

Personal Identity

Introduction to Philosophy

For each case, consider what a defender of each of the following views would say:

- The physical criterion
- The psychological criterion
- The dualist criterion

Teletransportation. Tesla founder Elon Musk has developed an exciting new form of transportation: teletransportation. In teletransportation, your body is scanned by sophisticated devices at the transmitting station. A three-dimensional computer model that is accurate down to the last molecule is created, and your original body is instantaneously destroyed. Moments later a perfect duplicate of you is created at the receiving station. You are offered a lucrative job in London. The job requires you to be teletransported to and from work each day. You step into the transmitting station on your first day of work. Is the person that emerges at the receiving station you, or a distinct person that looks and acts just like you? Why?

Head transplant. Tom Cruise tires of his fans' constant attention and seeks a new, more anonymous life. He offers to pay you \$3,000,000 to swap bodies with him. A famous neurosurgeon agrees to perform the operation, which will remove each of your heads and attach them to the other's body. You agree. The operation is successful and two people wake up. Which of them is you? Why? (If you think neither is you, pick the answer on the sheet that you think is most plausible.)

Uploading. Several decades from now, neuroscientists have developed the ability to monitor the brain waves of an individual and create a perfect computer simulation of their entire neural network. On your deathbed, you are given the option to have such a simulation created. The simulation will model your thought processes perfectly: it will have access to all of your memories, inherit all of your desires, think the way you think, and talk the way you talk (if given the ability to do so). The simulation will be run on extremely powerful servers following your death, and will be given control of a robot body that will look and act just like you. You agree, and after your death the new robot version of you walks into the room and says hello. Are you still alive? Is it you that is saying hello? Why?

Brain zap. You have been kidnapped by evil neuroscientists. You wake up in their secret operating room and see a man in a labcoat. "Hello there!" he says. "Thanks for volunteering to participate in our revolutionary experiment. We have invented a machine that is capable of completely erasing a person's memory, as well as their other psychological features—beliefs, preferences, personality quirks, habits, all that. The machine records these features as it goes for safekeeping. Once we've wiped your brain clean of every trace of your former self, we'll replace your psychology with one of those stored in our library. The process is instantaneous, painless, and perfectly safe. You'll wake up with all of the psychological features of Willie Nelson as of his visit two weeks ago!" You undergo the procedure. Is the person who wakes up thinking he is Willie Nelson you, or someone else?

Reanimation. Centuries after your death, a powerful alien species arrives on Earth. For whatever reason, they are interested in asking you a few questions. Using data from their in-depth surveillance of Earth, they gather all of the atoms that constituted your body at the time that you died, and reorganize them into exactly the same form they were in just before you died. They heal whatever ailments caused your death. Is the person that wakes up you, or a new person?