connectedness theory is true, you would survive upload.

A white circle with a blue outline, containing a black rectangle with the text "BLACK MIRROR" in white capital letters.

BLACK MIRROR

Psychological connectedness theory

- Suppose people make use of consciousness travel on a regular basis
 - They describe being scanned, feeling a tingle, and waking up in a new location with the memories of the past, with the same habits, the same skills, the same character traits and so forth,
1. Do you think people **retain their personal identity through the travel** (or do they die)?
 2. Would you undertake consciousness transfer?

