

**THE PROBLEM OF PERSONAL IDENTITY:
SOME ONTOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for
the award of the degree of**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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2007**

DEDICATED TO:

(Late) Mrs. PHALKHOHAT KIPGEN

(My Grandmother, my Best friend, my Guide and my Philosopher)

“Miss You Grandma, I’ll always do”



**CENTRE FOR PHILOSOPHY
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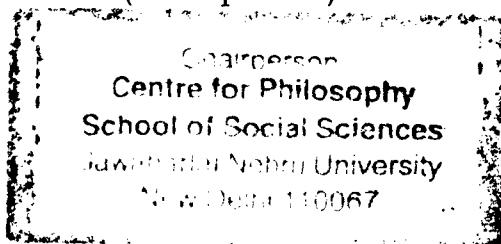
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the Dissertation entitled "**The Problem of Personal Identity: Some Ontological and Ethical Issues**" by **Ngaineilam Haokip**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Degree of Master of Philosophy**, is her original work. It has not been submitted in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of this or any other University, to the best of our knowledge and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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DECLARATION

I, **Ngaineilam Haokip**, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "**The Problem of Personal Identity: Some Ontological and Ethical Issues**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of **Jawaharlal Nehru University** is my original work and has not been submitted by me or by anyone else for any other degree or diploma of this or any other University.


(NGAINEILAM HAOKIP)

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INTRODUCTION

A Historical overview of the problem of personal identity

“What is it to be the same person today as one was in the past, or will be in the future?” constitutes the main question with regard to the problem of ‘Personal Identity’. Starting from the Greek Philosophers, like Socrates, to British Philosophers, like John Locke and David Hume, the problem of personal identity has traditionally been discussed by Philosophers as one of the most important metaphysical problem. This resulted in different views on what consists in an identity of a person over time. The significance of the problem can be traced back to the ‘Delphic Oracle’s’ pronouncement to “Know Thyself”. Since then, the urge to know what we really mean when we use the pronoun- ‘I’ becomes an important and central topic of philosophical discussion. The problem was first formulated amongst the Greek thinkers, and then spread to the whole Western Philosophical discussion. And till today it is still regarded as one of the most important issues in philosophy.

In a normal day-to-day conversation, when we say, ‘I am hungry’ or ‘I have a headache’, what we normally mean is that, our body is in

pain due to hunger or headache etc. Similarly when we say, 'I was in pain yesterday', it is a bodily continuity which is taken to be a criterion of one's identity. Again a person is normally taken as a subject of experience, an agent who can be judged and an individual with ethical and moral responsibilities. These aspects of a person's identity may not be understood merely in terms of bodily identity. There are cases where bodily criterion alone does not suffice to prove one's identity over time. Take, for example, the case of brain transplant. Also, the significance of personal identity is that, when we ask who the 'I' is, it becomes a matter of importance to be sure whether we are referring to the right person or not. As a result, philosophers have debated upon what exactly constitute personal identity. They have put forth arguments and counter-arguments to support their views. Influenced by John Locke's and David Hume's discussions on the problem at hand, the debate has taken a new perspective which can be seen in the views propounded by Sydney Shoemaker, Richard Swinburne, Bernard Williams, P.F. Strawson and Derek Parfit.

Statement of the Problem

The problems of personal identity are much debated on three broad criteria. They are:

1. **The Physical Criterion or Materialistic View**, propounded by philosophers like Sydney Shoemaker, holds that the identity of a person over time consists in the obtaining of some relation of physical continuity (bodily or brain continuity). On this view to be the same person is to be the same living biological object (whether body or brain). For example, the matter which forms my body is organized in a certain way, into parts – legs, arms, heart, liver, etc., which are interconnected in regular ways. What makes my body today is the same body of my body yesterday, is that, most of the matter is the same (although I may have lost some and gained some others) and its organization has remained roughly the same.

2. **The Psychological Criterion or Dualistic view**, propounded by philosophers like Richard Swinburne, on the other hand, argues that the identity of a person over time consists in the obtaining of relation of psychological continuity (like memory). For example, a person A existing at a time t_2 is the same as a person B existing at an earlier time t_1 if and only if A remembers, or can remember, at t_2 actions or experiences of B occurring at t_1 . There are two versions of this view – a) The Narrow version says that the cause of psychological continuity must be normal if it is to preserve personal identity. b) The Wide version says any cause will suffice whether normal or abnormal.

3. **The Mixed criterion**, propounded by philosophers like Bernard Williams, says that no version of either the physical or psychological variety on its own is correct. The best account of a person's identity over time will have to make reference to both physical and psychological continuities. That is, in order to be able to claim one's personal identity, we need the body as well as the personal characters, and memory.

From the above brief description, we can see that the main problem in theory of personal identity is to show exactly what constitutes the identity of a person over time. For example, if I say "my friend Amy hasn't change at all in 5 years", do I mean to say that - her looks (body) hasn't changed even though she has forgotten me! Or, do I mean to say that - even though she hardly looks the same, she still remembers small details about our school days? Does a person's identity over time depends on bodily continuity or psychological continuity, or is it both? - This is the main question that a theory of personal identity has to address. And as Philosophers, from the ancient to the modern, cutting across different traditions of philosophizing, are interested in finding solution to such question, we can see that there are as many answers to it as th

For example, personal identity consist of our imm

egos (Plato and Rene' Descartes), or personal id

psychological continuity (John Locke), or personal identity is really bodily continuity (Sydney Shoemaker), or the radical view that no personal identity as such exists (Derek Parfit).

Another important question that needs to be cleared with regard to personal identity is that, what are the issues involved in determining the identity of a person? That is, there are different perspectives to be considered and subtle distinctions to be made with regard to what exactly we mean when we say ' x is identical to y '. We may, in the first place, distinguish between *numerical identity* and *qualitative identity*.¹ In case of numerical identity, if x is identical to y , then whatever is true of x must be true of y , and vice versa. For example, if x and y are identical, then if x is 6 feet tall then y must also be 6 feet tall. However, in qualitative identity, two things may be exactly similar without being one and the same thing. For example, footballs could have exactly the same properties, but they would still be different balls. And in our discussion, we will be more interested in considering the issue of numerical identity when we speak of personal identity.

¹ Chatterjee (2002), p-116

Another distinction is of between *synchronic identity* and *diachronic identity*.² Here, if x and y are synchronically identical, then they are numerically identical, that is, they are one and the same thing at a given time t . Thus, Manmohan Singh and the Prime Minister of India are synchronically identical in the year 2006. And, if x and y are diachronically identical, then the relation of numerical identity must hold between them over time. That is to say, they would be the same enduring thing observed temporally at different points of time. Thus, the girl Sophie who played pranks with her friend Janet and the young woman Sophie who accompanied Mrs. Edit for her shopping were one and the same person at different stages of life.

In deciding numerical identity over time, there can be difficulties in a world where things changes with time. How can we decide that a thing is still the same inspite of observable qualitative changes? The problem has been posed by the Greeks. There is the famous example of the ship of Theseus. Different parts of a ship – made of wood in those days – are gradually repaired and replaced over time until one day every part has been replaced; nevertheless, it still remains the same ship.³ The same kind of change takes place in human body. As every cell in it is replaced over time, it may be true to say that no human adult has the same physical body with which he or

² *Ibid*

³ *Ibid*

she was born. However, it would be highly improbable to say that I-as-a-child and I-as-an-adult are completely different persons. So, it will depend on how we choose to define the “person-ness” of persons in order to find a proper criterion for determining the diachronic identity of persons.

Further, it is true in general that saying what sort of a thing an F is, involves indicating what the identity conditions for Fs are – what counts as parts of the same F, and what counts as events, phases, or stages in the history of one and the same F. And so, a good reason for inquiring into the nature of personal identity, into the identity conditions of persons, is that this can be expected to throw light on what persons are. Another important reason for inquiring into this is that it provides a way of addressing the more fundamental metaphysical puzzles – about change, substance, etc. – that arise whenever the identity over time of ‘continuants’ is addressed.

Also, in every human being there exists a special concern or interest for one’s own future well being. The existence of this special concern contributes to the interest in personal identity in two ways. Firstly, this special concern is a desire to exist in the future; we may call it a desire for ‘survival of the soul’. That is, persons have an interest in knowing whether the nature of personal identity is to allow

them to survive bodily death. Therefore, discussions on personal identity have often been linked with discussions of the prospects of 'personal immortality'. In a sense, if one/one's body dies, can one survive in some different form or not. We can see it in the existing religious beliefs about life after death – such as the concept of heaven, hell, paradise, second-birth or the law of karma and the like, which invariably influence our thoughts about this issue. So, it becomes really important to have a philosophical notion about life after death. Or even to philosophically consider whether there can be life after death.

Secondly, given that we have this special concern, there is a natural interest in finding an account of personal identity which makes our having it intelligible and rational, say one's concern for one's own future happiness. That is, the second desire to survive is different from the first one as it is not religious in nature. It is more of an atheist's concern for his/her survival through time. For example, will I remain the same ten years from now? If so, what will be the deciding factor - will it be my body or my memory? Everyone has a peculiarly intimate, egoistic concern about one's own possible future happiness or misery, which is different from any altruistic interest that one may have for the well-being of others. So, if one knows that the future self for which one has this special concern will be punished for

one's present actions, this can refrain one from wrong actions. But if one does not refrain and the future self is punished, this can act as a deterrent factor from repeating those wrong actions in future for the concerned person. Thus, the importance of having a philosophical notion about what consists in one's survival through time can be seen here.

Now, having stated the importance of the problem of personal identity in general, we can move on to a discussion of the views of John Locke and David Hume on the problem of personal identity. As almost all contemporary debates on personal identity are based on or emanates from their views, it will be helpful to start with an understanding of the original theses on which most of our work will be based. Furthermore, the views of these two philosophers, being rather opposed to each other, provide us with two classic counter-positions on the problem under consideration. So, we shall start with the view of John Locke and proceed to the view of David Hume.

Locke on the problem of Personal Identity

John Locke's account of personal identity forms part of a wider discussion of identity of particulars, including finite intelligences, bodies and God. He holds that, an individual thing *A* existing at a particular time and place is identical with *B*, if *A* & *B* are the same

kind of thing, and there is a continuous spatio-temporal history between A & B. He further insists that finite spirits are included in the general account of identity. So, "Finite spirits having had each its determinate time and place of beginning to exist, the relation to that time and place will always determine to each of them its identity, as long as it exists".⁴ In order to understand Locke's view more clearly, we need to start from the beginning, i.e. from the definition of a 'person' given by him, which is still quoted frequently by contemporary philosophers.

According to John Locke, *"To find wherein personal identity consists, we must consider what person stands for; which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it...For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes every one to be what he call self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things; in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being; and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self*

⁴ Paul Helm, (1979), p.174-175

now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done.”⁵

His definition suggests that what marks off persons from other subjects of mental states are rationality and the possession of ‘Reflection’ or Self-Consciousness. This consists of reflective capacity and memory of a person, and here, he is not concerned only with the word ‘person’ itself, but it is used as the noun which corresponds to all the personal pronouns. So, to the question, ‘wherein consist my identity, and hers, and his, and yours?’ the answer is that - it is consciousness that constitute personal identity, that makes me, for example, the same me, the same person, through and despite the passage of time.

Locke further argues that, consciousness ‘is inseparable from thinking’, that when we perceive, meditate, or will, we know that we do so. It is by this consciousness that each of us considers himself as himself, as one persisting thinking thing. Our different sensations, perceptions, thoughts, and desires belonging to oneself at any one time, is known by reflective consciousness. And, the same principle must account for the sameness of the self at different times: “as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or

⁵Locke (1690), p-211-212

thought, so far reaches the identity of that *person*: it is the same self now it was then, and it is by the same *self* with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done”.⁶ It is clear now that Locke is denying that bodily continuity constitutes personal identity in distinguishing ‘the same person’ from ‘the same man’. He holds that, the same living human body with its continuity of animal life constitutes the same man; but not necessarily the same person.

Locke holds that, it is also not the case that to be the same person is to be, or to have, one persisting immaterial, spiritual substance. He does not deny that there are spiritual substances, what he holds is that their identity does not matter. According to him – “if there are soul-substances, then presumably this can be re-incarnated: the present mayor of Queenborough may, for all that anyone knows, have what used to be the soul of Socrates; but if he has no consciousness from the inside of any of Socrates’ actions or thoughts, no direct awareness of those experiences as his experiences, then he is not the same person as Socrates.”⁷ He goes on to show how the person of the living body and the supposed soul-substance are irrelevant to personal identity thus; “could we suppose two distinct incommunicable consciousness acting the same body, the one constantly by day, the other by night...I ask...whether the *day* and the

⁶ See Mackie (1976), p-174.

⁷ *Ibid*

night-man would not be two as distinct persons as *Socrates* and *Plato*".⁸ Then we will have two persons with the same immaterial spirit, as we have two persons with the same body in the former case.

Locke argues that, personal identity might be "continued in a succession of several substances; or preserved in the change of immaterial substances...as animal identity is preserved in the change of material substances".⁹ He tries to show that, just as the same vegetable or animal life is continued despite the metabolic processes that constantly replace the material components of an organism, the same consciousness is possible to pass it from one soul-substance to another. There is also a possibility that it is being passed from one body to another.

However, there is a distinction made between 'person' which refers to the bearer of a rational and reflective consciousness, and 'man,' which is a biological entity. The criterion for determining the identity of a person is not necessarily the same as that for determining the identity of a man. Locke illustrates this with one of his most-quoted examples, he says, "Should the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the prince's past life, enter and inform the body of a cobbler, as soon as deserted by his own soul, every one sees he

⁸ *Ibid*, pp-175.

⁹ *Ibid*.

would be the same person with the prince, accountable only for the prince's actions; but who would say it was the same man?...I know that, in the ordinary way of speaking, the same person, and the same man, stands for one and the same thing...But yet when we will inquire what makes the same spirit, man, or person, we must fix the ideas of spirit, man, or person in our minds; and having resolved with ourselves what we mean by them, it will not be hard to determine in either of them, or the like, when it is the same, and when not."¹⁰ Also, Locke wants to prove from the examples that he had given, i.e. the case of Socrates and mayor of Queenborough or in the case of the prince and the cobbler, that we are the same person only when we have the same consciousness. The sameness of the body is neither necessary nor sufficient to constitute the same person, nor is the sameness of a spiritual substance.

For Locke, personal identity means the sameness of a rational being, and consciousness makes this sameness possible. He says, "Nothing but consciousness can unite remote existences into the same person; the identity of substance will not do it, for whatever substance there is, however framed, without consciousness there is no person".¹¹ For Hume, identity is essentially connected with persistence through time. But for Locke, the question – what are we saying when we claim

¹⁰ Locke (1690), p-216

¹¹ *Ibid*

that something which exists at a later time t_2 is identical with something which existed at an earlier time t_1 , and the question, *how are we ever justified in saying this?*, are not difficult to answer once we realized that identity is relative. It means that the same animals or plants as well as men could be identified at t_2 as those of t_1 , because of the existence of some parts which contributes to and partakes to common life. So, even if large quantities of matter are added and taken away from them, they will remain the same. J.L. Mackie says, "Locke's general theory of identity through time is that x -occurrences at t_1 and at t_2 are occurrences of the same x if and only if there is a continuous x -history linking them...and the sameness of a substance through time is constituted by the spatio-temporal continuity of a thing of the kind in question".¹² Therefore, Locke's criterion of personal identity is the possession of an uninterrupted flow of self-conscious awareness, that is, memory.

We can say that the role of consciousness in personal identity is logical as well as metaphysical. Personal identity at a time consists in consciousness at that time, and personal identity over a period of time consists in the spatio-temporal continuity of an individual consciousness. The role of Memory, on the other hand, is epistemic, that is, it is epistemically or evidentially necessary to know that one is

¹² Mackie (1976), p-142

the same person as some individual in the past. For Locke, memory is the main evidence for personal identity, and that it is limited and fallible has repercussions for our 'knowledge' of personal identity, but not for 'personal identity' as such. Also, memory is a test or a criterion of personal identity, whereas personal identity consists in consciousness, that is to say that consciousness is a criterion of personal identity in a much stronger sense. So, when Locke introduces memory it is used to retrace the spatio-temporal history of that individual consciousness.¹³

Locke's view on personal identity becomes the foundation for many of the contemporary philosophers, like, Richard Swinburne, which we will be dealing with later. The main objection against Locke's view put forth by many philosophers is that, "since a man at $t1$ commonly remembers only some of his experiences and actions at $t1$, whereas what constituted a person at $t1$ was all the experiences and actions that were then co-conscious, Locke's view fails to equate a person identified at $t2$ with any *person* identifiable at $t1$. It is only a theory of how some items which belonged to a person identifiable at $t1$ are appropriated by a person who can be identified as such only at $t2$. It is therefore hardly a theory of personal identity at all, but might be

¹³ Paul Helm, (1979), p.175

better described as a theory of action appropriation".¹⁴ However, even though there are many objections to Locke's view, the fact remains that, it has influenced many thinkers even today and has changed the way personal identity was debated and discussed upon in the philosophical circle. Most of the contemporary debate invariably refers to Locke's view when they talk about personal identity, and that shows how influential it is. There cannot be any doubt that Locke's understanding of the notion of personal identity in terms of memory continuity has its own merit, which has been recognized by philosophers succeeding him.

And now, we can move on to the next thinker whose view we shall discuss in order to understand our work better, David Hume's view on the problem of personal identity is as follows:

Hume on the problem of Personal Identity

As opposed to philosophers like Thomas Reid's and Bishop Butler's¹⁵ claim that there is a difference between ascriptions of identity to persons and non-persons like plants and animals, David Hume does not make any distinctions between them. Hume says, "its

¹⁴ Mackie (1976), p-183

¹⁵ See Mendus (1980), p-61. Here, Susan Mendus give us in a very precise way how both Bishop Butler and Thomas Reid consider the ascriptions of identity to non-persons is considered as "something which for convenience of speech we call identity", whereas, the identity ascribed to persons is strict and philosophical as well as "perfect identity".

evident, the same method of reasoning must be continu'd, which has so successfully explained the identity of plants, and animals, and ships and houses of all the compounded and changeable productions either of art or nature.”¹⁶ Personal identity, for him, is just a specific case of identity in general, and not at all different from any other identity which we ascribed to any non-persons. Also, there is no such thing as paradigm case of identity in person, and questions about identity are to be decided by stipulation and not by reference to the facts of the case. Thus, “Tho’ the change of any considerable part of a mass of matter destroys the identity of the whole, yet we must measure the greatness of the part, not absolutely, but by its *proportion* to the whole”.¹⁷

Hume further argues that, as we ascribe identity to both persons and non-persons through total change alone, the arbitrariness which infects the one will inevitably infect the other. Here, Hume is implicitly rejecting Locke’s search for the ‘perfect definition’ to differentiate between identities ascribed to persons and non-persons. Also, another reason why Hume rejects personal identity is, he holds that every ‘idea’ must arise from some ‘impression’ and that impression needs to be constant and invariable. Put it differently, in order to be able to recall or have an idea, we first need an impression of the object. Now, as our

¹⁶ Quoted in Mendus (1980), p-63.

¹⁷ *Ibid*

idea of 'self' consist of several impressions and as ideas are supposed to arise from these impressions, the corresponding impression must continue through the whole course of our lives.

But, Hume argues that, we can find no constant and invariable impressions of the self which exist at the same time, therefore, he concludes that there is no such idea as 'self'. Thereby, no permanent self exist to which one can refer to as 'himself' or 'herself', because everything is in a perpetual flux,¹⁸ and the mind is considered as a kind of theatre, "where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations".¹⁹ As we know, Hume's famous skeptical position with regard to the self is that when he looks inside/introspects he stumbles upon particular perceptions succeeding one another, and no persisting, substantial self could present itself over and above these fleeting perceptions. This has been referred to as the 'Elusiveness Thesis' by contemporary philosophers, which says, "When one is introspectively aware of one's thoughts, experiences, and sensations, one is never aware of a persisting self which has them."²⁰

¹⁸ We can compare his view with the Buddhist's view in Indian Philosophy, known as the 'theory of momentariness', which says that there is no permanent underlying substance, but everything is in a perpetual flux, so no self exist.

¹⁹ Hume (1976), p-239

²⁰ See Cassam (1994), p-3

For Hume, there can be no identity maintained between two successive stages of a physical process. Since persons have a special sort of knowledge of their own identities, our criteria for identity for persons must correspond to what an individual himself says about who he is. Hume emphasizes the similarity between plants, animal bodies and persons, also the ascription of identity to person is comparable to the ascription of identity to any material body. The idea of identity – which is invariable and the notion of diversity – which is variable, are commonly confounded together in our thoughts due to confusion of our mind. It is because the invariable and the variable are clubbed together in our imagination and have caught us unaware that we confused them as personal identity, whereas in reality they are not. In other words, according to Hume, the idea of personal identity is just a figment of our imagination, or the result of our confusion between idea of identity and idea of diversity.

Hume goes on to say that, identity seems to depend on three relations, namely, *resemblance, contiguity, and causation*.²¹ He says, “as the essence of these relations consists in their producing an easy transition of ideas, our notion of personal identity also proceed entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas. Thus, identity depends on the relations of

²¹ Hume (1976), p-246

ideas; and these relations produce identity, by means of that easy transition they occasion...but as the relations of easiness of the transition may diminish by insensible degrees, we have no just standard by which we can decide any dispute concerning the time when they acquire or lose a title to the name of identity. So, the entire disputes concerning the identity of connected objects are merely verbal".²² For Hume, resemblance, continuity and causality are just an illusion, and reject the subject as an abiding self or the seat of continuity and regularity. He also questions the idea of 'soul as a substance' over and above our particular experiences. So, he poses a skeptical challenge to the notion of personal identity.

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Regarding *resemblance*, *causation*, and *memory*, Hume tries to examine their role in maintaining personal identity and he wants to see whether they will be able to support his evaluation. He holds that they are the 'uniting principles in the ideal world', without which the mind will deal separately with each and every object. It will become impossible to think about continuity as there will be no link between perceptions. He starts with *resemblance*. He says that, if we can observe people's thoughts and can actually see them thinking, we will be able to see that their thoughts are linked by memories which resemble the perception that they have had before. For example, I will

²² *Ibid*, p- 246-48



be able to remember what an orange looks like when I saw one, and remember that I had seen an object which resembles it and was told that it is called an orange. So, "the memory not only discovers the identity, but also contributes to its production, by producing the relation of resemblance among the perceptions."²³

Regarding *causation* Hume holds that, in the human mind the different perceptions or existences are linked together by the relation of cause and effect in such a way that they mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other. This results in our impressions producing their corresponding ideas; and these ideas in their turn producing other impressions and this chain goes on infinitely. Further, he compares the human soul with a 'republic', in which members are connected by the laws of the government and where changes of the laws and constitutions do not necessarily mean change of members. In the same way, a person may change his/her character, dispositions, impressions and ideas without necessarily losing his/her identity. Even though the person may go through many changes, the relation of causation connects the parts together.

Hume goes on to examine the role of *memory* as the source of personal identity, and holds that without memory it would be

²³ *Ibid*, p-246-247

impossible to have any notion of causation or chain of cause and effect, which constitute our self or person. And as we acquired the notion of causation from memory, we can claim that we can also go beyond our memory and comprehend times, circumstances and actions which we have forgotten, but that had existed. But in contrast to Locke's claim, he ask - how many of our past actions do we remember? That is, can anybody tell what were his/her thoughts and actions on, say, 1st June 2005, 3rd September 2001 and 22nd May 1997? Can we say that as the person is not in a position to answer the above question, he/she should admit that he/she is not the same person of that time anymore? So, memory does not produce identity rather it helps in discovering it, and if someone does not accept this, then he/she should be able to give reasons why we can extend our identity beyond our memory. Here, we can see that Hume is questioning Locke's view on reliability of memory as a necessary condition for ascribing personal identity. For Hume, memory cannot be regarded as a criterion of personal identity, as there is nothing which can be called 'identity' of a person in the first place. So, according to Hume, any question regarding personal identity is to be regarded more as "grammatical than as philosophical difficulties...All the disputes concerning the identity of connected objects are merely verbal, except

so far as the relation of parts gives rise to some fiction or imaginary principle of union".²⁴

Thus, Hume ultimately ends up a skeptic in regards the problem of personal identity. There are counter-arguments put forth by many philosophers against his views, one of the main argument against Hume is that - it should be possible for a substance or thing to persist through time. In other words, "there is no reason why an unchanging thing should not quite genuinely be in, or persist through, time."²⁵ The absence of something cannot prove that the thing in question does not exist. The possibility that in future some kind of thought development or scientific discovery will emerge, which will enable us to prove that there exists an unchanging persistent thing, always remains.

However, skeptics, somehow or the other influenced by Hume, have raised their voice in contemporary debates on personal identity. Hence, Hume's views on this issue still manage to draw large amount of attention from philosophers. His denial of the plausibility of ascribing the perfect or serious identity to person as opposed to non-identity to non-persons was an important development in the area of personal identity. Accepting his view will, no doubt, run the risk of

²⁴ *Ibid*, p-248

²⁵ Mackie (1976), p-147

being regarded a skeptic. In order to put forward any positive notion of personal identity we cannot but answer a Humean skeptic.

General Introduction to the Chapters

In the following chapters we would like to show that the questions of personal identity over time cannot be analyzed exclusively in terms of either an exclusive physical relations of the same body or the same brain, or an exclusive psychological relations (like memory, belief, character etc.); this will constitute our discussion in the *1st chapter*. The plausible view appears to be a mixed view, according to which personal identity has to be understood in terms of both physical as well as psychological relations. In support of the mixed view, we will review once again the bodily continuity theory as well as the psychological continuity theory; which will be dealt with in the *2nd chapter*. And, in this connection, we will look at certain ethical question centering on the idea of moral responsibility in view of the preferred ontological position; which will be discussed in the *3rd and final chapter*. Here, we may end our introductory discussion by briefly summarizing the content of the three chapters.

According to the *Physical Criterion* or the *Bodily Continuity theory of Identity* propounded by *Sydney Shoemaker*,²⁶ physical

²⁶ See Shoemaker and Swinburne (1984)

continuity over time of the same body and brain (brain here is taken as a physical entity) constitute personal identity. Here, 'same' body and brain does not mean exact similarity at two points of time as that will be to ignore normal and natural processes of change. What is important is not the continued existence of the whole body, but the survival of enough of the brain to be the brain of a living person. This is what physical survival necessarily involves. So, it means that, x at $t1$ is the same person as y at $t2$ if and only if enough of x 's brain survives at $t2$, and has the capacity to support a full human consciousness, and is now y 's brain: and if no other person z exists at $t2$ who also has enough of x 's brain to support a full human consciousness.²⁷ So, for the philosophers who accept the physical criterion of personal identity, the essential attribute of personhood lies in the brain.

The bodily continuity argument does not deny that persons have mental life, but insists that what makes a person the same as the earlier person is sameness of body. Here, the difficulty lies in the fact that only one part of the body, i.e., the brain, seems to be of crucial importance for determining the characteristic behavior for the rest of the body. In response to counter argument to the bodily criterion, we can say that, what matters most is that our stream of mental life continues to be supported by the same biological organ. Furthermore,

²⁷ Chatterjee (2002), p-119

the fact that some physical objects support our mental life does not entail the identity of the mental with that of the physical.

The *Psychological Continuity* theory propounded by *Richard Swinburne*,²⁸ as opposed to the above account, argues that, memory, beliefs, characters etc., of a person constitute his/her identity over time, (which will also be a part of the first chapter). As a person does not change his/her beliefs or character overnight, nor does a person's memory desert him/her without any external cause, it is taken that personal identity can be based on a person's memory, beliefs, characters etc. Against this view, it is asked, in case of, say – amnesia, where a person's memory is lost, can we still say he/she is the same as the earlier one? In answer to this argument, we can say that, even in extreme cases like amnesia, a person's character will not change to the extent that there remains no trace of his/her old self. The reason for this is that unconsciously the habits will still be there and the person's psychological traits will remain. At the same time, our move to beliefs and characters etc. of a person is due to the fact that memory alone does not constitute a person's psychological continuity.

The *Mixed View* propounded by *Bernard Williams*²⁹ tries to put both the 'bodily criterion' as well as the 'psychological criterion' as a

²⁸ See Shoemaker and Swinburne (1984)

²⁹ See Williams (1973)

necessary and sufficient condition of personal identity. This view rejects the above mentioned extreme views and argues that personal identity cannot be based solely either on bodily continuity or psychological continuity. It holds that, bodily continuity, no doubt, is necessary for personal identity, because without a body it will be impossible to ascribe identity to a person. It means that, for an identity to be ascribed, a body needs to exist overtime; we cannot ascribe identity to the wind. At the same time, it is equally important to have psychological continuity if we are to ascribe an identity to a particular person. There needs to be some kind of memory continuity, or continuity of personal traits, skills and habits etc., otherwise it will not be possible to be sure about the ascription of identity.

In the same chapter, we will also be dealing with the *Double Aspect Thesis* propounded by *P.F. Strawson*,³⁰ in which we will be looking at another type of the mixed view. He argues that, persons consist of both physical and mental attributes, and so it is impossible to ascribed identity to a person only because of its physical attributes or because of its mental attributes. It is important to take into account both the attributes as it consists of both. The difference between Strawson and Williams lies in the facts that for Strawson Persons are

³⁰ See Strawson (1959)

one of the basic particulars of our descriptive metaphysical framework.

Another important view put forth by *Derek Parfit*, one of the most well known advocates of *Value Theory*,³¹ will be examined in the 3rd chapter. Parfit argues that personal identity is not an important relation in itself. What are important are the various psychological relations which are associated with personal identity. This view can be taken in two ways –

- 1) Personal identity over time is unimportant, &
- 2) Personal identity at a time is unimportant.

However, the first alternative undermines the self-interest theory of rationality and has implications for the tenability of trans-temporal moral notions such as compensation, responsibility and personal commitment. As a result it may also change our attitude to punishment, compensation and commitments. The second alternative, on the other hand, refutes the accepted doctrine of Utilitarianism that no weight should be assigned to distributive principles. We should simply aim to maximize the net sum of benefits over burdens, whatever maybe their distribution. As the central point of the thesis that 'identity is not what matters' is open to dispute, the failure of the

³¹ See Parfit (1984)

above arguments may be said to show how difficult it is to undermine the importance we attach to the fact that such-and-such a person tomorrow is me, and to the fact that you are not me. So, it is reasonable to continue to believe that personal identity is important and to endorse its importance in ethics and rationality.

Philosophers have also drawn the connection between ethical notions and the problem of identity in two ways:-

1) Metaphysical theories about personal identity - theories about what makes one the same person over time - have important consequences for what ought to matter to a rational agent, and

2) Understanding the concrete identities of persons - the social context and personal commitments that give life substance and meaning - is essential if moral philosophy is to address real human concerns.

We can ask – how are Metaphysical questions about personal identity supposed to bear on questions of morality? The thought is that what unifies a series of experiences into a single life illuminates what we are, and what we are, in turn, helps determine how we ought to live. More broadly, it is natural to seek coherence in our metaphysical and moral views about person. This pursuit of a comprehensive account has its danger: perhaps we will tailor a

metaphysical view to fit our moral philosophy and/or tailor our moral judgment to fit a false metaphysic. But the avocation has its attractions too. Perhaps we will come to understand what we are and how we ought to live, in a single package.

Thus, the aim of this work is to review some of the basic and contemporary literatures on this perennial philosophical problem concerning the relationship between personal identity and ethics. The topic of personal identity on its own, no doubt, has an important significance. It applies to each one of us in our endeavor to understand ourselves as persons, and in our understanding of the relationship that we, as persons, have with others. In the following chapters we shall try to unravel these complex issues to the best of our abilities. The connection between theories of personal identity and 'value theory' has been addressed in some new forms with the development of various theories of personal identity. Philosophers who advocate this connection argues that, on the correct theory of personal identity it is not identity that matters but the preservation of psychological relation such as memory and character (e.g., John Locke and Derek Parfit). These relations can hold between one earlier person and two later persons, they can also hold in varying degrees. For example, I can acquire a more or less different character over a period of time. This view of what determines personal identity has implications for certain

theories of punishment, as a reformed criminal may deserve less punishment for the crimes he has committed. Thus, one cannot but notice the importance of the connection between personal identity and moral responsibility.

CHAPTER 1

Personal Identity: Materialistic and Dualistic Perspectives

1.1 Introduction

An argument normally has two sides to it and for any two 'opponents' there will be a point of agreement as well as disagreement. Arguments in philosophy are very often garbed as a dialogue. And in philosophy, dialogue has been a powerful and effective means of philosophical exploration since the time of Socrates. As a result, for any philosophical debate to achieve its purpose, further discussions, arguments and counter-arguments among the participants is a necessity. Otherwise, it will be held that the particular view is unable to evoke enough interest among the philosophers and so not much of a philosophical success.

With regard to the problem of personal identity, one of the more popular and old debate is between the *Materialistic* and *Dualistic* views, which was given a new thrust in recent times by **Sydney Shoemaker** and **Richard Swinburne** respectively.³² We will be discussing their opposing views concerning the problem of personal identity and try to critically appreciate these two points of views. In the process we hope

³² See Shoemaker and Swinburne (1984), in which they put forth their own views and then give counter-arguments against the others' view.

to have a clearer view on the problem of personal identity. But before we go into their particular views, let us take a look at what 'materialism' and 'dualism' means in general.

Materialism is one of the oldest philosophical theories which can be traced back to the 4th/5th century B.C. Greek Philosopher Democritus³³, and also can be found in the writings of the Carvakas in Classical Indian Philosophy. According to it, everything in the world, even the most complex behavior of human beings, can be resolved into interactions between the atoms. The so-called mental events are nothing but physical events occurring in physical objects. However, materialism is different from epiphenomenalism, a dualistic theory which says that the mind is separate and distinct from the body but insist that the mind is causally dependent on the body. Epiphenomenalism holds that everything happens in the mind due to the events in the body and that the mind is powerless to affect the body in any way. Such view is often called 'materialistic' as it places importance on the material side of mental events, but they are not materialistic in the sense in which we are thinking and talking about materialism. According to the materialistic view that we are going to discuss here, nothing exists apart from the physical - like matter, energy and the void. At this juncture, we can pose a question as to

³³ Shaffer (1968), p-39

what exactly are the so-called mental phenomena – thoughts, feelings, wishes, etc. There are 4 (four) seriously proposed answer to the above question³⁴. They are as follows: -

1) The Unintelligibility Thesis: - This is the most radical materialistic view suggesting that mental terms have no real meaning at all and should be dropped or eliminated from the language. The reason is that, words like 'mental phenomena' are the outcome of superstition and should be discarded like witch-craft. This view is, understandably, not very popular among contemporary philosophers and so, not acceptable as an answer to our question. We can hardly compare mental phenomena like, thoughts, feelings and wishes with something like witch-craft. While not everyone believes in the practice of witch-craft, no body can deny that we all have thoughts, feelings and wishes. So, we cannot accept a view which treats mental phenomena as a superstitious belief.³⁵

2) The Avowal Theory: - This view suggests that utterances like 'I wish that...'or 'I thought that...'are like 'I feel bored', they are meaningful but not used to describe, assert or report anything. Instead, they are just bits of behavior and effects of certain inner

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid*, p-40. Shaffer had mentioned it as one of the possible answers to the question - what are mental phenomena? However, he also rejects it.

(physical) conditions. According to this thesis avowals are taken as expressions of our behavior. Philosophers like Ludwig Wittgenstein support the avowal theory. But there is a problem with this theory in the sense that, when we use it in the case of third person utterances, like 'he is bored', it cannot be taken as an expression of one's inner state. Also, even when used in first-person statement, as in the case of someone asking me why I keep looking at my watch, I may say "because I am bored", and thus making a report which explains my behavior, and not expressing it. Therefore the Avowal Theory is also not an acceptable answer to the question being dealt with here.

3) Behaviorism: - According to this view our mental phenomena do have meanings and can be understood only in physicalistic terms, that is, as physical behavior. Philosophers like Gilbert Ryle favor this theory. Even though this view was quite popular among philosophers, it has a fundamental flaw which is that the cause of a particular behavior can be different from what we thought. That is, we can imagine a particular behavior as coming from some other cause, or even a spontaneous one. So, one's actual behavior or the dispositions to behave in a certain way do not furnish an exhaustive analysis of the mentalistic terms.

4) The Identity Theory: - It suggests that mental phenomena are identical with states and processes of the body, or that they are the same with the nervous systems or the brain. Here 'identical' is used in the sense similar to the 'identity' in the sentence 'the morning star is identical with the evening star.'³⁶

Amongst the above four views the Identity Theory is regarded as the most acceptable theory, and it is being vigorously debated upon by philosophers on its acceptability.

Now we can move on to 'dualism', the other prevalent theory in philosophy of mind. The Dualists emphasize the radical difference between mind and matter, and one of the most systematic dualistic theories was presented by the French philosopher René Descartes. He held that the subject of consciousness is the *mind* and that the mind is a thing or entity separate and distinct from the body. The body is a thing or entity whose essence (defining characteristics) is occupying space, that is, having extension; and it is in no sense conscious. The mind, on the other hand, is completely different in its nature. It is utterly nonspatial, having neither shape, nor size, nor location. Its essence (defining character) is simply to be conscious, that is, have thoughts, feelings, memories, perceptions, desires, emotions, etc.³⁷

³⁶ Shaffer (1968), p-43

³⁷ *Ibid*, p-35

According to Descartes, the mind and the body are two separate entities which are joined at the 'pineal gland - the seat of the soul'. In the *Sixth Meditation*, (1952, p.294), he says, "Although the soul is joined to the whole body, there is yet in the body a certain part in which it seems to exercise its functions more specifically than in all the others...I seem to find evidence that the part of the body in which the soul exercises its functions immediately is...solely the innermost part of the brain, viz. a certain very small gland." So, when we wish to "move the body in any manner, this volition causes the gland to impel the spirits towards the muscles which bring about this effect." (1952, p 299)³⁸ Thus, Descartes propounds a form of interactionism in which mental events can cause bodily events and vice versa.

However, there is a gap in Descartes' theory - from the fact that the essence of the mind is consciousness and the essence of the body is extension, it does not follow that the mind and the body are two separate entities. There is nothing to rule out the possibility that one and the same thing can have both these properties, that is, a thinking thing can also be an extended thing. The best example is that of a human being who is both conscious as well as extended in space. This gap was first pointed out by Benedict Spinoza, a follower of Descartes who says that, "although two attributes may be conceived as really

³⁸ "Dualism and Mind", see the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 2006

distinct, we cannot nevertheless thence conclude that they constitute two beings or two different substances.”³⁹

Another objection to the dualistic theory of mind, as many philosophers argue, is that the notion of mind as a thing or entity is unintelligible. As the mind is not a physical entity, what are we to understand by the word ‘mind’? And, if we are to distinguish one mind from the other then how are we to do it? The dualists are unable to answer such questions. Keeping this debate in mind, we can now go on to discuss the views of Sydney Shoemaker and Richard Swinburne in order to understand what ‘materialism’ and ‘dualism’ means for these two philosophers, and how they conceive of the problem of personal identity in the framework of this debate.

1.2 Sydney Shoemaker’s view of Personal Identity: The Materialistic Account

Even though there is a tendency to view the problem of personal identity as an aspect of the mind-body problem (known as the dualistic view), Shoemaker rejects it as he thinks that the dualistic view is not enough to answer the problem of personal identity. According to Shoemaker, an account of personal identity ought to make intelligible the knowledge we have of personal identity. This

³⁹ See Shaffer (1968), p-36

should include the special access each of us has, in memory, to his/her identity. And it ought to make intelligible the special sort of importance personal identity has for us. It ought also to cohere with the rest of what we know about the world, that is, it ought to be compatible with a naturalistic account, or materialistic account of the world. Here we can say that Materialism is a part of 'naturalism' as, naturalism holds that all properties of things, including persons, are reducible to natural properties. And, materialism holds that the ultimate constituents of reality or nature are material bodies. Shoemaker thinks that the mind-body problem, including that of personal identity, arises because of considerations that create the appearance that no naturalistic account could be true; and so, in order to solve the problem we need to dispel the appearance. Thus, an account of personal identity needs to be compatible with the logical principles that govern the notion of identity itself.

1.2.1 The Concept of Identity

Shoemaker holds that, there is no contradiction between '*qualitative identity or sameness*' and '*numerical identity or sameness*', (which has already been discussed in details in the introduction). Confusion between these two senses of 'identical' can be said to be the source of the view that identity over time is incompatible with change. This, however, is not true, because "Change is incompatible with

qualitative identity between the successive states of the changing thing; but it not only allows, but logically requires, that the successive states be states of numerically the same thing.”⁴⁰ And, as we are concerned with ‘numerical identity over time’ and not with ‘qualitative identity over time’, there should be no confusion. Also, the *diachronic* and *synchronic* unity of continuants of kinds, like persons and things (also discussed already in the introduction), can be taken as questions about ‘identity’ over time. So, we can ask – “In virtue of what do different experiences or mental states occurring at the same time count as belonging to one and the same person?”, sometimes posed as the problem of ‘unity of consciousness’.⁴¹

Shoemaker examines John Locke’s account of personal identity⁴², and goes on to defend it from the famous objections raised in the 18th century by Bishop Butler and Thomas Reid. Butler charged that Locke’s account of personal identity is circular: he says, “one should really think it self-evident, that consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal identity, anymore than knowledge, in any other case, can constitute truth, which it presupposes”.⁴³ And, Reid charged that the account is self-contradictory, and sought to show this with a well-known

⁴⁰ Shoemaker and Swinburne (1984), p-73

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p-75

⁴² See the ‘introduction’ for Locke’s view on personal identity.

⁴³ Shoemaker and Swinburne (1984), p-80

example, that of the 'brave officer'.⁴⁴ The example is that, at a certain time a boy is flogged for robbing an orchard. After many years, the same person, now a young officer performs a valiant deed in battle, and he still remembers his boyhood flogging. Many years later, our man is an elderly general, who remembers the valiant deed in battle, but no longer remembers the flogging. So, according to Locke, the old general and the small boy are the same, because the old man is identical to the young officer who is identical to the small boy; at the same time, they are not the same, because the old man has no memory of the flogging.

Locke's view may be defended from the 'brave officer' example by saying that - here personal identity requires that one 'can' remember past action and not that one 'does' remember them. However, it still remains problematic, because it is plausible that the memory of past action was 'absolutely' or 'totally' lost. So, we need to revise the Lockean view and the standard revision to meet this difficulty is most conveniently put in the person-stage terminology. It says that, "two stages belong to the same person if and only if they are the end points of a series of stages such that each member of the series is memory connected with the preceding member."⁴⁵ And this account makes it necessary for identity with a 'past self', not in so much that one

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p-81

remember the actions and experiences of that past self but that one has a 'memory continuity' with that past self. Memory continuity consists in the occurrence of a chain of memory-connected person-stages, say the brave officer's like flogging, valiant deed and old age (present).

In the case of Butler's (and those who hold his views) objection to Locke, Shoemaker argues that they are attacking something which Locke never said, i.e., personal identity being definable in terms of memory. Instead, Locke holds that memory must be defined in terms of personal identity. Shoemaker goes on to say that, the sort of memory which Locke called 'remembering from the inside' cannot be characterized without the use of the notion of personal identity. Here, by 'remembering from inside', he means "a way of remembering past experiences and actions such that, if someone remembers X (an action or experience) in that way, it follows that X was an experience or action of that person."⁴⁶

Shoemaker further claims that the notion of memory is a causal notion; it is a necessary condition of a person's remembering a past event that his memory of that event should be caused, in an appropriate way, by that event itself. This can be seen from the

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p-77

example given by Shoemaker in which the brain of Brown is being transferred to Robinson, and these results in 'Brownson'.⁴⁷ Here, Brownson does not merely have the same personality traits as Brown; he has those traits because Brown's life was such as to lead him to acquire such traits. And Shoemaker holds that, as Brownson has Brown's brain we can suppose that there is a relationship of causal dependence between Brown's traits before the transfer and Brownson's traits after the transfer. That is to say, if Brown's trait had been different, Brownson's trait would have been different in corresponding ways. So for Shoemaker, the term 'psychological continuity' covers both 'continuity of memory' and 'causal relations'.

Here, the idea of causal connection or relation can be seen more clearly if we go further in the case of 'Brown' and 'Brownson'. We can say that if Brown's life had been different, then Brownson's memories would also be different. This is due to the fact that Brownson's memories are causally and counterfactually dependent on Brown's past life. For example, if Brown had a bad childhood then Brownson would also have a bad memory of his childhood. This causal relation is important for the materialists' concepts of mind. Without this relation it would be impossible to claim that our memories and other personal traits of a person are related from one moment to the next. And, this

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p-78

will mean that there will be no personal identity to be claimed, according to the materialist interpretation. Thus, the reason for including 'causal relation' as a part of psychological continuity is very important for materialist concepts of mind.

Shoemaker goes on to discuss the functionalist view and says that, according to functionalism every mental state is a 'functional state'. It is a state which can be defined in terms of its relations (primarily its causal relations) to sensory inputs, behavioral outputs, and other functional (mental) states. The functionalist view claims that, "it is of the essence of a mental state to be caused in certain ways, and to produce, in conjunction with other mental states, certain effects (behavior or other mental states)."⁴⁸ Shoemaker agrees with the functionalist's view that it is in conjunction with other mental states *of the same person* that a mental state produces the effects it does. And, the immediate effects (states or behavior) will also belong to the same person who had the mental state in question. There is, in the functionalist view, a very intimate connection between the question 'what is the nature of the various mental states?' and the question 'how must different mental states be causally connected in order to be "co-personal", that is, to belong to one and the same person?'

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p-93

Shoemaker points out that as the functionalist's account of mental states implicitly invoke personal identity, it will be circular if we define personal identity in terms of causal relations between mental states. In order to come out of this circularity, he suggests the notion of 'Ramsey sentence' proposed by David Lewis.⁴⁹ Shoemaker's view is that the nature of personal identity is, in effect, determined by the nature of the various sorts of mental states persons have. So, once we have said what the mental states are, and have specified their functional natures, there is no room for conventional decision about what the identity conditions of their subjects are – those identity conditions are built into the nature of the mental states themselves.

1.2.2 Unity of Consciousness and Self – Consciousness

Shoemaker agrees with Immanuel Kant's view that unity of consciousness, that is, unity of a conscious state, some way involves self-consciousness. Also, Kant's view fits the functionalist's account of mind and the psychological continuity account of personal identity propounded by him. Shoemaker goes on to say that it is essential in remembering one's past actions and experiences 'from the inside' of one's past self, as the subject of those actions and experiences does not enter into the content of one's memory in the way other persons

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p-99. Ramsey sentence provide us with variables for the properties of a sentence, turning it into an open one. Then, it is prefaced with existential quantifiers, to enable the sentence to come out of circularity.

do. And the reason one is not presented to oneself 'as an object' in self-awareness, as self-awareness is not perceptual. In other words, it is not the sort of awareness in which objects are presented. It is awareness of facts unmediated by awareness of objects. Also, perceptual self-knowledge presupposes non-perceptual self-knowledge, so not all self-knowledge can be perceptual. That is to say that, self-awareness is non-perceptual, while other kinds of self-knowledge are perceptual. For example, awareness that the presented object was x would not tell one that one was oneself x , until one had identified the object as oneself; these would be possible only if one had the knowledge that the object which possesses such-and-such properties to be oneself.

Shoemaker further claims that, even if a person is capable of undergoing a change of body, e.g., Mr. Brown becoming Mr. Brownson, the conclusion that the person is not identical to his body gives no support to dualism. It is in fact perfectly compatible with the materialist view of the world. Because all that materialism requires is that all of the actual realizations of mental states be physical, it is compatible with their being different in different species or different creatures. For, "the realization of mental state involves the existence of a mechanism whereby it stands in the causal connections that are definitive of it, that is, a mechanism whereby it produces copersonal

successor states in conjunction with copersonal states simultaneous with it. If this mechanism is entirely physical, so will be the realization of the relationship of copersonality.”⁵⁰

Shoemaker goes on to examine a hypothetical situation in which there is a machine called ‘The brain-state transfer device’, in which a person’s brain is transferred from one body to another (cloned one) in order to preserve the brain. Regarding this procedure, he holds that if, for example, we allow this device as person-preserving. Then we will have to accept, not only the fact that a cloned person is the same as the original one, but also to accept the device as a part of our survival. So, he imagines a society in which it is natural to store clone bodies from cells taken from the same person. These cells are stored, so that the person can change his/her body by using the device, say after every 5 years. Thus, we will have personal identity without the identity of any body, even though nothing non-physical is involved.

However, one of the main objection to this view is called the ‘duplication objection’ which supposes the possibility that the brain-state device (BST-device) malfunctions and produces the state of *A*’s brain in *B*’s brain without obliterating those same states in the

⁵⁰ Shoemaker and Swinburne (1984), p-107

original or *A*'s brain. The result is that, post-transfer possessor of the state, that is, brain *B* would not be identical with the pre-transfer possessor of the state, that is, brain *A*. However, Shoemaker argues that the duplication objection is due to a failure to distinguish rigid and non-rigid designators and their roles in identity statements. He holds that, definite descriptions like 'post-transfer *B*-body person' are non-rigid designators, while names like 'Paul' or 'John' are rigid designators that have the same reference whether in real or in hypothetical situations. So, if the BST-device malfunctions, then the post-transfer *B* brain person would not be the pre-transfer *A* brain person. Instead, the post-transfer *B* brain person would be someone else, perhaps created by the BST-device.⁵¹ So, for Shoemaker, the malfunctioning of the BST-device will not hamper the continued existence of the person whose brain was in the process of being transferred. But he or she will remain in the old body, and the newly created person will not be the same as the old one.

Further, Shoemaker considers the issue of how we ought to understand questions and claims about what personal identity 'consists in'. Should such questions and claims be best understood as ones to be answered or assessed by a priori analysis of concepts, or should they be understood as factual questions or claims about the

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 117

world, to be answered or assessed on empirical grounds, or both. For Shoemaker, the psychological continuity account of personal identity is implicit in the functional specifications of the various sorts of mental states. So, it is impossible to have a functionalist account of what creatures count as persons without having, at least in outline, a psychological continuity account of what the identity of person consists in. Meaning, both conceptual analysis as well as factual analysis⁵² on the account of personal identity is important. Thus, Shoemaker's view on personal identity is materialistic in nature. He holds that personal identity should be understood in terms of identity of material things. For him, identity of a person depends on the continuity of his/her body. To be specific, at least the 'brain' of the person must be continuous for him/her to be regarded as the same as, say, 5 years before. Thus, brain/body continuity is important in order to have personal identity.

1.3 Richard Swinburne's view on Personal Identity: The Dualistic Account

Richard Swinburne rejects the empiricist answers to the questions – 1) what does it mean to say that p_2 at t_2 is the same person as p_1 at t_1 ? And, 2) what evidence of observation and

⁵² That is, to answer 'what personal identity consists in', we can either give conceptual analysis or factual analysis, and say that, personal identity can be defined in terms of 'matter' or material things like - as a member of a particular biological species.

experience can we have that a person is a person $p1$ at $t1$? Swinburne disagree with the empiricist philosophers in their view that the above two questions are not different as their answers remain the same. For Swinburne, the above two questions have totally different answers. The bodily continuity theory of personal identity does not deny that persons have a mental life, but insists that what makes a person the same as an earlier person is sameness of body. But the difficulty lies in the fact that only one part of the body, that is, the brain, seems to be of crucial importance for determining the characteristic behavior of the rest of the body. And hence, a materialistic criterion of personal identity, which regards the brain as the core of the body rather than the rest of the body, is known as the brain theory of personal identity. This is given by David Wiggins in his book *Identity and Spatio-temporal Continuity*.⁵³

As opposed to the bodily continuity theory of personal identity there is the memory and character theory. It says that the presence or absence of memory claims in a person constitute personal identity. According to John Locke, memory alone constitutes personal identity. And memory here means personal memory, that is, memory of one's own past experiences, and not factual memory, that is, a memory of some impersonal facts known previously. Here, memory in the strong

⁵³ Shoemaker and Swinburne (1984), p-8

sense is always true, as “one can only remember doing something if one really did it.”⁵⁴ But, the memory that Locke talks about, i.e., remembering, is in the weak sense. Here, a person remembers whatever he/she believes that he/she remembers in the strong senses, which need not be true. So, Locke’s idea of memory theory is also known as the idea of apparent memory. However, Locke’s view is rejected by Swinburne as he think that it is absurd; because there are cases where apparent memory do not guarantee personal identity. Locke’s view is also called ‘simple view’.

Major objection to any memory theory was made by Thomas Reid⁵⁵ in which a ‘brave-officer’ example was given to prove that memory cannot constitute personal identity. And another objection was made in an influential article by Bernard Williams⁵⁶ in which a man called Charles who turns up in the 20th century claiming to be Guy Fawkes. Not only does Charles’ memory claims fit the pattern of Fawkes’ life as known to historians, but those parts of Fawkes’ life history which are not recorded and therefore cannot be checked seem plausible too. This is also known as ‘duplication objection’, and the same difficulty can be imagined in the case of bodily continuity theory of personal identity. There are 2 (two) possible solutions here.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p-9

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p-10. Also, the example is given in details in the introductory chapter of this book. So, it will not be repeated here.

⁵⁶ Shoemaker and Swinburne (1984), p-13

(1) We can say that personal identity is a matter of degree, i.e., *P2* is the same person as *P1* to the extent to which there is sameness of brain matter and continuity of memory. For example, we can gradually replace bits of a desk with new bits and get more or less the same desk. Likewise, we can have persons who are, to some extent, the same and to some extent different from the original person. This view has been advocated by Derek Parfit, which says, when a person divides as a result of a split brain transplant, he 'survives' in part as each of the two persons. They constitute his later 'selves', neither of whom, to speak strictly, are identical with the original person. This view is also called the 'complex view'.

(2) We can also say that, although apparent memory and brain continuity are evidence of personal identity, they are fallible evidence and personal identity is something distinct from them. In other words, personal identity is distinct from, although evidenced by, similarity of memory and continuity of brain. Also, strong similarity of matter and apparent memory are powerful evidence of personal identity. The point is that, "the truth about personal identity is not analyzable in terms of the fallible empirical evidence for it of brain and memory continuity."

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⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p-21

1.3.1 The Dualist Theory

Swinburne claims that it is coherent to suppose that a person could continue to exist with an entirely new body or with no body at all. And as it is not logically necessary that a person has a body made of certain matter, or has certain apparent memories to be the person who he or she is, it is not even necessitated by laws of nature. But it must be determined by something else, and all that a person needs in order to be who he/she is, are certain mental capacities for having conscious experiences. For example, having thoughts or sensations and performing intentional actions. And so, Swinburne goes on to widen the Aristotelian version of identity of substances that holds the continuity of form and matter as a criterion of personal identity.

The wider Aristotelian account holds that, “two substances are the same if and only if they have the same form and there is continuity of the stuff of which they are made, and allow that there may be kinds of stuff other than matter.”⁵⁸ That is to say that there is an immaterial stuff, the continuity of which is necessary for the identity of the person over time. This is also the essence of simple theory which says that a person living on Earth consists of two parts, material body and immaterial soul. And the soul is the essential part of the person, meaning, the continuing of the soul constitutes the continuing of the

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p-27

person. This view is also called classical dualism and it is propounded in slightly different ways by Plato and Descartes. So, consciousness of a person is to be analyzed as a property of his immaterial core, which is his soul.

Swinburne goes on to say that Thomas Aquinas agrees with Aristotle's view on substance (matter) and form, but differs in saying that for man the form of the body, which he called the soul, was separable from the body and capable of independent existence. The soul of man, unlike the souls of animals or plants, was in Aquinas' terminology an 'intellectual substance'. But Swinburne regards Aquinas' view as distortion of Aristotle's view and rejects it. Swinburne prefers classical dualism but does not agree with all the aspects of this view. He does not agree with the argument from the indivisibility of the soul to its natural immortality. According to classical dualists, as souls cannot be divided, souls are indestructible and hence immortal. For Swinburne, it does not follow from a soul being indivisible that it cannot lose its capacity for experience and action – and so cease to be a soul, just as an oak tree may die and become fossilized without losing its shape.

1.3.2 Dualism and Verifiability

Swinburne puts forth Wittgenstein's view on personal identity which says that the concept of personal identity is not like 'left' or 'right' or 'cause' and 'effect', but like 'below' and 'above'. It means concepts derived from certain situations have applications to very different ones. For example, there is no absolute below or above when we talk about, say, the solar systems. In the galaxy, we cannot say that the solar system in which the 'Earth' belongs is in the absolute above or below of another galaxy. While, the concepts of 'cause' and 'effect', and 'left' and 'right' can be used rightly, unlike the concept of 'below' and 'above'. So, Wittgenstein's view has a verificationist character, that is, he holds that, only those sentences which can be in principle verified or falsified, are sentences that can be regarded as either true or false. However, sentences about our own experiences can neither be verified nor falsified (that is, they are not empirical statements), and therefore, they cannot be regarded as either true or false.

So, the verificationists claim that, as we cannot verify whether a man survives a brain transplant operation, the claim that he does is neither true nor false. Swinburne goes on to examine the verificationist claim and its relation to personal identity. He says, "Verificationism insists that if it is to have a truth value, a sentence has itself to be

verifiable or falsifiable.”⁵⁹ But he argues that, “as long we as understand the grammatical pattern of a declarative sentence and the words which occur in it we understand what claims it is making, even if we have no conceivable means of getting evidence for its truth or falsity.”⁶⁰ Also, it is not humanly possible to verify each and every thing before we believe them, e.g., can we verify or falsify infallibly a sentence ‘there is a table in this room’? Because whatever our experience may be, it could be an illusion or we might be dreaming.

Swinburne further argues that, even if we insist on the possibility of confirmation or disconfirmation done by one person or anybody, at any time, be it logical, physical or practical, the dualist theory of personal identity will not fall foul of verificationism. Because, the claim that a person *P2*, recovering from a brain operation, is the same as person *P1* before the operation can certainly have evidence in its favor. For example, that *P2* has some of *P1*’s brain and most of his apparent memories, can be seen by the public memory claims. He also argues that, Wittgenstein’s counter-argument fails because there is no real argument there. It is simply a dogmatic assertion that the concept of personal identity has no application in puzzle situations, which is not backed up by any adequate argument.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p-39

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p-40

Swinburne claims that, the continuity of a person is a datum of experience: and if it were not, we could have little knowledge of the world. Also, “among the data of experience are not merely that certain experiences are the successive experiences of a common subject, but also that certain simultaneous experiences are the experiences of a common subject. For example, at a single moment of time you feel cramp in your leg, hear the noise of my voice, and see the movement of my arms.”⁶¹ As a result, there are at an instant persons, as well as bodies, brain and experiences make it natural to suppose that the continuing of persons over time is also a fact other than and beyond data about the continuing of bodies, brains and experiences over time.

1.3.3 The Evidence of Personal Identity

For Swinburne, similarity of appearance at different times is an indirect criterion of personal identity, because it is evidence of bodily identity, which in turn is evidence of personal identity. And bodily appearances change very gradually, but overnight change in normal circumstances is too rare to take into account seriously. Also, brain identity is important because it is chosen as the organ whose continuity is vital for personal identity as its continuity guarantees continuity of apparent memory and character. He says, “Our selection of brain continuity as evidence of personal identity is because that is

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p-45

the part of the body which is correlated with continuity of apparent memory and character, suggests that but for a correlation with apparent memory and character we would not use any part of the body as evidence of personal identity.”⁶² For example, given that *P2* and an earlier *P1* have the same brains, *P2* in general apparently remembers the deeds and experiences of *P1* and behave in somewhat similar ways to *P1*. And if brains were split, there will remain some part of the memory in both parts, and whosoever gets the brains will have some memory of *P2*'s past experiences. Thus, we can say that, it is brain continuity which is evidence of personal identity.

Further, in defending his claim about apparent memory being important for personal identity, Swinburne goes on to say that, if we started doubting apparent memory, then we will be led to very deep skepticism. In other words, if you have a memory of brown table in the room and doubt it, then you will be committing the error of 'principle of credulity'.⁶³ And he goes on to argue that, the dependence on apparent memory is a special unavoidable case of application of the principle of credulity. And if the principle of credulity suffices to justify reliance on apparent memories, it suffices also to justify reliance on apparent perceptions, such as there being a brown table in front of

⁶² *Ibid*, p-52

⁶³ *Ibid*, p-57. The 'principle of credulity' says that, probably things are as they seem to be (in the epistemic sense). For example, if it seems to me that there is in front of me a brown table, or a Greek vase, then probably there is; and I ought so to believe unless counter-evidence turns up.

you without appeal to anything further, such as apparent memories. However, Swinburne does concede that apparent memory can commit error sometimes. As a result, it is subject to correction just like apparent perception. And also that the criterion of apparent memory can be used and its deliverances can be checked privately and publicly without any reliance on any bodily criterion.

Thus, as a dualist, Swinburne holds that a bodily criterion of personal identity is as important as apparent memory criteria. The brain continuity provides indirect evidence, and is a reliable criterion which can be used, in particular cases, in preference even to the criterion of apparent memory. While apparent memory provides direct evidence of personal identity, it does not pre-suppose any bodily or brain continuity of one's present self with one's previous self. On the contrary, "memory is a device for discovering what happened independently of whether one can remember it."⁶⁴ He goes on to say that, one's own past deeds and experiences are data often revealed by memory, fallibly though, and that one has done the deed or had the experience was not something further analyzable. As a dualist Swinburne holds that personal identity is unanalysable in terms of empirical data.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p-66

1.4 Conclusion

‘What is it that we really care about when we care about our own survival and our own future well-being?’. In answer to this question, Richard Swinburne makes the natural assumption that when I want to survive it is essential to the satisfaction of my want that I, the very person who is now wanting this, should exist in the future. However, for Sydney Shoemaker, it is inconceivable that a creature should be indifferent to its present pleasures and pains. And as the future is continuous with the present, it is inconceivable that a creature should want its present pain to cease, or its present pleasure to continue, and yet be indifferent as to whether it has a qualitatively identical pain or pleasant experience a moment hence.

Swinburne disagrees with Shoemaker’s view that the selfish concern which we have for our own future is really a concern for anyone psychologically continuous with ourselves. For Swinburne, ‘the only reason why ‘the future sufferings and delights’ of a person psychologically continuous with oneself ‘cannot be a matter of indifference’ to me is because I take psychological continuity as fallible evidence of something else, namely, personal identity: I suspect that, in addition to being psychologically continuous with him, I will suffer his sufferings and enjoy his joys. The less reason there is to suspect that (e.g., where the future person is produced by a mechanism which

could easily produce a thousand others, which are even closer continuers of myself, by having more atoms from my brain), the less reason will be my selfish concern for that future person.”⁶⁵

Shoemaker’s case for his own theory is that the psychological continuity account of personal identity is entailed by a functionalist theory of mental states. But Swinburne thinks that this is false, and even Shoemaker admits that the functionalist theory of mental states is ‘widely disputed’. Swinburne goes on to argue that for functionalist our beliefs and desires explain our behavior as simply as possible, “but the trouble is that, for any given stretch of a person’s sensory input and behavioral output you can construct alternative systems of beliefs and desires which will explain it...Functionalism is committed to the view that the true account of a person’s beliefs and desires is the outside observer’s account in terms of the simplest or best theory of the person’s sensory input and behavioral output.”⁶⁶ However, Swinburne holds that agents are in a better position to know about their purpose and beliefs than are outside observers. So, the best theory about an agent’s purposes or desires and beliefs constructed by observers from a study of the agent’s sensory input and behavioral output may be mistaken. Hence, functionalism is mistaken in claiming that every mental state is definable in terms of its causal relations to

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p-135

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p-136

observable states. There is more to belief and desire than their manifestation in the public world. So, since functionalism is a mistaken theory of mind, the fact that it fits naturally with a theory of personal identity in terms of psychological continuity gives reason to doubt the latter than to affirm it.

Shoemaker argues back by saying that, in arguing for dualism Swinburne thinks that he should cease to have body at a certain time and continue to exist after that time. He must therefore be made at least in part of some non-bodily stuff, a soul, which can persist through the loss of his body. But, according to Swinburne there is no contradiction in supposing that just as a person might acquire a totally new body, a person might become dis-embodied, or exist without a body. For Swinburne, the possibility of a person existing without body and acquiring a new body supports a dualistic account of personal identity, as he does.

However, Shoemaker points out that the above claim made by Swinburne does not support dualism as he claims it to be. And to suppose that it follows from them is like supposing that, "from the fact that there could be someone who could beat the current heavyweight boxing champion of the world, it follows that I could beat the current

heavyweight boxing champion of the world.”⁶⁷ Because to suppose that some actually existing thing could undergo such-and-such a change can be grounded on mere thought experiment, goes against Swinburne’s Aristotelian principle,⁶⁸ so he cannot hold this view. Regarding Swinburne’s claim that unity of experience can itself be ‘experienced by’ the subject of the experiences. Meaning, the subject’s knowledge of this unity is often non-inferential, not inferred from something ‘more ultimate’, is accepted by Shoemaker. But when Swinburne claim that the above view supports dualism and also his view that personal identity is ‘ultimate’ and ‘unanalysable’, Shoemaker begs to differ. According to Shoemaker, “To appeal to the alleged un-analyzability of persons, or of personal identity, is not to solve the problem, but just to sweep it under the rug.”⁶⁹ He thus does not see that the dualist theory of mind to be any more successful in accounting for the peculiarities of self-awareness than materialist theories.

In discussing the views put forth by Sydney Shoemaker and Richard Swinburne, we have contrasting views on personal identity. The main issue here, as we see from the arguments, is ‘what does

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p-143

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p-27. Swinburne’s Aristotelian principle says that, “two substances are the same if and only if they have the same form and there is continuity of the stuff of which they are made, and allow that there may be kinds of stuff other than matter.”

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p-148

personal identity consist in?’ One important point about the two views is that, both the views are in favor of accepting ‘memory’ as a criterion of personal identity, but in slightly different ways. That is, for Swinburne, “the connection between memory continuity and continuity of character has an *a priori* basis, and is not merely an empirical connection”,⁷⁰ which Shoemaker accepts. But when Swinburne claim that, the use of apparent memory as a criterion of personal identity is “a special unavoidable case of application of the principle of credulity”,⁷¹ Shoemaker argue that this is a mistaken idea.

According to Shoemaker, to use memory as evidence of personal identity is not just an application of the principle of credulity. A satisfactory theory of personal identity ought to explain whether and how the things that we take as evidence really are evidence, and help explain facts as the priority of the said criterion, i.e., memory criterion. That is to say that, Shoemaker’s view of the criterion of personal identity is more to do with facts, or the material things which can be analyzed and put to test. Since his view is materialistic in nature, he holds that only the functionalist or psychological continuity theory of personal identity is acceptable, since they can help explain the reliability of the principle of credulity. On the other hand, Swinburne’s

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p-149

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p-149

dualistic account “leaves it as a mystery the things we count as evidence of personal identity really are good evidence”⁷² or not.

After examining both the views, the arguments and the counter-arguments, we can discern both virtues and failings in the theories propounded by Shoemaker and Swinburne. Shoemaker’s view on personal identity is correct as far as the importance of bodily continuity is concerned. To prove a person’s identity without sameness of body will be very difficult. However, bodily continuity cannot be taken as the sole criteria of personal identity. On the other hand, Swinburne’s account that personal identity is constituted by both mind and body is true. But, his claim that the psychological continuity is more important and the claim that we still can have personal identity without bodily continuity is not acceptable.

We cannot have a one-sided view, because the criterion of personal identity needs a ‘view’ in which both materialism and dualism plays an equal part. Human beings are complex entities which cannot be categorized into either only ‘mind/brain’ entity, or as only ‘bodily’ entity, or as only ‘psychological’ entity. Every part plays some important role, and in order to have an exhaustive definition of ‘personal identity’ we will need something more complicated than

⁷² *Ibid*, p-151

either the 'materialistic' or 'dualistic' view which we dealt with in this chapter. The above views are important as they provide the basic foundation for the other views. But we still need a criterion that will enable us to deal with the complex problem of personal identity, which will not face the problems that we have discussed above. In order to appreciate this intuition we need to look for a different kind of criterion, and in the next chapter we will see whether Bernard Williams and P.F. Strawson's view are able to provide us with one.

CHAPTER 2

Personal Identity: Mixed View and the Double Aspect Thesis

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will be dealing with the views of Bernard Williams and P.F. Strawson. Unlike the views of the previous philosophers on the problem of personal identity that we had discussed, Williams and Strawson put forth the 'Mixed View' and the 'Double Aspect Thesis' respectively, with regard to the problem of personal identity. They accept in their own ways, both bodily as well as psychological phenomena as important in maintaining personal identity, even though they may not use the same word. Their views are important in the light of the views discussed in the previous chapters. By accepting both the physical and psychological attributes of a person as important criteria of personal identity, Williams and Strawson put forth a novel way of understanding and solving the problem of personal identity.

It is important to highlight the significance of the 'Double Aspect Thesis' here. For Strawson, the 'concept of person' is a primitive concept and so more important than an 'identity of a person'. Also,

unlike the Materialists' view, Strawson gives equal importance to both the bodily and the psychological aspects of a person in maintaining one's identity. At the same time, unlike the Cartesians' view Strawson did not believe in the complete separateness of the body and the mind. Strawson's account of personal identity gives more importance to the concept of 'persons' as such and not to any attributes of a person. Similarly, according to Williams' 'Mixed View', both bodily continuity and psychological continuity are considered as necessary and sufficient condition for personal identity too. However, for Williams, bodily continuity is taken as always necessary and more important for identity than psychological continuity. We will go now to the details of Williams' and Strawson's account of personal identity to have a clearer idea of their stand point. We shall start with the view of Bernard Williams and go on to P.F. Strawson later.

2.2 Bernard Williams' view on Personal Identity: The Mixed View

According to Bernard Williams, "bodily continuity is always a necessary condition for personal identity,"⁷³ but not sufficient. The psychological continuity is also required for personal identity. Hence bodily continuity and psychological continuity together form necessary and sufficient conditions for personal identity. In support of this view, he holds that an adequate criterion of personal identity must enable

⁷³ Williams (1973), pp-1.

us to distinguish between identity and mere resemblance. In order to do that, we need to be able to have only 'one-one relation', i.e., a relation that logically could not have an instance in which two or more numerically distinct individuals bore this relation to some other individual. In other words, it is not possible for 'y' at $t_1...t_n$ to have exactly the same kind of experiences or feelings which are being possessed by 'x' at $t_1...t_n$. Only the relation of being bodily continuous gives us the required logical one-one relation for personal identity. Meaning, only x will have the exact feelings and experiences as x during $t_1...t_n$, and the same applies to y. Moreover, having the same ostensible memories like, personality, abilities, skills, etc., are not of logical one-one relation, because it is logically possible that two or more logically distinct persons have the same ostensible memories as some other individual. For example, take the case of twins where there exists some kind of telepathy and sharing memories of some kind. Further, he holds that the "normal operation of one 'mental' criterion involves the 'bodily' one."⁷⁴ So, for Williams the bodily continuity criterion is taken as granted.

Williams considers counter-example to his view. Suppose, a person called 'Charles' undergoes drastic changes in his personality in which he can no longer remember what he used to be. Instead, he

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p-5

ostensibly remembers many of the actions performed by some deceased person, say, Guy Fawkes. In addition, Charles acquires a new personality, skills and abilities, which are similar to those possessed by Guy Fawkes. Now, can we say that Charles is the same as Fawkes even though he has different body from Fawkes? Williams answers this question in the negative, and argues that we cannot say that they are the same person. For, if it is possible for Charles to undergo this transformation, then it will also be possible for any other person, say, Tom, to undergo the same transformation simultaneously. Then we will have Guy Fawkes at two places at once, which is absurd. Moreover, if Charles and Tom are identical to Fawkes then they will be identical to each other, which is also absurd. It means that having the same ostensible memories is not a logical one-one relation. So, here, it will be the case that both Charles and Tom resemble Fawkes but are not identical with him.

Thus, Williams maintains that bodily continuity and, to some extent, psychological continuity are important for personal identity. By psychological continuity, he means mainly memory. "Identity of body is at least not a sufficient condition of personal identity, and other considerations, of personal characteristics and, above all, memory, must be invoked."⁷⁵ The role of psychological continuity is not taken

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p-1

as granted like the bodily continuity, at the same time bodily continuity alone is not sufficient to provide one's identity. So, his view is also known as the 'Mixed View'. We can now go into the details of his account, that is, how are bodily and psychological continuities important for personal identity. We can also see what roles the bodily and psychological continuities play in maintaining personal identity. The following two subsections will deal with these two aspects of personal identity.

2.2.1 Personal Identity and Bodily Continuity

According to Williams, bodily identity as a necessary condition of personal identity is vital as "the omission of the body takes away all content from the idea of personal identity".⁷⁶ Thus, we can say that, the continuity of body is necessary for the accounts in the history of one person to be connected. Even in supposed non-bodily identification, identification made on bodily grounds at some stages is necessary. "Hence, any claim that bodily considerations can be absolutely omitted from the criteria of personal identity must fail."⁷⁷ He goes on to say that, bodily interchange theory or concept cannot be taken for granted, as there are unforeseen logical limits to what can be said in these directions as well. And he gives an example of a magician who is hired to perform the trick of making the emperor and the

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p-10

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp-11

peasant interchange.⁷⁸ So, memory on its own is rejected as a criterion of one's own identity, because similarity of memory claims and personal characteristics alone without bodily continuity are not sufficient conditions of personal identity.

Robert C. Coburn, however, rejects Williams' theory that, claims of similarity in memory and personal characteristics do not amount to personal identity. For Coburn, memory and personal characteristics of a person cannot be simply rejected, because they decide who will experience the consequence of our actions – like punishment for the crimes committed or reward for good deeds. Also, Coburn holds that it is justifiable to accept identification based on memory and personal characteristics. However, against Coburn's argument, Williams goes on to say that, identity is a one-one relation, and "no principle can be a criterion of identity for things of type T if it relies only on what is logically a one-many or many-many relation between things of type T".⁷⁹ He goes on to point out that Coburn's supposed criterion of identity for person which relies only on memory claims is also a many-one relation, and so it could not suffice to do what a criterion of identity is required to do, viz, enable us to identify uniquely the thing that is identical with the thing in question. That is, one-one relation is logically the adequate relation to constitute a criterion of identity.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p-21

Thus, Williams holds that, Coburn's theory states a necessary condition for a criterion of identity, but it cannot be a sufficient condition.

Further, Williams goes on to consider four leading objections to the view that persons are bodies and puts forth an argument against each of them⁸⁰:-

- 1) *First objection says that, we can conceive of disembodied persons:* - He is here considering persons who are previously embodied but now becomes disembodied, not those who are essentially disembodied. Against this objection, he argues that, if we admit the possibility of persons previously embodied becoming disembodied, then we are committed to giving a Cartesian or Dualistic account of those persons in their embodied state. And as he rejects Cartesian views of persons, he will not accept this view either, and so will those who reject Cartesian or Dualistic account. He goes on to consider the state of a previously embodied person who is now disembodied; and in answer to, say, 'what weight has he?', we will have to answer either (a) 'they have no answer' or (b) 'he weight 0kg'. Here, the problem of (a) lies in the fact that, if it is true then it will mean that having physical attributes was not essential to being a

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p-70

person. And, the problem of (b) lies in the fact that before its disembodiment the body must have weight something, and to say that it weights 0kg now is incompatible with his embodied existence. Therefore, they cannot be the same body, and certainly cannot be consistently combined with the possibility of disembodiment.

Second objection says that, 'Jones' (taken as referring to a person) and 'Jones' body' are not interchangeable SALVA

VERITATE: - Against this objection he argues that, even though to love a person and to love his or her body are two different things, yet this does not show that persons and bodies are two different things. The reason is that, it is doubtful whether it can be demonstrated that 'Jones' body' is different from 'Jones'. The 'objection' is that, as bodies are subjects of psychological attribute the expression 'X's body' will not be used. But Williams still think that a demonstration is lacking, and this shows the thesis to be false. Because, if an argument cannot convince others about a particular thesis, then it proves that the thesis is not true in all cases and so cannot be accepted.

3) Third objection says that, if persons are material bodies, then all properties of persons are material properties: but this is false: -

Against the third objection, Williams argues that, the objection is too head-on as to be suspected of begging the question - what are 'material properties'? What the objection needs is a plausible independent characterization of material properties which excludes peculiar properties of persons, e.g., psychological. Because, if material properties are whatever material bodies have, then it will include psychological properties too. But, if it excludes psychological properties, then it patently begs the question. So, the objection is not acceptable unless it characterizes what material properties are first. The distinction between material properties and non-material properties needs to be clear before we can even consider the objection.

- 4) *Fourth objection says that, the identity of persons is not the same as the identity of bodies:* - Against this objection, Williams argues that, Sydney Shoemaker's⁸¹ counter-example to the sameness of persons and bodies avoid the reduplication problem and it should be accepted without any further arguments. In the absence of the sameness between identity of persons and identity of bodies, what we called loving a person would begin to crack, and reflection on it may encourage us not to undervalue the deeply body-based situation we actually have. This can be

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p-77

seen from the example where he compares wanting to be near the person one love with wanting to hear even a not so good performance of *Figaro*. Thus “just as one will go to the scratch provincial performance of *Figaro* rather than hear no *Figaro* at all, so one would see the very run-down Mary Smith who was in the locality, rather than see no Mary Smith at all.”⁸² Thus, Williams argues that even though it is not the case that to love a person is exactly to love a body, yet we cannot account for love without any bodily basis.

Thus we can see that, for Williams the role of bodily continuity as a criterion of personal identity is very important. He has taken for granted that bodily continuity is necessary for maintaining personal identity. Now, we shall go on to his account of the role of psychological continuity in the understanding of personal identity.

2.2.2 Personal Identity and Psychological Continuity

Williams goes on to discuss the role of memory in maintaining one's identity in the absence of bodily continuity. He starts with a thought experiment in which, two persons *A* & *B* are to exchange bodies – as in *A* becomes *B* & *B* becomes *A*. For example, there is a certain process which can exchange the memories, actions and

⁸² *Ibid*, p-81

character of two persons, *A* & *B*. Before they exchange their bodies they are told to choose between a 'torture' and '\$100,000'. It will most probably be the case that – *A* chooses that *B*-body be given \$100,000 and torture *A*-body, while *B* chooses the reverse. This seems to show that to care about what happens to me in the future is not necessarily to care about what happens to this body, i.e., the one I now have. This in turn might be taken to show that in some sense of Descartes' idea, I and my body are 'really distinct', is correct, even though we may not support the Cartesian view that I could exist without a body at all.⁸³ The importance of psychological continuity for personal identity can be seen from the above case. Here, if persons *A* & *B* succeeded in changing their memories, actions and character, then we will say that the process of exchange was a success. Thus, we can see that bodily continuity is not the only important criterion for personal identity.

Williams goes on to discuss the nature of moral conflict that has bearing on logical or philosophical questions about the structure of moral thought and language. In particular, he discusses 'conflicts of beliefs' and 'conflicts of desire'. He takes up the case of conflicts of beliefs first, and says that, it is possible for a man to have inconsistent beliefs. That is, the statements which adequately express his beliefs involve a logical contradiction. Another kind of conflict which he is

⁸³ *Ibid*, pp-49

interested in here is one in which a man holds two beliefs which for empirical reason cannot both be true. He calls this kind of belief 'conflicting'.⁸⁴ For example, if a man believes that a certain person was a cabinet minister of the central government of India who took office in 10th September 2006 and also that that person was a member of the Bharatya Janata Party (BJP). These two beliefs will not be inconsistent if the man is ignorant of the fact that the two beliefs are conflicting, viz., that no such Minister would be from BJP. If, after he is given this information, he still retains his beliefs then he is in the situation of actually having an inconsistent belief.

Williams goes on to discuss 'conflicts of desire' and holds that, the clash between desires arises from some contingent matter of fact. It is a matter of fact that makes it impossible for both the desires to be satisfied; but we can consistently imagine a state of affairs in which they could both be satisfied. Here, the contingent root of the conflict may be disguised by the use of language that suggests logical impossibility of the desires being jointly satisfied. Thus a man who was hungry and lazy, and was seated comfortably, and his food were elsewhere, might perhaps represent his difficulty to himself as his both wanting to remain seated and wanting to get up. But his problem will

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p-166

be solved the moment help arrives or the discovery of his food within arm's length.

From the above discussion, Williams wants to show that conflict of belief and conflict of desire pre-suppose psychological continuity. It will not be possible to have 'conflicts' in our thoughts if we are not psychologically continuous with our selves. If it is a fact that we have beliefs and desires, then it is also a fact that sometimes there is a conflict in what we believe and what actually the case is. There are also times when we do not get what we desire. Having experiences about different kinds of emotions itself testify to the fact that psychological continuity is important for personal identity. So, a person undergoing any kinds of conflict in his/her mind cannot say that the conflicting thoughts are happening in somebody else's mind and he/she just has come to know. This will be absurd. So, the importance of not only bodily continuity but psychological continuity in order to maintain one's identity is highlighted.

Thus, we can see from the above discussions that, for Williams the bodily as well as the psychological continuity are important for personal identity. Therefore, his view is called the 'Mixed View', in contrast to views like 'Materialism' or 'Dualism' which accept either the bodily continuity or the psychological continuity alone. Now, we shall

go on to P.F. Strawson's view on personal identity, and discuss it in details.

2.3 P.F. Strawson's view on Personal Identity: The Double Aspect Thesis

According to P. F. Strawson, the central position which material bodies and persons occupy among particulars in general needs to be established. That is, they are the basic or fundamental particulars in our conceptual scheme, so the concepts of other types of particular are seen as secondary to them. For him, the concept of persons is even more primitive than those of material bodies and immaterial souls, and it will be wrong to take them as one and the same thing. So, we can say that for Strawson the concept of 'person' is the most fundamental concept in his theory of personal identity.

In order to establish his concept of 'persons', Strawson discusses and rejects other views and then goes on to give his idea of persons. We shall start with his critique of 'No-Ownership Theory' and 'Cartesian-Dualism' and then go on to his theory of persons as primitive particulars. Next will be his theory about M-predicates and P-predicates and then his theory about persons - which is the central thesis of his theory of personal identity.

2.3.1 Critique of Dualism and No-Ownership Thesis

For Strawson, in order to understand 'persons', it is important to answer two questions first, (a) why do we ascribe states of consciousness to anything? And, second (b) why do we ascribe them to the same thing to which we ascribe physical predicates? Before giving his own answer to the two questions, he considers two alternative answers to these questions. For the No-Ownership thesis and Cartesianism, ascribing consciousness to anything at all is wrong. This is so, according to Strawson, "for, on both views, it is only a linguistic illusion that both kinds of predicate are properly ascribed to one and the same thing, that there is a common owner, or subject, of both types of predicate."⁸⁵ Hence, according to '*No-Ownership Theory*' held by Wittgenstein and Schlick,⁸⁶ it is improper to ascribe states of consciousness to anything at all. In other words, the role of a body in someone's experience is not enough reason to explain why that experience should be ascribed to anyone. It would be improper to ascribe them to the body, and it would also be improper to say that bodies could be persons. Therefore, the second question does not arise. While according to '*Cartesian-Dualism*' held by Descartes and others, the state of consciousness is ascribed to either of two separate entities; mind or bodies, and not to both entities. Thus, it is not the

⁸⁵ Strawson (1959), p-94

⁸⁶ Shaffer (1968), p-94

case that consciousness is ascribed to persons but to one of its attributes, that is, the mind.

However, Strawson argues that, the No-Ownership account is incoherent because “it involves the denial that someone’s states of consciousness are anyone’s.”⁸⁷ States of consciousness can be ascribed to oneself only if we can ascribe it to others, or be prepared to do so. And we can ascribe consciousness to others only if we identify them as a possessor of states of consciousness. Thus, ascribing states of consciousness to oneself is important in order to be able to identify and ascribe it to others as well. Against dualism Strawson argues that, “uniqueness of the body does not guarantee uniqueness of the Cartesian soul.”⁸⁸ For, if we accept the Cartesian account, then we will have to put experience on the one hand and bodies on the other. However, this will only suggest that all of *my* (italics is Strawson’s) experiences stand in a special relation to body A, and so body A is unique. But the problem here is ‘whether it is right to speak of *my* (italics is Strawson’s) experiences at all’, and not if a body is unique or not.

After criticizing the ‘No-Ownership Thesis’ and the ‘Cartesian Theory’, Strawson goes on to give his own view on ‘persons’. According

⁸⁷ Strawson (1959), p-98

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p-101

to him, person is a 'primitive concept'; a concept which does not need definition or understanding in terms of any other concepts. Also, we shall try to find out what answer he gives to the above two questions - (a) why do we ascribe states of consciousness to anything? And, (b) why do we ascribe them to the same thing to which we ascribe physical predicates?

2.3.2 Person as Primitive Particular

According to Strawson, the concept of a 'person' is a primitive concept and, unlike the above two views, not reducible to concepts like ego or material bodies. It is a concept of a type "of entity such that *both* predicates ascribing states of consciousness *and* predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation etc., are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type."⁸⁹ And, states of consciousness should be ascribed to this type of entity, for without consciousness we will not be able to have personal identity. So, "states of consciousness cannot be ascribed at all, *unless* they were ascribed to persons, in the sense I have claimed for this word."⁹⁰ In order for us to be able to ascribe consciousness to ourselves, we must be able to ascribe it to others, or prepared to do so if the need arises. Strawson further goes on to say that, in order to ascribe consciousness to others, one must have some physical conditions that

⁸⁹ Miri (1980), p-9

⁹⁰ *Ibid*

were in “some sense logically adequate kinds of criteria”⁹¹. For, we can ascribe states of consciousness to others only on the basis of some physical conditions. And, as these physical conditions are necessary and adequate conditions to ascribe states of consciousness to others, they must also be essential for persons too.

Strawson further argues that the view that persons are composed of two distinct subjects - (a) an ego, a pure consciousness or subject of experiences, and (b) subject of corporal attributes - is not acceptable. For, if we look into it carefully, we can see that the concept of two subjects actually is a concept that contains ‘one subject and one non-subject’. That is, the concept of pure individual consciousness cannot exist as a primary concept that can explain or analyze the concept of a person. But it can exist as a secondary non-primitive concept to be explained and analyzed in terms of the concept of person itself. Thus, it was this illusory primary concepts, which according to Strawson, “Hume was seeking...when he looked into himself, and complained that he could never discover himself without a perception...It was this, too, to which Kant...accorded a purely formal (‘analytic’) unity: the unity of the ‘I think’ that accompanies all my

⁹¹ *Ibid*

perceptions and therefore might just as well accompany none.”⁹² Thus, the ‘I’ refers not to the pure ego, but to the person properly.

Strawson also holds that, “the simple truth is that we are ordinarily and rationally content to operate with a concept of ourselves and other people as beings who are both corporal and conscious; and it is to such creatures, to human beings, that we employ all the personal pronouns, including the first, to refer.”⁹³ Making it clear the importance of consciousness in the concept of personal identity. So, according to Strawson, “The concept of a person is logically prior to that of an individual consciousness...A person is not an embodied ego, but an ego might be a dis-embodied person, retaining the logical benefit of individuality from having been a person.”⁹⁴ This makes it possible to ascribe states of consciousness to persons, which in turn makes it possible to have the concept of personal identity. Thus, the answer to both the questions (a) and (b) are interlinked.

How are we to distinguish between two individuals if we are to ascribe states of consciousness? According to Strawson, the individuals concerned are of a certain unique type, such that to each individual, both states of consciousness and corporeal characteristics

⁹² Strawson (1959), p-103

⁹³ Cassam (1994), p-212

⁹⁴ Strawson (1959), p-103

must be ascribed or ascribable. We shall now discuss how the two types of predicates, M-predicates and P-predicates, are applied to individuals of this type:

2.3.3 M-Predicate and P-Predicate

Strawson base his discussion of persons on a distinction between two kinds of predicates that we can ascribe to ourselves, which he calls M-predicates and P-predicates. Here, M-predicates are those that could be ascribed also to material objects; whereas P-predicates are those that could not possibly be ascribed to material objects. P-predicates include such things as actions and intentions, thoughts and feelings, perceptions, memories and sensations. For him, it is not the case that persons are things which just happen to have bodily attributes, nor is it the case that they are things which just happen to have mental attributes. It is essential to persons that they be entities which necessarily have both mental and bodily attributes. And that means that they are things which differ essentially from bodies, which have only bodily attributes.

Strawson goes on to consider P-predicates in general, and says that even not all P-predicates can be regarded as 'predicates ascribing states of consciousness'. For example, going for a walk is not. Yet, they may be said to have one thing in common, which is, "they imply the

possession of consciousness on the part of which they are ascribed.”⁹⁵ Further, we need logically adequate kinds of criteria for the ascription of P-predicates to decide whether a particular behavior of a person is adequate to act as a reason for ascribing P-predicates. Also, P-predicates are both self-ascriptive and other-ascriptive, meaning, it is possible to ascribe P-predicates to oneself as well as to others. In case of self-ascription, it is not the case that one apply the same behavioral criteria to decide whether one should ascribe P-predicates or not. However, this is not true for all cases of P-predicates. For instance, this may occur in cases which carry assessments of character or capability in which self-ascriptions are made on the same kind of basis as they are on others. Still there remain cases where one has an adequate basis for ascribing P-predicates to oneself, while having distinct basis to ascribe the same predicates to another.

We can ask - how statements like ‘I am happy, I feel tired’ can reconcile with the doctrine of ascribing P-predicates to others? According to Strawson, this difficulty is a form of failure to recognize the special character of P-predicates. There is no single primary process of learning the inner meaning of these predicates and another process for applying them. Also there is no primary process of learning to apply these predicates to others on the strength of behavior criteria,

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p-105

and another process to acquire first-person P-utterances form of behavior. Thus, in order to understand the above question, “one must acknowledge that there is a kind of predicate which is unambiguously and adequately ascribable *both* on the basis of observation of the subject of the predicate *and* not on this basis, i.e., independently of observation of the subject: the second case is the case where the ascriber is also the subject. If there were no concepts answering to the characterization I have just given, we should indeed have no philosophical problem about the soul; but equally we should not have our concept of a person.”⁹⁶ The importance of the concept of predicates have been highlighted by Strawson here by pointing out that the concept of predicates are attributes of the concept of persons.

2.3.4 Idea of Persons

According to Strawson, ‘person’ means “a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation, etc., are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type.”⁹⁷ Strawson’s view is also known as the ‘Double Aspect Thesis’. This theory holds that the mental and the physical are both the attributes of *persons*, in other words, ‘persons’ is the underlying entity that has both mental and physical attributes. Thus, we could say of the person

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p-108

⁹⁷ Shaffer (1968), pp-55.

that, she is 5 feet 7 inches tall, weight 55 kg, and is moving at the rate of 2 km an hour (all physical attributes). Moreover, we could say of the very same entity, that person, that she is now thinking about a book she is reading, feels excited about finishing the book, then wishes that she has time to complete the book (all mental attributes). Therefore, we can see that we have neither attributions to two different subjects, a mind and a body (dualism), nor attributions to a body (materialism), but attributions to a person. Thus, we may say that, the person has a mind and a body, but all that means is that both mental and physical attributes are applicable to her.

In a sense we can say that Strawson is a dualist, as he holds that there are two different types of subjects in the natural world, viz., physical bodies and persons. And the difference is that, physical bodies necessarily have solely the physical dimension; persons necessarily have two dimensions, physical and mental dimensions. Further, the notion of attributing a state of consciousness to a subject cannot be analyzed as the notion of attributing a state of consciousness to a body. So, for Strawson, in order for the materialists and epiphenomenalists to formulate their claims they must have a concept of a subject of mental states which is different from the concept of material body. For they wish to single out sets of mental states and go on to make the nontrivial claim about each of those sets

that it is dependent upon some particular body. So they cannot use the body to single out the sets. Hence, their notion of a subject of states consciousness must be different from their notion of material body. Otherwise, their claim degenerates into the triviality that all those states of consciousness dependent upon a body are dependent upon that body, a claim too empty to be worth asserting.

2.4 Conclusion

After discussing in details the views of Bernard Williams and P.F. Strawson on the problem of personal identity, we can say that even though they do not accept dualism at the outset, yet they are also a dualist in their own ways. That is, they advocate the 'Mixed View' and the 'Double Aspect Thesis' of personal identity which accept the importance of both the bodily continuity and the psychological continuity, though in different ways. Both stress the need to have a theory which will cover every aspect of maintaining one's identity over time. For Williams, "Identity of body is at least not a sufficient condition of personal identity, and other considerations, of personal characteristics and, above all, memory, must be invoked." ⁹⁸ On the other hand, for Strawson, "the mental and the physical are both of them attributes of persons."⁹⁹ Also, another instance of similarity

⁹⁸ Williams (1973), p-1

⁹⁹ Shaffer (1968), p-52.

between Strawson's and Cartesian views lies in the fact that, both believes that persons are categorically distinct from extended things. Thus, "Strawson, in spite of his avowed anti-Cartesianism, shares this assumption with Descartes."¹⁰⁰

However, we can see that the importance attached to the two aspects of continuity, that is, the bodily and psychological continuity to maintain personal identity, are a bit different in the two views. It seems that Strawson attaches the same amount of importance to both the aspects, while for Williams, the bodily continuity aspect is more important than the psychological continuity aspect. There are some places where Williams accords as much importance to psychological continuity as to bodily continuity¹⁰¹. But, there are also places where bodily continuity is preferred, like when he says, "bodily identity is always a necessary condition of personal identity".¹⁰² It seems that Williams contradicts himself sometimes, also looking at the amount of importance he gives to bodily continuity, it becomes a bit difficult to regard his view as a mixed view. At the same time, he did acknowledge that both bodily continuity and psychological continuity provides the necessary and sufficient condition for personal identity.

¹⁰⁰ Miri (1980), p-2. How, for Descartes, the mind and body are distinct is given properly in the reference given and can be seen in page 2-7.

¹⁰¹ As it can be seen from the first paragraph of this section, where he is already quoted.

¹⁰² Williams (1973), p-1

According to Strawson, however, the importance of both mental and physical attributes was never confused. They were always regarded as the main constituents of personal identity, that is, without both the attributes we cannot have a 'person'. This is also one point in which Williams and Strawson differs, as it is important that the main criterion of one's identity be clear if we are to have an account that is acceptable to all. The aim of their account on personal identity was to have such an account, which will not face the same objections like the materialists' and the dualists' accounts. And to some extent they succeed in it, because their views are definitely more acceptable than those of the materialists' and dualists' views. However, as philosophical discussions goes, we can always improve on their views, and it is still improved upon by philosophers through debates and discussions.

Even though both views are similar in accepting bodily and psychological continuity, yet one is more comfortable in accepting Strawson's account of personal identity. Though not totally free from ambiguity, but it is less ambiguous than Williams. Unlike Williams, who sometimes cannot decide whether to accept psychological continuity as a criterion of personal identity or not, Strawson was at least clear that both bodily and psychological continuity are important. It is also important to have a theory that will be able to face critical

analysis. And Strawson succeeds in doing that and that is a good reason to accept his view as more persuasive than those of Williams.

However, Strawson's account has been criticized by Miri. Miri argues that, "the ordinary criteria of personal identity are claimed to be multiple, in spite of the awkward implication of this claim for Strawson's theory. It is possible therefore that their application might sometimes produce conflicting results. But how, on Strawson's theory, is one to resolve such conflicts? Merely to stress the word "personal" does not solve the problem, it merely raises it."¹⁰³ Here, we can see that the idea of personal identity is not clear in Strawson's account. What is clear is that both the bodily and the psychological continuity are important in defining one's identity. In spite of the difficulties faced by Strawson's account, it is still more acceptable than Williams' view on personal identity.

Thus, we can say that, Bernard Williams' and P.F. Strawson's account of personal identity is more acceptable than those of the Materialists' and the Dualists' account of personal identity. Now, we shall go on to discuss the view put forth by Derek Parfit on personal identity in the next chapter. We shall try to see how it is different from the account of personal identity discussed before. Further, we shall try

¹⁰³ Miri (1980), p-14

to show the relationship between personal identity and value theory as discussed by Parfit.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Parfit (1984), p-199-347

CHAPTER 3

Personal Identity in relation to Value Theory and Moral Responsibility

3.1 Introduction

Philosophers have drawn the connection between Morality and Identity in two different ways: 1. Metaphysical theories about personal identity, that is, about what makes one the same person overtime, have important consequences for what ought to matter to a rational agent. And, 2. Understanding the concrete identities of persons - the social context and personal commitments that give life substance and meaning. The above two points are essential if moral philosophy is to address real human concerns. Another important question is how are metaphysical questions about personal identity supposed to bear on morality? The thought is that, what unifies a series of experiences into a single life illuminates what we are, and what we are helps determine how we ought to live. More broadly, it is natural to seek coherence in our metaphysical and moral views about persons. This pursuit of a comprehensive account has its danger: "perhaps we will tailor a metaphysical view to fit our moral prejudices, or distort moral philosophy and judgment to fit a false metaphysics. But the pursuit

has its attraction too: perhaps we will come to understand what we are and how we ought to live, in a single package".¹⁰⁵

For John Locke, *person* is an amalgam of the actions for which that person can take responsibility, as one cannot take responsibility for what one cannot remember. So, Locke's sense of the moral role of the concept of person shapes his metaphysical account of personal identity. In Derek Parfit's terminology, identity requires that there be no branching. According to him, even in ordinary cases, what matters in survival is not identity but the obtaining of the right psychological relation with some future person. So, the relationship between personal identity and morality in general and moral responsibility in particular is based on what we value most. That is, for Parfit personal identity consists in the psychological connectedness and continuity of a person, which he calls 'Relation R'¹⁰⁶with the right kind of cause, and it is used in the widest term possible. And there is no further 'fact' apart from these. As the connectedness and continuity is more valuable, its relation with moral responsibility or morality will be different from those who insist in the importance of physical continuity. We will go into details later.

¹⁰⁵ Routledge Encyclopedia (1998), vol.8.

¹⁰⁶ Parfit (1984), p-215

However, Parfit's view has been criticized on two accounts. The more straightforward criticism is that personal identity does consist in the holding of some 'further fact', that is, the existence of an unchanging soul cannot be rejected. The subtler one agrees with Parfit that some form of reductionism is correct, but disagrees with his permissive attitude towards the cause of relation R and with his exclusively psychological reductionism. Another theory called 'The Concrete Identity Thesis' which is the second broad approach to connecting issues of morality and identity holds that, in order to see morality clearly we must see people as wholes. Understanding our moral lives might require that our attention move back and forth between general features of persons and persons in their particularity. So, we cannot concentrate on single aspect of a person as Parfit does, that is, concentrating on psychological connectedness and continuity alone.

The connection between theories of personal identity and value theory is extremely important and has recently been highlighted by Philosophers. It has been argued by some philosophers that, on the correct theory of personal identity it is not identity that matters but the preservation of psychological relations such as memory and character¹⁰⁷. According to their views, psychological relations can hold

¹⁰⁷ For example, John Locke and Sydney Shoemaker.

between one earlier person and two or more later persons. They can also hold to varying degrees, for example, I can acquire a more or less different character over a period of time/years. This view of what matters has implications for certain theories of punishment. For example, a now reformed criminal may deserve less or no punishment for the crimes of their earlier criminal self. Let us now go on to the detailed views of Derek Parfit on personal identity and its relation to value theory. It is considered to be a radical theory, so we can see whether it is acceptable to us or not.

3.2 Derek Parfit's view on Personal Identity and Value Theory

Derek Parfit, in his well-known work *Reasons and Persons*, has listed the questions that have to be asked about the nature of persons and of personal identity over time. These are: 1) What is the nature of a person?, 2) What is it that makes a person at two different times one and the same person?, 3) What is necessarily involved in the continued existence of each person over time? He also introduces a moral or value aspect to the discussion by adding: 4) What is in fact involved in the continued existence of each person over time? Here, an answer to the third question would be only a part of the answer to the fourth, since what is necessarily involved in the continued existence of a person need not exhaust what is in fact involved in it. Thus, being optimistic, for instance, is not necessarily involved in our survival, but

it may well be part of what is in fact involved. The introduction of the moral or value dimension also opens up the distinction between the objective aspects of identity, those that a person may possess because of his or her biological and social location, and the subjective aspects, those that he or she may value or identify with.¹⁰⁸

3.2.1 Psychological connectedness and Personal Identity

Parfit has proposed a concept of psychological connectedness that is more complex than the simple notion of the memory of past experience put forth by John Locke. So, according to Parfit, strong connectedness itself cannot be the criterion of identity. It is rather psychological continuity which is the criterion of personal identity. Psychological continuity can be maintained in two different ways:-

- 1) In the narrow sense, psychological continuity can only have a normal cause, that is, I seem to remember having an experience only after it was suggested to me that I had that experience; I did not actually remember it in the normal way. It means that my apparent memory is not causally dependent on my past experiences but rather on the suggestion that I had that experience. In the narrow interpretation there is no psychological continuity here.

¹⁰⁸ Chatterjee (2002), p-117

2) In the wider sense, not only normal causes but any reliable causes, or any cause, is considered acceptable for maintaining psychological continuity, and hence for establishing personal identity. So, it will make a lot of difference to our idea of personal identity in the interpretation of the psychological criterion that is being accepted.

On the moral implications of the question of personal identity, there are two broad approaches called the 'Reductionist' and the 'Non-Reductionist'. Cutting through that debate is Derek Parfit's radical suggestion that what really matters is not personal identity but psychological continuity with any kind of cause. According to the Reductionists, personal identity involves the continued physical existence of enough of the brain and/or psychological continuity with the right kind of cause. No other 'further fact' exists or is needed in personal identity. However, Non-Reductionist holds that personal identity cannot be reduced to certain facts about physical or psychological continuity. They insist that the identity of a person must involve a further fact. In other words, we can say, at the least, something beyond the sum total of elements comprising the body and the brain of the person. Here, Parfit accepts the Reductionist's account, but goes one step further by suggesting that, personal

identity involves nothing apart from psychological connectedness and/or continuity, with any kind of cause.

Also, according to Parfit, no matter how we define physical and psychological continuity, the possibility to imagine situations in which personal identity will be indeterminate and undecidable remains according to the reductionist criteria. So, he concludes by saying that what matters is not personal identity but continuity of a person in some form, that is, the person's survival. For example, after a person is cloned, even if the original is destroyed, nothing would be lost. The reason being whether or not the person survives in his or her original body, the physical and psychological continuity would be maintained just as well in the cloned one. Parfit's suggestion has been considered too radical a proposal that goes against the grain of conventional assumptions. One of the objections is by Peter Unger¹⁰⁹, who asks us to imagine how he would feel if it was suggested to him that his wife Susan be replaced by an exact duplicate. He says that like most people he would refuse to accept any such proposal. He says, "Evidently, I do not just care about the very many highly specific qualities my wife has...Quite beyond any of that, I care about the one particular person who is my wife; I care about Susan and, as well, I care about the

¹⁰⁹ See Chatterjee (2002), p-125

continuance of my particular relationship with her.”¹¹⁰ Therefore, according to Unger, what matters in survival is not just physical and psychological continuity in some manner or form but the identity of the particular individual that we value and identify with.

Further, in the third chapter of *Reasons and Persons*, Parfit deals with the topic of personal identity. He describes two conceptions of persons¹¹¹, i.e., the natural and dominant conception and the alternative reductionist conception. In the natural and dominant conception, persons are ‘separately existing entities’ (for example, immaterial Cartesian Egos), only contingently linked to their physical bodies. Here, the identity over time of Egos is necessarily determinate. In the alternative Reductionist conception, the existence of a person ‘just involves’ the existence of a brain, body, and stream of mental and physical events, and the identity over time of a person can sometimes be vague or indeterminate. One of Parfit’s central claims is that if we relinquish Cartesianism and embrace Reductionism, the identity and non-identity of persons will matter less. What matters will be surviving as some future person, through any kinds of cause. Meaning, if Reductionism is true, personal identity is not, in itself, an important relation.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Chatterjee (2002), p-126

¹¹¹ See Garrett, (1992), p-338

3.2.2 Reductionism and Identity

Parfit goes on to say that, we are naturally disposed to accept a 'Non-Reductionist' account of personal identity. According to this account, persons are 'separately existing entities', whose existence is all-or-nothing and does not consist in the holding of certain relations among mental events and bodies, and whose identity is perfectly determinate. Unity of consciousness is explained in terms of 'ownership' of different experiences by such a separately existing entity. And it is the continued identity of the entity of this sort that 'matters', and this is the focus of the special concern one has for one's future existence and well-being. But while this is what we tend to believe, according to Parfit, it is not what we should believe.

Parfit champions a 'Reductionist' account according to which we are not such separately existing entities. Personal identity consists in facts that can be described 'impersonally', more specifically in terms of 'non-branching psychological continuity and connectedness'. We have psychological continuity when a person remembers his earlier deeds and experiences, or when an intention formed at one time is fulfilled at a later time, or when there is persistence of psychological traits over time. Psychological continuity consists in there being a chain of overlapping psychological connections. It is partly because

psychological connectedness varies in degree that there can be cases in which personal identity is indeterminate.

In other words, what makes it rational for me to have a special concern for my well-being at a future time is the fact that my present states stand to my future states in the relations of psychological continuity and connectedness that are constitutive of personal identity. But in so far as the holding of these relations justifies future concern, it would do so even when, because of 'branching', the relations do not constitute identity. Thus, if I split into two people (as in David Wiggins's¹¹² example in which the hemisphere of someone's brain are separated and transplanted into different bodies), and my present stage is equally connected with the future stages of both, I should have the same concern for their future well-being as I should have for my own in ordinary cases, even though strictly speaking I can be identical with neither. And even in cases in which the future person is myself, I can be justified in having less concern in some cases (for example when the future person-stage is temporally remote) because the degree of connectedness is less. This can justify treating different parts of a person's life as if they were different persons. Thus, Parfit thinks, "boundaries between persons' have less moral significance than they are usually suppose to have (and, Parfit thinks, than they

¹¹² See Shoemaker (1985), p-444

would have if the Non-Reductionist view were true), or, on an extreme version of the view, none at all.”¹¹³

3.2.3 Unimportance of Personal Identity

Parfit argues that “what matters to survival is not identity, and further, that the concept of identity does not apply to persons.”¹¹⁴ That is, for him, it is not important to have personal identity for us to survive. It is the psychological continuity of a person that is important in the long run, even if there is no physical continuity to support it. This was shown by Parfit in the fission or branching example that he had given, in which he tried to prove that branching do not allow us to have any kinds of personal identity¹¹⁵. Another point that Parfit tries to put forth is that, if we try to cling to the idea that personal identity is important then we will not be able to have any theory of identity which will be able to withstand the re-duplication theory. It is the re-duplication argument that stands against any kinds of identity theory¹¹⁶.

¹¹³ Quoted from Shoemaker (1985), p-444

¹¹⁴ Quoted from Macdonald (2005), p-168

¹¹⁵ Parfit (1984), p-245-280. One example is where a person’s brain is divided into two hemispheres and transplanted into two different persons. We can ask – which one is continuous with the original one? And, the answer according to Parfit is ‘neither of them.’ So, any form of branching or fission does not provide personal identity.

¹¹⁶ So, in order to avoid the re-duplication error, we must do away with the identity theory. Instead, we need to accept the reductionist’s view.

Further, Parfit goes on to show the un-importance of personal identity by giving a thought-experiment of a 'split-brain' patients whose upper-hemisphere connections were cut-off to cure epilepsy.¹¹⁷ Here, evidence from such patients suggests that consciousness divides into two independent streams, that is, a divided mind in a single body. This example moves on to a situation where *X*'s brain is divided into two and each hemisphere is placed in two new bodies, say those of *Y* and *Z*. The result is that, both *Y* and *Z* are psychologically continuous with *X*, in other words, they have the same memories, beliefs, characters, etc., and partly physically continuous too. However, Parfit argues that, the above thought-experiment is unable to answer the question 'How does *X* survive?' To say 'X survive as one of the two (i.e., *Y* or *Z*)', will give rise to another question 'which of the resulting person is *X* exactly?' which it fails to answer. On the other hand, to say 'X survives as both' will mean that one person can have two minds and two bodies simultaneously. Thus, the most plausible answer appears to be: 'X does not survive' as *X* is not identical to either *Y* or *Z*. Thus, this "shows that it is not identity that matters, but what matters is Relation R: psychological connectedness and/or psychological continuity, with the right kind of cause."¹¹⁸ So, in case of division, he regards the question 'how does *X* survive?' as an empty question. That

¹¹⁷ See Garret (1992), p-342

¹¹⁸ Parfit (1984), p-279

is, these types of questions do not have any meaningful answers, and it does not matter even if there is no answer to it.

Thus, Parfit says, "Which is the relation that is important? Is what matters personal identity, or relation R?...If we believe that we are separately existing entities, we could plausibly claim that identity is what matters...But we have sufficient evidence to reject this view. If we are Reductionists, we cannot plausibly claim that, of these two relations, it is identity that matters. On our view, the fact of personal identity just consists in the holding of relation R, when it takes a non-branching form. If personal identity just consists in this other relation, this other relation must be what matters."¹¹⁹ He agrees that it will be a bit difficult to accept his theory that, 'personal identity is not what matters' on its own. But, if we consider it with the case of division where a person's brain divide into two and transplanted to two different people, the problems disappear. Also, he considers the case of division to be better than death as division will enable him to do things which he cannot do as a single person or a dead person. For example, "If I have two strong but incompatible ambitions, division provides a way of fulfilling both, in a way that would gladden each resulting person."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p-262

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p-265

For Parfit, what we value in ourselves and others are not the continued existence of the same brain or body. But, we value the various relations between ourselves and others, whom we love, our commitments, emotions, memories, and other psychological features. So, if some later person is R-related to me as I am now, it does not matter whether this person has my present brain and body. It will not matter even if my brain was replaced with an exact duplicate. This will be as good as ordinary survival. For example, in the case of teletransportation I know exactly what is going to happen. I am fully prepared for the transitions of the exact condition of my cells on Earth to my replica on, say, Mars. The scanner on Earth destroys my brain and body at the time of recording the exact condition, but I still survive as my replica. And this is as good as ordinary survival for Parfit.¹²¹

So, according to Parfit, we need not worry about whether our body will survive or not. Survival of our psychological continuity in any form is more valuable than having the same body or brain. If the future 'me' is psychologically continuous with me, then it will not matter whether she has the same body or brain as me or not. Against Bernard Williams claim that, 'loving a person is loving a particular body' is true even if it is misleading; Parfit argues that, if loving

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p-199. Here, in simple tele-transportation the scanner destroy the original brain and body after scanning. On the other hand, in complex tele-transportation the original also survives.

someone means loving a particular body, then “on the death of one identical twin, this obsession could be transferred, without any grief, to the other twin’s body.”¹²² But this is not the case in our normal relationships. If two people are in love then they have shared histories which cannot be shared by any third person, not even an identical twin. However, Parfit holds that his view is compatible with Nagel’s imagined alternative to the actual world - in which people are replicated, but only in one-one form, where there are never two existing Replicas of one person. Just as Parfit’s claim that Relation R never takes a branching form, so in Nagel’s alternative world Relation R traces lines through many different bodies, but never takes a branching form. Thus, in such a world ordinary love would survive unchanged which is what fundamentally matters here.

Thus, according to Derek Parfit, what is most valuable for our survival in future is not our body or brain. The continuity of relation R of our psychological attributes is deemed as utmost important in order to have a continuous being in future. His view is different from those of other thinkers who had accepted the psychological continuity criterion of personal identity in many ways. Unlike most of the philosophers who accepts psychological continuity, Parfit holds that relation R with ‘any cause’ is acceptable as a criterion of psychological

¹²² Parfit (1984), p-297

continuity. That is, he accepts both normal and abnormal causes, which is regarded as too wide and so not acceptable by most philosophers¹²³. He also claims that, personal identity is not important at all. For, as our concept of identity is either based on bodily continuity, psychological continuity, or mixture of both, it cannot be the case that identity is as important as we think it to be. What is important, in truth, is the survival of ourselves in some form or the other, and that can be achieved only if we are continuous in relation R. What kinds of consequences will this view has on Morality? Let us find it out now.

3.3 The Consequences of Parfit's view on Morality.

We have seen how Parfit gives a totally new perspective to the personal identity problem by suggesting that 'personal identity is not what matters at all'. By advocating a reductionist view about personal identity, a change of view in morality follows. With various concrete examples he tries to understand this relationship between his theory of personal identity and morality. For example, he takes the case of abortion. According to Non-Reductionist view, as existence is all-or-nothing, there must be a moment when one started to exist. But, it is not possible to claim that the moment when one started to exist as

¹²³ The most prominent being John Locke, even though he accepts 'memory' as a criterion of personal identity, he puts a condition that the concerned person must be able to remember that he/she had experienced what he/she remember now.

conception, or birth. So, abortion is morally wrong. However, on the Reductionist view, as existence does not mean existing at every moment, it can be denied that a fertilized ovum is a person or a human being. There is no sharp borderline to show at what moment the fertilized ovum becomes a human being. For the Reductionist, the fertilized ovum slowly becomes a human being, and then a person. So, "the destruction of this organism is not at first but slowly becomes seriously wrong...As the organism becomes fully a human being, or a person, the minor wrong-doing changes into an act that would be seriously wrong."¹²⁴ Parfit draws a distinction between a human being and a person following Locke;¹²⁵ as a result, for him human being becomes a person only after becoming self-conscious. Thus, in his view, abortion is not wrong if it is done in the early part of pregnancy, but as more time elapse aborting it will become more wrong. So, the difference between Non-Reductionist view's and Parfit's standpoint can be seen here.

Parfit goes on to other moral questions such as responsibility (he called Desert). For the Non-Reductionist, as personal identity involves a deep further fact distinct from bodily and psychological continuity, only the existence of this fact will carry desert for past crime. And in the absence of this fact, there will be no desert. That is, even if a

¹²⁴ Parfit (1984), p-322

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

person who had committed a crime cannot remember, that person still needs to be punished because he/she has the same 'further fact or soul' as the one who committed the crime a long time ago. But Parfit holds that, if a "convict is now less closely connected to himself at the time of his crime, he deserves less punishment. If the connections are very weak, he may deserve none...Suppose a man aged ninety, one of the few rightful holders of the Nobel Peace Prize, confesses that it was he who, at the age of twenty, injured a policeman in a drunken brawl. Though this was a serious crime, this man may not now deserve to be punished."¹²⁶ Thus, for the Non-Reductionist, degree of connectedness does not matter as long as they have the same soul. And the person should be punished so as to act as a deterrent for others. While for Parfit, the connectedness or continuity is the deciding factor whether and how much to punished.

Further, Parfit goes on to apply his view about the nature of personal identity on moral principle claims made by Utilitarianism. He holds that, Utilitarianism rejects boundaries between lives. There can be three possible reasons why they treat sets of lives as we treat single lives. The three suggestions highlighted by Parfit are as follows:¹²⁷

- 1) Their method of moral reasoning leads them to overlook these boundaries. Or,

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p-326

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p-331

- 2) They believe that the boundaries are unimportant, because they think that sets of lives are like single lives. Or,
- 3) They accept the Reductionist View about personal identity.

Regarding suggestion (1), Parfit goes on to say that, this suggestion was made by Rawls and it can be summarized as follows: when a Utilitarian ask himself 'what would be right or what would he prefer' to do to help in case of a problem in society, the person will identify with all the affected people as an impartial observer. By imagining that he/she would be all of the affected people, the person will ignore the fact that they are different people. As a result, he/she will ignore the claims of just distribution between these people. However, Parfit argues that the fact that one is an impartial observer cannot be the reason why one should ignore the principles of distributive justice. Also, approaching morality in this detached way will give rise to rejecting these principles, because we will not be afraid to become one of the affected people. "But this particular approach to moral questions does not sufficiently explain why these Utilitarians reject distributive principles."¹²⁸

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p-332

Suggestion (2) has been made by Gauthier and others, and if this is to be accepted then Utilitarians must assume that mankind is a super-organism. But, Parfit argues that this cannot be the case because it is a mistake to ignore the fact that we live different lives. And it is also clear that mankind is not a super-organism. For example, a super-organism will not fight with itself as nations and even individuals do. And if mankind is a super-organism, then there will be no war and no killing either. So, this suggestion can be taken as an objection to the Utilitarian View, instead of taking it as an explanation of it. So, "the suggestion may be that this view cannot be justified unless mankind is a super-organism, and that, since this is false, Utilitarians are wrong to reject distributive principles."¹²⁹

Parfit suggest (3), and on this suggestion Utilitarians reject distributive principles because they believe in the Reductionist View. It is possible that some Utilitarians can be both an observer and accept the Reductionist View. However, suggestion (2) and (3) conflicts and cannot both be held together. Here, we can further see the difference between (2) - in which groups of people are compared to a single person, and (3) where Reductionist compares a person's history with a nation or group of people. So, we can see that they are opposed to each other. But, one can hold both (1) and (3), as "some Utilitarians

¹²⁹ *Ibid*

may both be identifying observers, and accept the Reductionist View.”¹³⁰ Here, according to the Reductionist View, ‘People are like Nation’. The existence of nation involves nothing apart from the existence of its citizens, who lives together in its territory, acting together in certain ways. Thus, Parfit argues that his view is the most acceptable one and should be accepted as the explanation of the Utilitarian views as well.

Parfit goes on to say that, the Reductionism believe that the existence of a person involves nothing apart from the occurrence of interrelated mental and physical events. The existence of a person is not denied, but regarded as thinkers and agents who can describe his/her thoughts and actions to others. A person is not different from the facts of physical and psychological continuity; his existence is not all-or-nothing, nor is a person’s continued existences a deep further fact.¹³¹ These beliefs support certain moral claims, that is, by accepting these believes, “it becomes more plausible, when thinking morally, to focus less upon the person, the subject of experiences, and instead to focus more upon the experiences themselves. It becomes more plausible to claim that, just as we are right to ignore whether

¹³⁰ *Ibid*

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p-341

people come from the same or different nations, we are right to ignore whether experiences come within the same or different lives.”¹³²

Thus, we can see that, by accepting the Reductionist View, we can also accept the Utilitarians View that there are no boundaries while regarding persons. But this is not due to the fact that the lives of a group of people are like those of a single person. Rather, it is due to the fact that persons are like nations where there are no water-tight compartments between the members. These kinds of view give rise to totally different outlook about the commonly accepted societal norms regarding moral responsibility.

3.4 Conclusion

After giving his view on personal identity and then on morality, Parfit goes on to say that even if one feels a bit uneasy in accepting his view, one ought to be a Reductionist. He describes the effect of accepting the Reductionist View as, “it makes me less concerned about my own future, and my death, and more concerned about others. I welcome this widening in my concern.”¹³³ So, for Parfit as persons do not literally persists from one time to another, one need not worry about one’s future or death. Because the important thing is not whether some future person will be identical with him/her or not, but

¹³² *Ibid*

¹³³ *Ibid*, p-347

whether one will survive or not. And the cause of one's survival need not necessarily be a normal cause, but any kind of cause is acceptable as sufficient for survival. Also, he is in favor of momentary morality,¹³⁴ meaning we need to be moral for the present and not worry about future consequences. There is no condition that bodily continuity and psychological continuity must be there for survival either. Parfit provides us with wide criterion of personal identity.

Further, accepting this kind of view in regards to personal identity will drastically change our outlook towards the issue of moral responsibility. For example, if I am not to worry about whether my present body will have to bear the punishment, but someone else who will be related to me somehow, will bear the punishment. This will influence my action differently than if I am to worry that my present body will bear the punishment if I do wrong. The consequence can be disastrous, because nobody will be afraid to do wrong then. Moral obligations such as, making promises and fulfilling it, making commitments and following it through, fulfilling one's responsibility, and many other will be neglected which will be dangerous for the society. Imagine a society where moral responsibility is not given importance, as people are not worried about the consequences

¹³⁴ Here, Parfit's view can be compared with the Buddhist's theory of momentariness. According to which there is no persistent substance or soul, our existence is a quick succession of moments. As a result, we do not have to worry about our future.

anymore, for it will not be their present body that will bear the brunt...It will be a very different society from the one we live in now. And it will not be possible to accept it as a normal society in terms of what we understood as 'normal' in our society.

Parfit's idea of moral responsibility, therefore, cannot be a very acceptable one for us. And, this gives rise to whether we should accept his view on personal identity too. By accepting Parfit's idea of personal identity, we may have a very different society from the present one. We will not have to worry about the consequences of our actions as we do now. As our survival depends on the continuity of relation R and not on continuity of our body, there will be less concern about who will be rewarded or punished due to my actions. This can result in the deterioration of morality in the society at large, as nobody will be afraid to do wrong actions anymore. At the same time, few people will bother to fulfill their obligations as they are not sure who will be rewarded for their good actions. If we are to apply Parfit's idea of the relation between personal identity and morality, we will get a very different scenario. Thus, we can say that it is very difficult to accept Parfit's interpretation of the relationship between personal identity and morality in general and moral responsibility in particular.

This is due to the fact that, morality in general and moral responsibility in particular is invented by human beings and is there for the benefit of human beings/persons. This fact cannot be disputed, and so their relation to persons also cannot be questioned. If this is the case, then its relation to personal identity cannot be doubted either. The question that arises in our mind is: Without a person who will continue to exist to apply and fulfill these moral responsibilities? It will, infact, be useless to have the concept of moral responsibility itself. If a person ceases to worry whether he/she will be responsible for his/her actions, it will give rise to a situation where questions of morality will become irrelevant. Our very existence depends on the relation between personal identity and moral responsibility. And something as important as this seems to have been underplayed by Parfit. This does not mean that we have to worry about our death constantly, as Parfit does suggest¹³⁵, but we cannot ignore the importance of personal identity so as not to worry about our moral obligations. We cannot ignore the fact that there is a strong connection between one's identity and moral life.

Another problem with Parfit's account of personal identity is that, for him any kind of psychological connectedness or continuity is enough reason for some future person to be me. Here, if this is the

¹³⁵ Parfit (1984), p-347

case, then it will be possible for me to survive as say, my friend. For example, “my apparent memory experience of an event witnessed by a very close friend, which she told me about in great detail so often when I was young that I began to think of it as an event that occurred to me, could be enough to make me psychologically continuous with my friend.”¹³⁶ But, how can I accept that I am not me but my friend? It is a bit confusing here, because, even though I can remember my friend’s experience about the event, I am not my friend. The fact remains that, my body and my friend’s body is different and we have different lives, we cannot say that my friend is living two lives either.

Another claim made by Parfit is that, “in any situation in which I will have more than one Parfitian survivor, it cannot be rational for me to take a greater degree of interest in one survivor over another.”¹³⁷ For example, in case of teletransportation, in entering a machine I can be transported to say, Mars, and my duplicate will be psychologically continuous with me. In such a case, if my original is not immediately destroyed after the transportation but eventually die of heart attack after sometime, then I will have two survivors for the time being. Now, according to Parfit, it will be wrong for me to have biased feelings and more concerns for either one of my survivors. If I am to have interest in either one of them, then it is more rational for me to be interested in

¹³⁶ Macdonald (2005), p-159

¹³⁷ *Ibid*

my duplicate, as it will live longer than my original. But, it will be very difficult to be more interested in my duplicate; instead I will be very sad and worried about my original's impending death. I will consider the original's impending death as 'my' impending death and it will not be a comfort to know that my duplicate will live even after my original dies.

On the other hand, if I am told about my duplicate's impending death, it will sadden and upset me too, but not to the extent that I will consider it as my own death. This shows that Parfit's theory of personal identity being not what matters and "his claim that our concern with our continued identity is only of derivative importance,"¹³⁸ cannot be accepted as the truth about personal identity in general. Because, identity does matter, and both psychological continuity and physical continuity are necessary and sufficient condition for personal identity. Thus, "one version of this is the view that *human* persons are psychological beings that are constituted by physical things, in something like the way in which a statue is constituted by the matter that makes it up, or a ring is constituted by gold...It may be, though, that while the particular lump of matter that constitutes a thing such as a statue or a ring may not

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p-161

be identical with it, it might also be that no statue or ring can exist without being constituted by some matter or other.”¹³⁹

So, we can say that, Parfit’s account of personal identity and value theory no doubt, provides us with an important new approach to the problem of personal identity. But, the theory cannot be accepted as it is not applicable in every situation. As philosophical theory goes, Parfit’s account is being debated and discussed upon by philosophers extensively. There are philosophers who agree with him and others who are against his view. However, there seems to be some convincing arguments against his view, which cannot be ignored altogether. However, inspite of the problem faced by Parfit’s idea of the relation between personal identity and morality/moral responsibility, the fact remains that he is considered as the first philosopher to put forth the relation. No doubt, other thinkers had talked about problems of personal identity and problems of morality/moral responsibility. But, Parfit is the first thinker in recent times to highlight the important connection between personal identity and morality/moral responsibility. Also, he put forth the view of one’s responsibility towards others, an important and new perspective in the relation between personal identity and morality/moral responsibility. Thus, we can say that, Parfit’s idea is indeed radical. Eventhough his theory as

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p-172

a whole is not acceptable to us; there is no doubt about the important changes brought in by the theory. It is rightly regarded as a 'classic' among philosophical writings.

CONCLUSION

In answer to the question - "What is it to be the same person today as one was in the past, or will be in the future?" we have discussed the views of different philosopher's. We discussed the two main views regarding the criterion of personal identity; those who accepts physical continuity as *the* criterion of personal identity, and those who accepts psychological continuity as *the* criterion of personal identity. There are thinkers who do not accept either of these criterions, and there are those who accept both the criterions as constitutive of personal identity. We shall recapitulate the main points of the views we have discussed.

For John Locke, psychological continuity (or memory) is considered as the criterion of personal identity. That is, a person's identity goes back as far as he/she can remember, or a person's identity depends on how much 'memory' he/she has about his/her past. But for David Hume, the concept of personal identity is just an illusion as there is nothing that is permanently continuous in us. That is, any form of 'continuity' is just a fiction, so there is no question of the 'problem' regarding what exactly 'continues' as such. Amongst the *Materialist's* thinkers we discussed Sydney Shoemaker's view in which,

following Locke, he emphasize on the importance of the brain. He holds that, the true criterion of personal identity should include 'consciousness' as well as 'memory' and they should be based on the physical object, that is, more particularly on the brain. As opposed to Materialism, *Dualist's* view propounded by Richard Swinburne holds that the criterion of personal identity must accept both the material body and the immaterial soul. Both are necessary for the criterion of personal identity.

Further, we discussed the *Mixed view* propounded by Bernard Williams which says that both the bodily continuity and psychological continuity makes necessary *and* sufficient condition of personal identity. And, also, P. F. Strawson's *Double Aspect Thesis*, which regards personal identity as secondary to 'persons' which is a 'primitive concepts', whose attributes consists of both M-predicates and P-predicates. Finally, we discussed the view of Derek Parfit, also known as the *Value Theory*. According to him, personal identity is not what matters, but 'survival' in any form is more valuable. So, personal identity does not give values to our lives, but survival with relation R in any form does.

This brings us to the question of the relationship between personal identity and moral responsibility. Even though moral

responsibility is grounded in some sort of psychological continuity, but moral obligations like compensation may not always do so. For example, “consider a case in which I am compensated for the damage done by a doctor during my botched birth or even for the negligence of my mother during her pregnancy with me. If compensation presupposes personal identity, then the best (perhaps only) way to account for these sorts of cases would be with a non-psychological criterion. The most obvious candidate would be some form of *animalism* for this at least allows me (the compensee) to be the same individual as that damaged infant or fetus.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, we can see the importance of accepting both psychological continuity and bodily continuity in the theory of personal identity. In the light of this relation, we can say that the ‘Double Aspect Thesis’ and the ‘Mixed View’ come nearest as the acceptable theory. They are clubbed together because their theories are both ‘Dualist’ in spirit, though they are critical of a Cartesian form of Dualism. However, neither of these two theories made any direct connection between the problem of personal identity and question of who is a morally responsible person.

In the light of our discussion on this relation between personal identity and morality/moral responsibility, we would like to end by making a few observations.

¹⁴⁰ Shoemaker. David. W (2007), p-338

1. To be Human is not necessarily to be a Person – Hume had made the distinction between human beings and persons. For example, a three day old child is not a person. So, he/she cannot be made responsible for any of his/her actions which may cause harm. A human being becomes a person when he/she can reflect upon his/her actions, intentions, feelings etc. In other words, we can say that ‘Personhood’ is gained, it is not something we are born with. Thus, self-knowledge, self-reflection, and self-awareness are necessary conditions for personhood.

2. Being a person means being an agent – We acquire personhood through our interactions with other. Our family, friends or even our experiences are related with other persons. As an agent, we interact with other persons in our everyday life. Without other to interact with, a human being will not be an agent and personhood will not be attained.

3. Persons are agents because they are self-reflective – It is only a self-reflective person who can engage in actions having moral bearings. The reason for this is that we act only when we are aware of our beliefs, desires, wants, needs, wishes etc., that is when we are self-reflectively engaged. Further, our self-

awareness gives rise to our moral obligations, which makes us an agent.

4. Finally we cannot be an agent and hence a person unless we are both embodied and conscious.

Thus, the importance of the relation between personal identity and morality/moral responsibility cannot be underplayed as Parfit does. On the other hand, we cannot accept any theory that does not talk about this relation at all. So, we can say that, our quest for a perfect view on the relation between personal identity and morality/moral responsibility remains open. It is an open ended question or quest, with the hope of finding an answer in the near future.

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