What make us who we are? Discussion on the nature of personal identity, its evolution over time and implications on behaviour.

Marta Vecchio

# AGENDA

- **Introduction**

- **What makes us who we are**

  – **Properties**

  – **Identity**

- **Identity over time**

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  – **Making sense of change**

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  – **A psychological framework**

  – **A compatibilist approach**

- **Conclusion**

# AGENDA

# UNIVERSALS & PARTICULARS

# NOMINALISM

| Universals (Properties) | → | ✔ Each object has its characteristics |
| --- | --- | --- |

**CLASSICAL NOMILALISM** → **Entities are simply similar to each other**

**CLASS NOMILALISM** → **"properties are classes of things"**

# TROPE THEORY

Properties → Beings insatiate properties → TROPES → Basic components of all things, an "Alphabet of being"



Entities similar to each other as their tropes are similar

# BUNDLE THEORY

Particular

Univers...
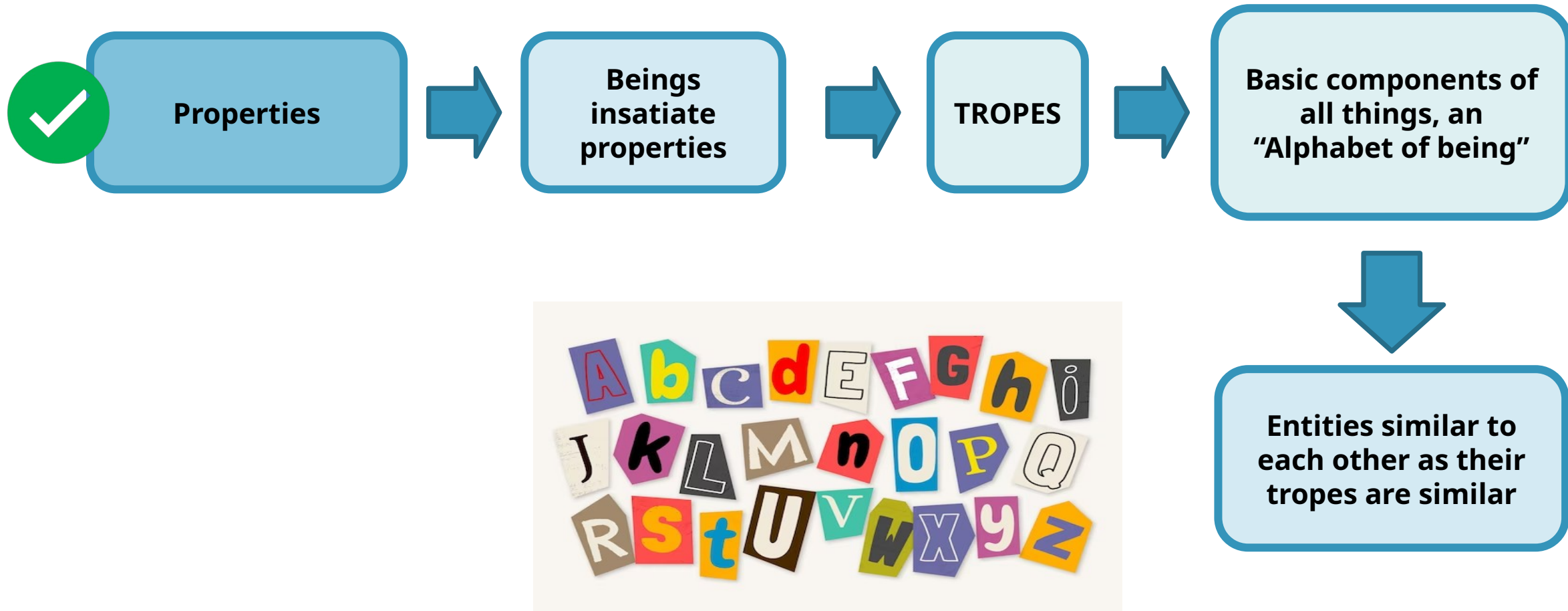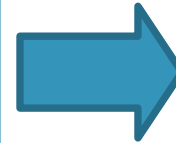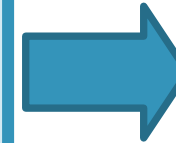Properties
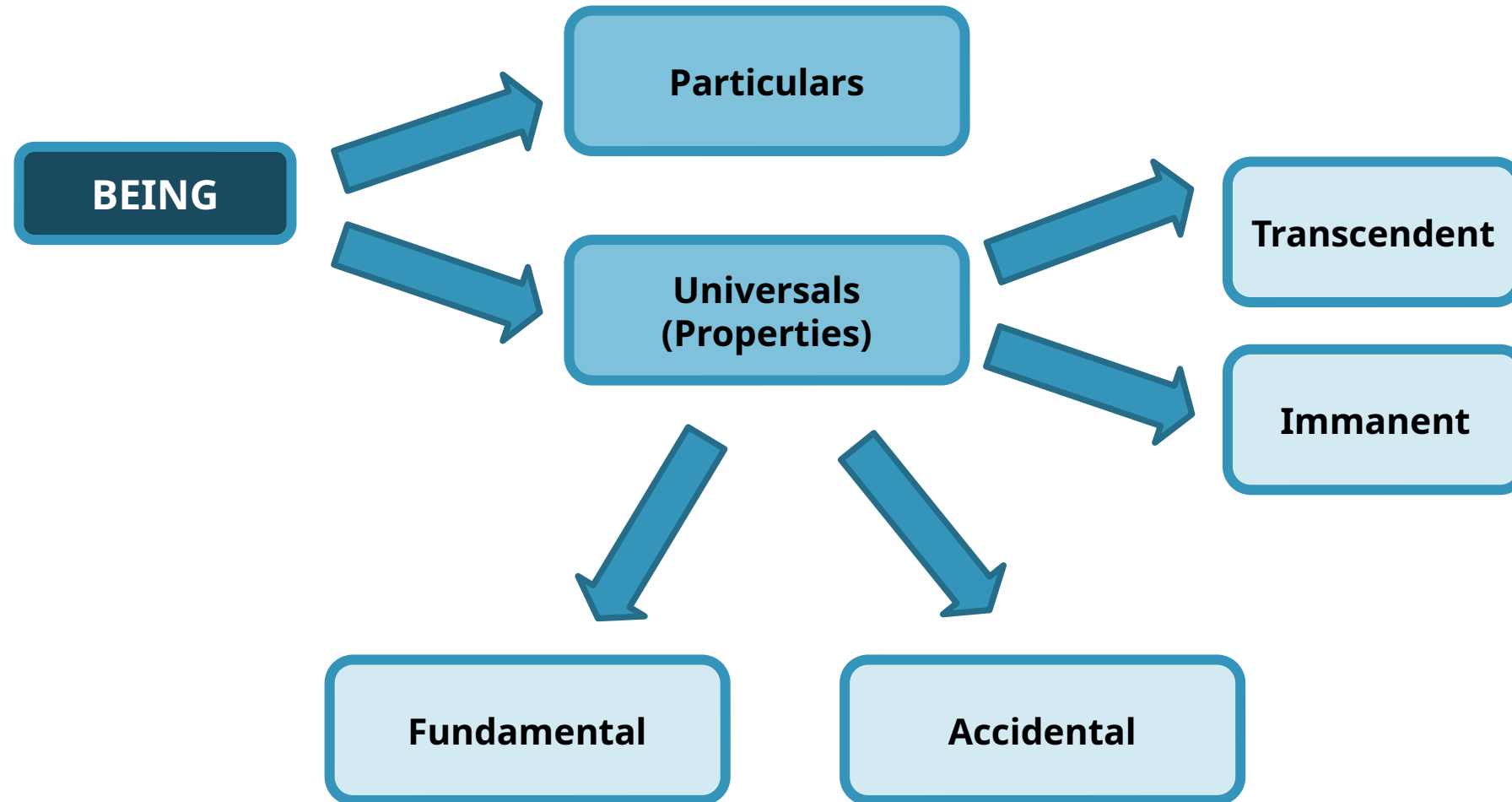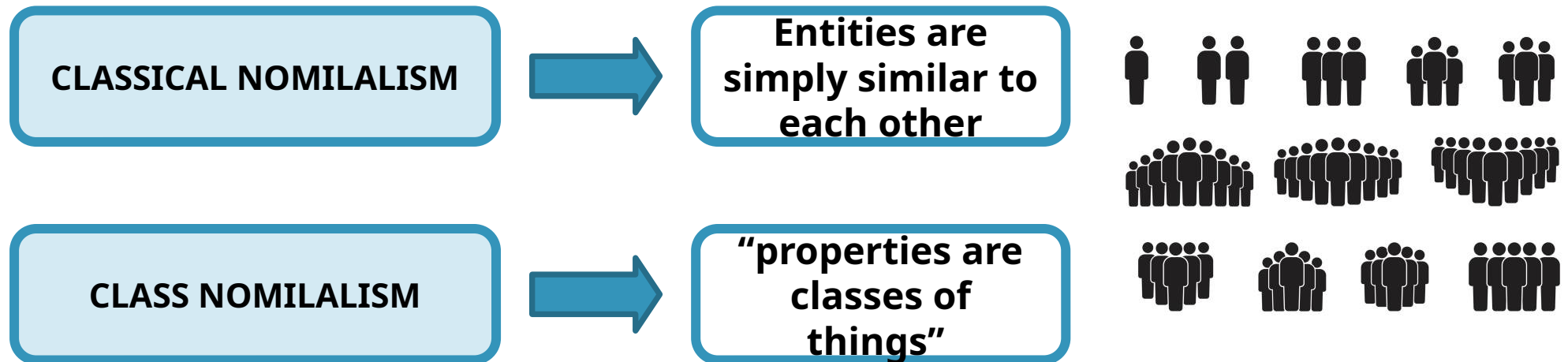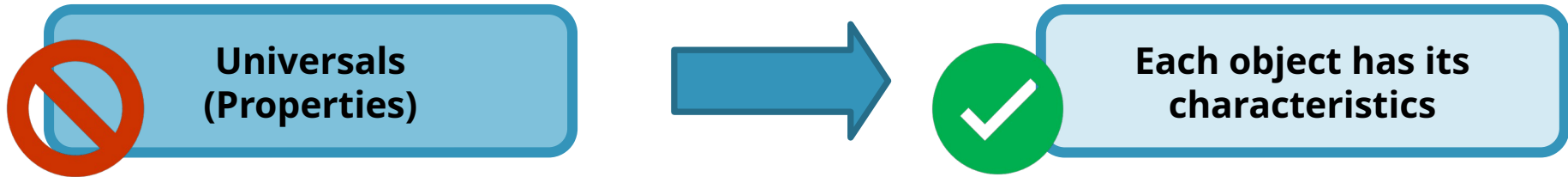
There are only
perceptions

→

Beings are
bundle of
perception

→

Identity is but
an illusion of
our imagination

*"For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on **some particular perception** or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and **never can observe any thing but the perception**."*
*(David Hume, Treatise of Humane Nature, 1738)*
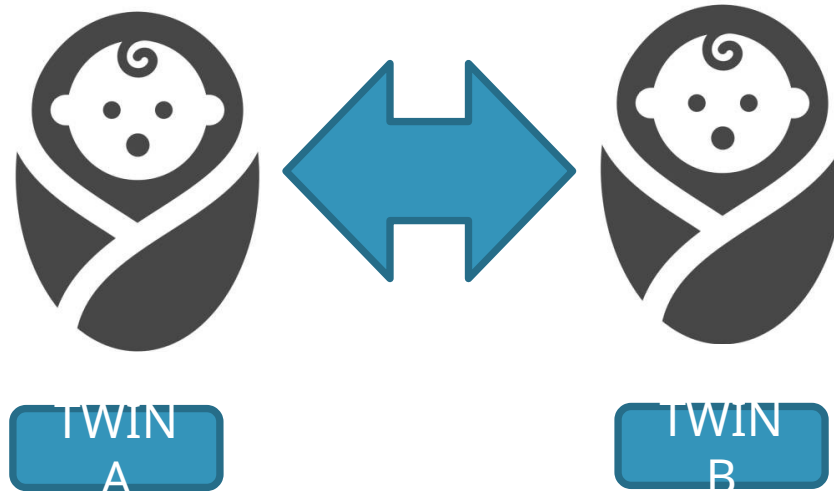
# INDENTITY

**DEFINTION OF IDENTITY**
- Qualitative: A have all the same properties as B, yet they may be two separate entities
- Numerical: A and B are one and the same entity
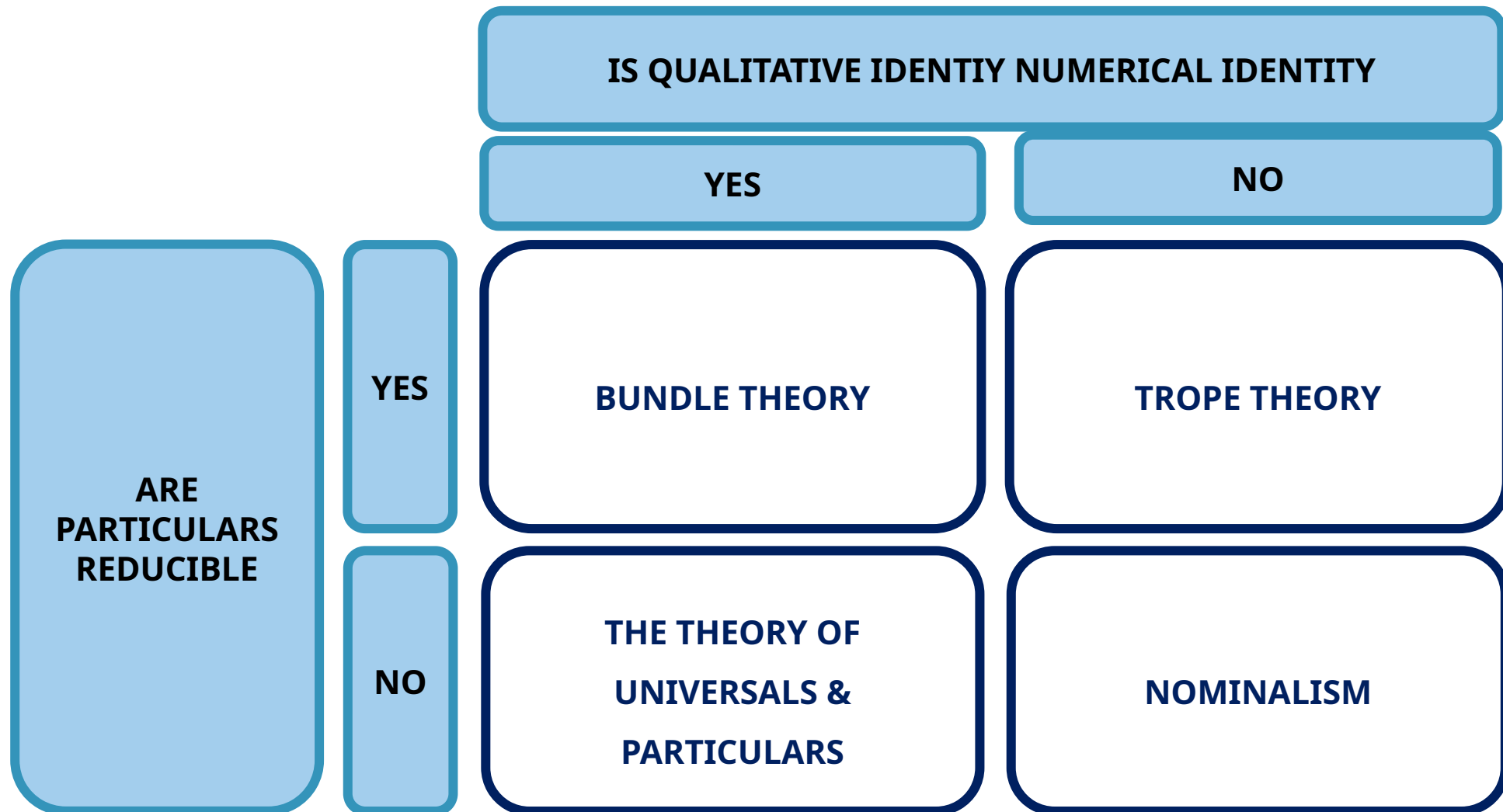
**PRINCIPLE OF INDESCERNIBLES**
if, for every property F, object x has F if and only if object y has F, then x is identical to y
**[∀F(Fx ⟷ Fy) → x=y]**

TWIN A

TWIN B

# THEORIES OVERVIEW

|  |  | IS QUALITATIVE IDENTIY NUMERICAL IDENTITY | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | **YES** | **NO** |
| **ARE PARTICULARS REDUCIBLE** | **YES** | BUNDLE THEORY | TROPE THEORY |
|  | **NO** | THE THEORY OF UNIVERSALS & PARTICULARS | NOMINALISM |

# AGENDA

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  - **A psychological framework**

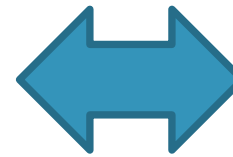  - **A compatibilist approach**

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# CHANGE

➤ **If an object truly changes, then the same object does not exist in Time T and Time T+ 1**

➤ **But if no object remains the same then there is no change at all.**
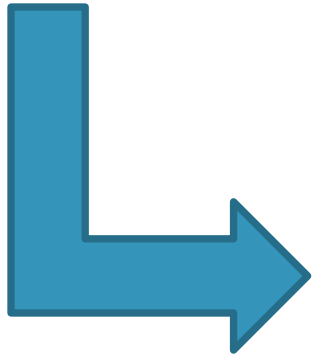
**Theseus king's ship is displayed in the harbour**, but exposed to the elements its parts need to be substituted and in time **none** of them are any longer **the original ones**

While its **old parts** are used to **rebuild**, even though in precarious conditions, the original ship in a **warehouse.**
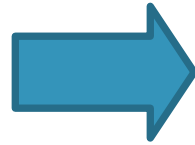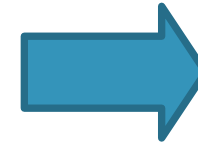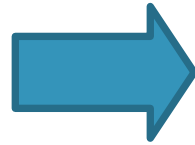
**Which one is Theseus ship?**

# REJECTING CHANGE

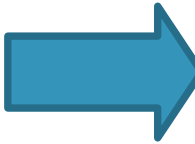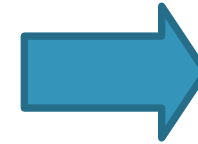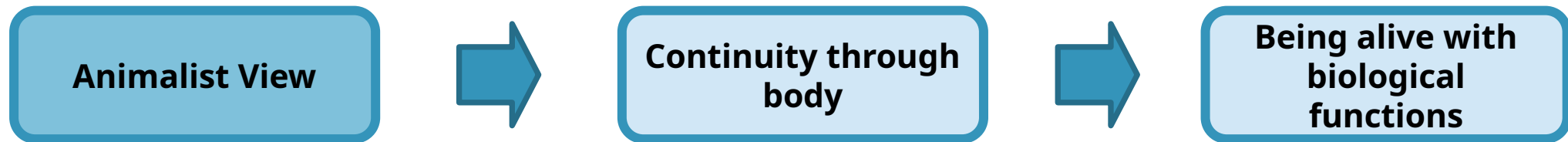| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Only presents exists** → | **Nothing ever changes** → | **Presentism** |
| **Pasta - Present - Future** → | **Objects do not change** → | **Continuity with successive entities** |
| **Pasta - Present - Future** → | **Objects do not change** → | **Their Parts change** |
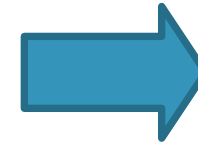
**Animalist View** → **Continuity through body** → **Being alive with biological functions**

# MAKING SENSE OF CHANGE: PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW

**Psychological continuity** → **Memory**
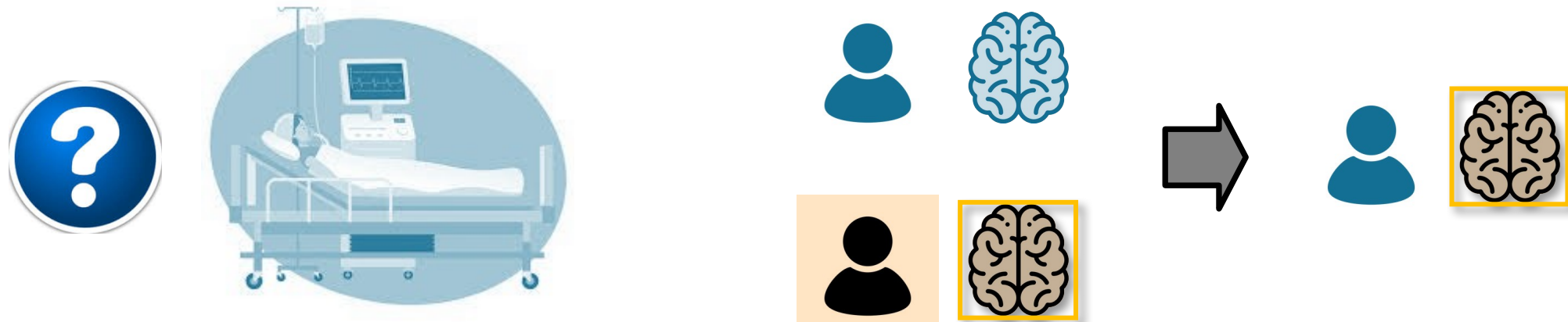
- O in T1 → M1
- O in T2 → M1 and M2
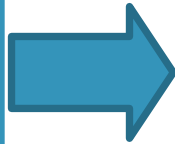- O in T3 → M2 and M3

→ T1

→ T2        T3

→ But T1        T3

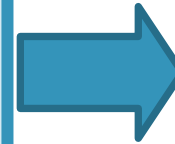# MAKING SENSE OF CHANGE: PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW
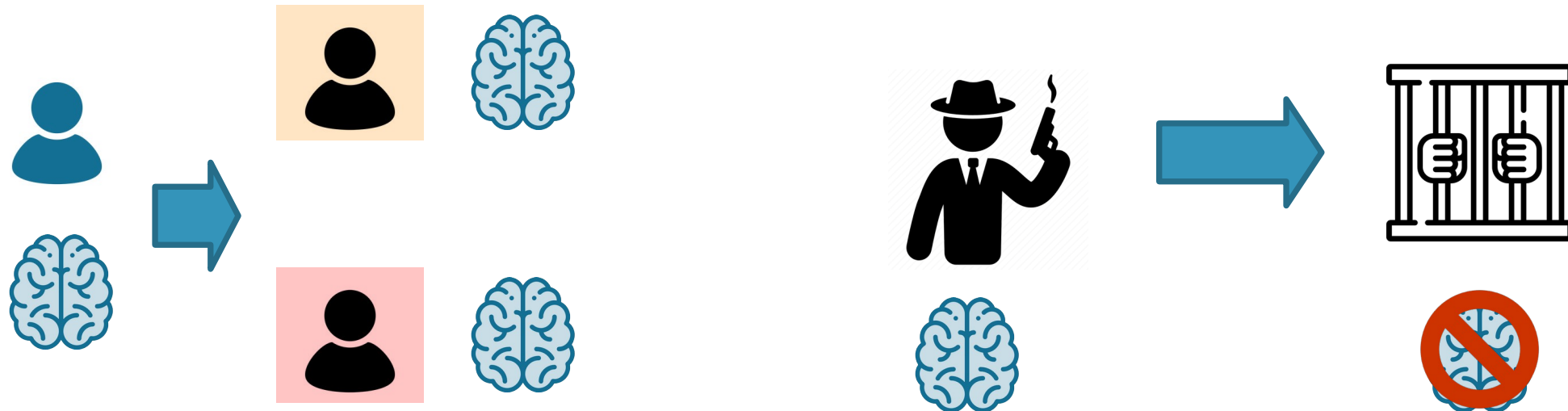
# MAKING SENSE OF CHANGE: PERPETUAL CHANGE

**We exist in an endless flux of perpetual change** → 🚫 → **No fixed identity** → 🚫 → **No continuity in time**

*"No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man" (Heraclitus)*

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# A PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK 1/2

**Psychoanalytic:** personality (P) has 3 components:

- the id: made of simple drives to attain pleasure and avoid suffering;
- the ego keeps the id in check vs. reality constraints
- the superego adds a moral dimension acquired through education.

Besides, P is formed by our 5th birthday.

**Behavioral:** focus on environment, P is formed through a process of conditioning applied directly to one's actions and their consequences.
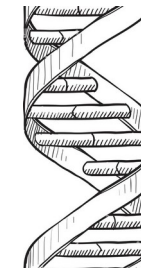
**Genetical**: P is the result of genes expressions.

# PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK 2/2

**Cognitive:** empirical approach claiming that:

- P is defined by the way individuals mentally represent information;
- and how through this active process interpret the world and act in it.

Agency is the engine driving human lives.

**Humanist:**

- while not denying the existence of basic biological needs (e.g. hunger, thirst, etc..)
- concentrates on self-actualization, the desire to develop one's potential and capabilities.



**Self-actualization**
desire to become the most that one can be

**Esteem**
respect, self-esteem, status, recognition, strength, freedom

**Love and belonging**
friendship, intimacy, family, sense of connection

**Safety needs**
personal security, employment, resources, health, property

**Physiological needs**
air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, reproduction

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

# PERSONALITY ASSESSMENTS

There are several models to appraise P and predict related behavior.

Many of these models reduce the complexity of human character to **5 basic traits, the so called "big five".**
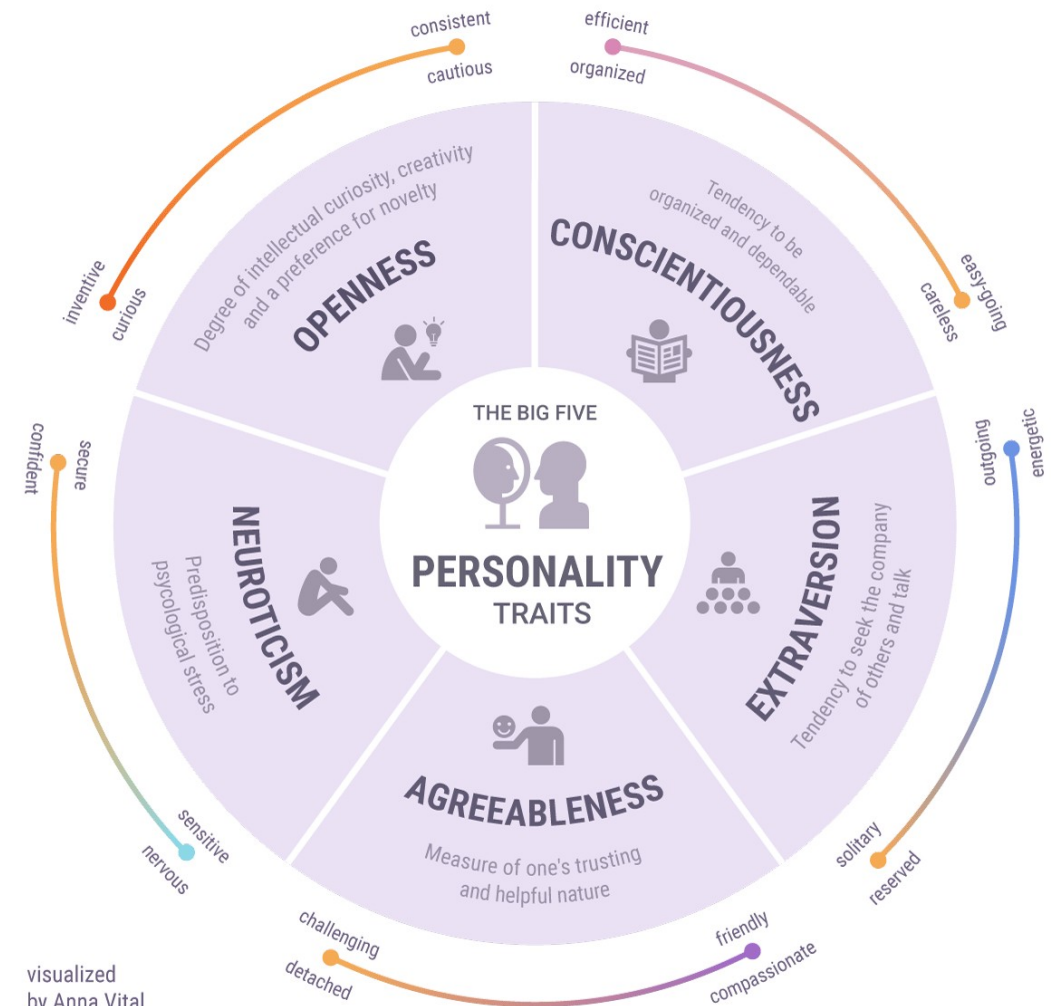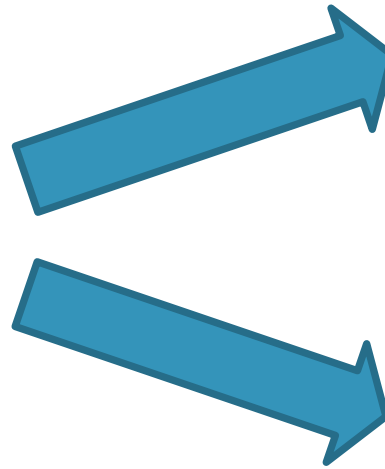


visualized
by Anna Vital

Source: J. M. Digman
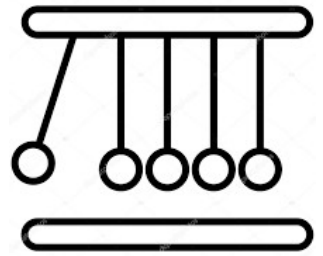Personality Structure: Emergence of the Five-Factor Model

adioma

# COMPATIBILISM

Philosophical theory

reconciling **determinism**

**with free will**

**Free Will preserved if**

We act **without any external constraints,** guided only by our own beliefs and desires
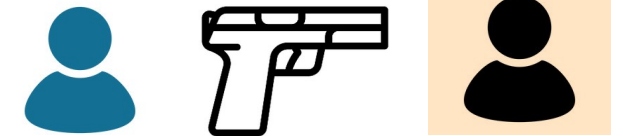
Interpreted as the possibility for an agent **to have acted otherwise if she had chosen** to do so

# FRANKFURT & THE PRINCIPLE OF ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES (PAP)
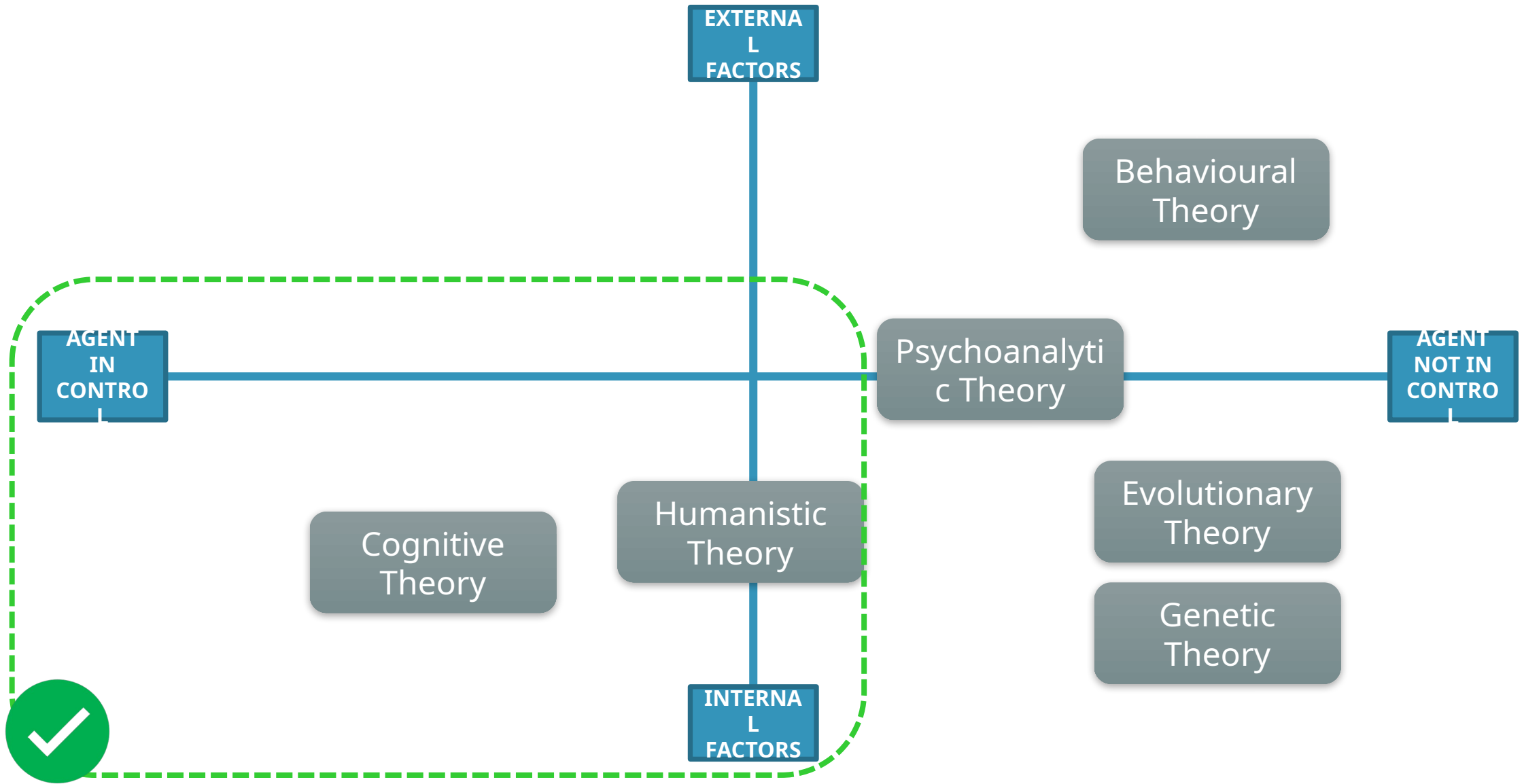
Jones decides to kill Smith.

Black is aware of this and he is keen for Jones to fulfil his plans, hence he puts an arrangement in place to manipulate Jones to accomplishi his plan, even in case he changes his mind.

In the end Jones murders Smith without any external interventions.

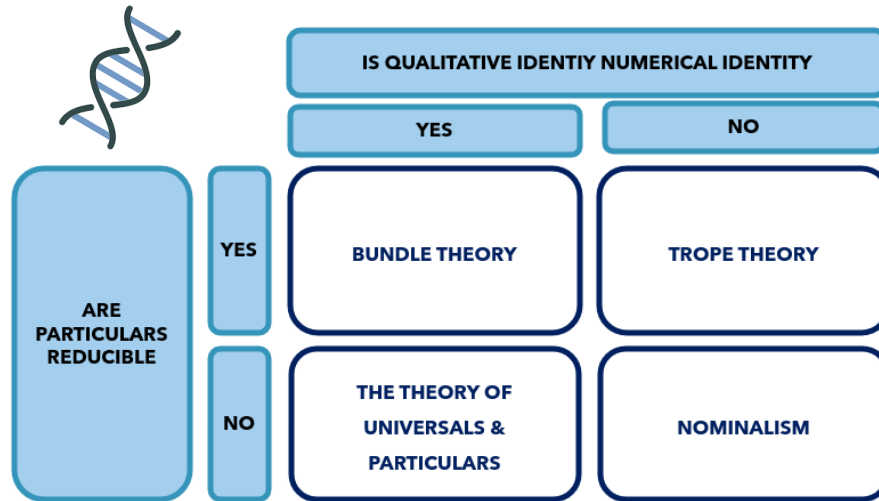# PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY VS. COMPATILIST DEFINITION

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Behavioural Theory

AGENT IN CONTROL

Psychoanalytic Theory

AGENT NOT IN CONTROL

Cognitive Theory

Humanistic Theory

Evolutionary Theory

Genetic Theory

INTERNAL FACTORS

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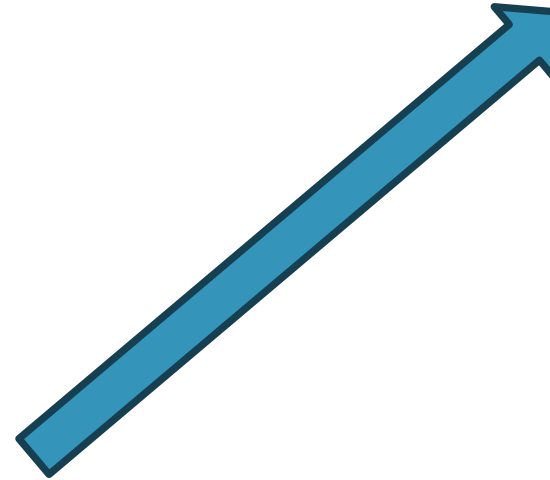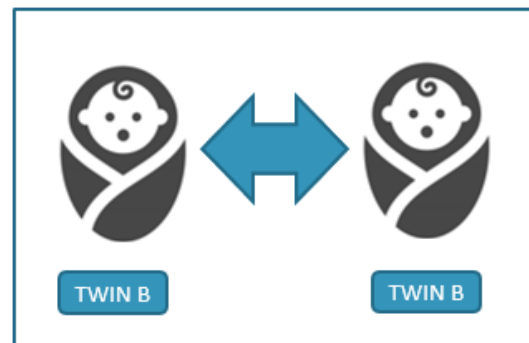
  - **A compatibilist approach**

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# CONCLUSION

**Theories of Properties**

| IS QUALITATIVE IDENTIY NUMERICAL IDENTITY | |
|---|---|
| YES | NO |

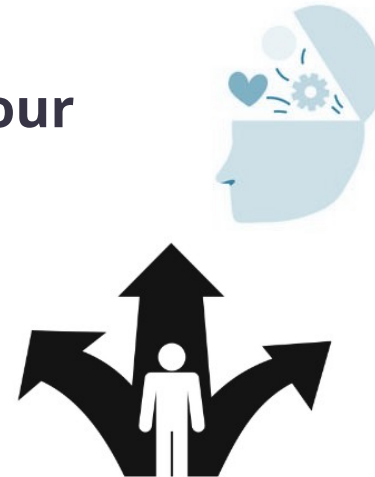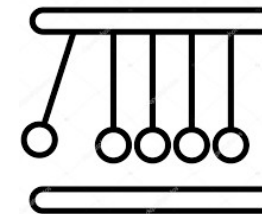| ARE PARTICULARS REDUCIBLE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | YES | BUNDLE THEORY | TROPE THEORY |
| | NO | THE THEORY OF UNIVERSALS & PARTICULARS | NOMINALISM |

**Identity**

TWIN B     TWIN B

**Time**

**Behaviour**

# Thank you for your attention

Marta Vecchio