

**PERSONAL IDENTITY.** It may be thought that the general discussion of identity is restricted to the theoretical issues in logic and language. Of course, we routinely assume that objects around us preserve their identity, but nothing much is lost if they fail to do so. I assume that my car today is the same car as yesterday, but should I care? All I care is that its functions (even better: manifestations of functions) are preserved. If the engine runs, I might not care that it runs in a different car than yesterday, or that it is itself a different engine than yesterday.

The matter is different, so it seems, in the issue of personal identity. Driving my car at the speed of 200 mph I worry whether *I* will survive—in this life or in another life. And it is known that Locke is partly motivated by the question whether at resurrection, the *very same people* that lived before will be resurrected. In addition, in legal matters, such as the practice of punishment, it is essential to know whether crimes committed earlier can attributed to *this* man in the dock.

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We are, therefore, working under the plausible assumption that ‘person’ is a sortal term. We have to find its criteria of identity. Consider this proposal: to be the same person is to have the same soul. Of course we should then need criteria of identity for souls. But this we can take as a given.

Now, Locke rejects the idea that immaterial soul grounds personal identity. He does not thereby reject the existence of souls. He merely argues that their existence is of no consequence to the question of identity (see Example 2).

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To understand what personal identity consists in we should understand what a person is. Echoing Descartes, Locke claims that a person is a thinking substance. Consequently, the criteria of identity of a person must be related to consciousness. Thus the proposal: the unity of consciousness constitutes the identity of a person.

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*Example 1* (Same body, same soul, different persons). Consider the case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Dr Jekyll is a reputable gentleman during the day. At night the same soul inhabits the same body, but passes under the name of Mr Hyde and acts in the evil ways very different from the ways of Dr Jekyll. Neither is aware of the acts of another (unlike in Stevenson’s novel). Are we supposed to say that these are the same persons? Probably not. And this is despite our (plausible) stipulation that Jekyll and Hyde have the same soul. Another answer might be that we have the same person, but two different personalities or characters.

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*Example 2* (Different bodies, same soul, different persons). Supposing that souls exist, they can inhabit different bodies. Perhaps in Obama’s body lives the soul of Lenin. If, however, Obama has no recollection of Lenin’s actions, of his experiences from the inside, then he is not the same person as Lenin.

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*Example 3* (Different bodies, same/different soul, same person). Suppose we manage to transplant the brain of a prince into the body of a cobbler. The brain may, or may not, be the seat of one’s soul (see below). What matters is whether it is the seat of one’s consciousness. Let us assume just that. After the surgery the ‘present cobbler’ is able to recover all the experiences of the ‘earlier prince’, but none of the ‘earlier cobbler’. Then we ought to conclude that the ‘present cobbler’ is no one other than the ‘earlier prince’.

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*Remark 4.* Locke notes that the unity of consciousness cannot be substantiated with material evidence. Thus the legal practice relies correctly on the identity of body where is no further proof to undercut personal identity is available.

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*Question 5* (Easy!). Notice that the thesis of relative identity allows us to say that  $x$  and  $y$  can be the same man, though not the same person. Can we think of a situation where  $x$  and  $y$  are the same person, but not the same man?

**UNITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS.** We have to clarify what the unity of consciousness grounding personal identity is supposed to stand for. Suppose we say that it consists in the continuity of memory. But what if our memories are sketchy? I remember being a student, and while a student, I remembered being a schoolboy. At present, however, I have no memories of being a schoolboy. Should we say that SB the adult and SB the schoolboy are not the same person?

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A natural response is that these sketchy fragments of consciousness are still united. Even though at  $t_2$  I cannot remember my experiences at  $t_0$ , yet at  $t_1$  I do have some recollections of  $t_0$ . So we obtain this criterion of personal identity: the person remembers episodes occurring at an earlier time, and at that earlier time he is (was) able to remember episodes of a still earlier time.

However, there is an exegetical difficulty here, as Locke seems to rule out unity of consciousness when some gaps have occurred. In such cases, he says, we can only allow the identity of substance (of a man), but not the identity of person.

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Quite apart from exegesis, there are problems of material adequacy (i.e. of plausibility). I mention two such related problems. (1) Suppose that at  $t_1$  Paul has a certain experience of driving a car. Suppose that at  $t_2$  Peter claims to have a vivid recollection of qualitatively the same experience of driving a car at  $t_1$ . The question is how he got it. If he mistakenly came to believe that he drove the car at  $t_1$ —perhaps because of Paul’s description—then we might say that he does not remember, but merely imagines to have driven a car at that time. Yet it may also be that the relevant fragments of Paul’s consciousness were *transferred* to Peter’s mind, perhaps by a procedure analogous to copy-paste in digital computers. Then this fact would not, contrary to Locke’s view, incline us to conclude that Paul has any claim of identity with Peter-at- $t_1$ . Locke recognises the difficulty, but in response offers what appears to be an irrelevant remark on God’s benevolence. The response is off target, because, on the face of it, there is *no problem* God should be charged with resolving. Locke’s view delivers, in the situation described, a clear, yet implausible, answer. (2) Recall the prince and the cobbler story (Example 3). Suppose we are told that the prince’s soul stayed behind, while his memories, and units of consciousness in general, were transferred to the cobbler. The cobbler’s own memories are erased. Very well; but with these assumptions stated explicitly, there will be more resistance to the idea that the present cobbler is identical to the earlier prince, as Locke’s view requires.

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**IDENTITY OF PERSONALITY.** The proposal, to repeat, is that so far as I have the same history of consciousness, I remain the same person. This is further elaborated as the unity of memory. But a question, I think, should arise whether we ignore the identity of personality. A person whose memories have been erased (by a disease or a surgery) might have a changed personality, but would he also be another person? We often say that in such cases we have a 'totally different person'. But do we mean anything more than that the personality, the moral character, the behavioural dispositions of this *man* have changed?

It seems to me that our use of the term 'personality' ('character') is continuous with the use of the term 'person'. Suppose that yesterday you were joyful, today you are gloomy. On the basis of these observations alone I will not conclude that your personality has changed, from 'joyful' to 'gloomy'. I would rather say your same personality is manifested differently on these two days. Suppose, however, I have observed you being uniformly joyful between July and December. Between December and June I observe you being uniformly gloomy. Then, in June, I am more likely to conclude that your personality has changed in regard to for the last three months. But I would presumably not conclude that you are not the same person. Suppose now that you demonstrate a radical change in virtually every aspect of your personality—even though you still remember various events from your past. Then, I think, I might be willing to consider that you have changed as a person.

By the same token, the hypothetical examples of Obama/Lenin or Jekyll/Hyde are underdeveloped. Some cannot in principle be developed further, so far as we are ignorant of inner workings of souls (if they exist). Or they lack psychological or biological details underlying the supposedly instant transformations. Where the psychological continuity is violated for relatively transparent biological reasons, as in Alzheimer's disease, then there is much less incentive to call the change a change in personhood. If Ernest is an Alzheimer patient, you do not readily admit, 'This is literally not Ernest in front of me, this is someone else.'

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