

CHAPTER V
PERSONS

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In this chapter, I wish to deal with a special problem which is of permanent interest in philosophy. The problem is the problem of understanding the concept of a person and of personal or self-identity. The expression "self" and "person" are often used interchangeably. While the term "self" is commonly used by the philosopher as a synonym of the word "person" the term 'self-knowledge' clearly does not mean the 'knowledge of a person'. Self knowledge means the knowledge of one self. It is because of the existence and nature of self-knowledge that there is a special problem or set of problems about the nature of persons and of personal identity. In this chapter, we shall consider why the nature of persons, and of personal identity is regarded as posing a distinctive philosophical problem in a way in which the nature and identity of other things does not. For instance, in the case of ordinary 'material things', e.g., 'table', 'chair', we can without much likelihood of controversy (except in marginal or "borderline" cases) speak of spatio-temporal continuity as the criterion, or logically necessary condition of identity. But it is well-known that to treat spatio-temporal continuity as the criterion of personal identity leads immediately to intractable puzzles.

It is obvious enough that the existence of a special problem about the nature of persons and personal identity is somehow connected with the fact that persons have minds. To

many it makes no sense to say that mind is a material thing. There is a philosophical tendency to regard minds as non-physical entities and to identify persons with their minds. But in merely pointing out that persons have minds and that minds cannot be said to be 'material things', one has, as it were, merely stated a problem, and not solved it !

It has sometimes been thought that the special nature of the problem about persons can be adequately appreciated by reflecting on the distinction between first-person ~~ps~~ychological statements and third-person psychological statements. But the most striking fact about the problem is that it is often raised by a question which does not even contain the word 'person' or any synonym of it, namely, "What am I ?" In order to answer this question it will be better to start with the traditional philosophers, like Descartes. He says -

"While I was trying to think everything false it must be that I, who was thinking this, was something."1

According to Descartes man is composed of two substances, viz., mental and physical. In other words, it can be said that man is composed of two parts, i.e. one is private and the other one is public. Descartes' theory is something like : human bodies are in space and subject to mechanical laws, which govern all other bodies in space. Body can be extended and its processes and states can be

inspected by external observation. But minds are not in space, nor are their operations subject to mechanical laws. The essential attribute of mind is 'thinking' and a person is identical with his mind only, because 'he is a thinking being'. Descartes' theory of 'person' i.e., 'he is a thinking thing' has been subjected to diverse criticisms and arguments. This theory has been criticised by many philosophers. Though it is true that a person is a 'thinking thing', yet, at the same time can his body and bodily properties be logically totally detached from this fact? Moreover, 'what is the thing that thinks?' is also debatable problem. Descartes' theory of 'thinking thing' has been criticised from many angles. It has been argued that mere diversity of thought and extension and the fact - if it is a fact - that they can exist apart from one another would not imply that there could not be a thinking substance which is also extended. Thus Hobbes says, that it could be the case that something that thinks should be something corporeal. And the same view has been shared by Locke who thinks corporeal body might be able to think. There is another great disadvantage in Descartes' theory. For him, the essence of mind is thought, and the essence of body is extension. These two are the essential features of both mind and body respectively. From this it becomes clear that, for Descartes both mind and body have one fundamental attribute each, so that each one is reducible to its fundamental attribute, i.e. 'mind'

is reducible to 'thinking' and 'matter' is reducible to 'extension'. Some critics are of the opinion that, from such a distinction, it becomes clear that Descartes seeks to sort out the 'mind-body' problem by a simple definitional device. His account says nothing more than that 'what we mean by body is that it is extended'. But Descartes is

not correct at all for the following considerations:

Though it is true that thinking is one of the chief characteristics of mind, yet 'mind' cannot be totally identical with 'thought'. There are other characteristics of mind such as memorising, imagining, intending, etc.

Descartes cannot avoid attributing these to the mind.

Similarly, though it is true that extension is an attribute of body, yet extension is not the only attribute of body.

Body possesses other attributes such as weight, senses, motion etc. qualities which distinguish body (physical) from

body (material). If we apply Descartes' theory, then there will be no difference between physical body and material

body. In fact, we know that these two are quite different from each other, because physical body possesses these

attributes which material body lacks. Descartes makes a serious mistake by identifying extension with bodies (physical).

From these considerations it becomes very clear that Descartes' categorial distinction between mind and

thinking is a product of the body. But this does not mean

body is more a matter of implicit, half-formulated assumption, than one of explicit concern.

We have seen that, if we make a categorial distinction between mind and body, then serious problems arise which cannot be avoided very easily. Now another question arises - if 'person' is not identical with his mind, then, is he - no doubt in much qualified way - identical with his body ? The materialist would answer this question in the affirmative. They say that a 'person' is identical with his body, because there is only one ultimate reality in the universe, and that is matter. There is nothing but only matter and motion. Extension and impenetrability are its essential attributes. Motion is the primary form of activity. Only matter and motion can explain all processes of reality, the physical processes as well as the mental processes. Therefore, from materialism it follows that 'person' is a material body consisting of matter only and though there are mental events and states, these events and states are only the products of the physical body. Thus under this assumption materialism tries to establish that a person is his physical body. His thought, emotions, his feelings, his desires are thus the products of this body.

Such an approach has been criticised by John Locke. Locke points out that it is possible to imagine that thinking is a product of the body. But this does not mean

that a person is his body. He tries to establish that a person is not his body rather it is his mind. For him a person is identical with his self because consciousness is the attribute of the self and it is consciousness that determines the identity of a person. A person's body changes, but his consciousness "remains the same" and that is why consciousness is the person.

The materialists' position faces other difficulties. Though it may for argument's sake, be allowed that a person is his body, yet there may be a problem about the nature of mental processes whose existence cannot be denied. If we agree with the materialist that mental processes are a by-product of the physical body, yet we cannot deny the occurrence of different kinds of mental phenomena. We know that a human being possesses both mental processes and physical processes. The materialist cannot deny the existence of mental process and in fact, they believe in it, but only deny that there are minds. The materialist also believes that a person is a 'complex being' with the mental processes and physical processes'. Thus materialism like dualism believes in the duality, as it were, of personal existence; and though it tries to establish that a person is his body, it fails to prove the same.

It is clear that neither Cartesianism nor materialism has an adequate way of overcoming the problems posed

by the apparent duality of the mental and the physical - duality if not of substance, at least of processes. The reason why it is important that this duality be overcome somehow is as follows :-

The concept of a 'person' seems quite unquestionably to be a 'unitary concept', i.e., a concept that somehow overarches the duality of the mental and the physical; and unless this overarching character is adequately accounted for, it would seem that the 'concept' has not quite come under our philosophical grasp. P.F.Strawson's theory seems to be an attempt at grappling with this very problem. I propose, therefore, in what follows to consider the Strawsonian's theory in some detail.

The starting point of Strawson's argument is the fact - or at least what we ordinarily regard as the fact - that we ascribe to ourselves two radically different kinds of predicates. We ascribe to ourselves predicates such as spatio-temporal location ('I am on the sofa') and relatively enduring characteristics such as height, colouring, shape, and weight. Such predicates are also ascribed to what we regard as only material bodies. On the other hand, we also ascribe to ourselves predicates which in Strawson's words, we would not 'dream' of ascribing to just material bodies, predicates such as intentions, thoughts, feelings, perceptions and memories. The important point to note here is that

these two diverse kinds of predicates are, in our ordinary discourse at any rate, are ascribed to one and the same thing. That is one's states of consciousness, one's thoughts and sensations are ascribed to the very same thing to which these physical characteristics, this physical situation is ascribed. The philosophical problem here is that of understanding how this is possible.

Strawson's answer is rather the simple one that this possibility is grounded in the fact that the concept of a 'person' is a 'primitive concept', in the sense that it is the concept of a thing which is not further analysable into two or more things but must be thought of as a 'unitary entity' to which two radically different kinds of predicates are equally coherently applicable. But before we come to this answer we must look at the way in which Strawson deals with the possibility that the concept of a 'person' which seems to underlie our ordinary ways of talking about ourselves might be wrong or confused. In this connection Strawson discusses two views. One of them is what he calls the Cartesian view and the other is what he designates as a no-ownership theory.

Any philosophical theory which aspires to clarify the concept of a 'person' must, according to Strawson, answer the following two questions:- (1) Why are

states of consciousness ascribed to anything at all? and (2) Why are states of consciousness ascribed to the very same thing as certain corporeal characteristics, a physical situation etc? According to the Cartesian view the second question is a question that does not arise, because it is only an illusion on this view that both these kinds of predicates are ascribed to one and the same thing. But the first question on this view does seem to demand an answer. On the no-ownership theory either question does not arise. For on this view it is a mistake that one ascribes one's states of consciousness to anything at all, and therefore, the question of ascribing them to the same thing as certain physical characteristics etc. cannot arise. To take the no-ownership theory first, the crucial thing according to this theory that must be appreciated is the fact that all ownership must be transferable ownership but it is wrongly presumed in our ordinary ways of talking about mental predicates or properties that these are owned in a necessarily non-transferable way. Thus it is thought that 'my pain' or 'my thought' is such that I cannot possibly give to anybody else. 'My thought' or 'my pain' is logically necessarily mine. Since, according to the no-ownership theory, only those things whose ownership is logically transferable can be owned at all, mental states or experiences cannot be owned by anything and therefore cannot

be ascribed to anything. It is possible however, to understand why people should have thought that mental states must not only be owned but owned in a non-transferable way. One's experiences are uniquely causally related to one's body and this unique causal relationship might, as long as one is clear about the fact, be expressed in terms of notion of ownership, e.g, as the body itself as 'having' the experiences in question. This of course must be seen as just another way of expressing the unique causal relationship between the body and experiences. However it is easy to slide from this notion of 'having' to the other illegitimate notion of 'having' according to which experiences are owned in a non-transferable way. Having taken the step, it is but another small step to postulating an owner in this very sense, an ego whose sole purpose is to own the experiences non-transferably.

Strawson's criticisms of the non-ownership theory is that it is incoherent. He says-

"It is not coherent, in that one who holds it is forced to make use of that sense of possession of which he denies the existence, in presenting his case for the denial".²

This comes about in the following way - He must present his thesis in something like the following way: 'All my experiences are owned' in the sense that they are uniquely

casually dependent on the state of body B'.³ Now any attempt to eliminate the 'my' from this presentation poses insurmountable difficulties for the theorist. For instance, the elimination of the 'my' yield the following proposition: All experiences are uniquely causally dependent on the state of the body B; and this is a plain falsehood. Another proposition that the elimination of the 'my' may yield is : 'all experiences which are uniquely causally dependent on the state of body B are so causally dependent on the state of body B'.⁴ But then this is not a contingent proposition as required by the theory but an analytic proposition. As Strawson says -

"He must mean to be speaking of some class of experiences of the members of which it is in fact contingently true that they are all dependent on body B. The defining characteristic of this class is in fact that they are my experiences' or 'the experiences of some person' where the idea of possession expressed by 'my' and 'of' is the one he calls into question." 5

The incoherence in which the no-ownership theory is necessarily entangled is crucial because the theory seems to deny the very basis of our being able to talk about experiences or mental states at all. This basis consists in the fact that experiences can be identifyingly referred to. And they can be so referred to only as experiences or states of consciousness of some already identified person!;

The experiences owe their identity as particulars to the identity of the person whose experiences they are. In other words, it is impossible that an experience of a state of consciousness, identified as a particular item can belong to or be possessed by someone other than the person with reference to whom they have been identified. Thus experiences must be possessed or ascribable in just that way which the no-ownership theorist ridicules.

"The requirements of identity rule out logical transferability of ownership. So the theorist could maintain his position only by denying that we could ever refer to particular states or experiences at all; and this position is ridiculous". 6

Strawson's criticism of the Cartesian theory centers round his claim that,

" it is a necessary condition of one's ascribing states of consciousness, experiences, to oneself, in the way one does, that one should also ascribe them, or be prepared to ascribe them, to others who are not oneself."7

The short answer to Cartesianism is as follows:

" One can ascribe states of consciousness to oneself only if one can ascribe them to others. One can ascribe them to others only if one can identify other subjects of experiences. And one cannot identify others if one can identify them only as subjects of experience, possessors of states of consciousness". 8

The only way, therefore, to free oneself from the difficulties of both the no-ownership theory and

Cartesianism is to acknowledge with Strawson, that the concept of a person is a 'primitive' concept i.e.,

" the concept of a person is the concept of a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation & etc. are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type." 9

To return to the two questions which according to Strawson any adequate theory of person must confront: (1) Why are one's states of consciousness ascribed to anything at all ? (2) Why are states of consciousness ascribed to the very same thing as certain corporeal characteristics, physical situation etc.? Strawson's position is that a necessary condition of states of consciousness being ascribed at all is that they should ascribe to the very same things as certain corporeal characteristics physical situation etc. That is to say that the states of consciousness could be not ascribed at all unless they were ascribe to a person in exactly the Strawsonian 'primitive' sense.

Strawson tries to further clarify the concept of a person as a necessarily 'primitive' concept by making a distinction between "M-predicates" and "P-predicates". "M-predicates" consist of those which are also properly applied to material bodies to which, as he says, we would not dream of applying predicates ascribing states of consciousness. They include things like 'weights 10 K. gs', 'is in the class-

room' and so on. The second kind consists of all the other predicates we apply to persons. Obviously, there is a great variety of 'P-predicates', they include things like 'is smiling', 'is going for a walk', as well as things like, 'is in pain', and 'is thinking hard', 'believes in God' and so on.

To realise the full force of the thesis that the concept of a person is a 'primitive concept' is according to Strawson, to acknowledge the truth of the following propositions: (1) Both "M-predicates" and "p-predicates" are equally applicable to persons; (2) There must be, at least in the case of some 'p-predicates' logically adequate criteria for ascribing them to others than oneself, (3) One ascribes some P-predicates to oneself without any criteria of application and (4) That behavioural criteria for ascription of 'P-predicates' to others must, at least on occasions, be logically adequate criteria for such ascription. To take these in order: It is clear enough that (1) is the basis statement of Strawson's position. As for (2): if none of our ways of telling that some individuals other than ourselves had 'p-predicates' were logically adequate then the relationship between these ways of telling (i.e., observation of behaviour) and the 'p-predicates' would be that of pure inductive co-relation. But co-relations can be established from the nature of the case only in one's own case. But in:

that case there would be no ways of talking about even my own case because one can talk of about one's states of consciousness at all only if one can also talk about states of consciousness of others, but one could not talk about states of consciousness of others unless there were occasions on which one knew that one's ascriptions of states of consciousness to others were correct. And this would be so if and only if the behavioural criteria for ascribing states of consciousness to others were at least occasionally logically adequate.

Strawson's (3) can be accounted for only on the supposition that the concept of a person is unique and primitive in exactly the Strawsonian sense. Thus the truth of this proposition provides, as it were, a transcendental justification of Strawson's theory of person.

As to proposition (4) it is clear that if what has been said in explication of proposition (2) were correct then it would necessarily follow that behavioural criteria, which are the only possible criteria that we have, for ascribing 'p-predicates' to others must at least be occasionally logically adequate.

Strawson's theory of persons undoubtedly avoids many difficulties which what he considers to be rival theory of persons are subject to. However there are many loose ends

in Strawson's own theory, some of which he recognizes himself. But his attempt to tie these loose ends up are anything but satisfactory. For example, Strawson recognizes that we need further clarification of his notion of a logically adequate criterion in connection with his claim that our behavioural criteria for ascribing 'p-predicates' to others must at least occasionally be logically adequate. But his clarification consists simply of the following cryptic passage"-

"If one is playing a game of cards, the distinctive markings of a certain card constitute a logically adequate criterion for calling it, say, the Queen of Hearts; but, in calling it this, in the context of the game, one is ascribing to it properties over and above the possession of these markings. The predicate gets its meaning from the whole structure of the game. So with the language in which we ascribe 'p-predicates'. To say that the criteria on the strength of which we ascribe P-predicates to others are of a logically adequate kind for this ascription, is not to say that all there is to the ascriptive meaning of these predicates is these criteria. To say this is to forget that they are P-predicates, to forget the rest of the language - structure to which they belong."10

This argument from analogy raises many questions about the analogy itself and without further clarification from Strawson one does not know how to make the analogy, as it were, work in support of Strawson's thesis.

In any case there seems to be clear admission that P-predicates necessarily carry a residue of meaning not covered by the criteria for that ascription. Is not this sufficient for the sceptic to get a foothold even in Strawson's own theory?

There is also the rather curious insistence that the causal relationship between my body and my experiences, unique as it is, is purely contingent. Strawson seeks to justify this in terms of his thought-experiment about the possibility that there is one subject of experience with more than one mutually independent bodies which have a special causal relationship with the experiences of that subject. The thought-experiment is alleged to show the logical possibility of their being only one subject of experience, S, (as it were) having several different bodies (e.g. A, B, C). Let us suppose that S is a subject of visual experience:

"(1) Whether the eyelids of B and C are open or not is causally irrelevant to whether S sees; but S sees only if the eyelids of A are open(2) Where A and B may be, however, is quite irrelevant to where S sees from, i.e., to what his possible field of vision is. This is determined only by where C is..... But (3) The direction in which the heads and eyeballs of A and C are turned is quite irrelevant to what S sees. Given the station of C,

then which of all the views which are possible from this position is the view seen by S, depends on the direction in which the head and eyeballs of B are turned, wherever B may find himself."11

Apart from the quite incredible difficulties that would be involved in spelling out his story in detail, Strawson would have to face the question that rises immediately to mind in view of his theory of persons: Where is the person, the entity which has the experiences? Presumably this entity is the same as S? One possible answer is that S is equally present in all the three bodies. But then persons would be too much like universals for Strawson's taste. Is S uniquely associated with only one of the three bodies? If so, the very idea of the thought-experiment becomes questionable. Does S alternate its existence between the three bodies? If it does, how is one to know that it is not replaced by another exactly similar subject of experience on transit from one body to another?

This may, however, be thought to be too short a way with Strawson's story; for it ignores—so it may seem—one perfectly plausible answer to the question, "Where is S?". If we assume with Strawson, for the moment, that he has no separate problem of personal identity, because, for him, persons, unlike Cartesian egos, must have bodies, could not S be supposed to be wherever bodies A, B, C are? I.e. Could

not S have a body which has A, B and C as its parts?

Although it is quite easy to produce examples of single material objects which have parts which are spatially discontinuous with one another, i.e. parts, the space between which does not contain any other parts of the material object in question, one would feel intuitively unhappy about treating Strawson's A, B and C as parts of a single material object. Leaving aside such dubious cases of material objects as universities, cricket teams and so on, there are such perfectly recognizable cases as, for example, complexes of buildings. A complex of buildings may, without much bending of our concept of singularity of material objects, be regarded as a single material object, and yet it would consist of parts which would be spatially discontinuous with one another. And if we accept a primitive atomic physics, the human body itself may be thought to be a perfect counter - example to the thesis that a single material thing cannot have parts which are spatially discontinuous with one another. For, on such a view, a human body, or any other body, consists of atoms which may be spatially discontinuous with one another. We must, however, note a significant difference between the two examples. One refers to macro parts of a single material object, while the other refers to micro parts of a single material object; and what we are really concerned with here is the relationship

between a single material object and its macro parts, and not also between it and its micro parts; and what is true of one relationship need not be true of the other. But this difference perhaps need not present any crucial problem to us. It may be said that both the examples are examples of single material objects because they satisfy the following condition of singularity of material objects; Any part of a single material thing must be nearer to some other part of it than to any other material thing.

But in fact neither of the examples satisfies this condition; and it must therefore be doubted whether it is a condition of singularity of material objects, for both the cases seem to be clear enough cases of single material objects. A constituent part of a complex of buildings may be nearer to a constituent part of another, adjacent, complex of building than to any other part of the former. And if someone stuck a pin into me, I could, I suppose, imagine an atom which is a part of my body being nearer to some other atoms constituting the pin than to any other atoms which are parts of my body. But although this way of dealing with the examples must be wrong, it nevertheless points to what, I think, is the correct why of dealing with them; and this would be to say that for anything to be a part of a single material object there must be severe restrictions on its capacity to move through space

independently of the rest of the object. A constituent building of a complex of buildings may be, if it is made of prefabricated, collapsible material, moved around a little, but there must be a limit to the distance to which it can be moved apart from the rest of the complex; when it crosses the limit, which need not be absolutely precise, it ceases to be a part of that complex. Similarly, I think, with the other example. And this explains why Strawson's A, B and C cannot be part of a single material object. There are no restrictions at all on movement through space of any of them independently of the others. Or, if there are, Strawson does not say so, and presumably he does not think that there is need for any in order coherently to tell his story.

It may be objected that this criticism rests on a simple but fundamental mistake, namely, the mistake of supposing that we can count or individuate material objects qua material objects. The notion of a material object is too general for enumeration and individuation to be possible under it. "How many material objects are there in this room?" is an unanswerable question; whereas "How many books are there in this room?" is answerable. Enumeration and individuation of material objects can begin only after the concepts under which the material objects are to be treated have been specified. Now it may be suggested that the argument of the preceding paragraph ignores this fact about

enumeration and individuation of material objects, because it treats A, B and C of Strawson's example simply as material bodies; and in so far as it does so it must be at least inadequate. The criticism perhaps, is justified, but it is not crucial. Part of the trouble is that Strawson himself does not specify the concept under which A, B, C are to be treated. But even if this inadequacy were removed from his argument, the main difficulty would remain.

The only relevant concept under which A, B and C can be treated is the concept of a human body. And since the whole point of the exercise is to show that it is only a contingent matter that experiences of a single subject of experience are dependent in the way that they are dependent on the states of a single human body, A, B and C are presumably to be conceived as three distinct human bodies. Now there may be thought to be two possible ways in which A, B and C can be regarded as parts of a single material body: (I) They could be regarded as constituting a single human body, i.e., as parts of a single human body. But our notion of a human body being what it is, this alleged possibility does not at all seem a plausible suggestion. (II) They could be treated somewhat on a par with the notion of a single complex of buildings discussed above, the only difference being, it may be suggested, that what gives unity to a single complex of buildings is the restriction on

the capacity of any part of the complex to move about in space independently of the rest, while what gives unity to A, B, C, in spite of their being three different human bodies, is that they are the bodies of a single subject of experience. This way of treating the matter of course begs the question, for part of what we want to be clear about is precisely the relationship of 'of' that is alleged to obtain between a subject of experience and the three relevant bodies A, B and C.

How are we to conceive this relationship? On Strawson's theory of persons it would seem that the relationship is to be understood in terms of his view about the ascription of M- and P-predicates to persons.¹² A person has that body some of whose M-predicates are the person's M-predicates, and whose behaviour constitutes a 'logically adequate' criterion for the ascription of P-predicates to that person. But when we apply this in the present case we seem immediately to face grave difficulties. Suppose A, B, C are all of different heights : A is five foot, B six and C seven foot. Then on Strawson's Theory of persons it would follow that the relevant person or subject of experience is at the same time five foot, six foot and seven foot tall. It may be thought that the difficulty is not of any fundamental importance, for all that a contingency such as Strawson's story represents demands, is that our language of

persons be revised in certain ways, and this need not involve any fundamental revision of our concept of a person. But we must at least be uneasy before accepting this answer. The difficulties presented by P- predicates would seem to be even greater. Even if we grant that we could, on the basis of observations of A, B and C and their respective environments, ascribe sense perceptions to S, how should we ascribe emotions and actions to S ? Suppose S is confronted with a tiger. There are several questions we can ask : (i) Does S see the tiger, and if so how do we know that he does ? (ii) Is S afraid, and if so how do we know that he does so, and how does S know that he does ? Even if we grant that, on the basis of what Strawson says about A, B, C, question (i) can be answered, it is difficult to see how on the three-distinct-human-bodies hypothesis, questions, (ii) and (iii) can be answered at all. Suppose body B behaves as though it (?) is afraid, but body A does not and instead moves intrepidly towards the tiger and tries 'fondly' to stroke it. Should we say S is afraid and not afraid at the same time ? Similar difficulties would arise with regard to the attribution of 'running' to S. To say that these difficulties could be resolved by a simple revision of our language of persons seems highly unpalatable. The revision required would be so drastic that we would not be certain that we were talking about the same

thing, or that we were talking coherently about anything at all. 13

While Strawson claims that the notion of a "pure ego" as a basic notion is incoherent, he admits that once the primitive character of the concept of a person is granted and thus the parasitic character of the notion of ego is realised, there is no logical difficulty in imagining the possibility of a disembodied ego surviving the death of a person. Although it is not clear that, within the framework of his theory, Strawson must admit such a possibility, the fact that he does admit this possibility seems to point to the suspicion that there is much more to the so-called primitiveness of the concept of a person than Strawson is either willing or able to make clear.

Strawson's theory is quite clearly a bold and skilful attempt at transcending the confines of the traditional debate about the nature of persons. However, this attempt does not seem to have made a great deal of difference to the debate after Strawson. The debate, for all practical purposes has relapsed into an argument between the materialist and, for want of a better word, the Cartesian. No doubt there has been an increasing sophistication on either side but it can hardly be said that the debate has achieved a substantial advancement. Like most philosophical

debates, this debate will also perhaps, when it has reached the point of exhaustion, will be set aside until such time as something strikingly new can be said about the problem.

The debate about the concept of a person and the debate about the criteria of personal identity has of course, from the nature of the case, been closely associated with one another. However the later debate is highly interesting in itself and in order to give an idea of how it has proceeded I add a statement about it in the Appendix to this chapter.

APPENDIX

The debate about personal identity seems to have been dominated by a particular conception of identity. And this is the conception that identity is a relation and this relation is such that it is both symmetrical and transitive as between the terms of the relation. Thus if A is identical with B, on this conception of identity, B must be identical with A; and if A is identical with B and B with C then A must be identical with C. It is stressed that we need this conception of identity so as to be able to demarcate similarity from identity; without such demarcation, so it is alleged, identity will collapse into similarity and this will result in a general collapse in the functioning of our conceptual scheme. There are powerful arguments in Wittgenstein, for example, against such delimiting of the concept of identity. It is not the purpose, however of this appendix to go into these arguments. I merely wish here to present as it were a skeletal philosophical picture of the debate.

Given the above notion of identity a philosophical problem about personal identity arises in the following way : There seem ordinarily to be two apparently unconnected, and therefore mutually independent criteria of personal identity. These are : (1) bodily continuity and (2) memory. A person A at time t_1 is identical with a person B at time t_2 , if B has the same body as A and the criterion for B's having

the same body as A's is the spatio-temporal continuity of A's body with B's. On the memory criterion a person B at time t_2 is the same as a person A at time t_1 if B remembers, or is at least capable of remembering, being A at time t_1 . These statements of the two criteria for personal identity find, of course, a great deal of qualification and refinement¹⁴ in the debate. It is not necessary for us however to go into this.

The interesting thing about the two criteria is that under normal circumstances they yield, when correctly applied, the same result. If A is found identical with B on the bodily continuity criterion the application of the memory criterion will yield the same result. However, it is not difficult at all to imagine circumstances under which the application of the two criteria produces diametrically divergent consequences.

Thus take the following story : A person X suddenly claims to be identical with a person who is known to have been long dead, say, Sivaji. Of course the initial rational presumption would be that the person is either telling a lie or that he is a suitable case for mental treatment. But after prolonged and most scrupulous examination of the memory claims that the person makes, it seems beyond doubt that these claims are authentic (e.g.

such examination makes it possible to rule out that the person had merely learnt from various sources the details of Sivaji's life. Also in the light of the memory claims that X makes it becomes possible to explain some hitherto dark area of Sivaji's life and so on). If this is accepted, on the memory criterion X has to be regarded as identical with Sivaji. On the other hand, it is quite clear that X's body is discontinuous with that of Sivaji's and therefore is not the same as it. So on the bodily continuity criterion X is not identical with Sivaji. Thus here is a case where the application of the two criteria of personal identity give us diametrically opposed results.

The debate consists primarily of a confrontation between the memory theory and bodily continuity theory of personal identity. Each side in the debate points out logical perplexities of an intractable kind, that quickly arise from the acceptance of the opposing theory. For instance, referring back to the story narrated above, it may be pointed out that there is nothing in logic to prevent another person Y, from making the same memory claims whose authenticity can also be equally well established. It will then follow that on the memory criterion of personal identity two obviously distinct persons are identical with one and the same person, namely, Sivaji. And this will violate the logic of the concept of identity, thus : the logic of

the concept requires that if X is identical with Sivaji and, Y is identical with Sivaji, then X must be identical with Y and this last obviously is not the case. Thus, it is claimed that the application of the memory criterion leads under imaginable circumstances, to logical contradiction. But one can also imagine the following happenings : The body of a person X, splits, as is logically possible, into two, Y and Z. In course of time, both Y and Z grow into complete human bodies. Now X is bodily continuous with Y as well as with Z; and the transitivity of the notion of identity requires that if X is identical with Y and also with Z then Y must be identical with Z. But obviously Y is not identical with Z. It seems thus that the application of the bodily continuity criterion can also, under imaginable circumstances lead to a self-contradictory situation.

The debate proceeds by an ever greater refinement in the statement of the two rival criteria of personal identity. The logical puzzles however tend persistently to reappear in some form or other --- the refinements notwithstanding. It does seem as though here we have reached a point where philosophical thinking needs to come out of a groove in which it seems to have got stuck. There have been signs of this happening in recent times. For example, the problem of personal identity is now seen not so much as a logical problem of coping with the sharp boundaries of the

concept of identity, but as one of a moral - intellectual inquiry into oneself. On such a line of thinking personal identity cannot be separated from questions such as what ought I ultimately to be ? Or what kind of a person am I really as opposed to the kind of person that I merely seem to myself to be? I find this a fascinating line of enquiry. However it will probably require a different kind of thesis from the one I have been able to put together.

REFERENCES

1. Sydney Shoemaker., Self-knowledge and Self-Identity, P.9.
2. P. F. Strawson., Individuals, P.96.
3. Ibid., PP. 96-97.
4. Ibid., P. 97.
5. Ibid., P. 97.
6. Ibid., PP. 97-98.
7. Ibid., P.99.
8. Ibid., P. 100.
9. Ibid., PP. 101-102.
10. Ibid., P. 110.
11. Ibid., PP. 90-91.
12. Ibid., P. 104.
13. I owe the argument about to M. Miri's article "Person and Their Bodies," Philosophical studies, 16th August, 1972.
14. See, for instance, Sidney Shoemaker's Self-knowledge and Self-Identity.

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