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## Chapter Six

## THE ISSUES AND PROBLEMS IN PERSONAL IDENTITY

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*The problem of personal identity over time is the problem of giving an account of the logically necessary and sufficient conditions for a person identified at one time being the same person as a person identified at another.*

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## I. Opening Notes

I was listening to a lecture by Christopher Shields on *Personal Identity* one evening where he talked about two students X & Y who during the course of their research on *Personal Identity*, sought for the best way to address the issues raised by John Lock as regards "Personal continuity". The following argument occurred between them.

X: A man at age 75 is far different from the man he was at age 20. This is because the man in this present age is now an old man, as such, he cannot be held responsible for an action/offence he committed when he was a young man in his youthful days.

Y: I beg to differ from your opinion Mr. X, I think you are missing the point. Based on the points that John Lock was trying to make in the arguments he presented for personal continuity, there are some enduring traits that have remained in the same young man at age 20 years and the same man now old at age 75. Since he still bears the same name for instance, there is no way the man now 75 years old, can be considered to be slightly or very different from the man he was at age 20. He therefore should be held accountable for the offence he committed at that youthful age of 20.

Y: Now tell me Mr. Y what you make of this illustration: There are two transparent glass jars "S" and "T", containers containing 200 small white pebbles each; used as some form of decorations in the office of our lecturer. Two days after this glass jars were put up as decorations in the office of our lecturer, a student, attracted away by the beauty of nature's earth's formation, comes along and takes away two pebbles from Jar "T" for an experiment she needs to carry out on igneous rocks the following day in the school's laboratory. This very act of removing two pebbles from Jar "T" changed the status of the glass jars and the pebbles put in them for decorative purposes in the office of our lecturer. Glass jar "T" has lost its original status, as such, it is no longer the same glass jar that our lecturer put up some three days back in his office as a work of art.

Y: With this kind of argument Mr. X, you only further complicate issues. The reason is that apart from you who witnessed the incident when the two pebbles were removed from Jar "T", there is really no noticeable difference between the pebbles in Glass Jar "S" and the pebbles in Glass Jar "T". Any onlooker seeing both glass Jars will most likely not know that two of the pebbles in Glass Jar "T" have been removed. They will still see the two lovely Glass Jars that were put up by their lecturer for decorative purposes.

X: I still do not agree with your position Mr. Y, this is because the removal of two pebbles from Glass Jar "T" is a significant change that has altered the original state and purpose of the two glass Jars filled with white pebbles in our lecturer's office.

Y: I see! (The events of the next moments were sudden and dramatic. Mr. Y braces himself and gives Mr. X a hard right hand slap to the face that takes him off his feet and knocks him down on the floor.)

X: Mr. Y! Are you out of your mind? What on earth was that slap for? Have you gone nuts?

Y: Hey!... Are you talking to me?

X: Why yes! I am talking to you Mr. Y. What was that slap all about?

Y: I don't know what you are talking about really, the guy you are now looking at Mr. X, is certainly not the same guy that you claimed slapped you some three minutes ago. That was in the past. Going by your first argument in the first line above, I cannot be held responsible for that offence since they guy who slapped you did that in the past. Change has taken place so I am now not that person Mr. X, I now understand the argument and the point you have been trying to pass across to me about John Lock. Thank you very much.

Who of these two young students have displayed a better understanding of the issues surrounding personal identity?

## II. Introduction

Personal identity deals with questions that arise about ourselves by virtue of our being people (or, as lawyers and philosophers like to say, *persons*). Many of these questions are familiar ones that occur to nearly all of us every now and then: What am I? When did I begin? What will happen to me when I die? Others are more abstruse. Personal identity has been discussed since the origins of Western philosophy, and most major figures have had something to say about it.

What does being the person you are, from one day to the next, necessarily consist in? This is the question of personal identity, and it is literally a question of life and death, as the correct answer to it determines which types of changes a person can undergo without ceasing to exist. Personal identity theory is the

philosophical confrontation with the most ultimate questions of our own existence: who are we, and is there a life after death? In distinguishing those changes in a person that constitute survival from those changes in a person that constitute death, a criterion of personal identity through time is given. Such a criterion specifies, insofar as that is possible, the necessary and sufficient conditions for the survival of persons.

The popular criterion, associated with Plato, Descartes and a number of world religions, is that persons are immaterial souls or pure egos. On this view, persons have bodies only contingently, not necessarily; so they can live after bodily death. Even though this so-called *Simple View* satisfies certain religious or spiritual predilections, it faces metaphysical and epistemological obstacles, as we shall see.

Another intuitively appealing view, championed by John Locke, holds that personal identity is a matter of *psychological continuity*. According to this view, in order for a person X to survive a particular adventure, it is necessary and sufficient that there exists, at a time after the adventure, a person Y who psychologically evolved out of X. This idea is typically cashed out in terms of overlapping chains of direct psychological connections, as those causal and cognitive connections between beliefs, desires, intentions, experiential memories, character traits, and so forth. This Lockean view is well suited for thought experiments conducted from first-person points of view, such as body swaps or tele-transportation, but it, too, faces obstacles. For example, on this view, it appears to be possible for two future persons to be psychologically continuous with a presently existing person. Can one really become two? In response to this problem, some commentators have suggested that, while our beliefs, memories, and intentions are experienced to be of utmost importance, they are not necessary for our identity, our persistence through time.

A third criterion of personal identity is that we are our bodies, that is to say, that personal identity is constituted by some brute physical relation between, for example, different bodies or different life-sustaining systems at different times. Although this view is still somewhat unpopular, recent developments in personal identity theory promise an ideological change, as versions of the so-called somatic criterion, associated with Eric Olson and Paul Snowdon, attract a continuously growing number of adherents.

Part of what we intend to do here is to survey the main questions of personal identity. Most of the entry will then focus on the one that has received most attention in recent times, namely our identity over time. We will discuss what the question means and the main proposed answers. We will also say a little about how these answers relate to some of the other questions of personal identity and to more general questions in Psychology, Metaphysics and the Philosophy of mind.

The main aim of this chapter among other issues that shall be addressed in this section is to (1) examine and add precision to the problem of personal identity, (2) situate the concepts within the context of Human development, (3) Explore empirical studies within the field of human development on personal identity, (4) consider some Psychological perspectives of the problems of personal identity, (5) proffer solutions

### III. Terminological & Conceptual Analysis

**Personality:** deeply ingrained and relatively enduring patterns of thought, feeling, and behaviour. Personality usually refers to that which is unique about a person, the characteristics that distinguish him or her from other people. Thought, emotion, and behaviour as such do not constitute a personality, which is, rather, the dispositions that underlie these elements. Personality implies predictability about how a person will act or react under different circumstances. Theorists emphasize different aspects of personality and disagree about its organization, development, and manifestation in behaviour. One of the most influential theoretical systems is the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud and his followers. Freud believed that *unconscious processes direct a great part of a person's behaviour*. Although a person is unaware of these impulses and drives, they strive to assert themselves.

Traditionally, psychologists however hold that the traits of an individual combine to form a personality, and that this personality shows great consistency over time. Recently, however, many psychologists have argued that traits exist only in the eye of the beholder, and that a person's personality varies with the situation.

The issue of personal identity concerns a number of loosely related issues: particular persistence, change, time, and sameness. Personal identity is the distinct personality of an individual and is concerned with the persisting entity particular to a given individual. The personal identity structure appears to preserve itself from the previous version in time when it is modified. It is the individual characteristics arising from personality by which a person is recognized or known.

1. In Philosophy, the term Personal Identity refers to the numerical identity of persons through time. That is to say that the conditions under which a person is said to be identical to himself or herself through time. Identity in this wise has become an issue for both Continental Philosophy and Analytic Philosophy.

Thus *Personal Identity over time* has to do with what it take for individuals to persist from moment to moment — or in other words, for the same individual to exist at different moments?

The question regarding personal identity in this regard has addressed the conditions under which a person at one time is the same person at another time, known as *personal continuity*. This sort of analysis of personal identity provides a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the identity of the person over time. In the modern philosophy of mind, this concept of personal identity is sometimes referred to as the *diachronic* problem of personal identity. The *synchronic* problem is grounded in the question of what features or traits characterize a given person at one time.

1. For John Locke, a British analytic philosopher, he considered personal identity (or the self) to be founded on consciousness (viz. Memory), and not on the substance of either the soul or the body. Book II Chapter XXVII entitled "On Identity and Diversity" in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) has been said to be one of the first modern conceptualizations of consciousness as the repeated self-identification of oneself. Through this identification, moral responsibility could be attributed to the subject and punishment and guilt could be justified, as critics such as Nietzsche would point out.

According to Locke, personal identity (the self) "depends on consciousness, not on substance" nor on the soul. We are the same person to the extent that we are conscious of our past and future thoughts and actions in the same way as we are conscious of our present thoughts and actions. If consciousness is this "thought" which "that goes along with the substance ... which makes the same person", then personal identity is only founded on the repeated act of consciousness: "This may show us wherein personal identity consists: not in the identity of substance, but... in the identity of consciousness". For example, one may claim to be a reincarnation of Plato, therefore having the same soul substance. However, one would be the same person as Plato only if one had the same consciousness of Plato's thoughts and actions that he himself did. Therefore, self-identity is not based on the soul. One soul may have various personalities.

Whether is self-identity founded on the body substance, argues Locke, as the body may change while the person remains the same. Even the identity of animals is not founded on their body: "animal identity is preserved in identity of life, and not of substance", as the body of the animal grows and changes during its life. On the other hand, identity of humans is based on their consciousness. Take for example a prince's mind which enters the body of a cobbler: to all exterior eyes, the cobbler would remain a cobbler. But to the prince himself, the cobbler would be himself, as he would be conscious of the prince's thoughts and acts, and not those of the cobbler. A prince's consciousness in a cobbler's body: thus the cobbler is, in fact, a prince.

But this interesting border-case leads to this problematic thought that since personal identity is based on consciousness, and that only oneself can be aware of his consciousness, exterior human judges may never know if they really are judging - and punishing - the same person, or simply the same body. In other words, Locke argues that you may be judged only for the acts of your body, as this is what is apparent to all but God; however, you are in truth only responsible for the acts for which you are conscious. This forms the basis of the **insanity defense**: one cannot be held accountable for acts from which one was **unconscious** - and therefore leads to interesting philosophical questions.

"personal identity consists [not in the identity of substance] but in the identity of consciousness, wherein if Socrates and the present mayor of Queenborough agree, they are the same person: if the same Socrates waking and sleeping do not partake of the same consciousness, Socrates waking and sleeping is not the same person. And to punish Socrates waking for what sleeping Socrates thought, and waking Socrates was never conscious of, would be no more right, than to punish one twin for what his brother-twin did, whereof he knew nothing, because their outsides were so like, that they could not be distinguished; for such twins have been seen."

Or again:

"PERSON, as I take it, is the name for this self. Wherever a man finds what he calls himself, there, I think, another may say is the same person. It is a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit; and so belong only to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness, and misery. This personality extends itself beyond present existence to what is past, only by consciousness, —whereby it becomes concerned and accountable; owns and imputes to itself past actions, just upon the same ground and for the same reason as it does the present. All which is founded in a concern for happiness, the unavoidable concomitant of consciousness; that which is conscious of pleasure and pain, desiring that that self that is conscious should be happy. And therefore whatever past actions it cannot reconcile or APPROPRIATE to that present self by consciousness, it can be no more concerned in it than if they had never been done: and to receive pleasure or pain, i.e. reward or punishment, on the account of any such action, is all one as to be made happy or miserable in its first being, without any demerit at all. For, supposing a MAN punished now for what he had done in another life, whereof he could be made to have no consciousness at all, what difference is there between that punishment and being CREATED miserable? And therefore, conformable to this, the apostle tells us, that, at the great day, when everyone shall 'receive according to his doings, the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open.'

The sentence shall be justified by the consciousness all person shall have, that THEY THEMSELVES, in what bodies so ever they appear, or what substances so ever that consciousness adheres to, are the SAME that committed those actions, and deserve that punishment for them."<sup>11</sup>

Henceforth, Locke's conception of personal identity founds it not on the substance or the body, but in the "same continued consciousness", which is also distinct from the soul since the soul may have no consciousness of itself (as in reincarnation).

b. For **David Hume**, while analyzing the bundle theory, undertook looking at the **mind/body problem** and **Mind/brain identity**. Hume also investigated a person's character, the relationship between human and animal nature, and the nature of agency. Hume pointed out that we tend to think that we are the same person we were five years ago. Though we've changed in many respects, the same person appears present as was present then. We might start thinking about which features can be changed without changing the underlying self. Hume, however, denies that there is a distinction between the various features of a person and the mysterious self that supposedly bears those features. When we start introspecting, "we are never intimately conscious of anything but a particular perception; man is a bundle or collection of different perceptions which succeed one another with an inconceivable rapidity and are in perpetual flux and movement".<sup>12</sup>

It is plain, that in the course of our thinking, and in the constant revolution of our ideas, our imagination runs easily from one idea to any other that resembles it, and that this quality alone is to the fancy a sufficient bond and association. It is likewise evident that as the senses, in changing their objects, are necessitated to change them regularly, and take them as they lie contiguous to each other, the imagination must by long custom acquire the same method of thinking, and run along the parts of space and time in conceiving its objects.<sup>13</sup>

Note in particular that, in Hume's view, these perceptions do not *belong* to anything. Hume, similar to the Buddha, compares the soul to a commonwealth, which retains its identity not by virtue of some enduring core substance, but by being composed of many different, related, and yet constantly changing elements. The question of personal identity then becomes a matter of characterizing the loose cohesion of one's personal experience. (Note that in the Appendix to the *Treatise*, Hume said mysteriously that he was dissatisfied with his account of the self, yet he never returned to the issue.)

In short, what matters for Hume is not that 'identity' exist but that the relations of causation, contiguity, and resemblances obtain among the perceptions. Critics of Hume might point out that in order for the various states and processes of

the mind to seem unified, there must be something which perceives their unity, the existence of which would be no less mysterious than a personal identity

2. In **Psychology**, Your personal identity is the way that you see yourself and is closely related to **yourself image**. It is very important to you because it will affect the way you feel about yourself and how you behave in challenging situations. Your personal identity includes be a reflection of how you are respond to these questions: Who are You? What makes you unique? What are your values? Your physical identity, (what you think you look like to other) as known as **body image**. Your internal identity (who you think you are in terms of your personality and character, values etc. how you see yourself in relation to others, how you identify yourself in terms of your job, and how you see yourself from your personal goals.

The most important thing to realizes about your personal identity is that it can be close to how other people see you in which case you will be at harmony with the world and others around you or it can be very different from how others see you and so you may feel you are misunderstood and you feel life is battle to make others appreciate who you are.

One of the biggest problems people have with their personal identity is that they may not accept or may be blind to who they are and what they believe. Most of us today suffer from this to a certain extent because society seems to want us to behave and live in ways which may not be exactly what we want.

#### IV. Understanding the main Issues in Personal Identity

There is no single Issues of problem of personal identity, but rather a wide range of loosely connected questions. We shall try to understand some of the major and familiar one in this segment:

1. **Who am I?** We often speak of one's "personal identity" as what makes one the person one is. Your identity in this sense consists roughly of what makes you unique as an individual and different from others. Or it is the way you see or define yourself, or the network of values and convictions that structure your life. This individual identity is a *property* (or set of properties). Presumably it is one you have only contingently: you might have had a different identity from the one you in fact have. It is also a property that you may have only temporarily, you could swap your current individual identity for a new one, or perhaps even get by without any. Ludwig Wittgenstein<sup>[1]</sup> contribution is typical to the topic in question and it says more.

2. **Personhood.** What is it to be a person? What is necessary, and what suffices, for something to count as a person, as opposed to a non-person? What have people got that non-people haven't got? This amounts more or less to asking for the definition of the word *person*. An answer would take the form

"Necessarily, *x* is a person if and only if ... *x* ...", with the blanks appropriately filled in. More specifically, we can ask at what point in one's development from a fertilized egg there comes to be a person, or what it would take for a chimpanzee or a Martian or an electronic computer to be a person, if they could ever be<sup>[1][2]</sup>.

3. **Persistence.** What does it take for a person to persist from one time to another—that is, for the *same* person to exist at different times? What sorts of adventures could you possibly survive, in the broadest sense of the word 'possible', and what sort of event would necessarily bring your existence to an end? What determines which past or future being you are? Suppose you point to a child in an old class photograph and say, "That's me." What makes you that one, rather than one of the others? What is it about the way she relates then to you as you are now that makes her you? For that matter, what makes it the case that anyone at all who existed back then is you? This is the question of personal identity over time. An answer to it is an account of our **persistence conditions** or a **criterion of personal identity** over time (a constitutive rather than an evidential criterion; the second falls under the Evidence Question below).

Historically this question often arises out of the hope (or fear) that we might continue to exist after we die—Plato's *Phaedo* is a famous example. Whether this could happen depends on whether biological death necessarily brings one's existence to an end. Imagine that after your death there really will be someone, in the next world or in this one, who resembles you in certain ways. How would that being have to relate to you as you are now in order to be you, rather than someone else? What would the Higher Powers have to do to keep you in existence after your death? Or is there anything they could do? The answer to these questions depends on the answer to the Persistence Question.

4. **Evidence.** How do we find out who is who? What evidence bears on the question of whether the person here now is the one who was here yesterday? What ought we to do when different kinds of evidence support opposing verdicts? One source of evidence is first-person memory: if you remember doing some particular action, or at least seem to remember, and someone really did do it, then that person is probably you. Another source is physical continuity: if the person who did it looks just like you, or even better if she is in some sense physically or spatio-temporally continuous with you, that is reason to think she is you. Which of these sources is more fundamental? Does first-person memory count as evidence all by itself, for instance, or only insofar as we can check it against publicly available physical evidence?

The Evidence Question dominated the philosophical literature on personal identity from the 1950s to the 1970s as indicated in the works of Shoemaker<sup>[3]</sup> and Penelhum<sup>[4]</sup> It is important to distinguish it from the Persistence Question.

What it takes for you to persist through time is one thing; how we might find out whether you have is another. If the criminal had fingerprints just like yours, the courts may conclude that he is you. But even if that is conclusive evidence, having your fingerprints is not *what it is* for a past or future being to be you: it is neither necessary (you could survive without any fingers at all) nor sufficient (someone else could have fingerprints just like yours).

5. **Population.** If we think of the Persistence Question as asking which of the characters introduced at the beginning of a story have survived to become the ones at the end of it, we may also want to ask how many are on the stage at any one time. What determines how many of us there are now? If there are some seven billion people on the earth at present, what facts—biological, psychological, or what have you—make that the right number? The question is not what *causes* there to be a certain number of people at a given time, but what there being that number consists in. It is like asking what sort of configuration of pieces amounts to black's winning a game of chess, rather than what sorts of moves typically lead to its winning.

You may think that the number of people at any given time is simply the number of human organisms there are then (perhaps discounting those in a defective state that don't count as people, and ignoring non-human people if there are any). But this is disputed. Surgeons sometimes cut the nerve bands connecting one's cerebral hemispheres. This results in behavior that suggests some sort of radical disunity of consciousness, such as simultaneously pulling one's trousers up with one hand and pulling them down with the other. You might think that this gives us two people sharing one organism. Researchers such as Nagele<sup>[10]</sup> and Puccetti<sup>[11]</sup> argue that there are two people within the skin of each normal human being. Or maybe a human being with split personality could literally be the home of two or more thinking beings. This view has been championed by Wilkes<sup>[12]</sup> and Olson<sup>[13]</sup>.

This is sometimes called the problem of "**synchronic identity**", as opposed to the "**diachronic identity**" of the Persistence Question (and the "counterfactual identity" of the How could I have been? A Question we shall yet treat below). These terms need careful handling, however. They are apt to give the impression that identity comes in two kinds, synchronic and diachronic: a serious blunder. The truth is simply that there are two kinds of situations where we can ask how many people (or other things) there are: synchronic situations involving just one moment and diachronic ones involving a stretch of time.

6. **What am I?** What sort of things, *metaphysically speaking*, are you and I and other human people? What is our basic metaphysical nature? For instance, what are we made of? Are we made up entirely of matter, as stones are, or partly or wholly of something else? If we are made of matter, what matter is it? (Just the

matter that makes up our bodies, or might we be larger or smaller than our bodies?) Where, in other words, do our spatial boundaries lie? More fundamentally, what fixes those boundaries? Are we substances—metaphysically independent beings—or is each of us a state or an aspect of something else, or perhaps some sort of process or event?

One possible answer to this broad question is that we are biological organisms. (Surprisingly perhaps, most philosophers reject this. We will return to it later.) Another is that we are partly immaterial substances—or compound things made up of an immaterial soul and a material body, a view shared by Swinburne<sup>[14]</sup>, Hume,<sup>[15]</sup> Quinon<sup>[16]</sup> and Campbell<sup>[17]</sup> suggested that each of us is "a bundle of perceptions" A popular view nowadays is that we are material things "constituted by" organisms: you are made of the same matter as a certain animal, but you and the animal are different things because what it takes for you to persist is different Shoemaker<sup>[18]</sup> Baker<sup>[19]</sup>. Another is that we are temporal parts of animals as opined by Lewis<sup>[20]</sup>, Hudson<sup>[21]</sup>. There is even the paradoxical view that there is nothing that we are: we don't really exist at all Russell<sup>[22]</sup> Wittgenstein<sup>[23]</sup>, Unger<sup>[24]</sup> Olson<sup>[25]</sup> was known to have also conducted an extensive and lengthy discuss on these matters.

7. **How could I have been?** How different could I have been from the way I actually am? Which of my properties do I have essentially, and which only accidentally or contingently? Could I, for instance, have had different parents? Frank Sinatra and Doris Day might have had children together. Could I have been one of them? Or could they only have had children other than me? Could I have existed in the womb and died before ever becoming conscious? Are there possible worlds just like the actual one except for who is who—where people have "changed places" so that what is in fact your career is mine and vice versa? Whether these are best described as questions about personal identity is debatable. They are not about whether beings in other worlds are identical with people in the actual world: Van Inwagen<sup>[26]</sup> elaborates more on this. But they are sometimes discussed in connection with the others.

8. **What matters in identity?** What is the practical importance of facts about our identity and persistence? Why should we care about it? Why does it *matter*? Imagine that surgeons are going to put your brain into my head and that neither of us has any choice about this. Will the resulting person—who will presumably think he is you—be responsible for my actions or for yours? (Or both? Or neither?) Suppose he will be in terrible pain after the operation unless one of us pays a large sum in advance. If we were both entirely selfish, which of us would have a reason to pay?

The answer may seem to turn entirely on whether the resulting person would be you or I. Only you can be responsible for your actions. The only one whose

future welfare you cannot rationally ignore is yourself. You have a special, selfish interest in your own future and no one else's. Identity itself matters practically. But some deny this. They say that someone else could be responsible for your actions. You could have an entirely selfish reason to care about someone else's well-being for his own sake. Perhaps what gives me a reason to care about what happens to the man people will call by my name tomorrow is not that he *is* me, but that he is then psychologically continuous with me as I am now or because he relates to me in some other way that does not imply that he and I are one. If someone other than me were psychologically continuous tomorrow with me as I am now, he would have what matters to me, and I ought to transfer my selfish concern to him. Identity itself has no practical importance. Shoemaker<sup>[20]</sup>, Parfit<sup>[21]</sup>, and Martin<sup>[22]</sup>

We wish to make known here that the study done in the above passages completes our survey of the issues and problems. Though these eight questions are obviously related, it is hard to find any important common feature that makes them all questions about personal identity. In any case they are different and failing to keep them separate will only bring trouble.

#### V. Understanding the Persistence Question

Let us turn now to the Persistence Question. Few concepts have been the source of more misunderstanding than identity over time. The Persistence Question is often confused with other questions, or stated in a tendentious way.

The question is what is necessary and sufficient for a past or future being to be you. If we point to you now, and then describe someone or something existing at another time, we can ask whether we are referring to one thing twice, or referring once to each of two things. (There are precisely analogous questions about the persistence of other objects, such as dogs.) The Persistence Question asks what determines the answer to such questions, or makes possible answers true or false.

The question is about *numerical identity*. To say that this and that are numerically identical is to say that they are one and the same: one thing rather than two. This is different from *qualitative identity*. Things are qualitatively identical when they are exactly similar. Identical twins may be qualitatively identical—there may be no telling them apart—but not numerically identical, as there are two of them: that's what makes them twins. A past or future person need not be, at that past or future time, exactly like you are now in order to be you—that is, in order to be numerically identical with you. You don't remain qualitatively the same throughout your life. You change: you get bigger or smaller; you learn new things and forget others; and so on. So the question is not what it takes for a past or future being to be qualitatively just like you, but what it takes for a past or future being to be you, as opposed to someone or something other than you.

(Someone might say, as Hume apparently did, that a past or future being *could* not be you unless he or she was then qualitatively just like you are now. That would be a highly contentious metaphysical claim. It amounts to denying that anyone can survive any change whatever: even blinking your eyes would be fatal, resulting in your ceasing to exist and being replaced with someone else. It would mean that you did not exist even a moment ago. There would be no point in asking the persistence question if this were the case. Virtually all discussions of personal identity over time assume that it is possible for a person to change.)

The confusion of qualitative with numerical identity is one source of misunderstanding about the Persistence Question. Here is another. People sometimes ask what it takes for someone to *remain the same person* from one time to another. The idea is that if I were to alter in certain ways—if I lost most of my memory, or my personality changed dramatically, or I underwent a profound religious conversion, say—then I should no longer be the person I was before.

The question of what it takes for someone to remain the same person is not the Persistence Question. It is not even a question about numerical identity. If it were, it would answer itself: I necessarily remain numerically the same for as long as I exist. Nothing could make me a numerically different person from the one I am now. For someone existing tomorrow to be numerically different from me is precisely for him *not* to be me. Nothing can start out as one thing and end up as another thing—a numerically different one. This has nothing to do with personal identity in particular, but is simply a fact about the logic of identity.

Those who say that after a certain sort of adventure you would be a different person, or that you would no longer be the person you once were, presumably mean that you would still exist, but would have changed in some important way. They are usually thinking of one's individual identity in the Who am I? sense: about the possibility of your losing some or all of the properties that make up your individual identity and acquiring new ones. This has nothing to do with the Persistence Question.

It is inconvenient that the words 'identity' and 'same' mean so many different things: numerical identity, qualitative identity, individual psychological identity, and more. To make matters worse, some philosophers speak of "*surviving*" in a way that does not imply numerical identity, so that I could survive a certain adventure without existing afterwards<sup>[23]</sup>. Confusion is inevitable.

Here is a more insidious misunderstanding. Many people try to state the Persistence Question like this:

1. Under what possible circumstances is a person existing at one time identical with a person existing at another time?

In other words, what does it take for past or future person to be you? We have a person existing at one time and a person existing at another, and the question is what is necessary and sufficient for them to be one person rather than two.

This is not the Persistence Question. It is too narrow. We may want to know whether you were ever an embryo or a foetus, or whether you could survive in an irreversible vegetative state or as a corpse. These are clearly questions about what it takes for us to persist, and an account of our identity over time ought to answer them. (Their answers may have important ethical implications: it matters to the morality of abortion, for instance, whether something that is an embryo or foetus at one time can be an adult person at another time, or whether the adult person is always numerically different from the foetus.) But many philosophers define 'person' as something that has certain special mental properties. Locke, for instance, famously said that a person 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"<sup>[21]</sup> Presumably this implies that something is a person at a given time if and only if it has those mental properties then. And neurologists say that early-term foetuses and human beings in a persistent vegetative state have no mental properties at all then. If anything like Locke's definition is right, such beings are not people—not at that time, anyway. In that case we cannot infer anything about whether you were once an embryo or could come to be a vegetable by discovering what it takes for a past or future *person* to be you.

We can illustrate the point by considering a particular answer to question 1.

Necessarily, a person who exists at one time is identical with a person who exists at a second time if and only if the first person can, at the first time, remember an experience the second person has at the second time, or vice versa.

That is, a past or future person is you just in the case that you can now remember an experience she had then, or she can then remember an experience you are having now. (This view is also sometimes attributed to Locke, though it is doubtful whether he actually held it.) Call it the *Memory Criterion*.

The Memory Criterion may seem to imply that if you were to lapse into an irreversible vegetative state, the resulting vegetable would not be you, as it would be unable to remember anything: you would have ceased to exist, or perhaps passed on to the next world. But in fact it implies no such thing. Assuming that a human vegetable is not a person, this is not a case involving a person existing at one time and a person existing at another time. The Memory Criterion purports to tell us which past or future *person* you are, but not which past or future *thing*. In other words, it says what it takes for one to persist as a *person*, but not what it takes for one to persist without qualification. So it implies nothing

at all about whether you could come to be a vegetable or a corpse. For the same reason it tells us nothing about whether you were ever an embryo. Olson<sup>[22]</sup> and Mackie<sup>[23]</sup> championed these thoughts.

So rather than Question 1, we ought to ask what it takes for *any* past or future being, person or not, to be you or I:

2. Under what possible circumstances is a person who exists at one time identical with *something* that exists at another time (whether or not it is a person then)?

This is the Persistence Question. Philosophers typically ask 1 rather than 2 because they assume that every person is a person *essentially*: nothing that is in fact a person could possibly exist without being a person. (By contrast, something that is in fact a student could exist without being a student: no student is essentially a student, and it would be a mistake to inquire about the conditions of student identity by asking what it takes for a student existing at one time to be identical to a student existing at another time.) This claim, "person essentialism", implies that whatever is a person at one time must be a person at every time when she exists, making the two questions equivalent. Whether person essentialism is true, however, is a serious question (an instance of the How could I have been? Question). Person essentialism—together with something like the Lockean account of personhood—implies that you could not possibly have been an embryo: the embryo that gave rise to you is not strictly you; you came into being only when it developed certain mental capacities. How could you come to be a human vegetable. For that matter, it rules out our being biological organisms, since no organism is a person essentially: every human organism starts out as an unthinking embryo and may end up in a vegetative state.

Whether we are organisms or were once embryos are substantive questions that an account of personal identity ought to answer, not matters to be settled in advance by the way we frame the debate. So we cannot assume at the outset that we are people in something like Locke's sense essentially. Asking Question 1 prejudices the issue by favoring some accounts of what we are, and what it takes for us to persist, over others. In particular, asking 1 effectively rules out the Somatic Approach described in the next section. It is like asking which man committed the crime before ruling out the possibility that it might have been a woman.

## VI. The Psychological Approach

Most people—most Western philosophy teachers and students, anyway—feel immediately drawn to the Psychological Approach. It seems obvious that you would go along with your brain if it were transplanted, and that this is so because that organ would carry with it your memories and other mental features. This



would lead the recipient to believe that he or she was you. And why should this belief be mistaken? This makes it easy to suppose that our identity over time has something to do with psychology. It is notoriously difficult, however, to get from this conviction to a plausible answer to the Persistence Question.

What psychological relation might our identity through time consist in? We have already mentioned memory: a past or future being might be you if and only if you can now remember an experience she had then, or vice versa. This proposal faces two objections, discovered in the 18th century by Seargeant and Berkeley<sup>[24]</sup> but more famously discussed by Reid and Butler.<sup>[25]</sup>

First, suppose a young student is fined for overdue library books. Later, as a middle-aged lawyer, she remembers paying the fine. Later still, in her dotage, she remembers her law career, but has entirely forgotten not only paying the fine but everything else she did in her youth. According to the Memory Criterion the young student is the middle-aged lawyer, the lawyer is the old woman, but the old woman is not the young student. This is an impossible result: if  $x$  and  $y$  are one and  $y$  and  $z$  are one,  $x$  and  $z$  cannot be two. Identity is transitive; memory continuity is not.

Second, it seems to belong to the very idea of remembering that you can remember only your own experiences. To remember paying a fine (or the experience of paying) is to remember *yourself* paying. That makes it trivial and uninformative to say that you are the person whose experiences you can remember—that is, that memory continuity is sufficient for personal identity. It is uninformative because you cannot know whether someone genuinely remembers a past experience without already knowing whether he is the one who had it. Suppose we want to know whether Blott, who exists now, is the same as Clott, whom we know to have existed at some time in the past. The Memory Criterion tells us that Blott is Clott if Blott can now remember an experience of Clott's that occurred at that past time. But Blott's seeming to remember one of Clott's experiences from that time counts as genuine memory only if Blott actually is Clott. So we should already have to know whether Blott is Clott before we could apply the principle that is supposed to tell us whether she is. (Note, however, that this is no objection to the claim that memory connections are necessary for us to persist. There is nothing trivial or uninformative about that.)

One response to the first problem is to modify the Memory Criterion by switching from direct to indirect memory connections: the old woman is the young student because she can recall experiences the lawyer had at a time when the lawyer remembered the student's life. The second problem is traditionally met by replacing memory with a new concept, "retrocognition" or "quasi-memory" which is just like memory but without the identity requirement: even if it is

self-contradictory to say that I remember doing something I didn't do but someone else did, I could still "quasi-remember" it. Penelhum,<sup>[26]</sup> and Shoemaker<sup>[27]</sup> were of this opinion.

Neither move gets us far, however, as both the original and the modified Memory Criteria face a more obvious problem: there are many times in my past that I can't remember or quasi-remember at all, and to which I am not linked even indirectly by an overlapping chain of memories. For instance, there is no time when I could recall anything that happened to me while I was dreamlessly sleeping last night. The Memory Criterion has the absurd implication that I have never existed at any time when I was completely unconscious. The man sleeping in my bed last night was someone else.

A better solution appeals to causal dependence.<sup>[28]</sup> We can define two notions, psychological connectedness and psychological continuity. A being is *psychologically connected*, at some future time, with me as I am now just if he is in the psychological states he is in then in large part *because of* the psychological states I am in now. Having a current memory (or quasi-memory) of an earlier experience is one sort of psychological connection—the experience causes the memory of it—but there are others. Importantly, one's current mental states can be caused in part by mental states one was in at times when one was unconscious. For example, most of my current beliefs are the same ones I had while I slept last night: those beliefs have caused themselves to continue existing. We can then define the second notion thus: I am now *psychologically continuous* with a past or future being just if some of my current mental states relate to those he is in then by a chain of psychological connections.

Now suppose that a person  $x$  who exists at one time is identical with something  $y$  existing at another time if and only if  $x$  is, at the one time, psychologically continuous with  $y$  as it is at the other time. This avoids the most obvious objections to the Memory Criterion.

It still leaves important questions unanswered, however. Suppose we could somehow copy all the mental contents of your brain onto mine, much as we can copy the contents of one computer drive onto another. And suppose this process erased the previous contents of both brains. Whether this would be a case of psychological continuity depends on what sort of causal dependence counts. The resulting being (with my brain and your mental contents) would be mentally like you were before, and not like I was. He would have inherited your mental properties in a way—but a funny way. Is it the right way? Could you literally move from one human animal to another via "brain-state transfer"? Advocates of the Psychological Approach disagree such as Shoemaker<sup>[29]</sup> and Singer<sup>[30]</sup>. For Schechtman<sup>[31]</sup> he gives an interesting objection to the psychological-continuity strategy, without abandoning the Psychological Approach.)

## VII. Problems in Personal Identity: A Look at Psychological Findings

We shall be examining five (5) major problems in personal identity and situations each of them in empirical studies which are classics in psychological research, pointing out how they affect, change and determine personal identity. The psychological dimension of identity is important because before our social life begins, we have formed certain ideas about ourselves, our world, how to behave in situations and so forth. Apart from forming personal identity while growing up, the identity formed could be modified or changed whenever we change our mind sets, learn to be helpless and conform as grownups. It is these that we shall be examining.

### 1. How we change our minds

Our personal identity has a lot to do with how we think and our mindset. Festinger and Carlsmith<sup>[42]</sup> in 1959 researched into this very issue. In their experiment on forced compliance, they had a group of subjects performing extremely boring tasks for quite some time for instance; packing and unpacking spoils, turning screws for clockwise and then another quarter turn continuously. Festinger and his colleagues then paid them either \$1 or \$20 to lie to the next subject that the task was interesting. The researchers were surprised to observe that the group that were paid \$20 reported that the task was boring while those that were paid \$1 said it was interesting and exciting, justifying it by telling themselves that the experiment was not really boring. This seems paradoxical but according to their theory of cognitive dissonance, people do not like to have tension within themselves (dissonance) when there is an inconsistency between what one believes and what one does, one begins to have dissonance and in order to reduce or remove it; people look for counter information from within or outside them. With regards to personal identity when people are forced to comply, they find reasons not to comply but when they are given little reasons to comply, they find reasons within themselves and tend to justify their actions as coming from within. Hence, people might do things that are not in alignment with what they believe and try to justify their actions as being part of their repertoire in order not to feel tensed.

### 2. How we learn to be helpless

According to the theory of Learned Helplessness, when human beings attempt to perform a task and they consistently fail in their attempt to perform that task, they tend to learn a particular behavior which is helplessness. This new behavioral pattern makes the individual assume an identity of a failure or someone who is helpless and cannot succeed in the bid to achieve certain goals. This behavioral pattern is called learned helplessness. Seligman and Maier in 1967<sup>[43]</sup> investigated this. In their study, they strapped two groups of dogs in a hammock and applied strong electric shock on them. The first group was able to stop the shock by pushing a panel close to their nose but the second group

had no panel to push hence, the first group of dogs determined what happened to their counterpart by stopping or allowing the shock. They called the dogs in the first group, the escape group while they called the dogs in the second group the yoked control group. The dogs in the first group, escape group, after consistent trial learned what to do to stop the electric shock (they learned to push the panel close to their nose) while the yoked group's fate was in the ability of the escape group dogs to push or not to push the panel. In the second part of the experiment, the experimenters used boxes whereby, there was no control from the shock that was delivered through the bottom of the box except jumping over a hurdle to the other side of the box. There was no control, all that was needed was the initiative to jump over the hurdle to 'do something' to help oneself. The dogs in the former escape group when placed in the box soon discovered what to do in order to escape but dogs in the former yoked control group acted like other dogs initially but did not learn to jump the hurdle hence, they let the electric shock them, while they howled and later became passive, resigning to fate and letting themselves being shocked. According to Seligman and Maier<sup>[43]</sup> they had learned to be helpless.

What does this concept of learned helplessness have to do with personal identity? It is interesting to know that the condition in which people find themselves determines their reactions to things in life. For instance, when people find themselves in conditions that are not pleasant, they have a way of resigning to fate and believing that they have no control over their lives. Disadvantaged and poor people have a way of manifesting this more than others. Even when there are things to do to get out of unwanted situations, they still do not get to see ways out of their situation. Hence, they identify themselves as poor people, intelligent people and these identities follow them.

### 3. How different people at times live in one person (Multiple personality (dissociation) disorder)

Most of us have watched the movie 'The three faces of eve'. This movie represents a real life story of an individual who had multiple personalities. Another movie, 'Sybil' is also about a lady who manifested multiple personalities. Multiple personality disorders are disorders within the main class of dissociative disorders in abnormal psychology. Dissociation simply means to split something into simpler or separate parts. Dissociative disorders represent a group of psychological disorders that splits the consciousness of individuals. According to the DSM - IV-TR<sup>[44]</sup> "The essential feature of the Dissociative Disorders is a disruption in the usually disintegrated functions of consciousness, memory, identity, or perception. The disturbance may be sudden or gradual, transient or chronic". Within dissociative disorders, we have: Dissociative Amnesia, Dissociative Fugue, Dissociative Identity Disorder (formerly Multiple Personality Disorder), Depersonalization Disorder, Dissociative Disorder Not Otherwise

Specified. We shall be focusing on multiple personality disorder. In multiple personality disorder, two or more at times up to sixteen or twenty two distinct personalities reside in the individual and at different times take over the person's behavior. The person is not able to recall the other personalities resident in him or her. According to the DSM-IV-TR<sup>146</sup> "It is a disorder characterized by identity fragmentation rather than a proliferation of separate personalities." Haigin and Whitbourne<sup>147</sup>, concurs by noting that dissociative identity disorder is said to have occurred when an individual "develops more than one self or personality. These personalities are referred to as ALTERS in contrast to the core personality known as the HOST." Here, the individual's personality sort of splits into different fragments and each personality becomes a distinct personality in its own right. This disorder was formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder. A classical case in the annals of Psychology and Psychotherapy is the case of Eve White reported by Thigpen and Cleckley in 1954<sup>148</sup>. The client Eve White presented with a case of severely recurring headaches, black outs, amnesia and so forth. During the course of therapy, another personality emerged, Eve Black. Eve Black had been around and manifesting since childhood but Eve White was not aware of this. Eve Black was a mischievous, irresponsible and troublesome woman who would do things Eve White dared not do. In fact, during childhood, she would appear and do things which later, Eve white would be punished for while she was oblivious of committing such acts. Interestingly, Eve Black did not like Eve White's husband or daughter and would appear at times to foment trouble. It was during psychotherapy that Eve Whit knew about Eve Black whom the therapist was now able to call up. However, during therapy, another personality emerged called Jane not known by either Eve White or Eve Black.

What does this hold for the problems we face in personal identity? Most people become fragmented as a result of the challenges they face in their environment. For instance, in 1975, the real person, Eve White [real name: Chris Sizemore], wrote an autobiography reporting that she at a time in her life had as much as twenty two sub-personalities in order to protect herself from circumstances that were unbearable or beyond her control. Many people do this. They develop identities that are not real in order to escape a certain situation but after sometime, they turn out to become their normal way of life and they cannot change it.

#### 4. How people forget who they are and assume another identity [Dissociative Fugue]

Most of us have watched the movie 'Bourne Identity.' Bourne Identity is a movie adaptation of a real life story by William James. The actor in the movie 'Bourne Identity' was suffering from dissociative fugue which represents an unexpected travel by someone away from where he lives or works, the person is unable to recall his past and is confused about his personal identity and as a result, assumes

a new identity<sup>149</sup>. When an individual is suffering from dissociative fugue, he loses his identity, by forgetting who he is, where he is from and where he is going. He just gets to a place, settles there and begins a new life with of course, a new identity. Interestingly, the DSM-IV-TR<sup>149</sup> adds as a criteria for the diagnosis of dissociative fugue that there is among others a 'Confusion about personal identity or assumption of a new identity (partial or complete)' also, another criteria is that 'the disturbance does not occur exclusively during the course of Dissociative Identity Disorder and is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., temporal lobe epilepsy)'.

People who are confused about their personal identity at times behave like people who have dissociative fugue. They tend to lose their identity and not have any direction or focus in life. They don't know where they are going in life but to talk of how to get there. Hence, it is generally believed that knowledge of the past assists us in understanding the future. These people do not have an idea of their past. They just know their present and immediately they leave, it becomes past and they need to gain new present realities again. These new realities are very contrary to their past lives or realities.

#### 5. How people conform and identify with other people as a result of social pressure

People do not want to be the odd person out in a situation. When everyone responds to a question in a particular way, and one person feels that they are wrong, in order not to sound odd, the person more often than not conforms to them. Solomon Asch in 1955<sup>149</sup> investigated in his experiment on opinions and social pressure. In his experiment, about seven to ten participants were brought into a laboratory room and told they were participating in an experiment that had to do with visual judgment. The researcher conducting the experiment told the subjects who were all seated that they were going to differentiate between lines. He showed them a card with a thick black line, say 9 inches long and showed them another card with three thick black lines say, the first line was 10 inches, the middle line was 9 inches and the last line was 6 inches long and told them to say aloud their answers to the question in turn (as they were seated) so that they can go on to the next study. The researcher conducting the experiment did this for about 18 times. Interestingly, out of the seven to ten seated participants, only one was a real participant. Others were confederates [a confederate is an associate or ally of the experimenter. He works with the experimenter in an experiment]. They were made to seat in such a way that for the nine experimental participant group, seven confederates sat before the real participant and only one confederate sat after the real participant. In the experiment the confederates were instructed prior to the experiment to give a unanimously wrong answer and they did. When it got to the turn of the real

participant, in order not to look odd or embarrassing, they gave the wrong answer most times. According to Asch<sup>[47]</sup>, about seventy five percent of the one hundred and twenty three of the subjects went along with the majority at least once.

This study point to the fact that human beings most times conform or behave in a socially acceptable way with what the majority feels is right. People rarely stand their grounds at all cost and tend to follow the majority. This affects personal identity. Hence, we see people accepting things contrary to their beliefs as appropriate when others have accepted it as the norm. Asch<sup>[47]</sup>,<sup>[48]</sup> went on to note that most of the participants wondered whether they had visual problems, and were confused about their sanity among other worries. This was as a result of one seeing a correct answer and watching others answer it incorrectly. The major problem of identity is that people most times identify with others even when they see that they are not doing the right thing. However, it is important to point out that some of the participants stuck to the correct answer even though other were consistently answering the wrong way.

In summary, there are many psychological findings on the problems of personal identity ranging from how we change our minds, learn to be helpless, how different people at times live in one person, how people forget who they are and assume another identity and how people conform and identify with other people as a result of social pressure. Other problems in personal identity may arise as a result of social or emotional deprivation, drug effects, split brain, states of consciousness and unconsciousness, hypnotic suggestions, and even group diffusion and brainwashing as in the case Patty Hearst, the granddaughter of the newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst who was kidnapped in 1974 at age 19 by the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). She brainwashed and later joined the gang to fight their cause and was caught one year later when she went on a bank robbery with them. She was sentenced to 35 years imprisonment which was later reduced to seven years and was further reduced in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter and pardoned in 2001 by President Bill Clinton. How did she get to the level of becoming a rifle wielding guerilla from a high class sophisticated lady? Probably her personal identity was not yet fully developed. One might ask, what is the process of the development of personal identity. Are we born with our identities? Do we develop it from the society or are there developmental set points for the development of personal identity? It is to this that we now turn, taking as our point of departure two theories of development in psychology, namely: the development of moral behavior and psychosocial development.

### VIII. Development of Personal Identity

Personal identity develops from the cradle to the grave. Ebigo is of the opinion that an individual's personal identity depends on the differences between himself and others, his physiognomy and his environment or society.<sup>[49]</sup> While addressing the issue of the Nigerian psyche, he noted that among the personality attributes of the African as illustrated by Stawen in the book *"Cultural and psychological conditions of working together with Africans"*, written in 1991, he noted that the African child is not allowed to feel hunger and engage in rigorous toilet training. This child rearing practice makes the child develop a "paradisiacal strong sense of self-esteem.... and the feeling of identity as if, one were the son of a king for whom everything is attainable". Ebigo went further to note that the situation above resulted in a lack of motivation for the African, high demand or high taste (flamboyancy), profoundly high self-confidence, strong self-overestimation, extremely exaggerated self-overestimation and so forth. These are supposed to be virtues but for the average African, they have turned out to be vices and as a result, works against them because there is no balance between the real and the ideal. The lack of this balance leads to unexplainable frustration. The question of how people develop personal identity, how people become moral, and how people become adjusted to their environment as social beings are some of the questions we shall be addressing in the pages that will follow. These studies shall be done with the aid of Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Erickson's theory of psychosocial development.

#### 1. Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

A moral dilemma: In order to examine Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning, let us consider a poser by Kohlberg<sup>[50]</sup>,<sup>[51]</sup> where the idea of moral reasoning in individuals and the level of such reasoning was measured. Read the following story and say what you would do in the same situation.

*In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.*

Attempt the following questions before proceeding. *Should Heinz have stolen the drug? Was the husband violating the druggists' rights? What sentence would the judge give the husband once he is caught? Sincerely, what would you have done if you were in Heinz's situation?*

According to Kohlberg's findings, there are majorly three levels of moral development and children precede from the first stage to the last stage in becoming morally members of society. Each of the levels has two stages each making a total of six stages. We shall examine this further by following Crain's,<sup>[32]</sup> Barnard and Grayson's<sup>[33]</sup> conceptualization.

LEVEL 1 Preconventional Morality	LEVEL 2 Conventional Morality	LEVEL 3 Post conventional Morality
STAGE 1 Obedience And Punishment Orientation	STAGE 3 Good Interpersonal Relationships	STAGE 5 Social Contract And Individual Rights
STAGE 2 Individualism And Exchange	STAGE 4 Maintaining The Social Order	STAGE 6 Universal Principles

#### STAGE 1: Obedience and Punishment Orientation

According to Crain<sup>[32]</sup>, at this stage of moral reasoning, a child assumes that the fixed set of rules handed down by the all-powerful authorities must be unquestionably obeyed to the latter. It is characteristic of children at this stage of reasoning to say that Heinz was wrong to steal the drug because "it is against the law," or "it is wrong to steal."<sup>[32]</sup> The child at this stage is concerned with the consequences involved in stealing: "punishment!" Children here do not yet understand their roles as members of the society neither do they see themselves as one. Hence, they see morality as handed down rules by adults.

#### STAGE 2: Individualism and Exchange

Here children think of individual viewpoints or individual interests. Everything is seen from a relative or subjective perspective. Heinz might therefore see stealing the drug as right while the druggist would not. At this stage, punishment is a risk one naturally wants to avoid hence the notion of fair exchange or fair deal with others i.e. one of returning favors – The wife might return the favor in future irrespective of the fact that the drug seller was attempting to exploit Heinz<sup>[33]</sup>. Here, children still do not speak as integral members of the society and they have not yet come in terms with what it means to be a member of a family or a society.

#### STAGE 3: Good Interpersonal Relationships

Here teenagers think as members of the conventional society with its values, norms, and expectations. Children at this stage believe that one should be good to others and live up to their expectations and other's expectations as family members. Hence, whatever is done with a good intent is not seen as bad. Hence, Heinz was not wrong in stealing the drugs because he had the good motive of using it to save his wife<sup>[32]</sup>. At this stage, children bring to the fore the Native American proverb which says: *to understand me you must walk a mile in my moccasins*. Invariably, anyone could have done what Heinz did if they were to *walk a mile in his moccasins*. (if they were in the same situation as he was)

#### STAGE 4: Maintaining The Social Order

At this stage, the idea of individualism is eschewed in order to establish societal goals. Here children believe that rules and regulations and the laws of the land are not to be broken. The social order must be maintained and stealing is bad. Here, the idea is that no matter the situation, Heinz is not supposed to break the law and cause chaos or disorder which makes a society uninhabitable. Here, children start thinking as members of the society and people who believe that the social order should be maintained.

#### STAGE 5: Social Contract and Individual Rights

At this stage, respondents begin to have a different view of the society. They begin to ask why we do what we do as a people and what should we be doing. Here, thoughts about people's existence in the society being a social contract where everyone has a right to exist and be a part of the society. Here some believe that Heinz was right and some do not. Here, some people begin to wonder what the society should be encouraging and what they should not.

#### STAGE 6: Universal Principles

Here, people begin to move from the society to the universe. Universal principles and fundamental values are taken into consideration. Here people believe that Heinz should steal to save a life which is more valuable than a property while others think that Heinz is not possibly the only one who needs the drugs. People begin to ask what the right thing to do at this point is. Should we allow oppression to continue? Is there a way we can live together and achieve our individual aims – the druggist makes his money, Heinz does not steal, Heinz's wife recovers and so forth. Civil and religious right leaders have been found to exist at this stage in their moral reasoning.

What does this hold for the development of personal identity? From this theory, it could be established that individuals develop their personal identity as a result of the stage of moral reasoning they find themselves in. The child is indeed a moral philosopher<sup>[34]</sup>. Children think at the first level of moral reasoning till about 7 years and then, they begin to reason at a more advanced stage, at the

second level from age 11 onwards and at age 13, they begin to engage in the third level<sup>193</sup>. Moreover, the role of the personality of the individual and the individual's environment should not be undermined as they determine how people develop in their moral reasoning. Let us now look at the second aspect of development, the social development following Erickson's theory.

## 2. Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Stages

Erik Erikson was born in 1902 and died in 1994. His father left his mother and Erickson was raised by his step father, a medical doctor. This tumultuous childhood engendered identity issues in the young Erickson. He could not find his place in life and as a result was trying so many things including becoming an artist, teaching and learning child psychoanalysis. He later moved to America, taught at Harvard Medical School, Yale, and at the University of California at Berkeley. He also had a child psychoanalysis private practice and conducted researches. His last attempt to define himself was when he officially changed his name as an American citizen to Erik Erikson which means Erik, son of Erik.

### A. Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

The sum of Erickson's psychosocial theory is that the society shapes every individual idea of psychosocial development. Erickson coined the word 'psychosocial' to represent the psychological and social stages people go through as they develop. He believes that individuals are an embodiment of their psyche, external relationships and environment in which they find themselves in. In his book childhood and society<sup>194</sup>, Erickson outlined eight stages people pass from childhood to adulthood. These stages are not smooth sailing stages. At every point in time, the individual faces what he termed 'psychosocial crises' which are simply internal conflicts, crisis, struggle or challenge which a person must overcome or resolve in order to progress to the next stage. When an individual is able to smoothly resolve the conflict, the individual locates himself either in the positive or not so positive side of the pole in his psychosocial stages. These crises occur as an individual develops physiologically. When an individual is able to resolve the crises at any stage, the individual's level of self-confidence enlarges and the individual is able to competently handle the next stage however, where the individual is unable to achieve goal, maladjustments occur in the life of the person. Below is a table depicting the stages of development. Table: From Boeree, George<sup>197</sup>.

Stage	Psychosocial Crisis	Primary Relationships	Psychosocial Goal	Psychosocial Virtues	Maladjustments
I. (0-1) - Infants	Trust vs. Mistrust	Mother	To get, to give in return		secondary distortion - withdrawal
II. (2-3) - Toddler	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	parents	to hold on, to let go,	Will, determination, faith, control	Impulsivity-compulsion
III. (4) - Preschooler	Initiative vs. Guilt	family	To go after, to play	Purpose, courage	Recklessness - Inhibition
IV. (7-12 or so) - school age child	Industry vs. Inferiority	Neighborhood and school	To compete, to make things together	competence	Narrow rigidity-nerd
V. (13-18 or so) - adolescence	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Peer groups, role models	To be oneself, to share	Fidelity, loyalty	Frivolousness - organization
VI. (19-30) - young adult	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Partners, friends	To love and find oneself in another	Love	Proximity - exclusivity
VII. (30-50) - Middle adult	Generativity vs. Self-Absorption	Household, workmates	To make life, to take care of	Care	Overconcern - reflectivity
VIII. (50+) and beyond - old adult	Integrity vs. Despair	Modified or "my life"	To be, through having been, to have not being	Wisdom	Preoccupation - despair

**i. Trust vs mistrust**

From day one, babies begin to trust their mothers or caregivers to be consistent with care provision. When this is consistently and steadily done, the infant develops a basic sense of trust in the world and sees the world as a stable place where things will always happen consistently. However, if this care is not consistent and the child is not protected, the child will develop a sense of mistrust and sees the world as an unreliable and an unstable place. The child becomes inhibited as a result of it and does not dare explore the environment as a result of not knowing what the outcome of such an exploration will be. This feeling almost always goes with the child to adulthood. Having a sense of mistrust will make the child ever suspicious of everybody and not having faith in anything or anybody. However, a child who has developed basic trust in the caregivers as a result of consistency in feeding, sleeping and in being protected, will transfer this to adulthood and believe that things will later turn out for their good even in adverse conditions.

**ii. Autonomy vs shame & doubt**

The toddler, who is between 2 to 3 years according to Erickson, always wants to be given the opportunity to explore the environment. Here, the child seeks for a sense of being an individual, being autonomous and independent. Children at this age might want to decide what to wear, eat, do and so forth. When they are given the opportunity to do so, they develop a sense of confidence and satisfaction but when they are shouted down, criticized and controlled inappropriately, they develop a sense of shame and might not be able to express themselves or trust their ideas in future. The child grows into an adult who does not have the ability to believe in himself and take responsibility and to determine and follow his course in life.

**iii. Initiative vs guilt**

A child is said to have initiatives when the child is able to act on his or her own, play, explore the environment, is able to initiate actions even if the actions do not have favorable outcomes. Here the child exhibits a sense of confidence that it is appropriate to initiate actions. However, when the child is not allowed to initiate actions, the child will not be able to make decisions, lead or take initiative later in life, resulting in a sense of guilt whenever, he tries to do so. When a child is from an overbearing background, where he feels that when he does something, it is going to be disapproved, such a child develops as part of his personality repertoire, a fear of taking initiatives.

**iv. Industry vs inferiority**

A child is industrious when he is able to engage in productive activities. The child is able to devise novel methods of doing things. Here the child is in school and works on things like assignments, projects, and so forth. If the child is able

to objectively pursue ideas to its conclusion, is able to contribute and cooperate with others, makes effort to learn and be generally productive, the child will turn out to be industrious. However, if the child is not able to develop a sense of industry nor his unique potentials, capabilities and methods, or if he/she consistently bungles in his/her effort to be industrious, does not perform well in school; he/she starts feeling inferior or worthless. According to Erickson, it is at this stage that inferiority complex, low self esteem and low self concept begin to develop in children.

**v. Identity vs Role confusion**

With regards to our discourse on personal identity, this is one of the most important stages. This stage is entered into around age 12. However, the age a young person enters this stage of psychosocial development depends on the environment and circumstances which the young person finds himself/herself. At this stage, the adolescent wants to identify himself in relation to the world. He begins to develop a sense of individuality and sees himself as distinct from the world and others. When an adolescent is able to identify himself, apart from his peer group and the world at large, he develops a sense of self esteem, self confidence that he is an integral part of the world and that he matters a lot. When he is unable to achieve this role, confusion ensues and the individual is not able to identify himself and his role in the world. The adolescent becomes confused and begins to try everything and get frustrated in his bid to identify himself. Interestingly, it is at this stage that puberty occurs. So, not only is the adolescent going through this psychological crisis, there is the issue of physiological changes occurring, making the adolescent more confused. This is where 'identity crisis' occur. Role confusion also manifest in the lack of purpose or direction in life.

**vi. Intimacy vs isolation**

This is the stage when the adolescent becomes a young adult seeking relationships, love and attempting to marry and start a family. Here the young adult is sexually matured and is now capable of giving and receiving love, form a healthy adult relationship with the hope of mating and rearing children. When the young adult is able to seek and find love, when he is able to reciprocate love, bond with others and is able to connect with people and work, the individual is said to have achieved intimacy. However, crisis occur when the young adult is not able to find love, cannot date, share love mutually and mate. The young adult enters into a state of isolation, feels alienated and withdraws from people and social events and if this sense of isolation is not effectively resolved such that the individual maintains doem form of intimacy, he/she might become a hermit.

### vii. Generativity vs stagnation

At this stage, the adult begins to establish generational impact through raising children, through careers and general adaptation in the society as person who want to have their legacies outlive them. Individuals at this stage endeavor not to be selfish but to invest into raising their children as functional and important members of the society. This endeavor extends to their work and their community life. If the individual is able to give back to the society, he has successfully resolved this stage but if not, he develops a sense of self-absorption or stagnation. Adult at this stage who stagnate become bitter, selfish and lack interest in the future and in life. However, adults who are able to successfully go through this stage become altruistic and contributing members of the society.

### viii. Integrity vs despair

Erikson's psychosocial stage culminates in old age which is the final stage. This is the stage of stock taking where the adult examined what he has done, has achieved, and what he has been able to do with his life. Here, the individual is in harmony with his/her world if he/she has done enough to make the world a better place. Here also, the adult is either satisfied or dissatisfied with himself/herself. The opposite of a sense of integrity is a sense of despair. This manifests in an individual who has missed out in life. This event is usually preceded by the moment when the individual takes stock of his past events and finds himself wanting. The consequence of this situation is usually a strong feeling of regret and hopelessness in life.

With regards to personal identity, Erikson's psychosocial stages assist the individual to understand himself and also make himself a better person. The theory also addresses what occurs when a person misses a particular stage of development by not being able to resolve a crises at a particular stage. From the theory, what the individual does is to simply try to regain what is lost through concerted efforts in the next stage. Hence, when an individual overcomes the crisis at a particular stage, he has the propensity to be successful at another stage. The main contribution of this theory to personal identity is that with consistent effort, one can become anything one wants to be and also with enough effort, one can resolve any problem.

## IX. Some Possible Solutions to the Issues and the Problems in Personal Identity?

Understanding personal identity is important but more important is the concept of overcoming the issues and challenges of personal identity. We shall be examining four ways of solving the problems in personal identity briefly. However, the reader is encouraged to introspect and allow answers to emerge from within in response to this question. We are our best therapist and psychologist and no one can offer solutions to our problems better than we do. We have seen the issues and the problems, what are the likely solutions?

### 1. Learned optimism

The Psychologist Martin Seligman has discovered through decades of researches in positive psychology, that just as human beings can learn to be pessimistic and helpless, they can also learn to be optimistic. Seligman<sup>(19)</sup> has come up with a solution to pessimism called learned optimism. He believe that everyone can learn to be optimistic by not allowing negative self talk thrive in us. According to him, we should challenge such thoughts. Seligman in chapter 12 to 14 of his bestselling book: "*Learned Optimism*"<sup>(20)</sup> believes that one can learn to be optimistic by following his model of Adversity, Belief and Consequences, Coputation and Energization, also known as the (ABCDE) model. According to his ABCDE model, "A" means adverse event; "B" means what we believe about the adverse event; "C" means the consequences of our belief system concerning that adverse event; "D" means disputation while "E" means energization. This simply means that when we face an adverse event, we tend to form a belief about it. We also experience the consequences of the belief we have formed about the adverse event. There is also a dispute of the belief system we have formed and lastly, we get energized to attempt or try out new experiences. For instance, when one has a problem of personal identity, maybe the person has tried to socialize to no avail. This becomes an Adversity. The individual then believes and thinks that he/she is not good enough to be around or be appreciated by others. When this becomes a Belief, the Consequence is that the person generally avoids going out to initiate play with people. Disputation has to do with one challenging the belief system for instance saying that these people here do not want to play with me because they already have people they are playing with, when I get to another area, they will play with me and be friendly towards me. Energization results when we are able to dispute our belief system. The energy to try out new things surges and we move on and so learn to be optimistic.

### 2. Re-Socialization of the self

People who are from disadvantaged places find it difficult to integrate when they are given the opportunity to do so. They have so much identified with their previous background that introducing new knowledge becomes difficult. However, when such individuals re-socialize themselves, they are able to positively adapt. Re-socialization according to Morrison<sup>(21)</sup> "is a process of identity transformation in which people are called upon to learn new roles, while unlearning some aspects of their old ones." For instance, children who had traumatic childhood, who faced sexual and physical abuse also tend towards wanting to be someone else. They want to be someone else, someone who has not gone through the abuse and in their bid to do so, their personality disintegrates and they could manifest multiple personality disorders (MPD). When people go through re-socialization process, they develop new identities



consistent with the identities they want to exhibit. This simply means that personal identity could be changed.

### 3. Introspection

If we have at one time sat down to self-examine ourselves on certain issues then, we have engaged in the art of introspection. We can solve the problem of personal identity by engaging in rigorous self examination. According to James, in his seminal book, *"The Principles of Psychology"* cited by Byrne <sup>[60]</sup> "the word introspection need hardly be defined – it means, of course, the looking into our own minds and reporting what we discover therein." This simply means an internal dialogue aimed at examining one's thoughts, beliefs, desires and feelings. When an individual engages in introspection, he becomes aware of himself, understand what he does and why he does them and if there needs to be a change, he consciously makes them.

### 4. Changing our 'Weltanschauung'

We can change anything by changing how we look at it or view it. We have a view of everything in life including success, happiness, wealth and so forth. We also have beliefs we strongly hold about ourselves. This has been encapsulated with the term *weltanschauung* which literally means, "view of the world," or a person's "world view." Kelly <sup>[61]</sup> notes that we store our experiences in the form of constructs, useful concepts, convenient fictions, or transparent templates and place these templates on our world to guide our perception and behavior. This he called personal construct, personal or individual construction of the world. This means that our personal identities are as a result of our construction of the world or our world view. If one has a personal identity problem which one wants to resolve, all the person needs to do is to change his/her personal world construction (view) which can only be changed if the individual's personal experience is reconstructed to take into cognizance his/her new constructs that has emerged. Hence, people intellectually construct their worlds and can construct, deconstruct and reconstruct it anytime and as many times as possible. If we have a negative self defeating world view, all we need is to deconstruct and reconstruct our *weltanschauung*.

### 5. conclusion

In conclusion, we have in this section examined the concept of personal identity explicating the issues and the problems. We have also examined personal identity from the standpoint of psychological findings, and also the development of personal identity. We have concluded by proffering some psychological solutions to the problem of personal identity. However, apart from the solutions of personal identity discussed, there are others like modeling positive behaviors, learning, unlearning and relearning behaviors, and cognitive restructuring. We believe that when the proffered solutions are adopted, an individual is able to recover from identity crisis.

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