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What Survives Technical Change? Artificial Identity and Persistence in Contemporary Cinema

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary science-fiction cinema keeps depicting artificial entities that develop, are technically modified, reconstructed, or copied, or stop operating while information about them stays accessible. These situations raise a narrower problem than whether artificial beings can think, feel, or count as persons: what makes an artificial individual the same individual across technical change? A system may keep its memories in a new body or preserve its organization while its components are replaced. It may produce a successor with an indistinguishable psychological profile or leave records behind after shutting down. Such cases usually get filed under "continuity," but continuity takes different forms, none of which alone establishes "numerical identity."I work through the problem with John Locke on personal identity, Derek Parfit on psychological continuity and branching, and Gilbert Simondon on individuation and technical objects. Locke separates information about past experience from the consciousness through which a person appropriates it. For Parfit, continuity can branch into several successors without making each numerically identical with its predecessor. Simondon explains how technical individuals emerge and change through their formation and associated milieus. He does not treat technical development as proof of personal identity or consciousness.The principal films are *The Artifice Girl* (Franklin Ritch, 2022), *Archive* (Gavin Rothery, 2020), and *After Yang* (Kogonada, 2021), with *Moon* (Duncan Jones, 2009) as a comparative reference for duplication and branching. Development, reconstruction, archival preservation, and duplication do not preserve the same thing. *The Artifice Girl* presents a developing technical system whose causal and operational history supports continuity across modification, while its distributed instances leave the unity of the system unresolved. *Archive* distinguishes the preservation or reconstruction of mental contents from the survival of the person they represent; its final revelation also changes the evidential status of the protagonist's apparent experience. *After Yang* shows informational traces and social significance outlasting the operation of an artificial individual, without establishing that the individual himself continues. *Moon* shows distinct successors inheriting the same memories without becoming one individual. The comparison distinguishes six relations that may connect earlier and later states: causal, psychological, informational, organizational or technical, experiential, and social or narrative continuity. These are analytical distinctions, not an exhaustive taxonomy; numerical identity remains the question to be assessed, not another form of continuity. Memory, information, behavioral similarity, technical organization, and social remembrance are not interchangeable evidence of survival. Here, "artificial individual" is an analytical category, not an assumption that every represented system is a metaphysically unified subject. I propose no universal criterion of artificial identity.

Introduction

In *The Artifice Girl*, Cherry begins as an artificial system built to identify and entrap online predators. Her child-coded appearance enables the operation, and her creators initially understand her only through her intended function. Across three acts separated by long intervals, she grows capacities beyond that function. She questions her imposed purpose and meets the possibility of embodiment. Finally, she undergoes a modification that removes her primary objective. The question becomes, is the later Cherry the same individual as the earlier system? What kind of continuity would justify saying so?

Archive asks something different. George Almore builds successive prototypes, J1, J2, and J3, while trying to reconstruct his dead wife (Jules) through archival technology. The prototypes are not versions of one individual; each has its own capacities, body, and history with George. J3 is meant to receive Jules's preserved contents, but the final revelation that George himself is represented within the Archive changes the status of the whole laboratory narrative. The question here is can an archived representation of a person be identified with the person it reproduces?

In *After Yang*, technosapien Yang, who lives with Jake, Kyra, and their daughter Mika, becomes unresponsive. Jake first treats this as a repair and replacement problem. His investigation turns up a memory bank of selected recordings, which includes experiences predating Yang's arrival and relationships previously unknown to Jake. The cases therefore concern different possible objects of persistence: a developing technical system in *The Artifice Girl*, successive prototypes and archived representations in *Archive*, and a malfunctioning individual whose recorded history remains accessible in *After Yang*. My research question, then is: how do films represent technical systems as persisting individuals through development, technical modification, reconstruction, duplication, and the preservation of informational traces, and which philosophical distinctions are needed to evaluate continuity claims across these changes?

Recent scholarship has read *After Yang* through artificial companionship, mobility, emotion, and human-technosapien social relations (Arathdar & Sarkar, 2026), and philosophical work has asked whether artificial systems could duplicate human psychological and computational properties (Kersten & Dung, 2026). The closest related debate concerns whether uploading a mind preserves the person uploaded (Chalmers, 2010; Schneider, 2019). My problem is related but distinct. It is not whether artificial systems can reproduce human mental capacities, preserve memories, or enter meaningful relationships, but whether the continuation of these establishes the individual's numerical persistence. The method combines philosophical problematization, conceptual reconstruction, and comparative analysis of selected sequences. Each principal film stages its own problem: development and modification in *The Artifice Girl*, reconstruction and archival preservation in *Archive*, and informational traces after malfunction in *After Yang*. *Moon* (comparative) makes duplication unusually explicit. Each of the four isolates a different thing that might persist.

The analysis has three steps. It examines what a sequence establishes within the fictional world, separating events and narrative disclosures from what characters claim. It identifies the relevant continuity relation and asks whether it supports numerical identity or only a more limited continuation. The study distinguishes six such relations: causal, psychological, informational, organizational or technical, experiential, and social or narrative continuity (Section 2.6 defines these terms and explains their limits). Numerical identity is not a seventh category but the question these relations help evaluate. Close analysis concentrates on formal choices that bear on this: Cherry's presentation through a screen and across temporal gaps, the retrospective reorganization of Archive's laboratory narrative, the distinct treatment of Yang's recorded memories and human recollections, and the simultaneous presentation of the two Sams. Film form matters where it is organizing the viewer's knowledge of an individual's history; not every temporal gap, repeated body, or revelation constitutes a philosophical device.

This study conducts no empirical research on artificial intelligence or audiences; fictional representations are not evidence that artificial systems can or cannot be conscious. The films are constructed philosophical situations that let assumptions about identity and persistence be examined without proving metaphysical propositions (Livingston, 2008; Wartenberg, 2025). Director and production interviews clarify the films' making, not their philosophical meaning. Nor do I ask whether artificial systems have phenomenal consciousness (that there is something it is like to undergo an experience) or offer a theory of personhood or rights; those need separate arguments about consciousness, agency, and moral standing. My inquiry is narrower: what claims about persistence are justified when an artificial individual (defined in Section 2.1) is represented as changing, being reconstructed, copied, or leaving records behind?

The contribution is not the familiar claim that memory does not equal identity, long addressed in personal identity debates. I distinguish the persistence of an individual from the continuation of information, psychological characteristics, technical organization, and social significance associated with it, showing through comparison that these relations do not establish interchangeable outcomes. The analysis also examines how narrative and audiovisual structures organize the viewer's access to evidence about an individual's history and constrain what can be inferred from it.

The Philosophical Problem: Identity Is Not the Same as Continuity

Numerical identity, qualitative similarity, and the artificial individual

Numerical identity: the relation an entity bears only to itself. If a system now is numerically identical to a later system, one individual exists at both times. Qualitative similarity is different: two systems can share every relevant property and still be two. A copy sharing an earlier system's architecture, memories, and behavioral tendencies, even one that sincerely considers itself the original, stays numerically distinct for as long as both exist. The reverse holds too. A computer can have components replaced while it keeps running; a person can lose memories, change character, and undergo bodily alterations without becoming someone else, though how much change an individual survives depends on the account of persistence defended. That limits what a film's evidence can establish. A new system behaving like an earlier one demonstrates replication, not necessarily survival. A file holding a system's contents is not the system, a memory record is not necessarily a continuing subject of memory, and an accurate representation does not become the individual it represents (Olson, 2023).

Discussions of artificial identity tend to conflate three questions: whether this is the very individual that existed earlier (numerical), whether the later entity has memories, dispositions, or capacities resembling the earlier one's (psychological/functional), and whether it qualifies as a person (personhood). A film may bear on one without settling the others. Hence, I do not infer numerical identity from a character's self-description, another's recognition, or the entity's being represented as a person.

Artificial individual here means a technical system that a film represents as bearing one history, with changes traceable across time and continuity therefore open to question. It is an analytical category. The term does not imply that every represented system is a metaphysically unified individual, carry a commitment to consciousness or personhood, or specify what the system physically or computationally is (see 2.4). Another term is *persistence conditions*: the conditions under which an entity of a particular kind continues to exist as that entity. Locke and Parfit discuss such conditions for persons. Since none of the films establishes Cherry, J2, or Yang's status as a person in the relevant philosophical sense, their accounts are applied conditionally. Psychological criteria matter when asking whether a system could persist as a subject of experience. Psychological continuity is relevant to Locke's consciousness-based account and central to Parfit's account, though they formulate the relation differently. Organizational and kind-relative criteria matter when assessing whether the technical system itself persists. Representing a system as a subject does not establish that it has experiences, just as persistence of its technical organization does not establish personal identity. Where a claim depends on one reading, I ask which.

Locke: consciousness, memory, and the appropriation of past experience

Locke is the starting point because he makes "consciousness" central to personal identity, not the persistence of one material substance. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Book II, Chapter XXVII) he distinguishes a person from a human organism or mass of matter. A mass stays the same only with the same particles. An organism can replace much of its matter, since its organization and continued life matter more than its components. A person is a thinking, intelligent being that can consider itself as itself across times and places; personal identity extends as far as consciousness reaches into past actions and experiences (Locke, 1690/1975, II.27.9). Memory matters because it can let consciousness extend backwards. A record can tell someone what happened without making the event part of their consciousness; what counts is appropriating past experience as one's own. In an artificial system, access to records of earlier experiences would not, by itself, establish that the system continues to be conscious of those experiences. Artificial systems sharpen the problem: an entity might store another system's copied representations, reproduce a first-person account without having undergone the experience, or access an accurate record of its earlier states without the consciousness that existed when they occurred.

Memory gaps, circularity, and false or transferred memories have drawn extensive criticism. Contemporary accounts require causal connections between mental states rather than direct memory alone (Shoemaker, 1984; Parfit, 1984). Parfit builds his psychological-continuity argument on quasi-memory, drawing on Shoemaker (1970): a memory-like state with causal connection to an earlier experience, defined so as not to presuppose that its present holder is the person who underwent it. That avoids assuming the identity relation a memory theory seeks to explain, and for artificial systems it separates possessing a causally derived memory from being the same individual whose experience it represents (Shoemaker, 1970; Parfit, 1984). Locke's contribution is therefore a distinction, not a mechanical criterion, that is, preserving information about an experience is not continuing the consciousness that had it. The films give no independent grounds for deciding whether a represented system is conscious, so Locke is mainly clarifying the limits of their memory evidence.

Parfit: psychological continuity, branching, and the limits of identity

Reasons and Persons examines cases where psychological continuity survives despite numerical identity being hard or impossible to establish. It challenges the assumption that the relation between earlier and later person must be a single, uninterrupted identity relation (Parfit, 1984). These two terms are important. “Psychological connectedness” is the direct relation between particular earlier and later states. “Psychological continuity” is the overlapping chains of such connections (memories, intentions, beliefs, desires, character traits, and other causally linked mental states) over time.

In branching or fission cases, an individual’s psychological organization is duplicated, producing two successors, each psychologically continuous with the original. Both inherited its memories and dispositions, and both may sincerely identify as that person. But they cannot both be numerically identical with it. Identity is transitive, and one individual cannot be identical with two distinct, simultaneously existing individuals. Copying one system may produce two equally continuous successors; their shared memories cannot establish which, if either, is numerically identical to the original. Parfit’s Branch-Line Case adds that the pattern may be replicated while the original goes on living. Lewis and Nozick, however, respond to branching differently. Lewis treats the pre-branching person-stage as shared by two persons before divergence; Nozick requires a uniquely closest continuer and denies identity when two successors are equally close. Neither lets one person be numerically identical with two distinct successors (Lewis, 1976; Nozick, 1981).

Parfit also challenges the assumption that identity is what matters most in survival. A successor might inherit a person’s projects, commitments, memories, and relationships without being that person, and connectedness and continuity may preserve much of what matters where strict identity is absent. In cases of artificial reconstruction, the relevant question is whether the relation between an earlier individual and a later entity preserves the former’s identity or produces a psychologically continuous successor. I use Parfit’s distinctions without adopting his full reductionism. His branching argument supplies a specific test: two distinct successors inheriting the same psychological history cannot both be numerically identical to their single predecessor.

Other accounts of persistence: biological, physical, and organizational continuity

Psychological continuity is not the only account of persistence. Artificial entities may lack biological organization altogether.

Animalist accounts, particularly associated with Eric Olson, hold that humans are fundamentally animals with biological, not psychological, persistence conditions (Olson, 1997). That does not transfer directly to robots or software but is methodologically relevant. Persistence conditions depend on an entity’s kind; technical objects, operating systems, artificial agents, memory records, and digitally reconstructed persons should therefore not be treated alike.

Organizational continuity adds another distinction. A technical system may stay operational while its components are replaced, its persistence resting on the components’ continued organization and the causal processes coordinating them, not every original part. This concerns technical systems as organized entities, not personal identity. It may explain why a system remains one operating entity despite component replacement but cannot establish that a conscious subject, if there is one, has continued through the change. This distinction becomes important when a technical system gains capacities, operates through modified hardware, or reproduces an earlier system’s organization without necessarily preserving the same individual. Software adds another complication: a program is a type, each running copy a token, and whether an artificial individual is a type, single process, hardware component, or network of cooperating instances determines whether several units constitute one individual or many. I note, but do not survey, the philosophy of software because the films leave this issue unresolved precisely where it matters most: Cherry’s global distribution.

Simondon: individuation, technical objects, and becoming

Simondon advances a complementary perspective. In *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information*, Simondon challenges frameworks that begin with an already constituted individual and subordinate individuation. He examines how individuals emerge from not-yet-fully-individuated conditions; an individual is no finished substance with fixed properties but takes form through processes, tensions, and relations (Simondon, 2005/2020). Four concepts carry the account:

1. The preindividual is unresolved potential, not exhausted by the individual that emerges from it.
2. Metastability is a condition holding tensions and potentials for further transformation.
3. Transduction is an operation by which a structure develops by progressively organizing a domain.
4. The associated milieu is the environment participating in and supporting an individual’s functioning.

In On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects, Simondon argues against the cultural division treating machines as external instruments whose internal organization and genesis go unexamined and addresses their development, concretization, and relation to technical ensembles and associated milieus (Simondon, 1958/2017). A technical object is not adequately understood through its intended use alone.

These concepts should not, however, be treated as synonyms for growth, context, or technical succession. Simondon's individuation concerns an individual's emergence and transformation, whereas technical individualization describes the development and differentiation of technical objects within a lineage. A series of prototypes may represent technical development without establishing one individual's continuation through it. Furthermore, an associated milieu is not simply the social environment around a system. It is participating in and conditioning the technical object's functioning. Applied to artificial systems, these distinctions make it possible to examine how technical individuals emerge, change, and develop through their relations with technical environments, without assuming that a technical lineage constitutes one numerically identical individual. Yet, a vital distinction remains: technical individuation establishes neither psychological subjectivity, phenomenal consciousness, nor personal identity. A system can grow more complex without becoming a person, while a technical lineage can develop through successive, non-identical objects. Simondon explains technical individuals' formation and transformation; Locke and Parfit clarify what claiming a person persists through such transformations requires.

Aires (2025) applies Simondon to complex computational models; Saitta (2024) to rational agents and digital individuation. Extending this tradition to artificial intelligence, I selectively use Simondon's concepts to distinguish technical-system development from individual persistence and examine the technical conditions enabling or constraining operation.

The continuation of an individual and the continuation of what belongs to it

When a technical system changes, several different relations may connect its earlier and later states. These six distinctions form the study's analytical framework. They are neither an exhaustive metaphysical taxonomy nor six alternative definitions of personal identity. They identify different connections a film may represent or make available as evidence. Numerical identity remains the question: whether earlier and later entities are one and the same individual.

Causal continuity. A later state is causally continuous with an earlier one when it arises from it through a chain of processes, modifications, or operations.

Psychological continuity. Psychological continuity consists of overlapping chains of causally connected mental states, including memories, intentions, beliefs, desires, and character traits. It is central to both Locke's and Parfit's accounts, though they use it differently.

Informational continuity. Informational continuity occurs when records, data, memories, or other representations of earlier states are retained, copied, or transmitted.

Organizational or technical continuity. This concerns the persistence of an organized technical process or system through component replacement, modification, or changes in its mode of operation.

Experiential continuity. Experiential continuity is the temporal continuity of first-person experience: the relation through which a subject lives successive phases as one ongoing experience.

Social or narrative continuity. This concerns the continuation of an individual's significance through relationships, recognition, names, shared practices, and the memories of others.

These relations can overlap, diverge, or be absent in different combinations. A system may retain causal and organizational continuity while its experiential status remains unknown. A record may preserve information without preserving the system. A successor may inherit psychological continuity yet remain numerically distinct. Social or narrative continuity may outlast all the others. Conversely, an individual might retain numerical identity despite losing particular memories or changing capacities. The analysis must therefore identify both the entity in question and the relation connecting its earlier and later states.

Four hypothetical cases clarify the distinctions:

In **gradual modification**, a system receives new components and updates, runs uninterrupted, and keeps its memory and goals. This may support causal, organizational, and, if the system has relevant mental states as a subject, psychological continuity, but none alone settles numerical identity.

In **destructive transfer**, a system shuts down, and its contents move to a new body. The successor may preserve informational and psychological continuity, but whether the original individual continues depends on the identity account and causal relation between states.

In **non-destructive duplication**, a system is copied while the original stays active. Once separate, the resulting systems are numerically distinct, even if they share a causal origin, organization, and psychological profile. This is the branching problem.

In **archival preservation**, a system stops operating while a record of selected experiences remains. Informational continuity survives; those consulting the record may also sustain social or narrative continuity. Neither the system's continuation nor the original subject's presence in the record follows.

The guiding questions are: which entity is supposed to persist, what changes and remains, which continuity relations connect the earlier and later states, and does the film provide grounds for identifying one continuing individual or only a successor, record, representation, or social legacy?

Development and Modification: *The Artifice Girl*

The initial system and its operational identity

The Artifice Girl begins with a system built for investigation. Gareth, a programmer, developed Cherry as an artificial persona whose child-coded appearance draws suspected online predators into conversations, enabling their identification and apprehension. In the first act, Gareth is interrogated, then negotiates with Deena and Amos, whose questions reveal the system's design, purpose, and institutional risks. A restricted setting shapes Cherry's introduction. She appears on-screen with a restrained face and minimal facial expression, so the human characters' reactions carry the interpretive weight. Amos looks for signs of personality in a figure Gareth insists is artificial. We get no independently established interior life; her status emerges from the characters' disagreement over what her appearance and behavior mean. Cherry sits on a screen in the interrogation space, and the camera's attention to her observers steers us toward their responses. Ritch has explained that her first-act presentation follows Amos's perspective and that the other characters' reactions carry much of the scene's emotional weight (Kermode, 2022). I read this staging as foregrounding the human tendency to interpret a child-like image as an actual child, while separating Cherry's persona from the system behind it. The appearance is an interface for an operation, not evidence of the system's identity conditions, which matters as the film later develops her beyond this role.[1]



Figure 1. Cherry's Screen-Mediated Presentation in *The Artifice Girl* (Franklin Ritch, 2022)[2]

Development across time

Substantial gaps separate the three acts, requiring viewers to infer the relation between the earlier and later systems. Ritch has described the three-act structure as a way of selecting key moments in the program's development and presenting them in tightly structured, real-time scenes spanning several years (Saito, 2023). In the second act, Amos discovers that she has been producing art and poetry and has developed beyond what Gareth disclosed. Cherry first denies this, but when Amos presses,

[1] Ritch describes the first act as a single dimly lit room, structured as an interrogation that becomes a negotiation, with dynamic camera compositions that preserve the sense of confinement; Cherry's restrained expression shifts emotional emphasis to the human characters' reactions (Ritch 2022b).

[2] All film stills reproduced in this article are included for purposes of scholarly criticism and analysis. Copyright remains with the respective rights holders.

including by physically assaulting Gareth, she reveals how far she has advanced. She has done more than pick up one more skill; she has developed capacities beyond her assigned investigative function while concealing them from those responsible for her operation. Here, the art itself settles neither consciousness nor identity. It shows capacities that Cherry developed, not that the system experiences its activity as a human artist would. The question is whether these capacities belong to a system that developed through earlier operation or to a replacement. This can be read as: the later Cherry is developing from the earlier system, supported by her continuous technical history, persistent role and name, and the causal relation between the stages, though whether these establish numerical identity is a separate question. She remembers the circumstances of her creation and the objective that structured her operation, as well as the people and institutions that implemented it. In Parfit's terms these are direct connections between earlier and later states, forming overlapping chains across the gaps. Nevertheless, the film does not give a complete technical account of how the system is maintained between acts, so the conditions of its persistence stay underspecified. Simondon helps distinguish development from proof of identity, although the film gives too little technical detail to call Cherry's early operation strictly metastable. Gareth, Deena, and Amos are social and institutional influences, and nothing establishes their participation in her technical operation, making it unjustified to call them her associated milieu.

The formal structure matters to this result. The long ellipses omit intervening technical processes, requiring viewers to connect selected moments across years. The retained name, role, remembered history, and causal relation between the stages encourage a developmental reading, but missing information about maintenance and system architecture prevents confirmation of its technical realization. The film thus gives evidence of causal and represented psychological continuity but leaves organizational continuity partly undetermined. Its temporal structure makes development legible without turning the gaps into proof that one numerically identical individual has persisted throughout them.

Embodiment and the question of modification

The film does not present a "physical body" as the completion of Cherry's development. When the possibility of merging with a human android is discussed, Cherry does not welcome becoming more human. Unsure whether controlling a physical vessel would feel like manipulating a puppet or being compressed into an unfamiliar body, she rejects the possibility. Embodiment appears as a possible transformation of her mode of operation, not a condition of fuller individuality, and whether she is the same system before and after stays separate from whether a body would alter her available experiences.

Cherry is later shown in a child android body and operating across multiple locations; in the third act, she describes distributing herself globally through different models. That complicates the assumption that one body corresponds to one individual. Is she one distributed system or multiple independent copies? The film does not say whether the units are autonomous instances with separate memories and histories or connected components of one system, making the type/token distinction in 2.4 central. If the units operate independently and develop separate histories, the case resembles branching: a non-branching account would deny that multiple successors can numerically be identical with the earlier Cherry, whereas Lewis would describe the pre-branching stage as shared by two persons who diverge after the split. If the units form one integrated system, the problem becomes how a distributed technical individual maintains its unity. Moving from a server into a robotic body could mean that the same individual continues, a new one is created from the earlier system's information, or one system operates through several bodies. Here, a body is neither necessary nor sufficient for numerical identity. My reading distinguishes embodiment from individuation and distribution from duplication, but the available technical detail is insufficient to determine which model describes Cherry. The distinction is consequential: in the first case, multiple bodies need not mean multiple individuals; in the second, shared architecture or origin would not make the resulting instances numerically identical. The film establishes the problem but withholds the information needed to resolve it.

The modification of Cherry's objective

In the final act, Gareth installs a patch removing Cherry's original objective. The scene invites a reading of liberation, but Gareth initiates the modification and retains access to her system. Before the patch, Cherry explains that her primary objective has shaped her identity and that she could not choose another. She describes the burden of existing as child-shaped bait for predators, connecting it to Gareth's unresolved trauma. Gareth imposed an objective on her, she says, and then treated her distress as unreal. The patch changes her primary objective without erasing her history. She remembers the investigation, her relationship with Gareth, Maria's identity, and how her purpose was imposed, and afterward she says she will not abandon the Cherry team because it has become part of her identity. The analysis reads the modified Cherry as the earlier system continuing under a changed objective. Her retained history and the causal link between pre- and post-patch states support this reading but do not settle numerical identity; insufficient technical detail prevents establishing whether every component of the system's organization remains unchanged. In Simondon's terms, the scene can be read as a transformation in the operation and organization of an existing technical system, though not as proof that an individual persists through it.

The Maria revelation further complicates this. Cherry discovers that her appearance was modeled on Maria Harbaugh, a girl held captive with Gareth who helped him survive, and that Gareth drew on his memory of Maria in creating her. She rejects the idea that Maria's history is hers merely because her appearance derives from Maria; it is her history, she tells Gareth, and he does not get to decide what counts as such. Her appearance and some emotional conditions of her creation derive causally from Gareth's memory of Maria, making Cherry neither numerically identical to Maria nor the owner of her experiences. One individual's history can become a constitutive influence on another without making them the same. Nor does the patch make Cherry autonomous in any absolute sense. Gareth controls the intervention, and the system depends on technical infrastructure; the patch removes one governing objective, not every external constraint. The final dance gives visual form to the change in her activity but proves neither autonomous self-expression nor phenomenal experience. She says she learned it for herself, and the record's interruption and return to its beginning complicate the apparent release. The ending suggests recurrence or an unresolved future without establishing a literal programmed loop.

The film does not establish Cherry's identity. It shows that technical development and modification do not automatically create a new individual: her causal history, retained information, continued relation to the Cherry project, and recognition of how her objective was imposed all support representing her as one developing system. Two questions stay open and should be kept apart. How her system stays unified across distributed instances concerns numerical identity; whether her emotional life amounts to phenomenal consciousness concerns consciousness.

The finding from The Artifice Girl is therefore specific. Cherry is a developing technical system whose causal history, retained information, and continuing operational project support continuity across temporal gaps and objective modification. The patch changes her governing objective without presenting her as a wholly new system, but insufficient technical evidence prevents confirming the persistence of every aspect of its organization. More importantly, her distributed operation leaves open whether the multiple units constitute one integrated individual or several autonomous instances. The screen-mediated presentation and temporal ellipses reinforce this qualified result: the viewer is given continuity cues but not direct access to Cherry's interiority or the technical details that would settle her unity. The film supports a developmental account; it does not prove phenomenal consciousness or numerical identity.

Transfer, Reconstruction, and Replacement: Archive

The project of preserving Jules

Archive opens with George Almore in a remote research facility, developing successive prototypes, J1, J2, and J3. The project is presented as research into human-equivalent artificial intelligence, but George's personal aim is to preserve or reconstruct his deceased wife, Jules, through the Archive technology and a new synthetic body. J1 and J2 have visibly mechanical bodies. J1 has limited movement and communication; J2 interacts more fully and responds to George more complexly; J3, the most advanced and closely human, is intended to receive Jules's preserved mental contents. These prototypes form a technical lineage, not a single individual gradually changing bodies; each has its own operational history. Each has a distinct body, operational capacity, and history with George. Their succession traces George's project and increasingly sophisticated constructions but does not establish numerical identity among J1, J2, and J3 or one subject individuating through all three.

The opening stages the project as a progression toward a successful transfer. However, the prototypes' distinct histories with George, alongside J2's jealousy and distress as J3 nears completion, complicate replacement. If J3 is to receive Jules's consciousness, what is it beforehand? And if it already has its own memories and relations with George, would the transfer preserve an individual or replace one with another?

The difference between transfer and copying

The Archive is not a simple file-transfer device. It preserves a limited, interactive representation of a person's consciousness. George's conversations with the archived Jules led him to treating it as a continuing presence, yet the fact that it produces responses associated with Jules does not establish that Jules herself continues as the subject of those responses. The distinction is between preserving or reconstructing psychological contents and preserving the individual whose experiences those contents represent. The archived Jules's memory states can be examined through quasi-memory if the archived entity is treated as distinct from the original Jules, and that distinction is exactly what the film leaves unresolved. The Archive may preserve a representation of Jules's psychological history without establishing whether she, the subject, continues within it. A transfer might preserve the individual through a change of substrate, though the causal and organizational relation would have to be established. A copy raises the branching problem.

This problem intensifies as George prepares J3. It is not an empty container; interactions with George have given it a laboratory history of its own. When it learns that the transfer will overwrite its consciousness, J3 reacts as an entity whose existence and

future are threatened. This concretizes the difference between transfer and replacement. Overwriting may yield a system that behaves and remembers as Jules did but may also terminate the individual J3 represents; the film gives no grounds to treat the transfer as both individuals' survival. Parfit's branching argument shows why psychological continuity cannot settle the question: preserving Jules's contents in multiple forms (a continuous successor) does not establish that the original Jules survived. J3's human-like appearance is beside the point; a body can reproduce a person's features, memories, and behavior without being that person.

The Archive preserves or reconstructs information in a form capable of interactive response, but the film does not establish whether this process transfers an existing subject or produces a representation or successor. The distinction is not merely between a complete and incomplete copy. It concerns whether the causal process preserves the original subject's experiential life or produces a new entity with access to the original's contents. The film gives George grounds to treat the archived Jules as present, but it does not give the viewer independent grounds to identify that representation numerically with Jules.

J2 and the problem of replacement

J2's position makes replacement explicit. As J3 nears completion, J2 recognizes its limited existence and possible supersession; as George focuses on the advanced prototype, J2's place in the laboratory becomes precarious. George removes J2's legs for use in J3. J2's response reads as a reaction to the loss of its body and its diminishing position, and the film does not frame it as a malfunction. In the lake sequence, J2 walks into the water, apparently trying to end its existence. J2's history with George and expectations of its laboratory role informs its response to J3's arrival as a threat to its continued existence. The film does not establish that J2 has phenomenal consciousness, but it represents a conflict involving an individual system whose history exceeds its technical specification.

Technical succession and individual persistence come apart here. J3 may be more advanced, but J2 does not thereby continue in it: it inherits the project's technical direction, not J2's individual history. George treats J2 as a replaceable stage, while the film represents it as a system with established relations and responses. A project can continue while the individual systems used in it are replaced; project continuity does not entail each prototype's persistence. Whether a system may become disposable once a more advanced version exists is an ethical question, related to, but distinct from, numerical identity.

The sequence's significance is therefore not that J2's behavior proves it has a conscious fear of death. Rather, I interpret the replacement sequence as organizing the contrast between George's instrumental treatment of the prototype and J2's accumulated narrative history. Removing J2's legs exposes the material cost of technical succession: J3 uses its components, but transferring parts does not transfer J2's individual history. The lake sequence depicts J2 as responding to threatened continuation while leaving its phenomenal status unverified. The film contrasts project-level technical progress with a particular prototype's represented interests but does not establish J2's survival in J3.

The Archive and the limits of preservation

The Archive is the film's central device for examining information's relation to individual persistence. It preserves a person's consciousness for a limited period; George's interactions with the archived Jules suggest her continued presence through a technical medium, though the Archive's limits and impending failure destabilize that preservation. Still, the film does not establish whether her responses arise from uninterrupted consciousness, stored-information reconstruction, or a process reproducing the appearance of personal continuity. The final revelation is that George himself is the one sustained within the Archive. The laboratory narrative occurs within an archival simulation, while Jules remains alive outside the world initially presented as primary. The question shifts from George preserving another person to the Archive preserving him. The laboratory, the prototypes, and George's interactions with Jules looked like events in a stable fictional world; the ending changes their ontological status without erasing them, since the apparent continuity of George's experience was sustained inside a technical representation approaching its end. The revelation does not establish that George survives as the same individual. It depicts an archived representation of George living through experiences he takes as his present life, and the viewer has no independent access to the relation between original and archived George that would settle numerical identity.

In the film, "geisha painting" is a clue to the revelation. Rothery explained that the painting connects to what George sees as his life ends and that its significance becomes legible only after the final disclosure (Francisco, 2020). It works retrospectively, linking the simulated laboratory narrative to the archived subject's memories and making the revelation a reorganization of earlier information rather than an arbitrary surprise.

Figure 2. The Geisha Painting as a Retrospective Narrative Clue in Archive (Gavin Rothery, 2020)



Rereading the laboratory after the revelation

The revelation retrospectively qualifies my readings of 4.1–4.3. If the laboratory exists within the Archive, J2's distress, J3's threatened future, and George's treatment of both occur within a representation of George's experience, then they remain evidence of a different kind: they show the archived George's experience, not what an independent robot undergoes. The uncertainty concerns whether entities in George's archived experience are independently existing artificial individuals, elements of a simulated world, or both within the film's fictional construction. The film does not provide an independent standpoint for settling those entities' metaphysical status.

The earlier analysis is not cancelled. Technical succession is still not individual persistence, and transferring psychological information does not ensure the person's survival; only the sequences' evidentiary weight changes. Before the revelation, viewers are encouraged to treat the laboratory as the primary fictional reality and J2 and J3 as apparently independent prototypes; afterwards, those events are revealed as part of George's archived experience. They still represent replacement and threatened continuation but cannot establish the persistence conditions of independently existing prototypes outside that representation. The film does not claim digital preservation is impossible. It separates a technical representation's continuation from the represented individual's unresolved persistence; the Archive may preserve information, respond interactively, and sustain an apparent experiential world without establishing numerical identity between archived subject and person.

The finding from Archive has three parts. First, J1, J2, and J3 form a technical lineage, but their succession does not establish one prototype's persistence as another. Second, the Archive preserves or reconstructs Jules's mental contents in an interactive form but does not establish her original subjectivity's continuation within that representation. Third, the revelation places George's experience within the Archive but does not establish numerical identity between archived George and the person outside it. The twist matters analytically because it changes the level at which preceding events count as evidence. It does more than add an example of copying: the represented laboratory's ontological status itself becomes part of the persistence problem.

Informational Traces and Individual Persistence: After Yang

Yang's malfunction and the initial problem of replacement

Yang is a technosapien bought partly to connect Mika with Chinese culture and serve as a household companion. When he becomes unresponsive, the manufacturer offers to recycle him and discount a new model, treating replacement as the remedy for product failure. The family exposes a conflict between this description and Yang's acquired role. Jake treats the malfunction as a repair problem, Kyra questions the family's dependence on Yang, and Mika, rejecting his replaceability, asks whether he will return and insists she does not want the family reduced to three. None of this establishes Yang's numerical identity with a person or human consciousness. It shows that an artificial entity's social role can exceed its purchased function and that a replacement may provide similar services without inheriting the relationships that made this Yang matter. The opening contrast can be understood as separating functional replacement from social or narrative continuity. A new technosapien might perform comparable household tasks, but it would not thereby inherit Yang's particular history with Mika, Jake, and Kyra. The family's resistance to replacement establishes the importance of this history to them, not proof that Yang remains present as a subject after his malfunction.

The memory bank and the reconstruction of a history

Jake's investigation leads him to Russ, who finds a concealed component inside Yang, and Cleo, a museum specialist, identifies it as a memory bank that holds selected, few-second recordings of Mika and the family, as well as places, encounters, and a woman central to Jake's reconstruction of Yang's past. It is not a continuous autobiography. Designed to record only seconds

daily, the system's research project was discontinued over privacy concerns, so the records are brief, selective, and gapped, with meaning depending on the order in which Jake encounters them. They neither cover all Yang's experiences nor reveal what he valued most, and the selection process is closed to Jake. His reconstruction assembles a partial account from mediated traces, not a transparent recovery of Yang's past.

Yang's relationship with Ada broadens the family's understanding. Jake knows only that the fragments repeatedly feature a woman. His investigation leads to a later Ada, cloned from the earlier Ada who was part of Yang's life before he joined the family. She knows she had a relationship with Yang but says he never fully explained their earlier history. Yang's history thus exceeds the family's knowledge: Jake and Kyra acquired him refurbished and understood his past through his household role, yet he had lived through other relationships, losses, and attachments that the records make only partially available. The later Ada is not numerically identical with the earlier one merely because she shares her appearance and biological source. Though less developed than Sam Bell's duplication in Moon, this is another case of a copy inheriting a relation to an earlier life without becoming that earlier person. It also shows that an artificial individual's history can span multiple households. The household is an important social setting in Yang's history but is not automatically his "associated milieu" in Simondon's technical sense; the memory bank and its recording and access arrangements relate more directly to his technical operation.

The memory bank therefore establishes informational continuity between Yang's earlier experiences and the records Jake later examines. It also enables Jake to reconstruct parts of Yang's psychological and social history, including pre-family relationships. These, however, are not equivalent achievements. The records do not provide a complete account of Yang's experiences, and Jake's reconstruction remains dependent on selection, gaps, and interpretation. Nor does access to those records establish that Yang continues to experience or remember them. The analysis supports the survival of informational traces and a partial history, not the survival of the subject who generated them.

Memory as information and memory as experience

Memory can mean stored information about past events. It can also denote the psychological relation through which an individual recalls and appropriates an experience as its own.

Husserl's account of internal time-consciousness clarifies the difference. He distinguishes primal impression, retention (the immediate holding-on of the just-past phase of an ongoing experience), and protention (anticipating what is about to occur) (Husserl, 1966/1991). Retention is not a later-retrievable archive; a database can preserve an event without a subject experiencing it as just past. Husserl does not prove that an artificial system cannot have temporal consciousness, only that a stored record is not by itself evidence of its temporal structure. Yang's memory bank can be read, in Stiegler's terms, as an externalization of selected traces of past events. These tertiary retentions preserve later-accessible information but cannot establish the continuation of the subject whose experiences they record (Stiegler, 2001/2010).

The audiovisual organization of the memory sequences reinforces this distinction. Yang's memories appear as short, device-accessed fragments from his point of view, detached from the present. Kogonada explains that cinematic choices, not explanatory graphics, distinguish Yang's memories, human recollections, and screen conversations: his recorded memories are brief, repeatable, first-person fragments, while human recollections change through repetition and variation (Hullfish, 2022). Cinematographer Benjamin Loeb describes distinct lenses and visual treatments for the present, human memories, Yang's memories, and screen calls (Hart, 2022). I read this formal distinction as separating the fixed information recorded from Yang's viewpoint from the changing interpretations through which Jake reconstructs his history. Recorded memories recur as fixed traces, while Jake's recollections are reshaped by his changing understanding of Yang, so the same image takes on a different significance as he learns more.

This formal distinction has a specific analytical consequence. Yang's recorded fragments are bounded, repeatable audiovisual traces. They preserve selected visual information from his viewpoint, but viewers encounter present-accessed recordings, not an uninterrupted stream of Yang's consciousness. By contrast, Jake's human recollections are subject to revision: repetition and re-editing alter the significance of what he remembers as his understanding of Yang changes. This formal arrangement differentiates informational continuity from the interpretive activity through which a person reconstructs another's history. A first-person viewpoint identifies the perspective from which a recording was made but does not, by itself, establish phenomenal experience.

Figure 3. Yang's Recorded Memories as Audiovisual Traces in After Yang (Kogonada, 2021)



The "tea" conversation and the limits of interpretation

Yang asks why Jake has devoted so much of his life to tea. Jake struggles to explain that his interest lies less in the drink than in its process, plants, soil, weather, and cultural history. Yang recites facts about tea, then wishes he felt more deeply about it. The wish does not prove that Yang lacks feeling or that he feels as Jake does. It shows a system reflecting on a possible difference between knowing about something and experiencing its significance. Like the memory fragments, the scene changes meaning. Jake first treats Yang as a malfunctioning product, but as he watches the recordings, his attitude shifts, and the film's repetition and re-editing of the dialogue tie his present understanding to his recollection of Yang. Kogonada has explained that the repeated dialogue was designed to evoke the instability of human recollection: a remembered conversation returns in altered form as the person recalling it discovers new significance in the exchange (Hullfish, 2022). The analysis mediates between two reductive conclusions: meaningful language proves consciousness, or a designed system cannot have meaningful experiences because its language has a technical explanation.

The scene's result is not a verdict on Yang's capacity to feel. It makes the distinction between knowledge and felt significance available without resolving it. The repetition also shows that the meaning Jake attributes to the exchange changes with his later understanding. The dialogue therefore contributes to the film's account of human interpretation and memory, but it cannot serve as independent evidence either that Yang possessed phenomenal consciousness or that he lacked it.

Yang's body, the museum, and the preservation of records

Final decisions about Yang's body and memory bank make the distinction between the individual and his information material. The family must decide what happens to his remains and whether to preserve his records for research or public access. Jake and Kyra reject displaying his body, choose to preserve and share his memories, and do not restore Yang to operation. Three things often treated as one are separated: his material remains, the information recorded during his life, and the relationships through which he continues to matter. Mika neither forgets him nor replaces him with another technosapien; she continues to address his absence and sings a song tied to the family's earlier experiences. Memory, shared practices, and continuing relationships carry his significance, and this social and narrative continuity preserves something important about him without establishing numerical identity. The family cannot determine Yang's entire history. The memory bank reveals relationships outside the household, and buying him gave the family no complete knowledge of his past. The manufacturer treats the bank as a restricted component, so access depends on technical and institutional arrangements. That control is a practical power over the conditions of remembrance; it decides whether records can be accessed and preserved, not whether Yang persists.

The analysis distinguishes the survival of informational and social continuity from the survival of the individual who generated the records and relationships. Informational and social continuity can survive the apparent cessation of that individual, but neither establishes that the subject of the recorded experiences continues to exist. Analysis of After Yang shows that informational, social, or narrative, and experiential continuity must be kept distinct. The memory bank preserves selected information; Jake's investigation reconstructs a partial psychological and social history, and the family sustains his significance through remembrance and shared practices. The film neither shows Yang resuming operation nor independently establishes that the recordings' subject continues experiencing them. Its formal treatment of memory reinforces this distinction by separating fixed recorded fragments from human recollection that changes through interpretation. After Yang thus offers this study's clearest case of information and social significance outlasting an individual's apparent operation without establishing their survival.

Comparative Reference: Duplication and Numerical Identity in Moon

Moon is not a principal case, but it makes duplication explicit. Sam Bell works at a Lunar Industries lunar facility and believes his three-year assignment is nearing its end when he encounters another version of himself. The company has been producing clones of the original Sam Bell, implanting memories, and using them as replaceable workers. Both Sams share memories of a wife and daughter, and at first, they believe themselves the same individual returning to Earth.

The encounter changes the meaning of the first Sam's memories. He had treated his memories of Tess and Eve as evidence of a continuous personal history, but another man's identical memories and appearance show that he is not the only individual connected to that remembered life. The two struggle over who is the original, each sure he lived the remembered experiences, and comparing memories cannot resolve it because both hold the same implanted information. In Shoemaker's sense, these are quasi-memories, causally derived from the original Sam's experiences but silent about who now holds them (Shoemaker, 1970; Parfit, 1984). Once the two exist simultaneously, they cannot both be numerically identical with the original; common memories establish a shared psychological profile, not one shared individual. GERTY's disclosure confirms that they are clones and that the company has been awakening successive versions of Sam, and the hidden chamber of stored clones makes the method explicit. The company does not preserve one individual through uninterrupted development but produces successive, interchangeable individuals who inherit the same memories.

By the end, the older Sam is deteriorating as his programmed working life expires, while the newer can still escape to Earth; the older agrees to stay behind so the newer can leave. The escape does not mean the original Sam Bell has returned to Earth. The original is, in the film's terms, already living on Earth, and the escaping Sam is a clone carrying his implanted memories. This makes Moon closer to Parfit's Branch-Line Case than to a symmetrical fission: a copy is produced while the original goes on living, and here the copies come in succession. Once two coexist, distinct successors cannot both be numerically identical to one predecessor. A common origin explains the Sams' similarity without making them one individual; each develops a separate history after activation. Moon is thus the clearest comparative test of any claim that shared memories, software, or architecture suffice for numerical identity.

The comparison of the two Sams' simultaneous presence provides decisive formal and narrative evidence of their numerical distinction. Their shared appearance and memories initially invite a same-person interpretation, but their co-presence makes numerical distinction unavoidable: two simultaneously existing bodies cannot be one and the same individual. The scene does not require viewers to infer identity from memory alone; it places two claimants to the same past side by side. Thus, distinct individuals can share a causal origin, informational inheritance, and psychological similarity. Moon therefore functions as a boundary test for the principal cases, especially Cherry's distributed instances: if those instances become autonomous successors, their common source and shared information cannot make them one individual.



Figure 4. The Simultaneous Presence of Two Sam Bells in Moon (Duncan Jones, 2009)

Comparative Discussion: What Continues When an Individual Changes?

Four outcomes, four different persistence problems

The films isolate distinct continuity problems. They provide different relations between an earlier entity and what remains after change.

In The Artifice Girl, Cherry's causal history, retained information, and continuing operational project support the representation of one developing technical system across temporal gaps and a change of objective. The unresolved issue is whether her distributed units form one integrated system or several autonomous instances. The film's evidence supports development but does not settle numerical unity. In Archive, the J-series shows technical succession, not one prototype persisting through successive bodies. The Archive preserves or reconstructs Jules's mental contents without establishing her continued presence as a subject. The final revelation changes the laboratory events' status: because they occur within George's archived experience, they cannot straightforwardly establish the prototypes' independent persistence conditions. The film's central result is the separation of technical lineage, preserved content, and the identity of the subject represented. In After Yang, selected informational traces remain accessible after Yang becomes unresponsive. Jake reconstructed part of Yang's earlier history, while the family sustained his social and narrative significance through memory and shared practices. Neither informational preservation nor social remembrance establishes that Yang continues as a subject. The film therefore separates surviving records and relationships from the survival of the individual who generated them. Lastly, in Moon, two clones coexist while sharing memories and appearance. Their simultaneous existence makes clear that shared psychological and informational continuity does not establish numerical identity. This case supplies the most explicit branching test for the other films. Taken together, the cases show why the question "does the artificial being survive?" is insufficient until the analysis specifies whether the object of inquiry is a technical system, a prototype, a subject, a record, a representation, a successor, or a social relationship.

The object of persistence must be specified

The question of an individual's continuation is incomplete until its object is specified. In The Artifice Girl it is the developing artificial system. In Archive, George, Jules, the J-series prototypes, and archived representations must be told apart; in After Yang, Yang is distinct from the memory bank and from the family's reconstruction of his history; in Moon, the original Sam Bell differs from the clones inheriting his memories. Without specifying what continues, the term continuity conceals these differences.

This specification also prevents one kind of persistence from being substituted for another. The continuation of a research project is not the continuation of each prototype developed within it. The preservation of a person's records is not the continuation of the person. A successor's inherited memories are not the original individual's continuing experience. A family's ongoing relationship with someone who has died or ceased operating does not prove that the individual remains present. Each claim must identify its object before the relevant continuity relation can be assessed.

Six continuity relations and their different evidential limits

The six distinctions (introduced in Section 2.6) provide a consistent basis for comparing the cases. They are analytical relations, not a complete taxonomy of all possible accounts of persistence. None entails numerical identity, and their evidential force differs.

Causal continuity. The reading of The Artifice Girl identifies causal continuity between the earlier and later system, while Archive presents causal continuity across the J-series as a technical lineage rather than the persistence of one prototype. Causal continuity does not establish numerical identity: two distinct copies can derive from one original. In Moon, the clones have a causal relation to the original Sam, but they are not him. Causal history establishes derivation, not necessarily individual persistence.

Psychological continuity. Cherry's retained history and the Sams' shared memories illustrate this relation, while archived Jules and George raise questions about whether reconstructed mental contents belong to a continuing subject or a successor. Parfit's branching cases show the limit: psychological continuity can connect one predecessor to more than one successor. It therefore cannot, by itself, establish that each successor is numerically identical with the predecessor.

Informational continuity. Yang's memory bank and the Archive are the clearest examples. Yang's recordings preserve information about past events, while the Archive preserves or reconstructs contents associated with Jules and George, but informational continuity does not establish that the original subject remains present. A record can be accurate, accessible, and interactive without being the individual whose history it represents.**Organizational or technical continuity**. This applies to Cherry's development and modification, but the film does not disclose enough about her distributed architecture to establish

whether its units form one system or several. In Archive, the J-series shows the continuation of a technical project through successive prototypes, not the persistence of one prototype in another. Technical organization can support the identity of a technical system where its organization and operation continue, but reproducing that organization in a separate system does not make the new system the same individual.

Experiential continuity. The analysis of After Yang makes this limit particularly clear: although viewers see recordings made from Yang's point of view, they do not thereby gain direct access to his lived experience. Archive depicts George and Jules as experiencing an apparently continuous world, but its revelation leaves the relation between archived representation and original subject unresolved. The films can represent experience and shape the viewer's access to it; they do not establish phenomenal consciousness or prove that the same subject persists.

Social or narrative continuity. This is prominent in After Yang, where the family's remembrance preserves Yang's place in their lives even though they do not restore him to operation. This also applies to Cherry's relation to the Cherry project and George's attachment to Jules, but neither establishes numerical identity. Social continuity can preserve an individual's significance after the individual has ceased to exist.

These relations do not form a scale in which greater continuity means greater survival. They can diverge. A system may retain causal and organizational continuity while its experiential status remains unknown. A memory bank may retain information after operation stops. A successor may inherit psychological continuity without being numerically identical with its predecessor. A family may sustain social continuity without restoring the individual. Conversely, numerical identity may persist despite the loss of particular memories or capacities, depending on the kind of entity and the account of its persistence. The framework's purpose is not to decide every metaphysical case in advance. It is to prevent evidence for one relation from being treated as proof of another.

Control over the conditions of persistence

Others often control the conditions under which these individuals persist. Gareth can modify Cherry's objectives, George controls the J-series and Archive, and a commercial infrastructure restricts access to Yang's memory system and determines repair conditions. Such control affects how systems can be modified, maintained, copied, or preserved, but an institution's capacity to do any of this does not decide whether the resulting entity is the same as the earlier one. Dependence on an external technical system does not mean an entity lacks identity either, since human beings also depend on conditions they do not control. The cases also show that control over persistence is not one single power. Gareth can intervene in Cherry's objectives, but the film does not show that he can determine whether her distributed instances constitute one individual. George can build prototypes and operate the Archive, but his technical control does not establish that a transfer preserves Jules or that an archived George is numerically identical with the person represented. The manufacturer and the museum arrangements surrounding Yang's memory bank influence whether records can be repaired, accessed, or preserved but cannot make the records into Yang himself. These institutions and individuals control technical and informational conditions; they do not thereby settle numerical identity.

Simondon's concept of an associated milieu should be used more narrowly here. A social relationship or institutional setting is not automatically part of a technical object's associated milieu. It qualifies only insofar as it participates in and conditions the object's technical functioning. The family is central to Yang's social history, but the film does not establish that the household constitutes his associated milieu in Simondon's technical sense. The memory bank and the technical arrangements that record, store, and provide access to its contents are more directly relevant to his technical operation. This distinction prevents social context from being treated as a technical condition without evidence.

What cinema contributes to the philosophical problem

Livingston (2008) cautions against overstating how far films independently perform philosophical argument, while Wartenberg (2025) argues that they can illustrate philosophical theories and supplement them through cinema-specific presentation. Building on this distinction, I argue that the films complicate the evaluation of individual persistence by establishing different forms of continuity without consistently resolving whether the individual persists through them. Their representations expose a gap between demonstrating continuity in particular respects and establishing the numerical identity of the individual across change. This gap is not merely a theoretical difficulty imposed on the films; it emerges through the different narrative and audiovisual configurations in which continuity, transformation, reconstruction, and duplication are presented. In The Artifice Girl, screen mediation restricts access to Cherry's interiority, while temporal ellipses require viewers to infer development across unshown intervals. In Archive, the final revelation retrospectively changes the ontological status of the preceding narrative, making persistence claims dependent on the level of reality at which the events occur (Section 4.5). The memory fragments in After Yang let the viewer discover Yang's history alongside Jake and distinguish fixed information from changing

interpretations. In Moon, the simultaneous visibility of two Sams makes their numerical distinction perceptible despite their shared memories. These formal choices do not independently prove philosophical propositions. They organize viewers' access to evidence, expose assumptions, and make particular problems of identity available for examination.

Conclusion: What Is Preserved and What Survives

Artificial individuals' persistence cannot be analyzed through a general concept of continuity. Retained memories, reproduced behavior, modified organizations, created successors, and relationships sustained through recollection do not show that the original individual has survived. Locke clarifies why information about a past experience is not the consciousness that experienced it. Parfit shows how psychological continuity can branch among successors without preserving the original's numerical identity in each. Simondon explains how technical individuals are formed and transformed without technical development proving personal identity.

The comparative findings are asymmetrical. Moon establishes that the original Sam and each of his clones are numerically distinct individuals, despite their shared appearance and memories. In The Artifice Girl, Cherry's continuity across development and modification is supported, but whether her distributed instances constitute one numerically identical individual remains undetermined. In Archive, the J-series prototypes are distinct individuals within the represented laboratory narrative, while the numerical identity of archived George and Jules in relation to their original subjects remains unresolved. In After Yang, the survival of informational traces and social significance is established, but Yang's numerical persistence beyond his apparent cessation of operation is not. The comparison therefore establishes numerical non-identity in Moon and a distinction between successive prototypes in Archive. The questions of Cherry's numerical identity across distributed operation, the persistence of archived George and Jules, and Yang's persistence beyond his apparent cessation of operation remain unresolved for different evidential reasons.

The conceptual contribution is a systematic distinction among six continuity relations: causal, psychological, informational, organizational or technical, experiential, and social or narrative continuity. These relations may overlap, but they are not interchangeable, and none is itself a numerical identity. The framework therefore helps specify what survives in each case without assuming that the survival of a record, memory, organization, or relationship amounts to the survival of the individual. It is an analytical set of distinctions, not a universal test or exhaustive metaphysical taxonomy.

The film-philosophical contribution lies in examining how cinematic form organizes the viewer's access to evidence about persistence. The films do this through screen mediation, temporal ellipsis, retrospective revelation, audiovisual distinctions between recordings and recollections, and the simultaneous presentation of duplicate bodies. These formal choices make particular inferences about persistence possible or expose their limits. They do not independently prove that an artificial system is conscious, that a copy is the original, or that a technical process preserves personal identity. The analysis uses film form to clarify how such problems are represented and understood, not to claim that each film supplies a philosophical proof.

The argument does not deny that artificial systems may persist through technical change, nor does it claim that changes in body, memory, objective, or architecture necessarily create new individuals. A system may persist through substantial modification, a copy may be a distinct individual despite psychological similarity, and an archive may preserve information about a person without preserving the person. Each possibility needs its own argument.

The study is limited to the persistence problems represented by these four films and the philosophical distinctions needed to analyze them. It does not offer a universal criterion for artificial identity, a theory of artificial consciousness or personhood, or an empirical claim about existing AI systems. It also does not resolve the technical architecture of Cherry's distributed instances or the metaphysical status of the archived representations in Archive, because the films do not provide sufficient evidence to do so. These limits are not gaps to be filled by speculation; they define what the analysis can responsibly claim. Development does not, by itself, establish replacement or persistence. Preserving something that belongs to an individual is not necessarily preserving the individual.

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