

STUDY GUIDE: PERSISTENCE

Ted Sider, Metaphysics

General guidelines: These are examples of the sorts of questions I might ask. Present your answers concisely. If you use philosophical jargon, explain it. For example, if you use the term ‘The Body Theory’, you must define it. Important: be sure you know how to present, explain, and evaluate arguments (see the assignment sheet for paper #1). When you present arguments, it isn’t important to word them *exactly* the way I do, but the basic meaning and logical structure should be the same.

1. Essay: informally discuss the problem of existing in the afterlife.
2. Essay: clarify the nature of identity over time. Distinguish between identity and similarity; distinguish different senses of “is the same as”; explain the idea of identity being an equivalence relation; explain the central project of personal identity (coming up with necessary and sufficient conditions for a person at one time being identical to a person at another time), and briefly sketch the idea that persons are aggregates of temporal stages.
3. State Leibniz’s Law, and P.E.E. the argument from change.
4. Short essay: describe the Aristotelian theory of identity over time, including the notions of substance, form, essential and accidental properties, matter, etc.
5. Present the Body theory, P.E.E. the Brain-swap objection, and present the Brain theory.
6. P.E.E. the prince and the cobbler argument against the Body and Brain theories.
7. Present Locke’s memory theory, P.E.E. the Brave officer argument against it, present the modified Lockean theory, and explain how it fixes the problem.
8. Present the Psychological theory, and informally describe why it is an improvement on the original Lockean theory. You should discuss Butler’s circularity objection and the problem of amnesia.
9. Present and explain the first half of the duplication argument against the psychology and brain theories. Explain how the “no-branching” modifications to those theories solve the problem. Then present and explain the second half of the duplication argument, against the modified theories. Discuss Parfit’s evaluation of the argument (identity doesn’t matter) and Lewis’s evaluation of the argument (overlapping persons).

10. Present and intuitively explain Swinburne's theory of personal identity, which consists of two theses, the Independence thesis (elaborated), and Dualism
11. P.E.E. Swinburne's argument for Independence. Be sure that in the evaluation you discuss the relationship between conceivability and possibility.
12. P.E.E. Swinburne's argument for the existence of souls.
13. Discuss the problems for dualism. P.E.E. the epistemological objection. (The evaluation should include discussing the parallel traditional problem of skepticism.) Informally discuss the problem of interaction and the claim that souls are gratuitous.
14. Present and explain the antinomy of constitution.
15. Present the just-matter theory, explain how it resolves the antinomy, and informally explain how it clashes with our ordinary judgments about coming into and going out of existence.
16. Present the takeover theory, explain how it resolves the antinomy, and informally explain the problem of anthropocentrism.
17. Present nihilism, explain how it resolves the antinomy, and informally explain the problem of gunk.
18. Present cohabitation, explain how it resolves the antinomy, and informally explain the two objections to it.
19. Present four-dimensionalism, explain how it resolves the antinomy, and explain how it evades the objections to cohabitation.