
Is Personal Identity, Moral Identity?

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Abstract: The problem of personal identity is a classical problem in philosophy. This question has been variedly tackled by different philosophers and philosophical schools. To address the problem of personal identity, it is essential to explicate the notion of 'person.' Many philosophers conceive persons as inherently conscious beings, who are capable of intentional mental activities which are explicable from the ability to have the first-person perspective and imagine the same of the other. On the other hand, physicalistic personhood is something that has mechanical/bodily properties but, either lacking consciousness or reducing it to a physical basis. For many others, persons have both the properties of mind and body, not reducible to each other. We would agree partially with the latter position and maintain that persons have not only physical properties but also various forms of consciousness, i.e., self-consciousness, moral consciousness, etc. The ability to take perspectives, we claim, lays the foundation of moral consciousness. In this paper, we aim to show that the idea of personal identity is very much related to moral consciousness. This is because persons are rational beings, and being rational is natural to the person. If a person does any irrational act, it almost becomes self-denial to him or her as rationality is natural to her or him. Therefore, rationality is one of the inborn qualities of human being, and thus her or his identity becomes a moral identity. If we accept persons as physical beings ultimately, the question of morality, freedom, and responsibility do not arise. The whole idea of self-determination is occurred only in the case of moral identity, but not in the case of persons as only physical beings. Therefore, personal identity and moral identity are conceptually connected to the extent that we propose that personal identity is moral identity.

Keywords: Personal identity; Moral identity; Material identity; Self-conscious identity; Moral identity.

The Problem of Personal Identity

Before analyzing the concept of person, we need to raise a few questions like what is a person, what is the nature of the person, and so on. These are fundamental questions in the philosophy of mind. The English word 'person' is alleged to have been derived from the Latin '*persona*,' which was the mask worn by actors in dramatic performances.¹ Neither in common usage nor in philosophy has there been a univocal concept of 'person.' In common usage 'person' refers to any human being in a general

way. The person is distinct from a thing or material object. It stands for a living, conscious human being.

Let us take two philosophers - P. F. Strawson and Bernard Williams as a paradigm of contrasting conceptualization of the philosophical notion of person: Strawson defines 'person' as "a type of entity such that *both* predicates ascribing states of consciousness *and* predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation &c. are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type."² For Strawson, persons are unique individuals who have both mental and physical attributes. Thus persons are neither purely physical body, nor are they pure spiritual substances. However, the Strawsonian view of persons is also non-material, whereas Williams' view of the person is purely material, which is in contrast with the Strawsonian view. This is because of William's³ claim is that bodily continuity is a necessary condition for personal identity, because according to Williams, it is the body which identifies the persons, but not the mind, and there is no mind at all; therefore, bodily criterion identifies the persons. Therefore, the category 'persons' belongs to spatiotemporal beings. Similarly, according to Parfit, a person is a psychological continuous living human body.⁴ Because physical continuity is neither necessary nor sufficient for personal identity. It is insufficient because a human being could conceivably change so radically that s(he) would not be the same person. A great deal of what matters to us in ourselves and others is psychological: our memories, characters, tastes, interests, loves, and so forth.⁵ This spatiotemporal being is the ontological individuality of a person. Thus persons are ontologically a natural kind. Now we can say that they are natural beings at one level and are self-conscious and minded being at another. The self-conscious includes the self-description of his or her awareness that s(he) is a solid, continuing being in the world and this spatiotemporal description itself recognized persons are natural minded being.⁶

Now the question is, does Strawson wish to say that persons are bodies of a particular sort, namely, bodies which have mental attributes as only? Strawson holds that persons have bodily attributes too. But unlike ordinary bodies, persons are things, which have mental attributes as well. According to Strawson,⁷ it is essential to persons that they be entities, which necessarily have both mental and bodily attributes. Also, those mental things are substantially different from physical things? They are different types of substance. Persons are radically different material bodies. Strawson's theory appears to be dualistic - in holding that there are two different types of subjects, the physical bodies, and persons.

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Again, physical bodies necessarily have only one dimension, that is, physical dimension. Then, there is perhaps no error in holding that (as concurred by many artificial intelligence theories) persons are mechanical beings,⁸ but this seems to be experientially counter-intuitive for persons necessarily have two dimensions, a physical and a mental dimension. Persons thus have a dual nature. The most important fact about the person is the self. The self is sometimes used to mean the whole series of a person's inner mental states and sometimes the spiritual substance to which they belong. The self does not refer to the body but the mental history of the person. This made the unity problem seem intractable, when the mental images, feelings, and the like, are contrasted with the temporal persistence. In Strawson's sense, a person is a thing which necessarily has both mental and physical aspects. The person is primarily the subject of mental experience. In the Strawsonian person theory, we cannot say that a person is a body, but we can say that a person is, in part, a body. If the person is a body, then it cannot be a conscious mind, and therefore, there is nothing wrong attributing mind to machines. One of the important questions is can we even say that a person has a body? But what would it mean for the theory of person? It means that persons have bodily attributes. Another question is, does it say anything about the relation between a person and a body? The body necessarily has bodily attributes and has nothing to do with a person's attributes. But Strawson's view is that persons have both bodily and mental attributes. According to Strawson,⁹ properties like 'being at such and such time and place,' having such and such weight and colour, and so on are M-predicates. The other properties are psychological properties like 'being in the state of happiness,' or 'being in the state of pain,' and so on are states of P-predicates. In this way, Strawson has rightly said, "the concept of a person is to be understood as the concept of a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation and consciousness are equally applicable to an individual entity of that type."¹⁰ What is significant about them, as Strawson has pointed out is their co-applicability to the same person substance. The M-predicates cannot be ascribable independently because of that prohibits them from being ascribable to the conscious beings, like M-predicates, the P-predicates cannot be ascribed to the material bodies. This is because of a combination of a distinct kind of substance that has both physical and mental properties without being reducible to each other.

The above argument shows that Strawson was accepting the person as non-material and non-dual yet incorporating the explanatory powers of Cartesian dualism. This is because Descartes held that when we dwell on the concept of person, we are referring to one or both of two distinct substances of different types, each of which has its appropriate types of states and properties. Each of which has its own appropriate types of states and properties and none of the states belong to both. That is to say that states of consciousness belong to one of these substances and the other. Descartes has given a sharp focus to this dualistic conception of the person. It is not easy to get away from dualism because persons have both sorts of attributes such as mental and physical. According to

dualistic conception, a person is something altogether distinct from the body. That is, a person is not identical to his body. Some dualists, however, believe that a person is a composite entity, one part of which is its body and another, part of which is something-immaterial spirit or soul. Thus dualism essentially adheres to the mind-body distinction and persons as mental beings as distinguished from material bodies.

Joseph Margolis¹¹ in his book '*Persons and Minds*' mentioned that persons are the particulars that have minds and nervous systems, sensation, and brain processes. But this will not quite do. A nervous system is not a person, nor is a psyche a person. It is at once the subject of both neurological and psychological predicates. In other words, it is both a nervous system and a psychic entity. Persons are not mereologically complex entities nor kind, each of which contains parts, a non-physical basic subject and a purely corporeal object to which this subject is in some way attached; for such a claim would not allow us to ascribe psychological attributes or corporeal attributes to the person as a whole. It is because persons are more than their bodies and that they are not reducible to any kind of body gross or subtle. The person-substance as described above is not taken to exclude the material properties as such. They only exclude the fact that persons are material bodies and nothing else. Persons are autonomous so far as their description in terms of bodies and mind is concerned. But it is not that no reference to body and mind is to be retained at all. Thus, person's description has the attributes reference to body and mind. Therefore, one of the paradoxical implications of the person theory is that the body which a person has cannot be conceived of as a physical object subject to the law of the physical world as we know from this theory, that persons are conscious. Finally, from the above examination, we may infer that a person's body is not a physical thing.

Person as Self-Conscious and Ontological Being

As we have argued so far, the person is an entity which has both mental and physical attributes. Hence, we could say of a person that s(he) is five feet tall, weighs a hundred kilograms, etc. But more importantly we could say that s(he) is thinking about his friends, feels a pang of guilt or is happy, or so on. We may, therefore, say that a person has a mind, which is different from his body because the subject of consciousness does not mean a body of a certain sort. But it still might turn out that whatever is a subject of consciousness is identical with a body of a certain sort.

Generally, consciousness is described as something, which distinguishes man from a good deal of the world around. Only a person possesses this consciousness, which is not by other material objects. Again, the question arises, what is this consciousness which a person certainly has, but rocks and other animate beings do not have? As G.E. Moore writes, "The moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see what distinctly it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us as mere emptiness when we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue; the other element is as if it were

diaphanous.”¹² Of course, we know perfectly well that we are conscious of things around us including other people, but we do not grasp consciousness itself.

However, it is this common feature, consciousness, which may be said to be the central element in the concept of mind. A person as being minded¹³ is to have the capacity of doing mental activities. Such activities include thinking, willing, feeling, understanding, speaking, communicating, and above all, remembering the past. Mental activities are such that they presuppose that there is a thinker who is capable of these activities. The thinker is here a subject or ‘I’ who is or has the capacity of consciousness. Wherever we will find the concept of ‘I,’ we will find the existence of consciousness because it is a person who stands for the concept of ‘I,’ have consciousness.

One of the most general views is that the philosophy of mind is concerned with all mental phenomena which they are concerned with consciousness. Philosophers from Descartes onwards have accepted consciousness as a fundamental metaphysical reality. I remain the same person if I am conscious of being so, even though my body should change drastically and be diminished through amputation. Conceptually, it is possible that I should remain the same person although I am altogether disembodied. Persons are indivisible, non-corporeal simple entities. It is because it becomes difficult here to distinguish persons so construed from metaphysical selves, transcendental egos, spirits, mental substances, souls, and other similar immaterial substances. However, the concept of a person does not fit into these entities, because persons are, if anything, concrete beings in the world. One can ascribe consciousness to others only if one can identify other subjects of experience. Also, one cannot identify other subjects if one can identify them only as subjects of experience, possessors of state of consciousness.¹⁴ The latter must have a concrete existence in the world.

If we are too obsessed with the ‘inner’ criteria, we shall be tempted to treat persons essentially as minds. We do need to factor in the widely and empirically substantiated claims (from psychology, neurosciences, medical sciences) that the bodily constituency also affects the mental characters and the domains of mind and body are not disjointed. However, admitting outer criteria does not mean that there are no states of consciousness. We should claim that some P-predicates refer to the occurrence of a state of consciousness. Persons are certainly identifiable beings having a life of their own. They are not Cartesian egos; rather they possess a mixed bag of M-predicates and P-predicates. Persons are in any case conscious individuals who can be ascribed a large number of P-predicates such as thinking, feeling, willing, deciding, etc. these conscious states, according to Searle,¹⁵ are intentional, that is, are of something. That is, they are directed at something outside them. Thus, persons who have these conscious states are intentional and mental beings.

Again, only a being that could have conscious, intentional states could have intentionality at all, and so every unconscious intentional state is at least potentially conscious. This thesis has an enormous consequence for the study of the mind. But there is a conceptual connection between consciousness and intentionality that has the

consequence that a complete theory of intentionality requires an account of consciousness. And our consciousness is consciousness of something. Thus persons have the essential feature of consciousness. There is an interconnection between person, mind, and consciousness. Empirically, there are distinctions between them. But transcendently, they point in the same direction. It is right to say that a person is a mental being, and the essence of mind is consciousness. Therefore, the concept of the mind, the person, and the consciousness go together. Thus consciousness is related to mind, which also belongs to a person.

P.F. Strawson has adopted the term ‘person’ for a philosophical use which comes rather closer to common usage than did Locke’s usage of the form, while it raises philosophical problems of its own perhaps it is less disreputable to hold that the person is a primitive concept. This is because the Lockean view of the concept of person is forensic concept, but Strawsonian concept of person is metaphysical concept like the concept of the self and therefore is not merely a social or a forensic concept.¹⁶ Pradhan¹⁷ points out that it is metaphysical, precisely because it shows how it can be used to describe the minded being as the unique substance which is not identical with the body, though it is necessarily linked with the body. That is to say that persons have material bodies and yet are not on the same levels as physical bodies or organisms. Persons, therefore, are not physical things at all and this is because persons transcend their physical existence. The person-substance as a minded being tended to be the ‘I’ or the self in the sense that, though it is a continuant being in the spatiotemporal world, yet it does not belong to the world in the way the human belongs. It is because human beings belong to this world, but the ‘I’ or the self is not an entity in the world at all. The fact is that the self is not a physical body to be counted in the world. Hence there is a sense of transcendence underlying the concept of self, though it does not mean that selves or persons for that matter are mysterious entities.

The transcendental qualities, however, shows that persons are explainable from the first-person perspective. The first-person perspective grants a unique individuality or an ‘I’ who experiences, as Wittgenstein¹⁸ points out that even it is not ‘name’ which can substitute ‘I.’ Therefore, the first-person is not the descriptions of any human being, because it refers to the third-person perspective, but it refers to the person himself or herself. This does not mean that person is distinct from this world, but a person is part of this world. As a Strawsonian person, to begin with, is to be understood as distinct from a mere material body, which retains the contrast customarily observed between a person and things.

Let us now think of some ways in which we ordinarily talk of ourselves, certain things which we do, and which are ordinarily ascribed to ourselves. We ascribe to ourselves actions, intentions, sensations, thoughts, feelings, perceptions and memories. However, we ascribe to ourselves location and attitude. Of course, not only we ascribe ourselves temporary conditions, states, situations, but also enduring characteristics, including physical characteristics like height, shape, and weight. That is to say, those among the things that we ascribe to ourselves are

those that we also ascribe to material bodies. But there are things and attributes that we ascribe to ourselves, but cannot dream of ascribing to material bodies.

Moreover, the persons are human beings and have the history of an organism belonging to a natural kind. At the same time, they are not physical beings at all, and they transcend their physical existence, i.e., self-conscious moral being. This transcendental nature of a person cannot be merely only a social construction. Thus persons are metaphysical beings who could be all these and yet must be claimed in the sense that they could not be what they are without a metaphysical essence.

Personal Identity as Moral Identity

In this section, we aim to show that personal identity as moral identity. Many scholars like Kant, who claim that the fundamental idea of philosophy is human autonomy. According to Kant, 'autonomy' literally means giving the law to oneself.¹⁹ Kant's moral philosophy is also based on the idea of autonomy. He holds that there is a single fundamental principle of morality, on which all specific moral duties are based. He calls this moral law the categorical imperative. The moral law is a product of reason, for Kant, while the basic laws of nature are products of our understanding. Moral rightness and wrongness apply only to free agents who control their actions and have it in their power, at the time of their actions, either to act rightly or not.²⁰ Thus freedom depends on our moral identity and humans have complete liberty to practice morality. Because a person claims that 'I should do justice' or 'All men are equal' or 'I am an honest person' or 'I am a good human'²¹ Thus it is a morality that leads to freedom, and it is a problem of human to claim that freedom is necessary being a moral agent. The freedom is not something given; rather it is something achieved. This is because a person is potentially free, but certain obstacles that s(he) has ignorantly put around herself or himself appear to limit her or his freedom. But Rajendra Prasad pointed out that for some philosophical systems, freedom is only instrumental good, that is, it is good because it is helpful to, is a necessary condition for, to achieve something higher; for some other systems, it is intrinsically good, that is, a state desirable for its own sake. There are also many systems which consider both instrumentally and intrinsically good. Lastly, many believe that freedom is a state of mind and not of the body.²²

Let us look at the idea of moral identity. If persons are not moral, they are not persons. This is because persons are rational beings, and being rational is natural to the person. If a person does any irrational act, it becomes self-denial to her or him as rationality is natural. The moral identity modified into self-identity.²³ Therefore, rationality is one of the in born qualities of human being and thus his or her identity became a moral identity. If we accept persons are material beings, the question of morality and freedom do not arise. There is an idea of self-determination exist in the case of moral identity, but not in the case of persons are material identities. Therefore, personal identity as moral identity is because being a person is self-conscious and ontological being.

However, the claim is that to be moral is natural for a person as it is for her/him to be rational. Humans are *naturally moral beings* in the sense that every human person has the natural propensity to act morally unless otherwise constrained.²⁴ In this way, a person's moral nature follows jointly from her/his being rational as well as spiritual. It is spiritual because person urge rises above self-interest and ego-centricity and are motivated to act morally from the universal point of view. The view that rational discernment of the moral form the immortal and spiritual urge for self-excelling put us naturally on the path of moral progress. Hence, the moral inclination is innate to persons, who are constitutively endowed with the capacity of rationality and spirituality. This is because moral personhood is constitutive in nature.

The person as the ideal moral agent makes choices which are rationally guided but are not the result of a deliberative of a process undertaken by an abstract moral reason. These choices flow from the internal moral commitments of the person. The moral commitments are the commitments of the normative kind which are located in the moral nature of the person concerned.²⁵ We would like to reiterate that it is futile to ask for the justification for persons being rational. This shows not that rationality lacks a necessary justification but that it needs no justification because it cannot intelligibly be questioned unless it is already presupposed. It is not the case that men are rational because of the circumstances, but a person's rational identities are beyond any kind of conditions. The natural fact that persons are capable, by rationality, not only of theoretic discriminations of sorts but also of judging what we should do and should not do. This is because a person is a self-knowing agent in the sense that s(he) is aware of his or her moral commitments as a person having willingly made rational choices. Following Pradhan, we would like to point out that self-knowledge in this sense is not merely knowing what one does, but willing to undertake to do certain actions. The self-knowing person is a willing and performing person. Self-willing is as important as self-knowing. Therefore, self-knowledge is a part of the moral personhood.

Self-knowledge is very much related to the idea of the person being rational is evaluative consciousness, which is characteristic of personal consciousness. This is because of the moral reflection on a person's actions. Moral reflection, by which we engage in the moral evaluation of ourselves, our actions and those of others, is thus constitutive of personhood; for moral reflection is the activity of rational agents and only persons are rational agents. The relation of 'constitution' is crucial to explain the notion of person and personal identity. The Constitution is a widely occurring relation in the world around us. What needs to be clarified first is that constitution is neither a relation of identity nor a relation of separateness.

However, the constitutive nature of personhood is very much related to the reflective nature of moral action. The objects of one's moral action may be a reflection of one's own intention, actions as well as those of others and such reflections are usually expressed in the form of moral judgments. However, the moral judgments lead to a person committing to those beliefs and desires in the sense that these in-

tentional states play a constitutive role in the unfolding of plans and projects of the person. The person is so-called because of the plans and projects which s(he) intends to execute. For this kind of execution, the person needs to have rational choices. This is one of the important aspects of being moral personhood. Again, this fact is very much related to the notion of 'freedom' and freedom is the basis of rational choice. If the person had not a rational nature, s(he) could not have exercised freedom because freedom is the very essence of rationality and morality.²⁶ On the other hand, the idea of freedom is sometimes formulated independently values, preferences, and reasons. Therefore, freedom cannot be fully appraised without some idea of what a person prefers and has reason to prefer. Here, there is a basic use of rational assessment in appraising freedom. In this sense, freedom must depend on a reasoned assessment of having different options. As Amartya Sen says, "Rationality as the use of reasoned scrutiny cannot but be central to the idea and assessment of freedom."²⁷ If we take freedom otherwise, rationality depends on freedom. To practice a rational choice in civil society, freedom is necessary. But if we see freedom as a person's natural right, freedom is necessary for her or his existence. If one views rationality or morality from a Kantian perspective, it is a person's primary duty to be moral as being only a rational animal in the universe. Our aim in this paper is not to discuss the philosophical problems exist about person's external world, rather analyze person's natural nature, as we have been arguing is an inherent feature of personal identity, which is morality or rationality. We do not deny that freedom can be valued for the substantive opportunity it gives to the pursuit of our objectives and goals.

Moreover, while responding to one of the important questions like "why should I be rational?" The first answer would be: it is up to the person. Here, the idea of freedom inherently present in a person's existence. As Rajendra Prasad said, that person should be moral because being moral has an intrinsic dignity of its own or that it is a necessary condition for having personal happiness, social harmony, etc.²⁸ Our answer would be rational is part of the definition of being a person. There may be several non-ethical points of view from which we may demand reasons for action, for example, self-interest. From impartial spectator, it may be the reason for transcending self-interest and act on universal judgments. This transcendental nature of a person leads to spirituality. This is because moral judgment is possible through spiritual endeavors. This leads to the fact that there is an innate potentiality which when actualized or realized, leads the person to rise above his self-interest. This spirituality has an innate capacity, which is the realization through intellectual maturity. This intellectual maturity is under the spirituality that the person is a self-reflective and self-evaluator. Therefore, there is a spiritual urge for self-transcendence underlies a person's life of self-appraisal that leads to self-transcendence. The self-transcendence requires that the person's motivational system be controlled by his valuation system with which he identifies his or her reason and has to control his or her passion. In the above passage, the concept of freedom plays a vital role. It is because a person's commitments and choices are

based on a person's freedom. Freedom as a social value is the power to choose between real alternatives and to realize the chosen alternative to further one's own, someone else's or some group's interests. By calling it power, we want to emphasize the fact that it is not a state or occurrence but ability. It is not a state of mind, nor something that occurs to it, but a power or ability to work in a certain manner. This power may or may not be exercised on a certain occasion, but this does not mean that on that occasion it has ceased to exist. But whatever it is exercised, in a conscious manner. It is a conscious power because it is a power to choose, and choice, by its very definition, involves conscious selection and rejection. It is contradictory to claim 'I chose x in the context c out of x, y, z, but was not aware of my choice'²⁹ This is why many philosophers argue that it is a natural propensity of a person to act morally and in the same manner to become a moral person one depends on his or her freedom. Freedom of the individual, which is the driving force of self-excellence, is the prerogative of persons. It lies at the root of the urge to moral perfectibility and goes to the making of what we have been referring to as unailing moral personhood. It is because persons always seek freedom and s(he) is engaged in reflective self-evaluation, and such is an embodiment of value. Freedom is important because, on Kant's view, moral appraisal presupposes that we are free in the sense that we can do otherwise. Freedom is not supposed as a character or quality; rather it is the very essence of the person. Any qualities or characters are something different from that to which it belongs, but freedom does not belong to the person, the person is freedom. Although there are various determining factors that exist in the universe, this does not mean freedom is not there in the universe. Therefore, freedom does not mean 'no-determination,' it means self determination.

We would like to point out that person's ability to be free, the ability to identify herself/ himself with the value judgment and in this way the person transcends the level of mere human existence, but the person never identifies with this material world. This does not mean that a person does not interact with this material world. Rather, the person attains rationality through the human body (material world).³⁰ A person alone attains perfection, but not any other beings in this world. This is how moral progress is possible. This progress that aims at moral perfection is not just rational but spiritual. Thus a person can exercise the spiritual self-transcendence, as well as the freedom that leads to perfections. Therefore, perfection is a matter of natural necessity as we have seen that morality is a rational affair and since rationality is constitutive of personhood, morality becomes intrinsic to personhood. That is why we do not find any difficulty to combine both spirituality and rationality to establish personal identity.

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