CHAPTER – 4
SELF, PERSONHOOD, AND AGENCY

A person makes his own way, but not the way makes a person
Confucius (551 – 479 B.C)

A person is given birth to contemplate a world, to reflect and to act according to it. A person isn’t perfect, but he is a part of perfection
Cicero (106 – 43 B.C)

Introduction

It is important for a human being to have purpose in life and sometimes the meaning of one’s life revolves around the fulfillment of this purpose. How do we come to have these purposes/ aims and objectives, whether they are short term or long term? As we can see from our day-to-day experience, these purposes are shaped and influenced in their formation and execution by other human beings. The influence of other human beings on the development of a person’s identity cannot be over-emphasized. We just need to look around and observe our day-to-day activities to be able to see the truth of this matter. It is also important to be clear about the difference between human beings and persons, because not all human beings can be considered as a person. Small children, mentally challenged people and too old people may be considered as human beings but not a person, at least not in the true sense of the term. Because they are unable to take decisions based on circumstances or environment presented to them and this is also the reason why they are not considered responsible for what they do. The main reason is that, these groups of human beings are either yet to become persons, in case of normal small children, or they have past their prime, in case of very old people, or they do not have any chance of becoming a person, in case of mentally challenged people. So, when we talk in terms of personhood, we mean a normal, adult human being, who is able to take decisions, act in accordance with the decisions taken, someone who can be held responsible for the outcome of her actions, and is accountable to the society she is a part of.

Also, it is important to point out here why we are dealing with the topic on self, personhood and agency. One of the most important reasons why we think that we
need to look into the relationship shared by self, personhood and agency is that there is a crucial role played by first-person perspectives in our understanding ourselves as persons and agents. How do we differentiate between self, person and agent? Unlike thinkers like Strawson, Shoemaker, Swinburne etc., we will concentrate on the relationship shared between these three concepts and how this relationship is formed and sustained, from an ethical perspective. Further, we would look at the role played by the “other” (individuals/society) in shaping one’s personhood. Here, it is important to be clear about the relationship between subjectivity and first-person perspective. Both are similar in the sense that they refer to the state where a person is aware of his/her personhood. The difference, however, lies in the use of the word; “subjectivity” is used to refer to one’s own conscious state in relation to others, while “first-person perspective” refers to my own experience of myself as distinct from others. We can say that there is a very thin line separating them and sometime they are used to refer to the same state. It is important to note that we will be using these words as synonyms here. Further, we will also look at how we understand ourselves as a person in relation to others. In this chapter we are going to deal with this intricate and often unexplored relationship between self, personhood, agency and the other. There is an underlying thread that binds them and we will try and point out how they are intertwined.

Firstly, the importance of the self, and also why it is problematic, can be seen in the way it is conceived by the Cartesians. For the Cartesians, as articulated by Richard Moran,

The self has special powers and place in the natural world, as well as giving vivid expression to a cluster of epistemological concerns about the knowability of this entity, both to itself and by others of its kind...described as being immaterial, immortal, autonomous, unique and self-identifying, transparent to self (in being both infallible and complete in its awareness of itself); not to mention being the locus of rationality, responsibility and moral value, and the bestower of meaning on the otherwise featureless universe.299

It is a fact that the way I know about myself is different from the way I know about any other human being. In my case, I arrived at knowledge of my own attitudes not

from any kind of self-observation, which is the case with other human being. I know my mind immediately and with authority that is lacking in any other observation-based description of me, or the others. However, this view is not free from criticism like “what is it for any mental life to be known by me in this way?” and “why is it the case that I can know only this mental life in this way?” One form of answer says,

While these form of awareness does not exhaust what a person may know of himself, and while its authority is not absolute, it is...a fundamental form of self-apprehension, that a person does not just happen to have this remarkable capacity, but that it belongs to the concept of a person that he should be able to achieve knowledge of his attitude in this way. 300

The ability/capacity to have self-awareness is an important form of apprehension embedded in the concept of person. It is a fundamental necessity or requirement for a person to be able to have the knowledge of his/her attitude in such a way that it is different from the way he/she acquire knowledge about others. Here, to be self-aware does not mean that we can know ourselves completely; there could be situations where we do not know what we think or do. Still we can say that we are most of the time aware of ourselves in a different and even better way than we are aware of others. We can say that self-awareness belongs to the concept of person as it is a fundamental form of self-apprehension.

Secondly, personhood is acquired or earned; the ability to analyze/interpret our situations/circumstances, act/react accordingly, form aims and objectives, form opinions on matters relating to ourselves and the society, etc. We acquire these abilities from different sources since childhood: from parents, siblings, other family members, acquaintances, friends, through education and from society at large. What we receive from the outside world influence the kind of person we are, the values we approve or disapprove, the kind of character we acquire. The self, on the other hand, is given at birth. So, we can say that self is given, while personhood is earned. It is important to be clear about the relationship between self and person, so that we are able to differentiate personhood from merely being a self.

Further, this will enable us to come to the important notion of the relationship between personal identity and moral responsibility, which will give us a better

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300 Ibid., p. xxx.
understanding of how our identity is influenced and shaped by the outside world. How much are we the result of nurture and what is the main reason behind this relationship between personal identity and moral responsibility? Is it the case that humans are considered as person only when they are in a society? Will it be possible for a human being to be considered “a person” even if he/she lives like Robinson Crusoe in a desert island? These are some of the questions we need to find an answer to if we are to be clearer about the relationship between personal identity and moral responsibility.

Thirdly, the difference between persons and agents is an important question to deal with because when the very idea of agency is presupposed in morality, can we say that all persons are morally responsible agents? Here, “agency presupposed in morality” means that, whenever we pass moral judgments it is presupposed that an agent is involved. We do not normally judge a cat as moral or immoral because of its actions. The term “morality” is applied only to persons who could be held accountable for their actions, not to infants or mentally ill people. However, it is worth asking whether all agents are morally responsible agents. The reason is that there are many cases where a perfectly normal person has committed a gruesome deed which shock, not only his/her family members and others who know him/her, but also the world. For example, honor killings, dowry deaths etc. So, how do we decide who are morally responsible agents? The answer to such question poses a challenge to an individual as well as to society in an important way. By providing answers to such questions, we will be able to hold morally accountable those who commit crimes which are preventable, crime committed due to social pressure like honor killings, dowry death, etc.

Fourthly, to show the important relationship shared between the agent and the other/society: how much are we influence by the outside world? Everything that we know we learn it either from people or from news, books, television etc. It will be wrong to say that we will not be a human being if we were born and brought up in a jungle without any other human contact. However, it is a fact that human civilization would not have advanced to the present stage without influencing each other. For example, those who are more competitive among students of the same class usually score better marks then those who are laidback and not bothered by their marks. And it is also a fact that healthy competition among siblings help motivate children to give their best in whatever they do. This competitive spirit is the influence of other persons
in an individual’s life. Without the idea of what “better student” means or what “higher score” means, the level of performance among students will not be too competitive. Even in the relationship among countries, we can see that the competition to have higher GDP growths compels governments to come up with better yearly-plans, so that one’s country will become better than the other. In every level we can see the influence of society in our lives. So, it is necessary that we go deeper into the relationship shared by an individual and the society.

Fifthly and finally, we will look into the relationship between moral responsibility and personal identity: what does it mean to be a morally responsible person? How does moral responsibility help shape a person become better in his/her every-day life? This relationship is crucial because a morally responsible person is the best a person can become, while a morally ir-responsible person shows the worst a person can be. As we can see it in our every-day experience, there are people who are mindful of their moral obligations towards not only their family members, but towards others. On the other hand, there are people who do not even bother to take care of their own family members. So, this relationship is important as it will help us understand how much our identity as a person is shaped and influenced by our moral responsibilities. Also, one of the reasons why we take up this question is to bring out the importance of ethical or agential dimension of personhood. The metaphysical/ontological debates on personhood is no doubt important, but the ethical/agential dimension of personhood should not be sidelined either.

4.1 Self and Personhood

The main difference between self and personhood is that; self are conscious beings who may or may not be aware that they are conscious, while persons have self-consciousness/self-awareness. When we talk about a self, we are referring to any kind of human being, including very young/old people, mentally challenged people, etc. The notion of self is broader in scope than that of a person. When we talk about a person, in a way we presuppose his/her selfhood; someone who is self-conscious/self-aware, who may be evaluated good or bad, right or wrong, etc. based on their actions. We can further say that what distinguishes a self from a person is that a person has a first-person perspective.
Further, having first-person perspective implies two “capacities”: (a) self-reflectivity or self-consciousness and (b) subjectivity. In subjectivity, we look at ourselves in relation to others; we become aware of ourselves and the kind of person we are by seeing others who behave like or unlike us. So, we can say that subjectivity is possible only when we are aware of the relationship we share with other persons. Also, we can say that self-consciousness enables us to realize that one has first-person perspective which is distinct from other person’s perspectives, as well as the capacity to realize that one is different from every other creature. In the words of Baker, “a conscious being becomes self-conscious on acquiring a first-person perspective – a perspective from which one thinks of oneself as an individual facing a world, as a subject distinct from everything else.”301 Here, we may say that to understand whether an entity is a self or not can be considered as a metaphysical problem and to understand whether an entity is a person or not can be considered as a moral problem.

In order to better understand the relationship between self and personhood, it is important to be clearer about the notion of self and personhood individually. It is important to be able to provide an answer to two questions – what constitutes self? What is a person? It is also important to understand what the word “self” means. According to Lowe, the self is different from its physical body or any parts of it, such as the body’s brain, even if it is physically embodied. However, it is important to point out that the self is not to be identified with some kind of “soul” or Cartesian Ego. For Lowe, “the self can be a ‘physical’ thing – possess physical characteristics such as height – even though it has different identity-conditions from those of the body or brain…the self…possesses a strong kind of unity which is incompatible with its being a composite thing.”302 As we can see, it is not easy to give answer to the question “what is a self?” We will now try to find a satisfactory answer by looking further into the notion of the self.

What Constitute Self?

What does it mean to be a self? Is it necessarily the case that we cannot talk about self without consciousness? What is the relation between self and consciousness? These questions are important because, normally, when we speak of

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301 Baker, 2000: 60.
self-awareness, we assume that there is a self that is aware of his/her own experiences. There are two ways of looking at theory of consciousness – egological and non-egological. The egological theory is supported by Shoemaker, (1968) and it says that, “it is a conceptual and experiential truth that any episode of experiencing necessarily includes a subject of experience.”  

On the other hand, the non-egological theory can be seen in the work of Strawson, (1959) that would, “deny that every experience is for a subject…experiences are egoless; they are anonymous mental events that simply occur; and minimal self-awareness should, consequently, be understood as the acquaintance that consciousness has with itself and not as an awareness of an experiencing self.”

Here, we can say that to speak of an ego is to speak of an agent; some principle of action and volition. However, pre-reflective self-awareness is something that precedes all performances and not something we initiate or control. Consequently, pre-reflective self-awareness should not be attributed to an ego, but rather be understood as an egoless occurrence. Also, if we conceive an ego as something that has the experience, then we are making a distinction between an ego and the experience; they are not identical. However, in this case it is difficult to understand why the ego’s awareness of the experience should count as a case of self-awareness. Thus, it is better to avoid introducing any ego into the structure of basic self-awareness.

The main point is that, “the ego is not the subject, but the object of consciousness. It is not something that exists in or behind consciousness, but in front of it…what is certain is not that I am aware of this chair, but only that there is awareness of this chair.”

There are different notions of self as put forth by philosophers. In the Kantian perspective, the self is considered as a formal and abstract notion, which is understood as a pure subject of experience and not the object of experience. Its existence can be presupposed but can never be experienced in itself. Every experience is always lived through by a certain subject; an experience is an experience for a certain subject. The existence of the self is a necessary condition of the possibility for experience, and not something that can be given as an object for experience. So, the self, for Kant, “is

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304 Ibid., p. 100.
305 Details on this views can be found in Zahavi, 2005: 100.
taken to be a distinct principle of identity that stands apart from and above the stream of changing experiences and which, for that very reason, is able to structure it and give it unity and coherence.\textsuperscript{307}

Zahavi further discuss the hermeneutical perspective of the self. Here, the self is understood not as a thing which is fixed and unchangeable, but rather as something which is evolving, like an ongoing project which cannot be understood independently of one’s own self-interpretation. We can say that to be a self is something in which one is involved existentially. The self is taken, in this view, as a construction; the product of conceiving and organizing one’s life in a certain way. Another notion of self identical to the hermeneutical perspective is the narrative concept of self,\textsuperscript{308} which has been suggested as that make up the essential form and central constitutive feature of self-understanding and self-knowledge. The reason, according to the narrative concept of self, can be stated as,

In order to know who you are, in order to gain a robust self-understanding, it is not enough to simply be aware of oneself from the first person perspective. It is not sufficient to think of oneself as an I; a narrative is required. To answer the question “who am I?” is to tell the story of a life. I attain insight into who I am by situating my character traits, the values I endorse, the goals I pursue within a life story that traces their origin and development; a life story that tells where I am coming from and where I am heading.\textsuperscript{309}

Here, it is important to recognize that narration is taken not merely as a way of gaining insight into the nature of an already existing self. But self is taken as a narrative construction, as it is first constructed in and through the narration. So, the narrative self is taken as an open-ended construction which is under constant revision; starting in early childhood and continuing for the rest of our life involving complex social interaction. Also, it is influenced by the culture prevalent in that particular society, and is organized around a set of aims, ideals and aspirations. This is because we are conditioned by the community of which we are part for our values, ideals and goals. Thus, it is said that one cannot be a self on one’s own, but only together with

\textsuperscript{307} Ibid., p. 104.
\textsuperscript{308} Here, we can say that the Hermeneutics and the Narrative concept of the self is identical. That is, for Hermeneutics the concept of self is like an ongoing construction work which is incomplete without self-interpretation. And for the Narrative concept, the concept of self necessarily includes verbal construction – an ongoing life story, a narrative construction.
\textsuperscript{309} Zahavi, 2005: 107.
others, as part of a linguistic community. We can say that the narrative notion of self is similar to an account of person. However, the word “self” is used here instead of “person”, they could be taken as synonyms in this context.

Further, as oppose to the narrative concept of self is the phenomenological perspective. According to the phenomenological perspective, the self possesses an experiential reality, is taken as closely linked to the first-person perspective, and is identified with the first-personal givenness of the first-person perspective. That is, “their first-personal givenness entails a built-in self-reference, a primitive experiential self-referentiality.”310 Here, we can say that the phenomenological self can be understood as more similar to the “metaphysical self” and not the “ontological self” or person. Thus, to be conscious of oneself is to be conscious of an experience in its first-personal mode of givenness. It is to have first-personal access to one’s own experiential life. We can say that in the phenomenological concept,

The self referred to is not something standing beyond or opposed to the stream of experiences but is rather a feature or function of its givenness…the self is conceived neither as an ineffable transcendental precondition, nor as a mere social construct that evolves through time; it is taken to be an integral part of our conscious life with an immediate experiential reality.311

So, according to Dan Zahavi, in the phenomenological self,

There is a minimal sense of self present whenever there is self-awareness. Self-awareness is there not only when I realize that I am perceiving a candle, but whenever I am acquainted with an experience in its first-personal mode of givenness, that is, whenever there is something it is like for me to have the experience. In other words, pre-reflective self-awareness and a minimal sense of self are integral parts of our experiential life.312

From all of the above views, we can see that self can be understood in different ways. However, the main point that we would like to emphasize is that self is a conscious being, who may or may not be aware of the fact that he/she is conscious. We can say that self is constituted by consciousness, and what is require to have self-experience is simply an episode of pre-reflective self-awareness; an

310 Ibid., p. 122.
311 Ibid., p. 106.
312 Ibid., p. 146.
acquaintance with the experience in its first personal mode of presentation. It is not necessary that we apprehend a special self-object, or have a special experience of self alongside yet different from other experiences. The important thing is that one is able to experience self-awareness without being aware that he/she is self-aware.

Further, what do we understand when we say we experience something? We can say that, to experience something is to have a “subjective” feel about experiences like, pain, nausea etc. According to Zahavi,

Every conscious state, be it a perception, an emotion, a recollection, or an abstract belief, has a certain subjective character, a certain phenomenal quality of “what it is like” to live through or undergo that state. This is what makes the mental state in question conscious. In fact, the reason we can distinguish occurrent conscious mental states from each other is exactly because there is something it is like to be in those states.313

When an experience is given to us in the first-person perspective, the experience becomes subjective as it entails a built-in self-reference, a primitive experiential self-referentiality. So, “subject of experience” could be replace with “subjectivity of experience”. To stress the subjectivity of experience is to insist on the basic self as an experiential phenomenon. Because, “subject of experience” sounds like the self is something that exists apart from, or above, the experience and so detached from it. Thus, in answer to what kind of relationship consciousness and self share, Zahavi holds that to have a minimal sense of self and self-awareness is an integral part of our experiential life; and it is because we are a conscious being that we have self-awareness. So, we can see that the relationship between self and consciousness is important for us to have self-consciousness/self-awareness. Now, it is time to try and understand the notion of person in contrast to or in relation to the notion of self.

What is a Person?

Before we discuss what “person” consists of, it is important to point out that our concern here is to look at the “sense” of personal identity and not the criterion, to try to give an answer to questions like “what makes me a person?” without looking

313 Ibid., p. 119.
necessarily at the criterion of identity. In other words, our interest here “is not the question of how we come to know identity, but the question of what the sense and the nature of that identity is.” It is important to break free from the criterion debate because we would like to bring forth the ethical aspect into the limelight. Philosophers overlook the ethical aspects of identity like “what makes a person, a person” in the debates on personal identity for long. And we would like to focus more on the ethical aspect of identity debate in this chapter as we have already dealt extensively with the criterion debate in the first chapter. So, to use the word of J.N. Mohanty again,

In thinking about the idea of person, I am, in a certain sense thinking about myself… I have no doubt that we are persons…that each of us is a person, that no two of us are the same in a reasonably obvious sense. In thinking about personal identity, therefore, I am thinking about the sense in which I am one person and each one of us is a different person… I do not propose to focus on the problem of the so-called criterion of personal identity…I am rather concerned with the question, what makes me a person?

In our everyday life, we normally associate a human person as constituted by a human body. Whenever we refer to someone, it is understood that that person has a body. However, there are different views on this, and one such is the constitutive view propounded by Baker, where she says,

A human person is not identical to the body that constitutes her…what marks persons off from everything else in the world…is that a person has a complex mental property: a first-person perspective that enables one to conceive of one’s body and mental states as one’s own. We human persons are animals in that we are constituted by animals, but, having first-persons perspectives, we are not “just animals”. We are persons.

Here, according to constitutive view, in order to be considered as a person, one of the important conditions is that our first-person perspective continues. However, before we go any further to discuss the concept of person, it is important to be clear about what is the claim made by the constitutive view. According to the constitutive view propounded by Lynne Rudder Baker,

315 Ibid., p. 71.
Something is a person in virtue of having a capacity for what I shall call a ‘first-person perspective.’ Something is a human person in virtue of being a person constituted by a body that is an organism of a certain kind – a human animal. Minds are not what distinguish person from other things. The fact that persons have mental or conscious states provides no boundary between persons and nonpersons, according to the Constitution View.\textsuperscript{317}

According to this view, we can say that first-person perspective is one of the properties that make us a person. Also, there can be a situation where an individual who is a person now lose the property of being a person without ceasing to exist. Also, as personhood is earned over a long period of time and not acquire once and for all, it is possible that someone may fail to acquire or have it but loses it after some time.

Further, persons are aware that they are self-conscious. Self-consciousness is a necessary attributes of a person. Baker further says that,

Persons are self-conscious, and self-consciousness is unique. No other part of the animal kingdom is self-conscious in the way that we are. Self-consciousness is sufficiently different from everything else known to us in the natural world that it is reasonable to say that the difference that self-consciousness makes is an ontological difference...there is a huge difference between us and non-human animals. And this discontinuity arises from the fact that we, and no other part of the animal kingdom, are self-conscious...self-consciousness distinguishes us ontologically from the rest of the animal kingdom. This is to say that self-consciousness – and thus personhood – is an ontologically significant property.\textsuperscript{318}

According to the constitutionalist’s claim, when self-consciousness evolves by natural selection, it was sufficiently different from every other property in the natural world as it ushers in a new kind of being. So we can say that self-consciousness makes an ontological difference whether it is a product of natural selection or not. It is also an important fact that personhood is gained as we grow physically, mentally and emotionally throughout our life. So, we can say that the first-person perspective make us distinct from the animals and make us more significant. It is only beings with first-person perspective that are able to write their memoirs, dread pain and old age, and

\textsuperscript{317} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{318} Baker, 2002: 386-387.
discover evolution etc. Thus, we can claim that first-person perspective is one of the important qualities that separates us from other animal and make us superior in many ways. The difference between self and person can be said to be the possession of first-person perspective among other qualities.319

Further, Baker goes on to discuss moral personhood/agency according to the constitutive view. She holds that moral agency presupposes personhood. As a defining characteristic of persons, first-person perspective is central for moral agency and moral life as well. To be a moral agent is to be accountable and to be subject to moral judgments of praise and blame. It is important that, for moral agency to appreciate the fact that one does things and has done things in the past. This is not to impose any requirement about memory; one need not remember any particular things he/she has done. For Baker,

What is required is that a being be able to think of herself in the first person as the doer of deeds. And a person with total amnesia can think of herself in the first person as the doer of deeds. She may well realize that she has done things in the past, even if she cannot remember what things she has done. What is required for moral agency is the recognition that one has done things.320

Here, we can see that according to the constitutive view, first-person perspective is both the necessary as well as sufficient condition for being a person. So, it follows that only persons are moral agents. However, it is important to note that persons are agents, but there is a possibility that persons may or may not be morally responsible agents. Being a moral agent is one of the most important attitudes about us, and this fact shows that the importance of being a person resides partly in the fact that all moral agents are persons. So, Baker holds that, “a being with a first-person perspective has many attitudes, and a being with many attitudes can do things. So, having a first-person perspective is sufficient for being able to do things.”321

Further, the importance of self-consciousness is put forward by Zahavi by giving what Husserl means by self-awareness. For Husserl,

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319 Here, it is important to note that “self-consciousness” and “first-person perspective” are taken as the same, they are use to refer to the same mental states. So, they are used as synonyms.
321 Ibid., p. 156.
An absolute existent is existent in the form of an intentional life – which, no matter what else it may be intrinsically conscious of, at the same time, consciousness of itself. Precisely for that reason (as we can see when we consider more profoundly) it has at all times an essential ability to reflect on itself, on all its structures that stand out for it – an essential ability to make itself thematic and produce judgments, and evidences, relating to itself.\footnote{Zahavi, 2005: 50.}

We can see the important role of self-awareness as it give us the ability to self-reflect, judge ourselves and evaluate our actions etc. The ability to form an understanding about oneself as a person requires self-awareness along with first-person perspectives. So, we can say that person requires both self-awareness and first-person perspective.

Thus, from the above discussions of the position held by different thinkers, we can say that persons are mainly constituted by self-awareness/self-consciousness and first-person perspectives. The ability to reflect on one’s action or subjectivity is formed by the knowledge gained from such awareness. So, we can say that personhood is not something we are born with, but it is something which we gain from our interactions with our environment in general and other human beings in particular. Personhood is earned; the fact that babies struggle to learn words and actions from elders, and are able to overcome obstacles after repeated practice shows that it needs to be earned. Further, we can say that the difference between self and personhood lies in the fact that first-person perspectives and self-awareness/self-consciousness can be absent in self. On the other hand, personhood is defined by first-person perspectives as well as self-awareness/self-consciousness. In the words of Mohanty,

The self…is the ego ‘clothed with the garments of society’. It lives, acts, and grows in the real time and history…a person is a ‘biographical actualization of the self’. Persons are selves ‘whose identities have achieved expression’. A person is also a subject, an ego, and a self. Without being a subject, without having the possibility of that reflective loneliness which is the destiny of an ego, and without enjoying that social and historical identity which belongs to a self, a person would not be a person. But a person is more than any of these.\footnote{Mohanty, 2000: 73-74.}
Further, for Mohanty a person is someone who thinks, believes, loves, hopes, desires etc. We can say that a person’s entire being and nature consist in such intentional relatedness to the world and other person. Also, identity of a person is not pre-given, but it has to be continually re-established. Identity of a person is never closed or fixed once and for all, it is rather to be continually questioned, re-established, and restored, for example, by keeping promises and commitments etc. So, according to Mohanty, a person is define as,

That being who is not merely a representing subject (whose object is the world), but who acts, suffers, expects, fears, hopes, loves, and hates. As such, a person is different from a living organism as well as from a centre of consciousness, although she is both. As a living organism, a person is self-maintaining, self-moving, self-reproducing; as a centre of consciousness, a person knows, represents, thinks. But as a person, while being all these things, she acts, judges, demands, has rights, entertain values, is in connection with other individuals and their acts, judgments, evaluations, rights, and values. The living space of a person is not a field of objects, but an actual and valuational field of situations which constantly overtake her, and in which she is called upon to make new decisions, and from within which she projects new possibilities for her being.324

Thus, persons are much more complex than self. From the above discussion, it is clear that the relationship shared by self and person is self-consciousness/self-awareness bring forth by first-person perspective. We will now go on to look at the difference between personhood and agency in the next section.

4.2 Personhood and Agency

In the previous section, we dealt with the difference between self and person. We can see that even though a person must be a self, a self may or may not be a person. Now, we will go on to the next distinction between a person and an agent. Here, it is important to point out that when we say “agent”, we meant “moral agent”, so “moral agent” and “agent” are used as synonyms here. A person may or may not be a moral agent, but a moral agent has to be a person. The relationship between being a person and being an agent lies in the fact that both depend on being a self. Let us take a concrete example to understand the distinction that we are driving at. Let us take the

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324 Ibid., p. 83.
example of Aruna Shanbaug. Aruna Shanbaug was a nurse in a government hospital and was engaged to be married. However, one day she was mercilessly raped and gagged by a sweeper in the basement of the same hospital after her night duty was over and before she was about to leave for home. The beating was so severe that she has been lying at the hospital in a vegetative state for more than 30 years now. She is still alive as she is still breathing, but for more than 30 years now she is lying in a hospital bed, taken care by the hospital staffs. In such cases, we can say that she can be considered as a self, but it is doubtful whether she can still be considered as a person, but definitely not an agent anymore.

Here, the fact that Aruna Shanbaug is still alive makes her acceptable as a self, doubtful as a person because we are not sure whether she still possess her intentional states, have first-person perspective; we may never know because she cannot show us either with words or actions. However, she can no longer be accepted as an agent as she is not in a position to perform any kind of volitional action. Here, there is a need to concentrate more on the moral dimension of a person in order to determine whether a person/agent can be considered morally good or bad, right or wrong, etc. based on their actions. A person has intentional mental states of various kinds which are directed towards the outside world, like – believing, desiring, intending, hoping, fearing, and wondering etc., and to have intentional states is a necessary condition, but not sufficient condition for being a person. We also need to look at the intentions behind a person’s action or behavior in order to pass any moral judgments. As we already discussed what constitute a person, we will deal with agency in this section.

To be an agent is to be – conscious, self-conscious/self-aware, embodied. Here, embodiment is necessary to be an agent because the body is the seat of the ego. When I say “I”, there must be something this “I” refers to. Otherwise “I” becomes devoid of meaning – an empty word. In order for a moral judgment to be passed there is a need for a body to be judged, we do not normally judge a “cyclone or earthquake” for causing damage to property and lose of life. Further, there is also a difference between a mere embodied agent and a moral agent; a mere embodied agent will be someone who cannot be taken as a moral agent anymore due to the absence of intentionality in the person because of old age etc. For example, a 98 year old man who has lost his eye-sight will not be blamed if he fails to recognize the person who killed his whole family in front of him. On the other hand, we have a moral agent who
is held morally responsible for his/her actions, omissions etc. We have already looked at the difference between what it is to be a conscious self, and a self-conscious/self-aware person. In this section, we would point out what makes an agent different from a self and a person.

Here, we can say that an agent is necessarily an embodied person and an intentional entity. Embodiment is important because in the absence of a body, there will be no agent to act. So, an agent is a part of a society in which he/she acts and is subject to moral judgment by others as he/she judges others. Society gives meaning to the agent’s values and goals, evaluate and judge, based on his/her intentional actions. Mohanty give us the identity of an agent as, “an attribute that is borrowed from his social setting, he is a point of intersection of numerous social relationships. He is a social construct.” We can say that these social relationships help shape form the agent’s intentions and actions. The relationship between society and intentional actions of an agent can be further found in tradition. Mohanty holds that,

An intentional act is not only of an object, but presents its object in a certain manner, with a certain sense. This sense is appropriated by an individual from her tradition…the way the world, including oneself, is presented in our experience is determined by one’s culture. My perception of who I am, is no less so, as is also my perception of who the other standing before or approaching me is.

Thus, the role of tradition and culture in shaping one’s perspective towards oneself as well as the other is immense. I will judge according to the values and paradigms on which I am being judged. The way I look at other ultimately comes from the way I am being looked at by others. Traditions and cultures help shape a person’s attitudes, values, etc. for example, most culture in the Indian society regard touching one’s elders feet as a show of respect. And even small children are encouraged by their parents to perform this tradition, which become a part of the child’s attitude. Tradition presents us with many other intentional acts, such as the one we discussed, the meaning or sense which we derive from our tradition and cultures. In order to have a clearer idea of an agent, we would look at the relationship agency share with action as well as agency and freedom.

325 Ibid., pp. 80-81.
326 Ibid., pp. 81-82.
Agency and Action

Before we go into the relationship between agency and action, it is important for us to be clear about the difference between action and events and the difference between various kinds of actions. Actions involve reference to the agent’s beliefs and intentions, as well as rules and social practices. To perform an action necessarily means to go through a sequence of movements in which social context constituted by institutions, practices prevalent in the society, beliefs and intentions of the agents are taken into account. However, events are exempted from such requirements. Actions are different from events as an action presupposes an agent who is language-dependent, while events are language-independent.327

We can further say that concept of action, unlike event, is primarily applicable to human beings. An action is always caused by human beings who are told to do something or tells someone else to do something, being praised or blamed for what has been done or not done, being asked to clarify, explain or justify one’s actions, or someone justifying, explaining, clarifying or describing one’s action. This is not the case with events, as events can be caused by other things apart from human beings. Another difference between action and event lies in their nature; actions are future-oriented in the sense that they are performed with a view to actualize the agent’s intentions, while events are past-oriented in most of the case.

Thus, we can say that the main difference between actions and events lies in the fact that actions are to do only with human beings, while events can be caused by other things as well. As Gautam points out in distinguishing actions from events,

In so far as every action is meant to posit, positing may mean placing something in a context or bringing something about, we have to take into account the reflexive character of the awareness that human beings have of their capacity to intervene (or not intervene) in the world with a view to bring about certain consequences. Unlike actions, events just happen, they are no one’s responsibility. Events are explained by invoking laws of nature – the traditional task of natural sciences.328

Here, the term “reflexive character of the awareness” is applicable to persons and not to self. The reason is that, persons have the ability to reflect on their intentions

327 Gautam, 1983: xii.
328 Ibid., p. xii.
and actions. On the other hand, the self, even though it is conscious, do not have the
ability to reflect on its own action. This character of self-reflexivity brings in the
awareness in a person about his/her personality – the kind of person he/she is in
comparison to other persons in society. So, the importance of ability to self-reflect for
a person can be seen here. Further, there are three main types of action – voluntary,
involuntary or non-voluntary.\textsuperscript{329} Here, we will be interested in voluntary actions only;
because it is only when a person performs a voluntary action that questions of moral
responsibility arise. For example, Mother Teresa’s acts are morally commendable
because she voluntarily took care of the needy. Voluntary actions are those performed
by an agent with the intention to achieve some results, for example, writing an exam
to get a degree. We are interested only in voluntary actions as in such actions the
agent’s participation is most pronounced. And the fact remains that the result of
voluntary actions alone can be morally judged as either right or wrong.

A moral agent is answerable for the actions he/she performs; he/she is
accountable to others and is to be subjected to praise or blame according to the action
performed. However, there are further conditions to be fulfilled before one can be
held morally accountable. An agent should be held responsible only for voluntary
actions. And he/she must be physically, mentally and emotionally healthy while
performing the actions. The action must be intentional in all sense of the term.
However, making a mistake is an important part of learning about what is correct or
incorrect, and it is only when we make mistakes that we are held responsible. For
example, Jane cannot be held responsible if Tom ran in front of her car suddenly in
the middle of the road during peak traffic hour. However, Jane will be held
responsible if she hurt Tom while jumping the red light, even if she did not intend to
hurt Tom, because she was fully aware that such accident could happen if she jumps
the red light, but she still did it and it is a mistake on her part.

Further, it is also important that a moral agent will be able to accept that
he/she is responsible for the outcome of the action. The ability to realize that one is
responsible for one’s action shows that an agent recognize that he/she has done things
in the past as well. However, in case like killing someone for the first time, the killer

\textsuperscript{329} Involuntary actions are those actions perform by the agent without any intentions to achieve
something, for example, twitching of lips. And non-voluntary actions are those actions perform by
an agent without his/her will to do so, for example, a rebellious teenager cleaning his room after
being warned that otherwise he will not get dinner.
will still be punished for his/her action, because this can be seen from the past cases where killers are punished. Also, a normal person knows that killing is wrong through teachings by religious leaders, elders in the family, from society etc. So, we can say that, not only my past actions, but the past actions of other people also make us realize that we can be held responsible for our actions like killing, stealing, cheating etc. This is important because, “this acknowledgement requires a first-person perspective. Moreover, appreciation of the fact that one has done something brings with it the ability to try to change one’s attitudes.”

We can say that, first-person perspective is one of the necessary conditions to be a person, and also that only persons are moral agents.

There is no doubt that being a moral agent is one of the most important thing about us. Without being considered an agent our life will have no meaning at all. We can further say that the importance of being a person lies partly in the fact that all moral agents are persons. It is a fact that first-person perspectives enable us to have a moral life, a life that has a moral significance. To talk about our moral life would have been metaphysically impossible without the first-person perspective. For example, while reflecting on what kind of individual one wants to be, it is important that I can envisage myself as one kind or the other kind among the various options available for me. Without the ability to do this, I will not be able to reflect.

Here, the same goes for emotions like, struggling with temptation, attempts to discern and purify one’s motives and deliberations about what is the right thing to do. Even in case of ordinary moral sentiments like guilt and regret, we can see the importance of first-person perspective. If one cannot appreciate the fact that one had done something, one would not be able to regret it either. In case of guilt, the capacity to feel guilt requires that one be able to conceive of oneself as oneself. If one is not able to have the first-person conception of who one is and the wrong one had committed, there would be no logical space for guilt. Thus, we can say that an agent must be able to act voluntarily in order to be held responsible for his/her actions.


Agency and Freedom

How does an agent act voluntarily? The agent must be free for such acts, and so it is important to look into the relationship between agency and freedom next. Here, before we go on, we would like to look at the definition of a person once again. According to Baker’s constitution view,

Something is a person in virtue of having a first-person perspective, and something is a human person in virtue of being a person constituted by a human animal (or body)...I could continue to exist without being an animal, but I could not continue to exist without being a person...Persons are essentially persons. 331

For Baker, we can see that the difference between a human person and a human animal lies in the fact that the existence of a person requires a first-person perspective. A person’s persistence conditions are determined by his/her having a first-person perspective. My body’s persistence conditions are determined by its being a human animal. The aim of “constitution” is to provide the third position – intermediate between identity and separate existence. That is, “if x constitute y at t, then x is not just a stand-in at t for y: y exist in its own right. And not only does y borrow properties from x at t, but also x borrows properties from y at t.”332 So, we can see that, according to the constitution view persons have ontological significance in virtue of being persons, even when they are constituted by human animals. Also, human animals have ontological significance in virtue of being human animals, even when they constitute persons.

Further, to be an agent requires that we must be embodied. Embodiment is important as it is our body that gives our ego the necessary place to reside. Normally, the body is pointed at when we refer to a person and it is the body that represents the ego to the outside world. So, there is a complex relationship between embodiment and freedom, and by freedom we do not mean freedom from the body but freedom of the body to choose in everyday life. To be a moral agent requires that one must be free to entertain and choose from the different goal that is available to him/her. If an agent is

331 Ibid., p. 371. Here, freedom is related to first-person perspective in the sense that persons are define by first-person perspective, and freedom is discussed in relation to person in this context. Also, freedom is attributed to an embodied person, thus the relationship between person and freedom.
forced to do something bad, he/she cannot be held responsible for the action as the agent is not free. Also, if an agent is forced to do something good, he/she cannot take the credit for the good work as he/she did not choose to do it on his/her own. It is important to be clear about the relationship between embodiment and freedom. Due to the fact that an agent is embodied, freedom will have to be considered in terms of bodily freedom and not freedom from the body. If an agent is free to perform an action voluntarily then he/she is free to that extent.

Further, we will not consider cases where freedom means freedom from the human body, like “the soul/ego is free after the body dies”. But our interest lies in the freedom as enjoyed by an agent that is embodied. Embodiment is a necessary condition for being an agent because without a body one cannot act and thus be an agent. Also, when we talk of free agent, we mean a moral agent who acts out of his/her complete free will; there is no duress, blackmail or any external reason that forced him/her to act as he/she did. Because an action which is not voluntary cannot be judge to have moral responsibility of praise or blame, good or bad and right or wrong. So, the relationship between embodiment and freedom is an important relationship. And this relationship is an integral part of personhood; a person necessarily is an embodied agent who has the capability to choose his/her action voluntarily. Thus, we can see the connection between embodiment, freedom and personhood.

Further, an agent is a rational being. We cannot be like animals when we deal with other persons, being rational means to deliberate about what best to do, attempt to evaluate and rank preferences and desires and goals or ends, attempts to evaluate one’s beliefs, taking time to resolve conflicts among each other, and so on. Here again, we can see that we try to reflect on our actions and situations according to our conception of the kind of person that one wants to be. It is our first-person perspective that gives us the idea of what kind of a person we are now and what kind of person we want to be. Our attitudes like – beliefs, desires, preferences etc – are given to us by our conception of ourselves through our first-person perspectives. This is the reason we are able to have second-order desire to fulfill our first-order desires. To be able to fulfill our first-order desire, to do or not to do something is usually the outcome of reflection and deliberation on our desires, and then deciding to act or not to act on the basis of our first-order desire is our second-order desire. This is important because
desires tend to conflict and we need to evaluate and order our desires so that there will be no conflict of desire. So, we can say that a first-person perspective is the underlying character for a person to be considered as a moral and rational agent. Also, a person is considered as a moral and rational agent if he/she has the freedom to choose his/her actions, values, decisions, etc. A person must enjoy the right to decide/choose in order for him/her to be considered as a moral and rational agent.

Further, we can say that without freedom an agent will not be able to become a moral and rational agent. When we are given the freedom to choose and we choose to do one and not the others, then we are considered to be moral or immoral according to our choice. Being an agent means that we already have the capacity to do both good and bad in a given situation. Freedom to choose gives us the necessary quality to be considered either as a moral or immoral person. For example, a case where a government officer refuses to take a bribe where the chance of being caught is minimal shows that he/she choose to be a morally good officer. In the words of Fischer,

The question of whether human beings have freedom is of interest to us – we care so deeply about it – because certain attitudes and forms of behavior that are extremely important to us seem to presuppose some sort of freedom...some attitudes – frustration and relief, sadness and happiness – can be appropriate, even if the object of the attitudes lacks “control” or freedom...but these attitudes seem crucially different from attitudes such as gratitude, respect, indignation, resentment, and so forth...Strawson calls these latter attitudes “reactive attitudes,” and they seem appropriate only as reactions to free actions performed by free agents.333

Also, the role of freedom in holding/judging someone morally responsible can also be seen from chapter three. Fischer and Ravizza give us the importance of freedom in details. The most important point they made could be stated as, “the sort of control typically associated with moral responsibility implies the existence of alternative possibilities or freedom to do (or choose) otherwise.”334 So, we can say that absence of freedom to do otherwise means that an agent cannot be held morally responsible for the consequences of his/her actions.

Further, how do we decide/know whether a person is a free agent or not? This needs thorough analysis in order to come to any kind of acceptable conclusion. Galen Strawson gives some important conditions of free agency. According to Strawson, an agent must be,

Capable of forming beliefs, capable of having desires (pro-attitudes), capable of self-movement (self-change), capable of practical reasoning in inclusive sense, fully self-conscious, possessed of basic ability to choose, possessed of rich ability to choose, possessed of maximal ability to choose, possessed of the belief or sense that one is U-free, engaged, and possessed of the conception of U-freedom.335

Here, to have U-freedom means one is ultimately (morally) responsible for one’s actions. The above conditions point us towards an acceptable meaning of freedom. A free agent must have the capacity to form beliefs, have desires and have the ability to reflect on himself/herself and change his/her attitudes towards something if he/she so desires.

Further, an agent should be reasonable about his/her circumstances and try and think of others while taking decisions. All these imply that he/she must be fully conscious of himself/herself as well as others, and he/she should have the ability to entertain and choose one action or goal over another. Here, rich and maximal ability to choose is the capacity to be fully self-consciously aware of oneself grasped as oneself and able to choose while choosing. In addition a free agent must have the ability to believe that he/she is a free agent and that he/she must be aware of being a free agent. To be able to know that one is in possession of freedom is important as this self-awareness gives us the ability to judge ourselves in accordance with our beliefs. An agent who possesses the above conditions can be called free agent and this entails that the agent is also morally responsible for the outcome of his/her freedom. Thus, we can see how an agent must be able to act freely in order to be responsible for the results of his/her actions.

From the discussions so far on the relationships between persons, agent, actions and freedom we can say that there is more to agency than just being a person. Agency entails two important attributes – embodiment and freedom to do otherwise, which is necessarily not the case in persons. Also, an agent is necessarily held morally

335 Strawson, 2004: 397-398.
responsible for his/her actions, which may or may not be the case with persons. Because, there can be cases where a person cannot be considered as moral agent due many reasons. Someone may have been an agent but has lost it since due to accidents or old age, and there can be cases where there is no chance for a person to become an agent – cases like split personality disorders, schizophrenia etc. The connection between moral responsibility and freedom can be seen in Fischer’s account, he says,

Moral responsibility involves accessibility to reactive attitudes, and we care deeply about reactive attitudes. In other words, we care deeply about whether the other individuals in our lives (and we ourselves) are morally responsible. And since lack of freedom appears to threaten the appropriateness of reactive attitudes, we have reason to wonder about – and to care about – whether or not we are free.

Also, Susan Wolf gives us two conditions for moral responsibility; it is important here because the relationship between agency and freedom becomes clearer. According to Wolf,

In order for a person to be morally responsible, two conditions must be satisfied. First, he must be a free agent – an agent, that is, whose actions are under his own control. For if the actions he performs are not up to him to decide, he deserves no credit or discredit for doing what he does. Second, he must be a moral agent – an agent, that is, to whom moral claims apply. For if the actions he performs can be neither right nor wrong, then there is nothing to credit or discredit him with.

Thus, we can see the important relations between agency and freedom from the above discussions. Here, it is important to point out that it is difficult to put forth the distinction between self, person, and agent. However, a tentative proposal is put forth in order to have an ethical view as oppose to metaphysical view on persons. In the next section, we will go on to the relationship between an agent and the other to see how much they influence each other in forming personal identity.

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336 Reactive attitudes, according to Strawson, is a “reactions of people directly involved in transactions with each other; of the attitudes and reactions of offended parties and beneficiaries; of such things as gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, love, and hurt feelings.” (Strawson, 2003: 75.)
4.3 Agency and Other

Being an agent means that one’s actions are directed outwards, towards the outside world. To be an agent means to be a part of a society where there are other agents as well. Without other people, there will be very little meaning in calling oneself an agent. It is a fact that the only mind I have access to directly is mine; my access to other people’s mind is always mediated by their bodily behavior. By analogy I infer that, just as I feel pain when scalded by hot water, so will others when scalded by hot water. In case of the other, it is not always possible to infer indubitably that it is the case, as it is not possible to experience other minds.

However, this argument from analogy is problematic because when we come in contact with others, we come in contact not with a mere body or a hidden psyche, but with a unified whole or what could be regarded as person. According to Zahavi,

There is more to the mind than its behavioral manifestation, but we should recognize that behavior is already soaked with the meaning of the mind and that the expressive relation holding between “inner” mental states and “external” bodily behavior is stronger than that of a mere contingent causal connection…expressions are not merely exterior manifestations of something that was already internally present. Rather, what is expressed is fully realized only in the expression.339

When we want to convey something to other, even though it is formed in the mind, expressing the thought makes the expressions complete. Hence, in order for an agent to be able to become a moral and rational agent, the judgments of other agents are a necessity. The link that exists between an individual and the other is important as they each depend on the other to be what they are. So, it is important for us to look into the relationship shared between an agent and other, and how one comes to know other minds. This will help us in forming a clearer notion on how individual and other help each other grow and communicate in our everyday life.

In order for us to understand the mode of knowing other, we will have to try and understand the problem of other minds. We can say that it is important to address the problem of other minds, because “it seems wrong to claim that the mental life of others is essentially inaccessible, but it also seems wrong to claim that everyone is

There are times when we can be in no doubt about a person’s anger or pain. But there are times when we are not sure about the other person’s state of mind. The Cartesian idea that we can never have direct accessibility to other minds seems acceptable at such times. It is a fact that I cannot directly access other minds like I do mine, without any form of behavioral manifestations and inference involved, which makes other minds different from my own mind. Otherwise, the difference between my mind and other minds will no longer apply. However, the distinction between my mind and other minds, the sharp divide between the subjective and the objective, gets blur as the way my mind develop is influence by other minds. This is the reason why there cannot be a rigid boundary drawn between my mind and other minds.

Further, we can ask, how do we know/recognize other as different from me? There must be something else apart from our mind that helps us in recognizing other subjects. It is the experience of one’s own embodied subjectivity that allows us to recognize another embodied subject as a foreign subjectivity. And to experience myself and to experience others is to deal with embodiment in both cases. The way I experience myself and others is also the way the others experience themselves and me. We live in a public and communal world, where subjectivity and the world are integrally related. As the structure of this world contains essential references to the other, we will not be able to understand subjectivity except as inhabiting a world that it necessarily shares with others. That is why it is important for us to understand the world or the other if we are to understand ourselves, as a person with a distinctive subjectivity. However, the way we understand others will always be subtly different from the way we understand ourselves. This will remain because the presence of first-person perspective in an individual will always make it different from the third-person perspective of the other.

**Understanding Other Minds**

In order to understand other minds, it is important to develop a theory of mind. We also need to move our discussion from subjectivity to intersubjectivity, as we deal with the problem of other minds. According to Andrews, to merely discover that systems (like, chess-playing computers, monkeys, chimpanzees, etc.) interact with

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340 Ibid., p. 154.
one another in a predictable manner doesn’t provide enough empirical evidence to say that they have a theory of mind. In fact, when we ask if something has a theory of mind, “we’re asking for something more than a description of behavior; we’re asking why the systems behave as they do.” The importance of facial expression in our interaction with others in our everyday experiences cannot but be emphasized. Whether we agree or disagree, empathize or not, are some of the feelings we can get from facial expressions. This shows how important our facial expressions are in conveying our feelings to others. According to Cole,

In order to understand what the face really does and means in relation to selfhood and to intersubjectivity, we must extend the range of our empathy to enter the experiences of those with facial difference. Just as the face may have been necessary for the evolution of complex inner stats (of which empathy is one), so we need an enriched and full sense of empathy for an understanding of those with facial difference. This, in turn, allows us a fuller comprehension of what the face means in all of us.

Before we move on, we would like to emphasize on the importance of empathy a bit more. According to Thompson, “one’s consciousness of oneself as an embodied individual in the world is founded on empathy – on one’s empathic cognition of others, and other’s empathic cognition of oneself.” Empathy is a unique and irreducible kind of intentional experience, based on sense perception and involve inference. However, it is not reducible to some additive combination of sense perception and inference. There are different kinds of empathy that we experience; firstly, empathy as the experience of another as an embodied subject of experience like oneself, that is the passive association of my lived body with the lived body of the other. Secondly, delving into the content of the other’s experience, that is the imaginative transposal of myself into the place of the other. Thirdly, interpretation or understanding of myself as an “other” for you; where I try and make you understand that I am an “other” for you. Fourthly, empathy as an ethical responsibility in the face of the other, that is, empathy brings forth responsibility towards others.

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Here, we can see that, we move from the first level of accomplishment – the emergence of experience where we remain tacit, a matter of passive association – to the second level – where it unfolds to the imaginative self-transposal to the place of the other. This movement enables us to gain new spatial perspective on the world of the other, while at the same time we continue to have our own centre of spatial orientation. Also, the third stage, where we make ourselves clear to the other as the “other”, enable us to reach the fourth stage where empathy make us develop ethical responsibility in the face of the other. Thus, Thompson holds that, “the intersubjective openness of consciousness and empathy are the preconditions for our experience of inhabiting a common, intersubjective, spatial world. Empathy…provides a viewpoint in which one’s centre of orientation becomes one among others.”

So, we can see how empathy enables us to be included among the other in our experience. According to Thomson, the importance of empathy in first person perspective is stated as,

It is through empathy as the experience of oneself as an other for the alter-ego that one gains a viewpoint of one’s own embodied being beyond the first-person singular perspective. Thus, empathy involves ‘a displacement or fission between my empathizing self and the empathized other; recollection between my present recollecting self and my past recollected self; and refletion between my reflecting self and the experiences I reflected upon’…in Dan Zahavi’s words: ‘even if consciousness could turn its attention so completely toward itself that everything else were excluded, it would not escape the confrontation with Otherness.’

Here, as we will be moving from our discussion of subjectivity to intersubjectivity it is important to highlight their relationships first. It is important to note that persons are alike in many ways, possessing body, mind, ability to feel pain, be happy, get hurt, be angry etc. This means that, whatever I feel and understand could also be felt and understood by others. This is how we learn about others, through their behavior, body language, facial expression etc. and vice versa. In fact, sometimes we learn new things about our feelings or pain from other people. That is the extent to which this relationship is important for us to be able to understand

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344 Thompson, 2001: 19.
345 Ibid, p. 19
346 Ibid, p. 20
ourselves better. According to Thompson, Zahavi holds that, “the actual experience of another embodied subject is founded upon an a priori reference to the other.”\(^\text{347}\) The outcome is that, the intersubjective openness of consciousness must belong a priori to the very structure of subjectivity; so cannot be reduced to any contingent and factual relation of self and other.

There are different views prevalent as to how we are able to understand other people’s mind. Gallagher holds that, “in most intersubjective situations we have a direct, pragmatic understanding of another person’s intentions because their intentions are explicitly expressed in their embodied expressions.”\(^\text{348}\) However, there is a need to have a pre-theoretical knowledge about how people behave in particular contexts, before we are in a position to form a theory about other people’s desire. We get this kind of knowledge through the various capabilities that characterize primary intersubjectivity, like imitation, eye-tracking, perception of meaning and emotion in movement and postures, etc. We acquire these backgrounds from embodied practices in interactions with others. This shows that we are in a position to interact and understand others in terms of their gestures, intentions and emotions, etc., before we are in a position to theorize, simulate, explain or predict mental states in others. According to Gallagher,

Primary, embodied intersubjectivity is not primary simply in developmental terms. Rather it remains primary across all face-to-face intersubjective experiences, and it subtends the occasional and secondary intersubjective practices of explaining or predicting what other people believe, desire or intend in the practice of their own minds.\(^\text{349}\)

Further Gallagher holds that, in order to understand other people we do not need to go beyond contextualized overt behaviors like actions, gestures, speech-acts, etc. That is, one need not go beyond a person’s gestures or emotional expressions to gain an understanding of that person, basic primary behaviors are enough. Thus, we can say that, “primary intersubjectivity…is not just primary in developmental terms: it continues to characterize most of our interpersonal interactions, and it forms the basis

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\(^{347}\) Ibíd, p. 15  
\(^{348}\) Gallagher, 2001: 86.  
\(^{349}\) Ibíd., p. 91.
for the more specialized mentalistic interpretations of how others perform in the practice of their own minds.”

Here, it is important to be clear about what primary and secondary intersubjectivity means. By primary intersubjectivity, Gallagher means the basic human behavior which can be seen everywhere. For example, gestures, intentions and emotions, what people do or pretend to do with objects, and how they act toward us and others. We get primary intersubjectivity through various capabilities like imitation, intentionality detection, eye-tracking, the perception of intentional or goal-related movements, and the perception of meaning and emotion in movement and posture. This kind of knowledge is derived from embodied practices in interaction with others. Before we are able to form any kind of theory to explain other people’s mental states, we are able to understand others through primary intersubjectivity.

On the other hand, secondary intersubjectivity means trying to explain what is in the mind of other people; for example, their beliefs, desires, intentions, etc, basically trying to explain or predict the practice of other people’s mind. However, we can say that primary intersubjectivity is more important than secondary intersubjectivity. Primary intersubjectivity provides the foundation on which secondary intersubjectivity is built. Further, how we are to understand secondary intersubjectivity can be seen in the writings of John Barresi, where he explains how we develop an understanding of mental life in general, including how I and others have a mental life that can be distinguished from the embodied organic involvement in the world. One difference is that, in order for me to understand the thought or feelings of another person I need to place myself imaginatively in their situation; to have empathy towards the other. But in my own case, my behavior is the consequence of my subjective state and so no inference is required from my own behavior to the mental state that I am in. I don’t have to interpret my actions to myself, I know the reason of my actions and I don’t need to empathize myself in order to understand my thoughts or feelings.

Further, we can also have “a theory of mind” in case of knowledge of other minds. According to Natalie Sebanz, “conscious awareness of mental states evolved

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350 Ibid., p. 103.
351 Barresi, 2007: 84.
because it increased individual’s ability to predict others’ actions…and because it allows individuals to distinguish between self- and other-generated thoughts.\textsuperscript{352}

Here, we can see the role of social and cultural forces in the emergence of consciousness. We can say that a sense of agency developed because crucial forms of social interaction relied on the ability to distinguish between action effects produced by oneself and action effects caused by others. Also, we can say that humans proceeded from awareness of their own mental states to awareness of others’ mental states. It is our own awareness that enable us to form an opinion about other people’s mental states as well as any awareness about the world around us. We are able to go to the next level of understanding others mind after we have an awareness of our own mind.

Further, by observing others an individual could understand that others had similar action capabilities as they themselves. This allows an individual to combine their own and others’ action more flexibly, and gives a chance for better understanding of what is in the others mind. Also, in understanding others mind, culture plays an important role as well. As a social being, we understand each other in the context of a particular social structure in which we are members. We judge ourselves and others in reference to the prevalent cultural norms of our own society, this enable us to understand a person’s mind through his/her actions, behaviors, habits, etc. So, in order to gain knowledge of others’ mind, it is important for us to accept that we need to have self-awareness first before we can understand others’ mind. Also, we need to understand others in the context of the prevalent socio-cultural norms.

Thus, from the above discussion on the relationship between agency and other’s mind, we can see that subjectivity involves both embodiment and mindedness. In other words, an agent must be embodied as first-person perspective is shaped by the body, and the role of psychology is important in understanding other’s mind. In the next section we will try to clarify the relationship between personhood, agency and other persons.

\textsuperscript{352} Sebanz, 2007: 235.
4.4 Personhood, Agency and the Other

Here, it is important to be clear about the relationship between personhood, agency and the role of the other. This will enable us to ascertain the extent to which moral responsibility shape one’s personhood. The common attributes shared by persons, agents and subjects is that they themselves have first-person perspectives. According to Marcia Cavell, this first-person perspective is important, because

The first-person perspective of any one person is part of what constitutes that person as that particular person; it gives us subjectivity without a subject and that absolutely excludes others rather than a subjectivity that is implicit in what it is to be a person, a person separate from others, but not closed off.\footnote{Cavell, 2006: 142.}

A person’s first-person perspective is something which cannot be shared with any other person. It gives us subjectivity without a subject as it totally excludes others and no other person can ever share its perspective apart from the subject that experiences it. Before we move on, let us be clear by what “subjectivity without a subject” means. There are two kinds of subjectivity: one that absolutely excludes other, another that is implicit in what is to be a person, this subject is separate from other but not totally closed off from other. By “subjectivity without a subject” we mean subjectivity that absolutely excludes other, it is a subject’s view on itself without any interference from outside.

Further, first-person perspective makes us that unique person which is different from the other persons. However, if first-person perspective gives us genuine knowledge about ourselves we must be sensitive to truth and falsity. We must be able to accept that the possibility of error is essential to first-person perspective. This is how we learn and grow, reflect and change ourselves. Also, “rather than ruling out the knowledge of other minds, first-person authority demands that at least some aspects of the mind be knowable from a third-person point of view.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 142.} Without the possibility to know at least some aspects of our own mind from others point of view, we will not be able to learn, judge, reflect, and bring about change in ourselves. We can say that, first-person authority is a constitutive feature of being a person as well as an agent. By recognizing this fact in another person, we accept that person as an agent.
with whom we can engage in a dialogue. So, someone can challenge my authority on particular occasion, but not in general, without denying my status as a person. Also, it is the relation between first- and third-person perspectives that provide us with the world-view that we formed about our surroundings. Only first-person perspective will give us a one-sided view in any given situation, but if we also take third-person perspective in to account it will allow us to form an informed decisions about our perspectives. So, we can say that first-person perspectives and third-person perspectives is not totally different.

Further, our account of what a person is “must recognize the ways in which the external world, including relationships with others, is part of the fabric of the inner world, as one’s first-person experience provides the only approach to one’s knowledge of the external world.” The relationship between our mind and the external world is important for our personhood. And this personhood provides us with the way to gain knowledge of the external world. Also, according to Baker, the capacities to formulate questions like “what/who am I” help us in our reflection about our own values, rules, ideals and whether or not they are the ones that we ought to have. She says,

Asking such questions and embracing ideals are absolutely characteristic of persons, and of no other kind of thing. Thus, our moral agency, our rational agency, the cognitive and practical abilities that require a first-person perspective, and the ability to have an inner life are all unique to persons. And these things, I submit, are among the most significant things about us.

Here, the next question that needs to be address is: how does a first-person perspective operate in an intersubjective world of “I with the other”? In the intersubjective world, the “I” interact with the “other” in a supplementary and complementary manner. As much as I need the other to learn about myself, so does the other needs me to learn about them. Subjectivity alone cannot give us all the knowledge about ourselves, for example, before he come in contact with other human being Tarzan was unaware of any feelings towards other human beings. Even though he was brought up by other beings, like monkeys, elephants, lions etc., maybe he was

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355 Ibid., p. 144.
357 Ibid., p. 164.
not aware of feelings as such. This shows that for the full development of our emotions as well as other innumerable personal traits, we need to be with other persons. First-person perspective constantly tells the “I” about what the “other” feels, which it learns through the other’s actions and behaviors. Further, in the world of intersubjectivity, the “I” is not an isolated subject and this calls for certain amount of responsibility towards the society in which he/she is a member.

On the other hand, the “others” are themselves an “I” in their own world, and so all of them are mutually exclusive yet dependent on each other in some way. We can say that “I” and the “other” relates in such a way that the “I” develops its full potentials only when it is in the intersubjective world. When alone, the individual “I” cannot do much in terms of learning from mistakes, reflecting on actions, changing goals, etc. It is in the intersubjective world alone that an agent becomes aware of his/her mistakes, by seeing how other agents behave in a given situation. So, we can say that persons are open to other as they learn what it is to be a person from others, while subjectivity excludes the other. This is an important difference between persons and subjectivity. In the next section we will consider the role played by society in understanding a person.

**Role of Society**[^358] in Understanding Person

The role of society in the evolution of self-consciousness is an important aspect that needs to be looked into at this stage. There is a view that “conscious awareness of mental states evolved because it increased individuals’ ability to predict others’ actions (Firth, 2002), and because it allowed individuals to distinguish between self- and other-generated thoughts (Prinz, 2003).”[^359] For Sebanz, individuals gain a sense of self in simple joint actions through social interaction that did not depend on the use of symbolic communication, like using sign language, and required little or no ability to infer others’ mental states. For example, moving a large rock requires people who have the same goal, like, crossing to the other side of the rock.

Here, it is not necessary that they know each others’ mental states. In order to achieve the goal of moving the rock out of the way, individuals also imitate each other

[^358]: Here, the word “society” is synonymous with the word “other/others”. We are using the word “society” here as we are referring to other persons in general. It is used to refer to plural term for the word “other/others”.
where he/she understood that actions of self and other lead to effects in similar ways. This makes it possible to create a mapping between actions and effects at a more general level, and then use observed action-effect principles for oneself. After recognizing the importance of others in achieving some goal, an individual will have to remember who is good in what type of work. Sebanz says,

> For example, if an object can only be reached through strength and dexterity, and one remembers that last time, one could do the part of the action requiring dexterity, but not the part requiring strength, one may try to recruit the help of an individual whom one has seen achieving actions that require strength. This does not involve ascribing a mental state to the other; it just involves attributing action capabilities to the other.\(^{360}\)

The next step in these interactions here is that, it is essential for an individual to remember other’s preferences, as we need others to achieve our goals. In these contacts with the other, the concept of subjectivity was born as sometimes my preferences are different from those of the other person even though we may have the same goal in the initial interactions. This means that we attribute others with mental states like desires or intentions. Thus, “joint action played a crucial role in the emergence of the experience of agency and the understanding of others’ actions as goal-directed.”\(^{361}\)

Further, the importance of society can be seen in our everyday life. In answer to the question “who are you?”, the way we characterize ourselves by referring to our profession, social status, familial relationships, and many other features which serve to identify us are all derived from the socio-cultural system to which we belong. However, our identity is not exhausted by our social self. According to Mohanty,

> I can, in a reflective stance, reduce myself to the life of an ego, to the stream of my inner mental life, but more than that, I can also critically reflect on the social origin of my beliefs and interpretations, which involves a certain distancing, a certain refusal to submerge myself in my social relationships. To the extent that I can do so, I am…a transcendental ego. My contention is that a person has essentially the possibility of adopting this stance of a transcendental ego.\(^{362}\)

\(^{360}\) Ibid., p. 244.
\(^{361}\) Ibid., pp. 247-248.
\(^{362}\) Mohanty, 2000: 82.
So, we can say that the way we look at ourselves as well as others is shaped by the society we belong to. For example, many parents in our society encouraged their children to become a doctor, an engineer or an I.A.S officer without bothering to find out whether their children are passionate about pursuing either of these professions. This kind of parental pressure ends up hurting many children or young people, along with their parents. These kinds of problems are the result of societal pressure on what success should be like. This is one aspect of the relationship shared by persons and society, negative aspect. However, there are positive aspects too in which a person learns how to respect elders, treat children with love, and care about environment, etc. Thus, the role of society in shaping one’s identity can be seen here.

Also, it is important to go into the relationship between self and the other, so that we will have a clearer notion of the influence of the other on the self. When we speak of the other, we are speaking of something that will always transcend its givenness for me; the other’s self-givenness is inaccessible to me. I have direct access only to my mind; the mind of another person is always mediated to me through their bodily behavior. However, Max Scheler (1973: 255) denies that “our initial self-acquaintance is of a purely mental nature that takes place in isolation from others. He also denied that our basic acquaintance with others is inferential in nature.”363 For Scheler, when we come face-to-face with other persons, we are not confronted with a mere body, or with a hidden psyche, but with a unified whole. The mind is not something that is visible to only one person and invisible to everyone else, there is more to the mind than its behavioral manifestation.

For Zahavi, “expressions are not merely exterior manifestations of something that was already present. Rather, what is expressed is fully realized only in the expression.”364 The mind is meaningfully manifested in expressions and meaningful behavior, but it is different from the direct manifestation available to the first-person perspective. The problems of other minds intrigue us as it seems to give us conflicting intuitions about its accessibility. Sometimes it seems true that other’s mind is manifested in their expressions and actions. Other times it also seems true that the other’s mind is inaccessible to us. So, there is a need to reconcile both the intuitions and come up with a better answer then the one that is dominant now. However, it is

363 As quoted in Zahavi, 2005: 150.
364 Ibid., p. 152.
important to point out here that, this inaccessibility of the other person’s mind gives meaning to the phrase “other person’s mind”. If I could get access to the other person’s first-person givenness, then there will be no difference between my mind and the other person’s mind.

According to Zahavi, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty hold that my embodied subjectivity enables me to interact with and recognize another embodied subject as a foreign subjectivity. That is, “if we deny that embodiment and environmental embedding are essential to having a mind, we will have a hard time escaping solipsism.” When I am dealing with myself and with other mind, I am dealing with embodiment in the world. When I experience myself, I can anticipate that I experience the other and the other also experiences me. It is our actions that deconstruct the artificial divide between my inner and the outer, as it is the action of minded individuals. Also, actions always bring about a change in the outer world. And it is a fact that we are able to interpret other’s action as to whether it shares crucial properties with our actions. We encounter others in a worldly situation and we understand each other according to the present situation that we face. As we live in a world that is permeated by reference to others, we are able to understand ourselves and the world through language. The reason is that the other is already furnished with meaning. Zahavi holds that,

The world we live in is a public and communal world, not a private one. Subjectivity and world are internally related, and since the structure of this world contains essentially references to others, subjectivity cannot be understood except as inhabiting a world that it necessarily shares with others.

Here, we can see how we are related with the other as we are in a world where others also exist. We will not be able to understand ourselves until we understand the world in which we exist. As the world cannot be understood apart from those who inhibit it, we will have to understand the other in order to understand ourselves better. Further, persons are not just human beings but they are also moral agents, and this brings in the ethical dimension to our relationship with the others. And it is in the ethical domain where the other makes ethical demands of me; when I have to assume responsibility for the others, that he/she is present as the other and vice versa. Just as

365 Ibid., p. 159.
366 Ibid., p. 167.
the other is “other” to me, I am an “other” to the other as well. And that is why relationship between subjectivity, agency and moral responsibility needs further exploration.

4.5 Subjectivity, Moral Responsibility and Agency

Different types of metaphysical as well as ethical dimensions influence the relationship between subjectivity, moral responsibility and agency. When we say that persons are moral agents, what we mean is that they are morally accountable for at least some of their conduct. This makes them different from robots, mentally challenged people, infants, etc., as they cannot be held morally responsible for what they do. The important condition for moral agency is that, an agent must have the relevant understanding or the capacity for understanding the external requirements of morality. According to William James,

What give significance to human life is that we can set ourselves ideals or goals and then pursue them with zest, overcoming obstacles in the way. If there were no struggle in human endeavor there would be nothing heroic about us. When we admire individuals for their struggle against temptation, or against disease, or their heroic attempt at conquering mountains or solving mathematical problems, we are appealing to an inner life. If a computer solves a mathematical problem, however ingenious its solution, there is nothing heroic about it.\(^{367}\)

Here, here by “overcoming obstacle” we mean both mental as well as physical obstacle, like, illness, depression, etc. There are many things that can become an obstacle when we try to achieve something. We need to “struggle” to overcome these obstacles if we want to achieve our goal. How hard can a person struggle to achieve his/her goals make that person the kind of person he/she is. It is this struggle that refines a person and makes him/her a different person. Also, there are some actions which are done intentionally but without any important reasons for doing so. For example, dancing in the rain, I may do it intentionally just because I want to enjoy the rain or just feel like dancing and it happens to rain at that particular moment, but without any important reason. I just wanted to do it and it gives me pleasure. When we do something for the sake of doing, but without any important reason, like the habit of chewing gums, we are doing things intentionally but without any important reasons.

reason. However, there are some actions we do that require heroic effort from us. For example, saving people from a burning building, diving into a whirlpool to save people, helping the poor get justice, etc., requires us to get out of our comfort zone which everyone don’t do in our normal day-to-day life. That is why we admire those heroic people as we admire their inner strength.

Further, in order to connect personal identity and moral responsibility, it is important to know the relationship between persons and moral responsibility. So, in answer to the question, “What is personal identity constituted of?” Flanagan and Rorty says that,

a person’s identity is constituted by a configuration of central traits…that typically make a systematic difference to the course of a person’s life, to the habit-forming and action-guiding social categories in which she is placed, to the way that she acts, reacts, and interacts…the kinds traits that form identity very culturally, across class and gender lines, and indeed, individually…the question of whether a trait is part of a person’s identity generally has no simple and univocal answer; it is contextually subscripted to one or more dimensions of centrality.\(^{368}\)

It is also important to know how the traits we acquired from others affect a person’s values, beliefs, and motivations. According to Flanagan and Rorty, central temperamental traits dispose a person to develop certain sorts of motives and habits. And sometimes these motives and habits affect a person’s actions directly, which may or may not be contrary to his/her desire. It is a fact that we sometimes have someone who we idolized, the ideal person for us and who we want to become. Sometimes, this ideal identity can also set directions for the development of the central traits of a person. It can make a person act, walk and talk like someone he/she admired and can influence his/her decisions as well. For example, let’s say that after reading Mother Teresa’s biography, someone admired her and her work so much that she started donating for the needy more. She may even become more generous towards the old and infirm beggar outside her office gate; she may decide to buy more from the traffic signal sales girl, etc. So, we can see that the central temperamental traits of a person can develop from his/her hobbies, accidentally etc., and these can help him/her to develop a certain sorts of motives and habits.

Further, when we look at the relationship between subjectivity, moral responsibility, and agency, we can say that they influence each other in an important way. To make this relationship clearer we can compare it with what has been discussed in chapter two and three. In chapter two, Parfit holds that what is important is not identity but “the existence and well-being of a future person related to oneself by certain relations of psychological continuity and connectedness.”\textsuperscript{369} In such a society where Parfit’s account is true, the role of subjectivity, moral responsibility, and agency will be totally different from the way we understand it now. As continuity of body is not necessary in such society, our understanding of persons will also be different. It will be difficult to say that there is continuity of subjectivity or first-person perspective of a person in such a society. We will face the main problem when we are to judge someone. To punish someone for the action of another person will be crime in itself, but how are we to be sure that we punished the same body that had committed the crime? This shows the importance of the role of embodiment in our understanding of these notions. And we can see that there are many problems with Parfit’s “Identity does not matter in survival” theory.

Further, as mentioned in chapter three, Fischer and Ravizza hold that,

Our sense of ourselves and other human beings as persons and subject to the reactive attitudes is a very basic and important feature of our lives. Without personhood and moral responsibility our lives would be radically different, and (for most) very unattractive…a person can be morally responsible for his behavior. Moral responsibility, however it is understood, appears to require some sort of control. And we naturally presuppose that we (sometimes at least) possess this sort of control. In the absence of it, it would seem that we would have to give up very important features of our views about ourselves and others. And in the wake of giving up these views, we would have to abandon behavior that helps to constitute human life as we know it – to mark its boundaries and give it the dramatic contours and rich texture it has.\textsuperscript{370}

From the above quote we can see the importance of moral responsibility and how it adds colors to our lives. But in order to be able to attribute moral responsibility to an agent, a person needs to be in control of his/her actions. In the absence of this

\textsuperscript{369} Noonan, 1989: 192.
\textsuperscript{370} Fischer and Ravizza, 1998: 16, 25.
control, the way we reflect, evaluate, judge, decide etc. about ourselves and others will be impossible. So, moral responsibility and agency is needed for a subject to be able to develop as a person, to learn from others or one’s mistakes, to be a part of society, etc.

It is important to note here that words like “subjectivity”, “self-consciousness”, “self-awareness”, and “first-person perspective” are used as having more or less the same meaning. Subjectivity and first-person perspective overlaps in such a way that subjectivity comes under first-person perspective. This can be seen where first-person perspective give us the “myness” in us, while subjectivity is my consciousness of this “myness” to oneself. Also, persons are aware of others who are different from him/her, reflect on his/her actions, and judge others. Further, we had taken the metaphysical debate on person and try to look at the “sense” of “what makes a person, a person.” We have tried to put forth the ethical aspects of a person, and show the importance of the “other” for the person. Because persons learn what is it to be a person from others, and subjectivity is best develop in intersubjectivity. Further, an agent needs embodiment as it is the body that will perform the actions and will get punishment or reward according to the person’s actions. Thus, we can see the important relationship shared by subjectivity, moral responsibility and agency.

4.6 Personal Identity and Moral Responsibility Revisited

Here, an important question that can be asked is – Is identity a necessary condition for moral responsibility? There is nearly universal agreement that it is. The way this idea is most often expressed is that one can be responsible only for one’s own actions. Sometimes this is put more expansively: “I can be responsible for my own actions, and I cannot be responsible for anyone else’s actions.” However, we can have obvious counter-examples to this claim: parents are sometimes held responsible for the actions of their children, and accomplices are held responsible for the crimes committed by others. A reply is that in each case the person being held responsible is actually responsible only for what he or she did. For example, the parent who is being held responsible, not for what his child did, but for his (in)action in letting the child do what she did, say, or for his poor parenting. Or the accomplice is being held responsible, not for what the criminal did, but for what the accomplice

did in aiding the criminal. So in both cases there is some properly specified action for which it seems only the person identical to the actor may be held responsible.

Here, if we look at ordinary grounds for legal responsibility, it is something like a physical criterion of identity: as long as \( X \) and \( Y \) have the same DNA, then they are the same person, and so \( Y \) can justly be held responsible for the crimes of \( X \). But what we are looking for is the same moral agent — a certain sort of robust psychological being — and given that, for us humans as presently constructed, sameness of moral agency goes hand in hand with sameness of DNA, identification of DNA patterns reliably tracks the responsible agent in question. But it is easy to see that, if DNA patterns changed over time, or if it were possible to alter them in a way that nevertheless preserved the relevant psychological relation, they would be about as useful indicators of responsibility as the color or length of one’s hair.

Further, we can ask – what is the appropriate psychology-based account of personal identity to act as a necessary condition for moral responsibility? What we are looking for is an answer to the question: what makes a past action my own for purposes of responsibility? The answer given by most theorists on this topic is that an action is my own just in case I am identical to the person who performed it. The next question to pursue, then, is what account of personal identity provides the right criterion of what makes an action one’s own? Locke’s memory criterion won’t work, for surely some actions can be one’s own even if one no longer remembers performing them, due to drunkenness, repression, trauma, or the like.\(^{372}\) In addition, memory isn’t sufficient for ownership of actions. Were someone else’s memory trace of doing something immoral copied into my brain (so that I “remembered” that person’s action), it would be silly to think that it was mine, that I was somehow thereby identical to the performer of that action.\(^{373}\)

The natural move, then, is to apply the psychological criterion to the criterion of ownership relevant to responsibility.\(^{374}\) This criterion requires a wider variety and a greater number of psychological connections than does the memory criterion, and so it is unaffected by the worries about Locke’s account. According to this view, then, some past action is my own (relevant to responsibility) just in case the person who

\(^{372}\) See Schechtman, 2005.

\(^{373}\) Ibid., p. 12.

performed the action is uniquely psychologically continuous with me (where this consists in overlapping chains of strong psychological connectedness). Nevertheless, this view also has some problems. For one thing, it’s unclear that psychological continuity alone is sufficient for ownership. It is because of this sort of consideration that Schechtman suggest that we should abandon the search for the sense of re-identification in identity in favor of identity in the characterization sense. That is,

What we’re looking for, after all, is an account of what makes some past action my own. But looking for an answer to this question via something like the Psychological Criterion is too indirect: it has us attributing the action to some past person first and then trying to determine whether or not the person to be assessed as responsible is one and the same as that past agent. But if the action cannot be attributed to the allegedly responsible person directly, the relation between the two person-slices just isn’t strong enough to warrant responses like punishment and blame.375

From the above arguments, we can see that the relationship between personal identity and moral responsibility is more complicated then it look. Even though they supplement and complement each other in its ethical aspects, when we try and look at it from metaphysical aspects it still has lots of problem. The relationship between metaphysical, ontological and ethical aspect of persons can be seen here again. Without establishing the metaphysical aspect of persons first, we will not be able to construct any ontological or ethical aspect of persons.

The main problem is that – where do we base the first-person perspective? Should we go with the bodily continuity theory or the psychological continuity theory? Do we need to distinguish between these two concepts when we deal with the relation between personal identity and moral responsibility? The relationship between personal identity and moral responsibility is important for us to understand as it helps us in forming an informed choice when it comes to our interaction with other persons in society. The difference between self, person, agency and the other lies in the important presence or absence of first-person perspective in a human being, which gives us the ability to become self-aware/self-conscious – a person.

Also, the awareness that we have about the existence of other persons comes from one’s first-person perspective, and this help us gain knowledge about others as

well as about ourselves from others perspectives. It is also the role of first-person perspective to help us gain knowledge about moral responsibility from the outside world through reflection and self-examination. First-person perspective can operate both at the level of the body as well as at the level of the mind. We can think of a “body subject”, where subjective stance is taken with respect to the body. So, we can say that in the absence of first-person perspective, a human being will not be a moral agent or person either. Thus, we can say that first-person perspective give us the authority to be considered as a person as well as a moral agent. And the relationship between personal identity and moral responsibility hinges on the presence of first-person perspective in a human being.

However, we can also say that in order to be a person we need something more than first-person perspective; we need subjectivity to help us evolve into a person as well. Here, by subjectivity we mean, not only to have first-person perspective but the ability to form an opinion about oneself in relation to other. This includes feelings, values, different kinds of emotions etc., and the ability to form perspectives about oneself in relation to society. We can say that first-person perspective is a necessary condition for person, but it is not sufficient as we need something else too. Zahavi holds that, according to Husserl, self-awareness is an essential feature of subjectivity, and considers reflection to be a founded and derived form of self-awareness. That is, “to be a subject is to be in the mode of being aware of oneself.”

So, we can say that self-awareness is a characterizing feature of subjectivity; no matter what worldly entities we may otherwise be conscious of and occupied with. The formation of our identities can be summarized in the words of Atkins as,

Born immature and enduring a long period of juvenile dependency, we learn about our own bodies and capacities through our involvement with the bodies of other people, for example, directly through the communication of touch and vocalisation in being cared for (or abused), and indirectly through representations, observation and instruction, as well as through the complex processes of cultural encoding of differently sexed, coloured, aged or abled bodies. Through the communicative processes of socialisation we come to acquire concepts, emotional schema and

376 Zahavi, 2005: 50.
behavioural repertoires through which we develop our self-conceptions. Those processes, in different ways under different circumstances, have enabling and disabling effects on the various capacities and attributes that go toward forming our identities. A consequence of the developmental and intersubjective nature of selfhood is that our personal histories precede our explicit self-understandings and so, our lives need to be recounted in order to be understood. As an individual’s past becomes known to her through the resources of her carers, associates and culture, that understanding forms an essential part of the context in which she understands her present situation and who she is.377

So, we can see the role of other and society in developing knowledge about one’s personhood and identity. And we can say that the role played by society is important in both identity development as well as moral responsibility. Because society acts as a mirror to us, and force us to evaluate, reflect, decide, judge, etc. on our actions, intentions, opinion, etc. Thus, the relationship between personal identity and moral responsibility become clearer.

Conclusion

From the above discussions, we can see that first-person perspective378 is the underlying thread that binds the concept of self, personhood, agency, other minds, and moral responsibility. Without first-person perspective it will not be possible to know whether we are even conscious beings or not. We will not be able to reflect and evaluate our thoughts and desires in order to know whether we ought to be in such state of mind or not. Further, without first-person perspective a person will not be able to know another person. He/she will not be able to differentiate between himself/herself and the other person. It will be impossible to have any kind of moral or rational agent in such case. If one does not have a first-person perspective, it will be difficult to have any feeling of responsibility towards other persons. For example, let us try and imagine a society where the residents are devoid of first-person perspective. In such a society, there will not be any kind of deep relationship between persons.

378 Here, it is to note that first-person perspective encompasses “self-awareness”, “self-consciousness” as well as “subjectivity”.
Further, in such a society there will be no desire for improvement as no one has the capacity to evaluate and improve on their situations. There will be no desires to achieve, which will mean that such society will not develop in any sense. When it comes to morality, there will be no morals to follow as the capacity to feel guilty will be missing. There will be no paradigm to look up to; there will be no rule of law as there will be no sentiment to take care of. We can see that such society will not be in existence for long, even if it did in the first place. Thus, we can see the importance of first-person perspective in shaping the individual self that becomes a person due to it, also helps the person becomes a moral and rational agent. And ultimately shape the society at large by providing the required insight to forge ahead in all sphere of life. So, we can say that first-person perspective is the steering wheel behind the success of human beings. However, it will be interesting to go a bit further and ask – exactly what kinds of relationship exist between identity and moral responsibility.

Thus, we can say that our aim in this chapter was to look at the ethical “sense” of “what makes a person, a person”, without a strict metaphysical criterion of identity. However, it is not possible to cut-off the criterion of identity in its totality, as it provides the basis on which our quest is based. Further, we try to give the difficult distinction between self, person, and agent; a tentative view is put forth here so that we can have an ethical aspect as oppose to metaphysical argument alone. In short, self are conscious beings, persons are conscious of the fact that they are conscious, and agents are self-conscious as well as necessarily embodied. We try to put forth our knowledge of personhood from an ethical aspect by bringing in moral responsibility. The importance of society in shaping the formation of our subjectivity as well as person is put forth. The role of the other is important because persons learn to become a person from other persons. Also, subjectivity develops better when it experiences intersubjectivity. In this relationships, it emerge that the most important role is played by first-person perspective. It is the most pivotal thread that passed through the whole clothe of this work.

So, the role of society/other in the development of personal identity can best be given in the word of Atkins again,

Our identities are formed socially and communicatively. We each form our self understandings in relation to a community of interlocutors, either directly through
interpersonal dialogue or indirectly through the communicative networks implied in the meanings that constitute our languages. Understanding who a person is, then, requires coherence and continuity in the psychological, physical, social, cultural and historical aspects of a person’s life. Furthermore, this must be a coherence that can be grasped and endorsed in the first-person. I come to understand myself (and likewise, others understand who I am) as the subject of a certain life, for example, as someone who was born at a specific date and place into a certain family; who has lived at certain places in certain ways; who has particular physical and character traits, weakness and abilities, hopes and fears; who has acted and suffered in certain ways; and who enjoys or is denied certain social and political status. In other words, who a person is, is the named subject of a practical and conceptual complex of first, second and third-person perspectives which structure and unify a life grasped as it is lived.379

Thus, the above quote gives us the formation of a social agent and how a person is formed in our society clearly. Our identity is the result of an amalgamation of language, psychological, physical, cultural, social, historical aspects of a person’s life. A person’s first-person perspective about oneself stems from these aspects and influences our life in our everyday experiences. The role of communication is huge as it is through words that we learn and are taught from childhood. The meanings of a word are given by its historical usage which has been in use for centuries. The social, cultural and historical aspects of a person’s life need to cohere with each other in the formation of personal identity. In other words, a person is a complex subject with the first, second and third-person perspectives. Also, a person is able to understand the life it lived due to its subjectivity in its intersubjective relationship shared with other subjects.