

Reading

- Stephen Law, *The Philosophy Gym*, Chapter 22: Brain Transplants, 'Teleportation' and the Puzzle of Personal Identity

Metaphysical Questions about the Self

Philosophers ask metaphysical questions about the self such as:

- Are there such things as selves?
- If so, what is the self? Is it a physical thing, a soul, a spiritual thing, or something else?
- What are the conditions under which you – a self, or a person – persist over time?

This last question is the question of **personal identity** – it can be pursued with some science fiction examples: Can you survive a 'brain transplant'? Would you go where your brain goes, or just the body? Can you 'teleport' if that involves destroying your whole body and reconstituting it out of new matter in a new location? Or are you tied to your actual body?

Divided Selves?

Philosophers of mind & psychology, as well as psychologists also ask questions about the self such as

- Is the self divided? Are there different parts of the self?

Some have thought that we need to admit divisions in the self to account for the way in which our behaviour sometimes doesn't make sense or is incoherent: when you do things you don't really want to do, or deceive yourself, this can be seen as different parts of yourself in tension with each other.

The Self and Mental Health

There are several ways we can link discussion of the self to mental health, these include:

- By considering dissociative identity disorder (which used to be known as multiple personality disorder). What is it to have 'multiple selves', and how does that relate to mental health?
- By considering self-help – what is self help? Does it work?
- By considering who you *really* are: **your true self**. What is the true self? Do we have true selves? If so, how is recognizing and developing the true self relevant to good mental health? Some people say that this is tied to **authenticity**, and this is a valuable thing. Do you agree? How does this link to themes of **self-discovery** and **self-understanding**?