

# Study Guide – Introduction to the Philosophy of Change & Identity

## Main Problem

- A way to describe the main problem we are learning about right now is: “How can something stay the same while also becoming different?”
- One of the reasons why this question is difficult to answer is that when you think about how humans normally experience and reflect on what change is, their answers don’t work together logically; there is either contradictions or answers we are uncomfortable with.
- We can use “thought experiments”—an imaginary story used to understand or test a theory or set of ideas—like the Ship of Theseus to figure out how to solve these problems.
- Also, to solve this problem, we can compare our common-sense ideas with logical laws like “Leibniz’s law” (the *Indiscernibility of Identicals*) to come up with an answer that is universal

## The Cost of Leibniz’s Law

- If two things are truly identical, they must have **all the same properties**. This is also known as having numerical identity.
- This is in contrast with having the **same qualitative properties (qualitative identity)**.
- Common sense says things can change and still be the same (e.g., people growing up). But according to Leibniz’s Law, **if something changes, it no longer has the exact same properties**, so it may not be the same.

## What do *most* people want? Continuity

- The idea that something can still be the same even if it changes gradually over time.
- For example, we want to believe that our loved ones remain the same over time and that even small changes don’t disturb or destroy their identity.

## What do the Ship of Theseus, Parfit’s Teleporter and the story of Alex and Nina have in common?

- All three explore the **same deep question**: *What does it mean to stay the same over time—even when things change?*
- Each example shows a situation where something (a ship, a person’s body, or a relationship) has changed, and we’re left wondering if it’s still the *same thing*. These thought experiments help us think about identity, change, and whether gradual or sudden differences really change who or what something is.