CHAPTER – 2

SELF, PERSON AND I
There are two terms in the expression ‘personal identity’, i.e. ‘person’ and ‘identity’. Each term has a distinct notion and an established meaning in philosophy as well as in language. So to cover the entire realm of personal identity we have to explore both the terms separately. In the previous chapter we have discussed various problems on personal identity from different well known philosophical perspectives. At the same time we have mentioned the criteria related to each of these ideas of identity. So we have already explored different constitutive criteria for the identities of persons.

But to determine any criteria the nature and concept of person must be understood. For ‘criterion’ means some necessary conditions for being a person. Without analysing the nature of persons we cannot understand what the essential characteristics of persons are. For this reason we are going to discuss the concept of person at length in the present chapter.

Second, we have mentioned at the very beginning of the previous chapter that the problem of personal identity is peculiar in nature, and therefore receives a very special importance among all concepts of identity, because of the peculiarity of the term ‘person’. Hence it is undeniable that no philosophical discussion on personal identity is complete if it ignores the responsibility to explain in detail the notion and nature of persons.

In the present chapter we shall also discuss the related concepts of ‘self’ and ‘I’. I within quotes does not refer only to the word ‘I’, but the object whom ‘I’ refers to. It is sometimes claimed that ‘I’ is immune to any kind of reference-failure and only the object referred to by ‘I’ reveals the true nature of persons or selves.

It may be noted here that theorists of personal identity use the terms ‘person’, ‘self’ and ‘I’ almost synonymously. But they are synonymous only when viewed from first-person perspective. However, in general, in philosophical discourses there are subtle distinctions between these three. We shall take up this issue later.

2.1 The Concept of Self in Philosophy

There are several strands of related literature on self. Prominent contributors of this literature are Descartes, Hume, William James, and Strawson. In this section we shall discuss their views in a nutshell.
In Meditations II, Descartes\(^1\) introduced the method of doubt by which he doubted everything including his senses and body and came to the conclusion that he could not doubt himself and his own existences. The conclusion is the first principle of philosophy, which according to Descartes, is clear and distinct and certain, and that is, “I think, therefore, I am”. He said, “So that after having reflected well and carefully examined all things, we must come to the definite conclusion that this proposition: I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time that I pronounce it, or that I mentally conceive it.”\(^2\) According to Descartes, none of the things that are related to one’s body are essential properties of oneself. Only thinking is the essential nature of oneself. He said, “I am, I exist, that is certain. But how often? Just when I think; for it might possibly be the case if I ceased entirely to think, that I should likewise cease altogether to exist [...] I am however a real thing and really exist; but what thing? I have answered: a thing which thinks [...] What is a thing which thinks? It is a thing which doubts, understands [conceives], affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels.”\(^3\) Clearly, according to Descartes, thinking is the essential core of oneself. Besides thinking, other mental faculties like doubting, understanding also prove the same thing. For example, by means of the faculty of imagination we can say that, “I am, I exist that is certain, but how often? Just when I imagine.” It seems that Descartes takes thinking in a broader way, and all types of mental states like belief, attention, consciousness, imagination etc. are nothing but modes of thinking. Particularly, according to Descartes, a self is a substance whose essential property is thinking.

Clearly according to Descartes, the notion and nature of self is inseparably linked with the notion of ‘I’. I am myself, a thinking thing and something that cannot be equated with the notion of body. Though my body is an object of direct observation, and no doubt I have a clear knowledge of it, but my body cannot be identical with myself. For Descartes body and self are two distinct substances with different properties and it is logically possible that one can exist in complete isolation of the other. The essential property of a body is extension, whereas the essential property of

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\(^{2}\) Ibid., 150.

\(^{3}\) Ibid., 151-153.
self is thinking. Each and every utterance of ‘I’ implies that I exist, and I am a thinking being.

William James⁴, another well-known philosopher and psychologist, speaks about a “widest possible sense” of self. He said that “a man’s Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account. All these things give him the same emotion [...] not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all.”⁵ James’ view is just the contrary to Descartes’, since Descartes’ self only has some mental properties, which are distinct from physical properties; while James’ self has all mental-physical-social properties that I feel as mine, and if I lose any one of these properties, a part of myself will cease to exist.

The history, that is, the totality of the self in this widest sense, according to James, can be divided into three parts: its constituents, the feelings and emotions they arouse – that is, self-feelings and the actions which they prompt – self-seeking and self-preservation. Again, the constituents of the self may be divided into two classes, those which make up respectively 1.The material self; 2.The social self; 3.The spiritual self; and 4.The Pure Ego.

James uses the term ‘material self’ in a broad sense. In cause-effect relation material cause are those out of which the effect is constructed. According to James, material selves are not only those that construct selves, but also those which matters for a self. For example, though the body is the innermost part of the material self, but our clothes, houses, family, wealth etc. are also part of it.

A man’s social self is the recognition which he gets from his friends, families, and acquaintances. A man can have many social selves which are varied in degrees as there are individuals who recognise him and carry an image of him in their minds. That is to say, a man’s social self against his enemy is distinct from his social self against his friends, and in front of his family. He generally shows a different side of himself to each different individual or groups. Fame and honour are also part of a

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⁵ Ibid., 291-292.
man’s social selves. James comments, “A layman may abandon a city infected with cholera; but a priest or a doctor would think such an act incompatible with his honour.”

Compared to the other two selves – the material and the social, spiritual selves are the most intimate part of the self. Spiritual self is distinct from ‘Pure Ego’. James describes, “By the Spiritual Self, so far as it belongs to the Empirical Me, I mean a man’s inner or subjective being, his psychic faculties or dispositions, taken concretely; not the bare principle of personal Unity, or ‘pure’ Ego [..]” These psychic faculties cause self-satisfaction of a pure nature. For example, when we think of our ability to reason, or argue, we feel this self-satisfaction.

Spiritual self can be divided into faculties that are related with consciousness. “[...] the spiritual self in us will be either the entire stream of our personal consciousness, or the present ‘segment’ or ‘section’ of that stream, [...]” This stream of consciousness or the present segment of consciousness exists in time and have “unity after its own peculiar kind”. According to this view, thinking about spiritual self is a reflective process that points to our subjective nature to think ourselves as thinkers. Identification of ourselves with our thoughts, according to James, though in some respects a rather momentous and mysterious operation, but as a matter of fact happens. When we think of ourselves we identify ourselves with our thinking, and at each moment of our thinking, we exist.

James’ view of spiritual self is very close to the Cartesian concept of ‘I’, for James explains the notion of spiritual self in terms of consciousness and thinking. Contrary to Descartes, he criticizes the notion of Pure Ego as something substantial, and something that owns experiences. In Cartesian view it is supposed that every experience must have an owner, and the soul or Ego (which is an independent substance) is the owner of many simultaneous and successive experiences, that are said to belong to a self. James suggests that the ownership can be said to belong to the experiences themselves, instead of having to depend on the soul. Experiences are continuous, and every successor self deduces its consciousness (of some experiences)

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6 Ibid., 295.
7 Ibid., 296.
8 Ibid., 296.
from its predecessor self, or the predecessor self transmits its consciousness to its successor self. James describes this process of owning or adopting of experiences by successive selves as the process of “appropriation”. James also explains the notion of personal identity by this process of “appropriation”.

Now we should pay attention to some distinctive theories of self propagated by contemporary philosophers. From phenomenalist point of view any mental state (i.e. states of belief, attention etc.) must be a conscious state if it is directly or indirectly related to thinking. This is a broader construal of the term consciousness. According to the narrow concept of consciousness our conscious states are restricted to those that we think about, or aware of, or attend to or form belief about. The wider consciousness includes all the objects of my experiences irrespective of whether we notice these objects or not. All background experiences are constituent parts of our current total state of experiences or they are constituent part of my broader consciousness. From the phenomenal perspective our consciousnesses are unified at any given time. This is also known as the synchronic unity of consciousness. Particularly our bodily sensations are related with our visual, auditory and tactile experiences and these experiences occur together within our overall state of consciousness at any given time. And this togetherness is itself experienced. This experiential togetherness is called ‘co-consciousness.’

According to certain phenomenalist views selves cannot exist while unconscious and cannot persist through periods of unconsciousness. This view emphasizes on the “essentially conscious self.” Another view regarding self and consciousness emphasizes on “the potentially conscious self.” This view holds that “a self is a thing whose nature it is to be capable of being conscious; a self has the capacity for consciousness at every moment at which it exists, and it possesses this capacity essentially. A self can lose consciousness provided it retains the potential to be conscious.”

If ‘consciousness’ means potential consciousness, not necessarily consciousness at every moment, then Descartes’ idea of ‘thinking’ seems another name for consciousness, for Descartes and even James never said that thinking implies

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conscious thinking at every moment of one’s life. The phenomenal approach to the self therefore includes most of the aspects of Cartesian concept of mind or self, James’ concept of the spiritual self, and the notion of personal identity (as self introspects itself as an owner of experience, described below).

From the above discussion it follows that there are some essential aspects of the notion of self. A self is a subject of experience in the sense that it is something to which experiential states (and normally dispositional mental states, like desires) are attributable. This is the owner-of-experiences aspect of the notion of the self.

The second aspect of selfhood or being a self is that the self must in some way be aware of itself. This aspect, namely a self is necessarily capable of perceiving itself, is known as the phenomenal aspect of the self. It is this aspect which Hume had in mind when he wrote that there were philosophers “who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF.”

The third aspect of self is the introspective aspect. Introspection means inner perception, that is, perception of mental states, such as, pleasure, pain etc. But since mental states should have an owner or a subject, therefore effectively through introspection, a self is aware of itself as an owner of experiences. A self attributes experiences to itself, it can think of itself as seeing a cat, as thinking that the cat is approaching. Introspective aspect presupposes the second, i.e., phenomenal aspect and phenomenal aspect is a necessary condition for introspection of our experiential states. But perception of oneself is not introspection. Being aware of oneself as a subject or owner of experiential states is different from perception of oneself as an object of introspection. Briefly, these three aspects point out that, “A self, then, is something that (1) owns or has experiences [...], that (2) perceives itself, or enters into the content of some of its experiential states, and that (3) is aware of itself as something of which (1) is true.”

Another important theory of self is called the narrativity thesis. According to this thesis human beings typically see or experience their lives as a narrative or story of

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some sort, or at least as a collection of stories, and whenever they speak of
themselves they always try to form a story. Galen Strawson\textsuperscript{12} called this the
‘psychological narrativity thesis’, and it is a straightforwardly empirical, descriptive
thesis about the way ordinary human beings actually experience their lives. The
psychological narrativity thesis is often tied with a normative thesis which Strawson
calls the ‘ethical narrativity thesis’. Ethical thesis states that experiencing or
conceiving one’s life as a narrative is a good thing; a richly narrative outlook is
essential to a well-lived life, to true or full personhood.

Strawson quotes some eminent philosophers and psychologists to demonstrate what
narrativity is. For example, in Sartre’s novel \textit{La Nausée}, Roquentin (one of the
characters) said, “a man is always a teller of stories, his lives surrounded by his own
stories and those of other people, he sees everything that happens to him \textit{in terms}
of these stories and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it.”\textsuperscript{13}

Strawson also cites Dan Dennett. Dennett argues that, “we are all virtuoso novelists,
who find ourselves engaged in all sorts of behaviour, and we always try to put the
best ‘faces’ on it we can. We try to make all of our material cohere into a single good
story, and that story is our autobiography, the chief fictional character all the centre
of that autobiography is one’s self.”\textsuperscript{14} It appears that a general tendency of human
beings is narrate his life in the form of a story.

Strawson criticizes the narrativity approach. To understand his actual position we
must realize the distinction between ‘diachronic self-experience’ and ‘episodic self-
experience’ as described by Strawson. The distinction can be well understood if we
notice the fact that people tend to think of themselves as things whose persistence
conditions are not obviously the same as the persistence conditions of a human being
considered as a whole (that is, a combination of brain-body and mind). Now the
basic form of diachronic self-experience is that:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Galen Strawson, “Against Narrativity”, in Galen Strawson ed. \textit{The Self?}, (Oxford: 
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Jean Paul Sartre, \textit{La Nausée}, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions
Publishing Corp.,1964), 64.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Daniel Dennett, “Why Everyone is a Novelist”, in \textit{Times Literary Supplement}, 16-22, 
\end{itemize}
“[D] one naturally figures oneself, considered as a self, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future – something that has relatively long-term diachronic continuity, something that persists over a long stretch of time, perhaps for life.” 15  Diachronic people are those who have a long term continuity from past to future, and who has a special concern about their life in past, present and in future. According to Strawson, many people are by nature Diachronic and many who are Diachronic are also narrative in their outlook on life. Clearly a self is diachronic if it is aware of itself as something continuous or persistent from past to future.

On the other hand the basic form of episodic self-experience is that:

“(E) one does not figure oneself, considered as a self, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future. One has little or no sense that the self that one is was there in the (further) past and will be there in the future, although one is perfectly well aware that one has long-term continuity considered as a whole human being. Episodics are likely to have no particular tendency to see their lives in Narrative terms.”16

Clearly, the distinction between diachronics and episodics lies in the degree of concern towards life, and in the viewpoint of life. Diachronics are more serious or concerned towards life, and try to live their lives in the form of a story, whereas episodics do not possess that kind of interest towards life.

It is true by definition that if someone is diachronic, he or she is not episodic and if someone is episodic he or she is not narrative. It may be supposed that being diachronic is at least necessary for being narrative. Strawson argues in favour of episodic self-experience and rejects both psychological and ethical narrativity thesis. He finds himself relatively episodic, for he knows that he has a past, and can remember some of his past experiences “from the inside”, yet he has absolutely no sense of his life as a narrative. That is, he has no interest to describe his life or any of his experiences in the form of a story or narration. Neither has he had any great or special interests in his past, nor does he have a great deal of concern for his future.

16 Ibid., 65.
According to Strawson, ‘I’ represents “that which I now experience myself to be when I’m apprehending myself specifically as an inner mental presence or self. ‘I’ comes with a large family of cognate forms – ‘me’, ‘my’, ‘you’, ‘oneself’, ‘themselves’, and so on. The metaphysical presumption built into these terms is that they succeed in making genuine reference to an inner mental something that is reasonably called a ‘self’.”17 A person, no matter whether he is a diachronic or an episodic, refers to himself by the term ‘I’ or ‘me’. These words indicate something mental, and self is that inner, mental something.

At present we need not elaborate any more on Strawson’s position of episodic self-experience. We have mentioned Strawson’s views in connection with different theories of the self. In the following sections we shall explore the prominent views on the concepts of person and ‘I’, and observe that they are but different modes of representations of the theories of self discussed above.

2.2 The Concept of Person in Philosophy

Let us begin with the etymological meaning of the term ‘person’, and how the term is used in different fields of language. The word ‘person’ is originally derived from old French ‘personne’ which was derived from Latin ‘persona’ means actor’s mask, character in a play. “It has been suggested, in turn, that persona is a substantive derived from the participle ‘per-sonando’ (‘sounding through’), although the etymology has been challenged as being quantitatively impossible in Latin.”18 In ancient times, it seems, the term ‘person’ was used as synonymous with ‘role’ or ‘part’ played in theatre.

As a noun the term ‘person’ ordinarily means a human being who is regarded as an individual. Strikingly, when used as a noun ‘person’ sometimes refers to an individual’s body. For example, “I would have publicity photographs on my person

17 Ibid., 68.
Notably, persons are not viewed as diachronic or episodic, for it is believed that each and every person has a special concern for his life.

From the standpoint of the ancient legal tradition slaves were not regarded as persons since a slave had no right in the eyes of the law. Law excludes children and idiots as legal persons. On the other hand every legal person is not a human being. For example, a corporation is considered to be a juridical person.

According to Christian theology, each of the three modes of being of God is a person namely the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, who together constitute the Trinity.

In philosophy the term ‘person’ is associated with some major ideas. Shoemaker comments, “Of course, I am not only a person. I am also an American, a mammal, a vertebrate, and a male, to mention just a few of the things I can truly be said to be. But the philosopher who asks, ‘What am I?’ is not looking for an answer of the sort ‘Well, you are a philosopher, a taxpayer, an amateur musician, and many other things.’ He wants to know, not what things he happens to be, but what he is essentially. We need to consider why the question ‘What am I?’ is commonly regarded as equivalent to the question ‘What is a person?’ in a way in which it is not equivalent to, for example, the question, ‘What is a vertebrate?’

In philosophy it is generally held that a person is a mental being. But every mental being is not a person. Chimpanzees are (supposedly) mental beings but they are not persons. Persons have sensations (pains and pleasure), intentions (belief, desire) and have a distinct mental structure. They possess sophisticated self-reflective mental states, i.e. they are self-conscious mental beings. The term ‘person’ is a generic term like ‘animal’, ‘vertebrate’, ‘mammal’ etc. But it is characteristically distinct from all other terms even from the term ‘man’ and from the term ‘human being’.

In philosophy a very general definition of person is,

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22 Though A. J. Ayer in his famous article “The Concept of A Person” does not distinguish persons from human beings. For him every individual being is a person. Every person has
“(Person is) a complex unity of consciousness, which identifies itself with its past self in memory, determines itself by its freedom, is purposive and value seeking, private yet communicating and potentially rational.”23

In the history of personal identity the most famous and primitive definition of person was given by John Locke. We have mentioned in the previous chapter that ‘person’ for Locke is a concept which is distinct from other related concepts like ‘man’ and ‘human beings’. “Person (according to Locke) stands for;... a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking...”24 We have also mentioned that the essential qualities for being a person, according to Locke, are thinking, self-awareness and consciousness of the past (i.e. memory) and present.

Hume, the founder of perception-bundle theory suggested that, terms such as ‘self’, ‘person’, ‘mind’ refer to collection of perceptions or sense-contents. Self is a collection or a bundle of perceived internal sense-contents that are linked to each other by the relation of causation and resemblance. The idea of ‘self’ is an empirical idea of such a bundle, though it is illusory. According to Hume, no perceptions can be found corresponding to the idea of ‘mind’ or ‘self’ and hence no such thing can have an independent and substantial existence. Only perceptions exist, and ‘self’ or ‘person’ or ‘mind’ is a conglomeration of momentary perceptions (i.e. perceptions of sensations, mental states, images etc.).

It seems that almost all the philosophical definitions of person attach importance to the psychological aspect. Most of the definitions hold that a person can identify itself with itself by the faculty of consciousness.25 Every person is a conscious individual. The term ‘conscious individual’, however, does not imply that every person is both physical properties and various forms of consciousness. Consciousness is not something extraordinary for him, rather every mental state entails being conscious.

25An widest application is possible of the term ‘consciousness’. It can include all the faculties of mind. Attention, memory, imagination, learning, sensation, perception, understanding etc. All these are forms of consciousness.
conscious or aware of everything existing under the sun. It only implies that a person is conscious of his own existence through time and probably also of his surroundings and of the existence of other beings.

According to some philosophers the concept underlying the term ‘person’ is peculiar. The main reason behind this peculiarity is the belief that persons have minds and they are conscious beings. Consciousness is a mental faculty and is a defining characteristic of persons. Every person is conscious of his own identity. That is, he is conscious of his past experiences and actions and knows with utmost certainty that he is the person who did those actions or had those experiences. But there is no direct way to know whether other persons, who are also conscious individuals and are aware of their own identities, exist. This last point explains the fact that the way in which a person can know himself is different from the way in which he learns about others.

The last paragraph is important for two reasons. First, from the definitions of person it follows that these definitions are mainly first-personal. Second, the definitions indicate that persons are self-conscious. The statement, ‘I am thinking about this book’ is a first-person psychological statement, which implies while thinking about a book a person is conscious about two things: the book and the ‘I’.

Sydney Shoemaker pointed out another special characteristic of persons. In his view, only a person can assert something as true or false. An assertion like ‘I am a person’ is distinct from the mere utterance ‘I am a mammal’. It is contingently true that I am also a mammal, while ‘I’ necessarily refers to a person (though the person may not know this; as, for instance, in fables, where animals are ascribed personhood). It is to be noted that, though first articulated by Shoemaker, almost all the anti-empiricist philosophers share this view.

Some questions may arise here. If I am contingently an Indian and also a female then what I necessarily am? Does the statement ‘I am a person’ explain everything that I want to know about myself? Does the proposition ‘I am a person’ explain what kind of an object I am? The obvious answer is ‘no’. There is something more that I want to know about myself, and that is my essence. These questions invite the discussion of substance in the discourse of personal identity. The proposition ‘I am a person’ is
not self-explanatory because it does not describe what kind of object a person is or what the essential nature of that object is.

The contextual significance of the question of substance can be demonstrated in another way. Till now we have been trying to portray the notion of a person as something conscious. The corporeal characteristics of persons were ignored. It may appear that all my physical characteristics are contingently linked with myself, that is, I can conceive myself (at least logically) as something distinct from my body. But without the reference of space and time any analysis of identity of an object is not complete. The spatio-temporal continuity of a person can be understood only in terms of his body, for physical body and spatio-temporal continuity are inseparable.

If a conceptual distinction is made between the first person and the other (i.e., third-person) then the discourse of person involves reference to the body. We can find this to be true where the subject of the first-person statement is not oneself. To explain, if I hear someone saying, ‘I have a toothache’ and I know that I am not the speaker, then of course the utterance comes from another person whom I can identify by means of his body (if and only if there is no other person, i.e. a third one, who is uttering this statement at the same time and who is also identifiable by means of his body).26

Apart from providing the necessary spatio-temporal continuity body serves another purpose. The concept of the identities of persons is closely linked with the concept of the identities of substances. Western philosophy accepts mainly two kinds of substances: physical and mental. Body is generally known as a physical substance, whereas mind or self is generally known as mental substances. Therefore body plays an important role in analysing the essential or substantial characteristics of a person.

In the present section our purpose is to analyse the notion of persons in the light of different theories. From Russell’s discussion it follows that the term ‘self’ is synonymous to the term ‘person’. Second, Russell emphasizes on the notion of first-

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26 Identification of other persons do not involve only the reference to body. The memory, character and personality traits are also important, as has been discussed in the previous chapter.
person. In *The Problems of Philosophy*, Russell makes a sharp distinction between two kinds of objects. The first kind is known by acquaintance and the second by description. Russell comments,

“We shall say that we have *acquaintance* with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths. Thus in the presence of my table I am acquainted with the sense-data that make up the appearance of my table – its colour, shape, hardness, smoothness, etc.; [...] Thus the sense-data which make up the appearance of my table are things with which I have acquaintance, things immediately known to me just as they are. [...] The table is ‘the physical object which causes such-and-such sense-data’. This describes the table by means of sense-data. In order to know anything at all about the table, [...] we must know that ‘such-and-such sense-data are caused by a physical object’ [...] In such a case, we say that our knowledge of the object is knowledge by description.”

Also,

“[...] we know the truth ‘I am acquainted with this sense-datum’. It is hard to see how we could know this truth, or even understand what is meant by it, unless we were acquainted with something which we call ‘I’.”

From the above account it follows that knowledge by acquaintance is the knowledge of the sense-data caused by various external or internal objects. The knowledge of the objects which are responsible for various sense-data is knowledge by description. Knowledge by acquaintance is first-personal direct knowledge of various sensations or sense-data. My knowledge about my own experiences, sensations etc. are knowledge by acquaintance, for I can directly know all these sensations without the intermediary of any process of inference. Also, when I assert ‘I see a red colour,’ I know that it is *me* who is seeing a red colour. Probably this is the reason behind Russell’s argument that through the knowledge by acquaintance we directly get acquainted with something which we call ‘myself’ or ‘I’. On the contrary, when I know something that is not an object of my sense-data, but causes sense-data, my

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29 Ibid., 28.
knowledge of that object is the knowledge by descriptions. Likewise, my knowledge of other persons (or third-persons), or knowledge of any physical objects are knowledge by description for they are the source of some of my sense-data.

Clearly in *Problems of Philosophy* Russell opines that self-knowledge is possible; otherwise the meaning of the proposition ‘I am acquainted with this sense-datum’ could not be understood. ‘I’ refers to the self of the self-referrer or whoever utters the sentence ‘I am acquainted with this sense-datum’. To have a knowledge by acquaintance, someone should also be acquainted with his or her self.

From Russell’s arguments, it follows that similar to the sense-data of a red colour the person or the self who experiences those sense-data is also an object of direct acquaintance. But Russell did not make it clear how a person could at the same time get acquainted with two distinct things – the object of knowledge and the knower. This may be the reason why in *Analysis of Mind* Russell ceased to hold the said position. There he claimed that a “person is not an ingredient in the single thought: he is rather constituted by relations of the thoughts to each other and to the body.”

He denied the notion of person or self as a subject of the act of thinking. He did this by explaining Meinong’s view about the three elements involved in the thought of an object. These three elements are the act, the content and the object. Whatever I think, whether I think of Smith or Brown, my act of thinking would remain the same. The content of my thought is the particular event that is happening in my mind which makes the character of that thought as contrasted with other thoughts. For example, when I think of Smith, the character of the event happening in my mind is different from when I think of Brown. And finally, the object is another essential part of thinking. The object of a thought may be something of present, past or future, may be physical or mental, may be abstract or even imaginary. The object may exist without the thought but not vice versa.

Russell criticises the notion of self or person as something that does the act of thinking. According to him, the term ‘thinking’ suggests that there must be

something that does the act of thinking, since, “It is supposed that thoughts cannot just come and go, but need a person to think them”\textsuperscript{32} and person is that something that does the act of thinking. What Russell wants to deny particularly is this notion of person as subject of thinking, or as unitary beings; although he does not deny the notion of person altogether. Let us elaborate the matter. In \textit{Problems of Philosophy} Russell did not explicitly mention what he understands by the word ‘I’. He only said that by means of acquaintance we directly get acquainted with something which we call ‘I’. This ‘I’ is nothing but the self or the person. Russell claimed that the word ‘I’ in “I think so-and-so” suggested that thinking was the act of a person. In \textit{Analysis of Mind} he denies that there is something known as self or as person that performs the act of thinking. Persons are constituted by relations of thoughts to each other and to the body. Obviously, in that case it would be impossible to get acquainted with persons. It appears that in Russell’s entire philosophy there are two opposite notions of persons: one as a single unitary being that can only be known by acquaintance and the other as a bundle of interrelated thoughts or perceptions. Russell first admitted that direct knowledge of self was possible by acquaintance but later denied that there were entities like selves. Russell observed “I see no reason to suppose that ‘the knower for different items is one and the same’.”\textsuperscript{33}

Earlier Russell argued that along with sense-data the object referred to by ‘I’ was also known by direct acquaintance, but later he reasoned that only thoughts were knowable, but not ‘I’. One thing should be noted here. Although in his later writings Russell did not deny knowledge by acquaintance altogether, he, however, denied the notion of self or person as something substantial. When we say that a person is a single unitary being and does the act of thinking we, in effect, admit that a person is a substance.

Till now, what we have learnt about persons may be summarized in the following way. First, the term ‘person’ mainly refers to a kind of entity having some psychological characteristics. Second, every person is spatio-temporally continuous, and the spatio-temporal continuity of a person can only be understood by means of his body. Third, according to certain views, person is a substance and the term

\textsuperscript{32} Russell, “Recent Criticisms of ‘Consciousness’,” 18.

‘person’ refers to some sort of immaterial entity that constitutes person as a single unitary being. Fourth, some philosophers even think that persons are bundles of perceptions, but nothing substantial.

Following Lichtenberg, Russell argues that we should not say ‘I think’; rather ‘it thinks in me’. It is absurd to infer ‘something is thinking’ from ‘I am thinking’; as it is absurd to infer ‘something is raining’ from ‘it is raining’. It may be objected that ‘it thinks in me’ is actually nothing but reintroducing the possible object of knowledge. But according to Russell ‘it thinks in me’ is similar to ‘it rains here’. To use the term ‘here’ meaningfully we do not need to know something by acquaintance. Similarly, to use the expression ‘in me’ meaningfully one does not need to know something by acquaintance.

Sometimes this kind of theory (especially where Russell wants to eliminate ‘I’ as an subject of direct-knowledge) is known as the no-ownership theory of self. This theory eliminates the notions of ‘person’, ‘self’, ‘I’ or ‘Ego’ as something that non-transferrably own states of experiences. According to this interpretation, it is a matter of linguistic illusion that there must be something to which we ascribe all our experiences. Rather, our experiences could be ascribed to a certain body in a contingent sense of ownership. In this connection, we may remember that William James denied the notion of Pure Ego as something that owns mental states.

P. F. Strawson holds something contrary to the no-ownership theory. In his famous article “Persons” he said that we generally ascribe to ourselves certain

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34 According to Ayer the no-ownership theory is a hybrid theory. This theory does not accept any owner of experiences except the body, the states of which are causally related to particular experiences. He thinks that to call this theory ‘no-ownership’ is misleading, since this theory does not intend to hold that experiences are unowned. Most probably the reason behind calling it no-ownership is the fact that this theory does not guarantee that experiences are private property. For, according to this theory, it is a contingent fact that experiences are causally linked to the body of its owner.


36 Strawson introduced the term ‘no ownership theory’ to explain the views of Wittgenstein with respect to person. We find that this view is similar to Russell’s view in *The Analysis of Mind*. Strawson first invokes the concept of person as a “largely technical concept”. The concept helps us to better understand various issues related to mind-body problem and “the framework in which we think of ourselves and others” [D. W.Hamlyn, *Metaphysics* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985), 193]. Other philosophers, including Locke,
physical characteristics (such as height, weight, location etc.) which are ascribable to other material bodies also. At the same time we ascribe to ourselves states of consciousness, experiences which we would not “dream of” ascribing to any material bodies. Strawson’s concept of person is not derivative, that is, the concept of person is not analysable into simpler elements. The concept of person is primitive. In his book *Individuals*, Strawson raises two questions which are for him central to his thesis. First, “Why are one’s states of consciousness ascribed to anything at all?” and second, “Why are they ascribed to the very same thing as certain corporeal characteristics, certain physical situation etc.?"\(^{37}\)

Strawson thinks that the answer of the above questions can be found in the concept of ‘person’, not in the concept of body. Several bodies may logically come into contact with a subject of experience, but empirically there is only one (this body) which plays a unique causal position in respect of the experiences. The uniqueness of *this* body, however, cannot provide an answer at all to any of these two central questions but only the concept of person can, as explained below.

In the literature on personal identity, it has been observed that according to most of the prominent theories, persons are essentially different from physical body, with which persons are actually attached to. On the contrary, persons, according to Strawson, are entities upon which both physical and experiential properties are applicable. As he claims, “what I mean by the concept of a person is the concept of a type of entity such that *both* predicates ascribing states of consciousness *and* predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation &c. are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type.”\(^{38}\)

The concept of person is primitive in the sense that the concept is neither reducible to the concept of Pure Ego\(^{39}\) nor reducible to material body. Most probably the reason behind this kind of assertion is to criticize Cartesian dualism and no-ownership theory. We have already discussed both theories. To repeat, according to the no-

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\(^{37}\) Strawson, *Individuals*, 90.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 101-102.

\(^{39}\) Pure ego owns mental states nontransferrably.
ownership theory, the word ‘I’ as used in first-person psychological statement does not point to any subject that owns mental states. In this view, it is a misconception, and just a contingent fact that mental states are owned by something. On the other hand, Cartesian dualism holds that states of consciousness are ascribable only to and thus owned only by minds, while bodily characteristics have a similar relation to something different. Strawson claims that both theories are unacceptable.

Strawson criticizes the no-ownership theory as incoherent, for, it defeats itself. According to this theory it is a contingent proposition that for any given person all his experiences are dependent upon the state of his body. The question arises how and by which principle experiences are identified. If the reply is that the experiences that are causally dependent on the state of this body are my experiences then the proposition that “all my experiences are causally dependent upon the state of this body” becomes analytic and not contingent. If a theory does not consistently maintain the character of its main premise then that theory should be rejected.

On the other hand the Cartesian dualistic theory is unacceptable as it renders body and mind as basic particular. According to Strawson the notion of person is more basic compared to body and mind or physical states and states of consciousness. Person is a basic particular and therefore primitive. According to Ayer, Strawson rejects dualism, for according to him consciousness cannot exist as independent or as a primary concept.

Secondly, according to dualism experiences are not identical with their related physical events or physical manifestations. We have direct knowledge of our own experiences, whereas our knowledge about the experiences of others are merely inferences based on their physical manifestations. These inferences are inductive. Strawson admits that the reason for ascribing experiences to oneself and the reason of ascribing experiences to others are different but denies that in case of others all reasons are based on inductive inference. For the criterion on which we rely to ascribe experiences to others is ‘logically adequate’. To understand the nature of logical adequacy it is necessary to understand the concept of ‘P-predicates.’ 40 Our ascription of experiences to ourselves are not based on observation and we do not need any criteria to ascribe experiences to ourselves. This last point is very

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40 P-predicates are a very important feature of Strawson’s theory of person.
significant for our entire discussion. Briefly, we shall try to show that if someone does not require any criteria to ascribe experiences to oneself, one does not require any criteria for self-identity. We shall devote our conclusive chapter to this issue. Now we should return to Strawson’s theory of person.

The concept of person is primitive because it explains why states of consciousness should be ascribed at all. For Strawson, “a necessary condition of states of consciousness being ascribed at all is that they should be ascribed to the very same thing as certain corporeal characteristics, a certain physical situation &c. That is to say, states of consciousness cannot be ascribed at all, unless they were ascribed to persons[...]”41 Here ‘person’ means oneself as well as the other, i.e. individual entities of the same logical type. The statement “states of consciousness cannot be ascribed at all unless they were ascribed to persons” means that the necessary precondition of ascribing states of consciousness to oneself is to be able to ascribe them to others.42 The sense in which I ascribe states of consciousness to myself is the same in which I ascribe states of consciousness to others. The possibility of ascribing states of consciousness to others is logical. The ascription of states of consciousness as predicates43 is correlative to a range of distinguishable individuals such that to each individual these predicates can significantly (but not necessarily truly) be ascribed. One can identify others as subjects of experience if and only if others are related to their identifiable bodies in such a way as I am related to my body (this body). Persons (I and others) constitute a distinct category as it ‘owns’ both states of consciousness and corporeal characteristics. This category is therefore neither

41 Ibid., 102.
42 One thing should be noted here. Strawson’s concept of person is much wider than Lockean concept of person and other established concepts. For, he repeatedly speaks of oneself and others as persons. There is nothing imaginary in the concept of person as pictured by Strawson. Rather persons are ordinary human beings like us. I am a person (as oneself). Strawson is a person (as other). Hamlyn Comments, “No doubt, on Strawson’s concept of a person as well as on others, embodied persons are the norm.”(Hamlyn, Metaphysics, 199.) Clearly Strawson does not distinguish the concept of person from the concept of man as Locke does. The only thing that draws attention in Strawson’s theory is that persons are primitive but not substantial.
43 For all conscious states belong to P-predicates, and corporeal characteristics belong to M-predicates.
reducible to states of consciousness nor reducible to body, since both presuppose persons. In that sense persons are primitive.44

One can ascribe states of consciousness to others on the basis of some observable physical conditions of others. The important thing here is that to include embodied human beings as persons. Strawson brings the notion of ‘other’ in his theory of individuals. For states of consciousness and indeed all P-predicates are constituted by a wide range of psychological predicates that are and only are ascribable to persons. But as mind-body theories conceive, psychological properties are accessible only to the person himself or the first-person. The only way to know that other embodied human beings also possess psychological properties and hence they are also persons, is to observe their outward physical behaviours that mirror their conscious states. These physical behaviours or physical conditions are, according to Strawson, constitutes in “some sense logically adequate kinds of criteria” for identifying others as persons; otherwise one could not ascribe states of consciousness to others at all. That is to say one must have logically adequate criteria to ascribe states of consciousness to others. Unless these criteria were logically adequate, there would be sufficient reason to doubt whether there were other persons apart from oneself.

Till now the picture is not clear enough. The problem for Strawson was ‘why states of consciousness should be ascribed to anything at all?’ and for him the answer is states of consciousness cannot be ascribed at all unless they were ascribed to persons. The reason behind this kind of thinking may be that, for Strawson, pure consciousness cannot exist as an independent or as a primary concept. The term ‘states of consciousness’ implies states of something and that something for Strawson is person. No material body could have states of consciousness and it is hardly a truth that other animals possess states of consciousness. To repeat, consciousness cannot exist independently, therefore if there is consciousness or states of consciousness, then it must be ascribed to something. And that something is none other than person. Similarly physical or corporeal states are secondary with respect to persons. Both physical or corporeal states and states of consciousness presuppose the

44 I owe this idea to Hamlyn’s Metaphysics, 193-201.
notion of person. In that sense the concept of person is primitive and both kinds of
states are secondary.

Persons consist of two kinds of predicates, \( M \)-predicates and \( P \)-predicates. \( M \)-
predicates are ascribed only to material bodies to which “we would not dream of
applying predicates ascribing states of consciousness.”\(^{45}\) Examples of \( M \)-predicates
are: ‘weighs 10 stone’, ‘is in the drawing room’ etc. All other predicates that can be
ascribed to persons are \( P \)-predicates, such as, ‘is smiling’, ‘is in pain’ ‘is going for a
walk’ etc. There can be various \( P \)-predicates. A very important character of all \( P \)-
predicates is that it individuates different individuals (having both \( M \) and \( P \)-
predicates) of the same logical type. To ascribe \( P \)-predicates to others one must have
logically adequate criteria that depends on the observation of others’ behaviours.
There are some other classes of \( P \)-predicates in which one has an entirely adequate
basis for ascribing a \( P \)-predicate to oneself, and yet in which this basis is quite
distinct from those on which one ascribes the predicate to others. Feeling pain or
ascription of pain to oneself is something that is entirely independent of any criteria
on the strength of which one ascribes \( P \)-predicates to others. It is an essential
characteristic of all \( P \)-predicates that they are both self-ascribable and other
ascribable. One ascribes \( P \)-predicates to oneself without applying any observational
criteria or “independently of observation of subject” (i.e. oneself). Whereas one
ascribes \( P \)-predicates to others on the basis of the observation of the subject and at
the same time one “must see every other as a self-ascriber”.

To illustrate his point, Strawson cites a particular mental state which falls under a
certain class of \( P \)-predicates and that is depression. If a person \( X \) has depression then
\( X \) feels his depression but does not observe, while, other persons observe \( X \)’s
depression but do not feel it. To refuse to accept this kind of thinking is to refuse the
structure of language in which we talk about the mental state of depression.
Similarly, it is not possible to have only one aspect of \( P \)-predicates. Both aspects are
important to draw an adequate picture of \( P \)-predicates.

Strawson’s theory of person and predicate reminds one of the theory of substance
and attributes or substance and modes. His theory of persons as primitive brings up
the concept of substance as independent and \textit{causa sui}, though Strawson is silent on

\(^{45}\) Strawson, \textit{Individual}, 104.
this matter. Second, Strawson criticizes the no-ownership theory and dualistic theory, and from Strawson’s theory it does not imply that a person comprises bundles of experiences. His theory obscures the nature of persons, since the claim that persons are primitive does not throw any light on our understanding of what kind of object a person is. Third, if a person can ascribe states of consciousness to oneself then he should also be conscious about the fact that these states of consciousness are his own and he is a person. From Strawson’s theory it does not clearly follow whether a person ascribes his states of consciousness to himself, that is, whether a person knows his own identity.

Ayer in his famous book, *The Concept of A Person* elaborately explains and criticizes Strawson’s view regarding the ascription of personhood (that is, ascription of experiences or *P*-predicates) to others on the basis of logically adequate criteria. If we ascribe experiences to others on the basis of their outward physical behaviour, no doubt there is some sort of relationship between these two, that is, between the experiences and its corresponding external behaviour. Specifically if experiences were not somehow related to their physical manifestations then one (i.e. physical manifestations) could not be the indicator of the other (i.e. experiences in question). Ayer argues that the sign-significance relation is neither that of identity, nor is logically distinct. There must be some sort of one-way entailment relation between the two. Otherwise, one could not be the criteria of the other. The moment Strawson introduced the concept of criteria in his theory of persons, he no doubt tacitly admitted that the inner state and its outward behaviour were related by the relation of entailment, even though Strawson himself did not make it explicit.

Strawson used the example of playing of cards to clarify the concept of logical adequacy. While playing cards the distinctive marking of a card is logically adequate to call it queen of hearts. But in the context of a game some properties are ascribed over and above its markings onto the card. Those properties get their meaning from the whole structure of the game. Ayer explains that “The reason why the appearance of the card is a logically adequate criterion for its function is that the connection

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47 In the last chapter we shall try to show that ascription of personhood to others, in any circumstances, cannot be logically adequate.
between them is established by the conventions which allot to cards of various
designs their respective powers in the game.\textsuperscript{48} In the same way, ascribing states of
consciousness to others on the basis of their physical manifestations does not show
that there is nothing more in the meaning of those predicates. The predicates get their
full meaning from the structure of language. That is to say, one should know which
kind of behaviour is appropriate for what kind of $P$-predicate (i.e. inner experience),
and one can know this only by means of language.

Ayer argues that the analogy between playing of cards and ascription of
consciousness to others is not appropriate. The connection between a mental
occurrence and its bodily expression is not equivalent to the conventionally
established connection between the appearance of an object and its function. The
reason for calling a card the queen of hearts is not only based on the appearance of
the card, or the distinctive markings on the card, but also based on the function of the
card that it has within the game. If a card appears as queen of hearts but does not
have its appropriate function within the game it will be a contradiction. Whereas
there is no contradiction if a person behaves as if he is in pain but he has no pain
altogether. The behaviour of a pain and the pain itself is separable in a way in which
the appearance and function of an object is not separable. Furthermore, even though
a relation of association holds between an experience and its corresponding physical
manifestations, according to Ayer such a relation is not \textit{a priori}.

Ayer criticizes Strawson’s concept of logical adequacy. The necessary condition of
ascribing states of consciousness to oneself could not be only that the person should
ascribe it to others on the basis of their physical criteria, but the condition would
have to exclude the possibility one’s being invariably mistaken in ascribing
conscious states to others. Ayer does not want to say that everyone is always
mistaken in ascribing states of consciousness to others, rather his main point is even
if a person is mistaken in ascribing states of consciousness to others, he can still
make no mistake in ascribing states of consciousness to himself. He imagines a
thought-experiment where an experimenter keeps a child in an artificially
constructed nursery which is devoid of any human beings. Except the child there are
some automata that can roughly imitate human behaviour, can utter some simple

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 99.
sentences, and can respond to his actions in certain limited ways. The child learns the use of language from a voice that comes through a loud speaker, which are not spoken by any person, but transmitted by a machine, so that there remains no scope to communicate with any sort of human elements. From that voice he learns his own name, basic grammar and “the use of words which describe his ‘inner’ states”. He learns the distinction between perception and imagination and memory (even the distinction between memory of dreams and genuine memory). “In this way he learns how to apply the concept of a person: and satisfies the condition of being ready to apply it to other things besides himself.”

Ayer argues that the important consequence of this thought experiment is that the child will be invariably mistaken in ascribing experiences to others, or, better to say, the child will be invariably mistaken in ascribing personhood to others. The child does not know the application of the word ‘person’, though he had learnt to ascribe experiences to automata and to regard them as persons. Though one can reasonably argue that, it is misleading that the child does not know the proper use of the term ‘person,’ for “there is no warrant for assuming that his concept of person could not be same as ours”. May be he has exactly the same concept of what it is to be conscious, but unfortunately the things which he thinks to be conscious are not so. There is nothing in the nursery, which would help him to know that automata are not persons. It seems clear that the behaviour criteria which Strawson thinks as logically sufficient, are actually not so.

This point is significant. We have said that the term ‘personal identity’ includes self-identity and identities of other persons. From Strawson’s entire discussion it follows that without any criteria identities of other persons could not be determined. In case of other persons, we first analyse their nature and then determine some criteria for establishing their identities. But in third-person identification the term ‘identity’ is misleading, since there is no way to know whether the person I am identifying on the basis of some criteria is numerically identical with his earlier existences. It may the case that the person I am identifying as identical is actually a replica of the original one. Actually no logically adequate criteria can be given for invariably correct

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49 Ibid., 107.
ascription of identity to others. Despite all criteria more and more positive instances or evidences are important for identifying others.

At this point it is important to mention that in rejecting dualism, Ayer follows Strawson. He does not think that over and above the physical substance a mental substance is essential for the ascription of states of consciousness. According to him, without admitting any mental substance it is possible to hold that states of consciousness are distinct from their physical causes and physical manifestations. The reason for this could be that Ayer wanted to explain the concept of person and the concept of personal identity in physical terms. As he argued, “I am, however, inclined to think that personal identity depends upon the identity of the body, and that a person’s ownership of states of consciousness consists in their standing in a special causal relation to the body by which he is identified. I am not maintaining, of course, that this is how one actually becomes aware of one’s own experiences, but only that the fact that they are one’s own, or rather the fact that they are the experiences of the person that one is, depends upon their being connected with this particular body. Ayer Comments, “This amounts in effect to adopting what Mr. Strawson calls ‘the no-ownership doctrine of the self’. We must, therefore, try to rebut his charge that this theory is internally incoherent.”50

In the preceding discussion we have mentioned that Strawson refuted the no-ownership theory as this theory does not maintain the specific character of its main premise, and hence is inconsistent. We do not want to repeat, but the main point of criticism is that the proposition “all my experiences are causally dependent upon the state of my body” once appear as contingent and once as analytic. Ayer claims that the concerned proposition could be reformulated in such a way that no contradiction would arise. The contingent proposition is ‘if my body is in such and such a state, then an experience of such and such a kind results.’ The analytic proposition could be regarded as ‘if an experience is causally dependent in this way on the state of my body, then the experience is mine’. Clearly the first one is distinct from the second, and therefore, no inconsistency arises. Ayer’s standpoint is that, a person may be identified by means of his body. His body (which is this body to him) can be identified by its physical properties and spatio-temporal location. It is a contingent

50 Ibid., 116.
fact that certain experiences are causally connected with it. These particular experiences can be identified as the experiences of the person whose body it is. Clearly, there is no inconsistency within the theory.

Ayer holds that the main criterion of personal identity is physical; other criteria are subsidiary. Criteria of memory and continuity of character traits ultimately depend on the physical criterion. For example, if a person $A$ ostensibly remembers everything that fits another person $B$’s past life and if $A$ shows $B$’s character traits and personality and if the person $B$ remembers everything that fits $A$’s past life and if $B$ shows $A$’s character traits and personality then a physical theorist would truly conclude that $A$ and $B$ have exchanged bodies. On the other hand, if someone could remember the experience of a person who is long since dead, and if he shows the apparent continuity of character of the dead person, following Ayer, “we should prefer to say that he had somehow picked up the dead man’s memories and dispositions, rather than that he was the same person in another body.”

Clearly here Ayer’s argument is more or less similar to Williams’ argument in Guy Fawkes case. If Charles was not physically present at the time of occurrence of his remembered actions of Fawkes’ past life, according to Williams, Charles must be a clairvoyant. Ayer thinks that other criteria are parasitic upon physical criterion. For the only way to identify experiences is to connect them with a given body.

We have by now discussed the Strawsonian picture of persons almost in its entirety. It reveals that a person is a complex type of entity and predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics are equally applicable to each individual of that type. Of course persons are not any kind of material entity, and persons are not spiritual. Undoubtedly here embodied persons are the norm; otherwise, there could not have been any public criteria for ascriptions of personhood.

Professor Mrinal Miri thinks that Strawson’s views can be well incorporated into any materialist theory of person according to which persons are material bodies and states of consciousness can be ascribed to material bodies as

51 Ibid., 127.
52 Hamlyn points out that these public criteria are according to Wittgenstein, “the condition of the intelligibility of whatever is under consideration”. As the criteria for the ascription of pain is “forms of behaviour” that are the natural expression of pain. (Hamlyn, Metaphysics, p.199)
53 Mrinal Miri, What is a Person (Delhi: Shree Publishing House, 1980).
well. As far as we understood, Strawson did not deny the material/physical part of a person and to underline this he brought the concept of \( M \)-predicates. A materialist theory of person could claim no more support than what it can secure from Strawson’s theory of persons.

Theories of personal identity consider persons as either a material or a non-material (spiritual, mental, functional) entity and therefore try to analyse the nature of persons within these kinds of established framework. Strawson’s theory, though seems an ordinary theory of personal identity that regards persons as the owners of conscious mental states and distinct from other material bodies, nevertheless possesses another aspect that needs to be mentioned. Strawson analysed the notion of persons in terms of predicates and it seems that there is a subject (a particular type of subject) to whom these predicates apply. It is possible that Strawson wanted to explain the nature of persons within the framework of linguistic convention. Strawson’s person is entirely conceptual and therefore logical and the concept of a person as a logical subject that ascribes some predicates to itself as well as to others is a concept that finds its place in the structure of language. To understand the Strawsonian nature of persons one has to understand the concept of subject-predicate inseparability and therefore understand the conceptual framework of any concerned language within which ‘persons’ exist as an ineliminable entity. May be this is the reason behind the thinking that “The concept of a person is logically prior to that of an individual consciousness. The concept of a person is not to be analysed as that of an animated body or of an embodied anima.”\(^5\)

From Strawson’s theory it follows that a) persons are one kind of entities, and by nature primitive; b) persons are owner of conscious states; c) these conscious states or predicates are also ascribable to other persons and the ascription of such predicates to others are based on their behavioural criteria, and the criteria is logically adequate; d) every person has a material or physical part, like height, weight etc.

2.3 Different Aspects of I

From the above discussions it appears that the concept of person and the notion of I are closely related to each other. According to many philosophers the ‘I’ of any first-

\(^5\) Strawson, *Individuals*, 103.
person psychological statement refers to persons. The presupposed idea behind the question ‘what am I’ is that ‘I’ stands for or refers to something and that something is person. I do not need to observe my bodily behaviour for knowing the truth of the statement ‘I have a toothache’. My knowledge of the truth of the statement and of many others are independent of whatever knowledge I have of my body. The ‘I’ of all these statements necessarily refer to persons. Persons other than myself, i.e. other persons (or third-persons), also make first person statements and uses ‘I’.

Shoemaker points out that from the fact that ‘I’ sometimes refers to the body of a person it does not follow that the person is equivalent to his body. Some first-person statements are not psychological, and sometimes the word ‘I’ of those first-person statements does seem to refer to a body. For example ‘I am six fit tall’ is a statement where ‘I’ refers to the speaker’s body; here ‘I’ can be replaced by ‘speaker’s body’. The ‘I’ of ‘I weigh 150 pounds’, ‘I have a distinct physical and chemical composition’ etc. refer to something that in some way belongs to the speaker, that is, belongs to the speaker’s body. Of course, these statements do not imply that a person is his body, as the meaning ‘a person is his automobile’ does not follow from the statement ‘I am out of gas.’ The word ‘I’ in the statement ‘I am out of gas’ is not really being used to refer to oneself, but is rather an abbreviation for the words ‘my car’. My car is not ‘I’, but something that I possess, that is out of gas. Likewise, the ‘I’ in ‘I am over six fit tall’ is an abbreviation for the word ‘my body.’ I am not my body, rather my body, which in some way belongs to me, is over six fit tall, has a certain weight and shape, and has a certain physical and chemical composition. First-person statements those are clearly statements about a person are the first-person psychological statements, and the ‘I’ in the statements like ‘I am depressed’, ‘I am feeling lucky’ etc. really refers to myself, rather than to something that belongs to me.

It appears that ‘person’ and ‘body of a person’ are not identical. I am logically distinct from my body, though I may be causally linked with my body. That is, empirically my existence may be causally dependent upon my body and I may not continue to exist without my body. One thing should be noted here. The claim that a person is not identical to his body is true only if we take the word ‘body’ to mean ‘something whose properties are only physical properties’. No doubt some properties
of a person are also non-physical, but from this it does not follow that a person is entirely a non-physical entity and a person cannot have any physical property or that a person’s identity does not involve the identity of a body. From the statement ‘a thing can exist without possessing any physical property’ it does not follow that the thing does not possess physical properties. Similarly, one can know some truths about oneself (such as having a toothache) without knowing any facts about one’s body which are relevant to these truths (for example, the physical condition of one’s teeth or that of the nerves). But that does not mean that one can exist without having physical properties.

Clearly, first-person psychological statements are indispensible for understanding the concept of the word ‘I’. Obviously the intimate relation between ‘I’ and first-person psychological statements motivated philosophers to assume that the nature of ‘I’ is generally non-physical. In the last chapter we have seen that, philosophers who support the physical continuity criterion do not take body as merely a physical entity, but as the core of all psycho-physical states. The brain, as an essential part of any body, is the centre of all psychological states, language capacities etc. The question now is whether persons are purely non-physical entities. If we accept a version of materialism, and if we admit that every psychological state can be identified with some or other brain-states, the statement, ‘a person is not a body’ does not remain true.

In the previous section we have discussed Russell’s views on knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. To recapitulate, knowledge by acquaintance is my awareness of being aware of something. Specifically, Russell’s view is that when I am acquainted with the sense-data of the sun, I am also aware of my seeing the sun. This is a kind of consciousness of one’s own thoughts and feelings. But instead of sense data, when I am acquainted with my thoughts and feelings whether I am still acquainted with myself (according to Russell ‘I’ refers to my self which is the subject) is a matter of question, though it is undeniable that without the knowledge of ‘I’ (myself), being aware of being aware of something seems absurd.
Thomas Nagel\textsuperscript{55} extends Russell’s views regarding knowledge by description and knowledge by acquaintance. According to him there is an unbridgeable gap between a complete description and its first-person ascription. No definite description about my body and mental states, no matter how complete it is, can imply or entail the truth ‘I am that person’ (bearing such and such description). I have to know myself first to know that any such description could be applied to myself. ‘I’ is a logically proper name known by first-person direct acquaintance and it indicates something without which the nature of self cannot be understood. ‘It is mine’ or ‘the property of being mine’ or the property of being a self cannot be analysed and therefore, is like a simple unanalysable property like ‘redness’. The self has no essential property apart from thinking. “I am thinking” implies my self is thinking. In this connection Geoffrey Madell points out,

“I thus appear to be the name of an unanalysable entity with no essential properties except that of thinking or consciousness, an entity whose nature we can grasp in our experience but which we cannot hope to analyse.”\textsuperscript{56}

It appears that the statement, ‘‘I’ refers to something non-physical’ though apparently true, is not by nature tautological. G. E. M Anscombe shows a parallel between Descartes and Augustine regarding the reference and the sense of ‘I’.\textsuperscript{57} Descartes’ ‘this I’ and Augustine’s\textsuperscript{58} ‘the mind’ are parallel in the sense that ‘I’ or mind is not identical to the body. By applying the method of doubt Descartes doubted everything including even the existence of the man Descartes. That is, he doubted all those properties that were contingently linked with him. He found that he was non-identical with the man Descartes. In the statement ‘I am not Descartes’ or ‘I am not my body’ the term ‘I’ could not be replaced by Descartes. According to Anscombe, “That which is named by ‘I’ – that, in his book, was not Descartes.”\textsuperscript{59} According to Anscombe, the phrase, “the non-identity of himself with Descartes” is

\textsuperscript{57} Anscombe’s thesis, though not entirely consistent, is still important in many respects, as she tries to explain the peculiarity of the nature of ‘I’.
\textsuperscript{58} Raymond Martin and John Barresi, \textit{The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 69-74.
not equivalent to the phrase, “the non-identity of Descartes with Descartes.” This non-equivalence is due to the nature of ‘I’ – a peculiar reflexive, which is called by grammarians the indirect reflexive.

In the article ‘The First Person’ Anscombe tries to explore the meaning of ‘I’ or what ‘I’ essentially refers to. Her theory is significant because, contrary to traditional philosophical thinking, she argues that ‘I’ refers to person and a person is a living human body. Naturally this theory goes against the general conception of person, namely, that a person is a self-conscious individual and something different from the physical properties, though contingently linked with a body.

To establish her position, Anscombe first compares ‘I’ with ordinary proper names. According to her, ‘I’ is distinct from ordinary proper names, because the notion of ‘I’ is associated with the property of self-consciousness. She also distinguishes between ‘I’ and ordinary demonstratives. After that she shows that ‘I’ cannot refer to the self or person, if ‘self’ means something like a Cartesian Ego. Because, If ‘I’ points to something like a Cartesian Ego, then according to her, it would be the sense of ‘I’, but not its reference. She concludes that, a self or a person is nothing more than a living human body. Now we shall discuss some crucial points from her article in detail.

In Anscombe’s view, ‘I’ is not an ordinary proper name, first, since it does not possess all the characteristics of ordinary proper names. Every person uses ‘I’ only to refer to himself. But a proper name refers to the person who has that name. Proper names are used for introducing people to one another or for summoning someone. A Proper name is also an identification mark of the signatory and therefore used for signature. If ‘I’ were used as an ordinary proper name then it would be impossible to identify a person by his name. Clearly, there is a distinction between ‘I’ and ordinary proper names. An ordinary proper name is not only used by the person who has that name, but also by others who identifies him as the name-holder. On the other hand, the use of ‘I’ is not restricted in this sense. Everyone can use ‘I’ to refer to himself.

Another distinction between ‘I’ and ordinary proper names is the following. That is, ordinary proper names are not annexed with the notion of self-consciousness. To explain this Anscombe considers the following imaginary situation. Suppose, in a society everyone is labelled with two names. One appears on their backs and on the
top of their chests and the bearer cannot see it and this name is different for every bearer. The other name is \textit{A} which is labelled on the inside of their wrists. It is observable, and everyone uses it only to refer to himself or to speak of himself. Everyone has privileged access to the name \textit{A}, so that \textit{A} is common for everyone. The other name is unique for each individual and used for communication, that is, everyone learns to respond through that name. On the other hand, “reports on one’s own actions” means reports from the mouth of \textit{B} (or \textit{C}, \textit{D} whatever) saying that \textit{A} did such and such actions which is directly verified by \textit{A} and “prima facie verified by ascertaining that \textit{B} did it and are decisively falsified by finding that he (i.e. \textit{B}) did not.”\textsuperscript{60}

Anscombe argues that \textit{A} is considerably different from ‘\textit{I}’. First, people who use \textit{A} do not possess self-consciousness, since in the imagined story Anscombe did not ascribe the property of self-consciousness to \textit{B}, \textit{C}, \textit{D} etc., though they can report their own actions by means of \textit{A}. Someone may argue that when \textit{A} reports its own actions and feelings he is obviously a witness to those actions and feelings and \textit{A} reports because \textit{A} possesses self-consciousness. Anscombe strictly opposes this sort of thinking, and says, “But when we speak of self-consciousness we do not mean that. We mean something manifested by the use of ‘\textit{I}’ as opposed to ‘\textit{A}’.”\textsuperscript{61} Another distinction between ‘\textit{I}’ and \textit{A} is that reidentification of the selves is not part of the role of \textit{A}, though the corresponding reidentification was involved in the use of ‘\textit{I}’.

Self-consciousness according to Anscombe is consciousness of a self. She comments, “\textit{The self} is not a Cartesian idea, but it may be tacked on to Cartesian Ego theory and is a more consequent development of it than Descartes’s identification of ‘this I’ with his soul. If things are, rather than having, selves, then a self is something, for example a human being, in a special aspect, an aspect which he has as soon as he becomes a ‘person’. ‘\textit{I}’ will then be the name used by each one only for himself (this is a direct reflexive) and precisely in that aspect.”\textsuperscript{62}

From the last quotation it follows that Anscombe wants to reject the Cartesian notion of Pure Ego or self, as something that is pure and immaterial and can exist

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 49.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 50-51; Anscombe also said that self-consciousness can be explained as “consciousness that such-and-such holds of oneself,” 51.
independently. According to her the Cartesian concept of Pure Ego is senseless, for no one could guarantee that one would always be connected with the right self, i.e., the self of a man called ‘I’. In other words there is no guarantee that one cannot misidentify one’s self. Possibly this is the reason why Anscombe thinks that ‘I’ is the person and persons are embodied human beings.

‘I’ is also distinct from ordinary demonstratives like ‘this’, ‘that’ etc. According to Anscombe, ordinary demonstratives may fail to refer to the intended object. Suppose on the first day of April someone receives a parcel box from courier service. He unpacks the parcel and sees a chocolate box gifted by his dear friend Y. He says, “This is gifted by Y.” If it is asked to him “What?”, He replies this parcel of chocolate box. It may be the case that unknown to the speaker there are no chocolates in the box, since Y April fooled the person. Anscombe comments, “what ‘this’ has to have, if used correctly, is something that it latches on to [...] the referent and what ‘this’ latches on to may coincide [...] But they do not have to coincide, and the referent is the object of which the predicate is predicated where ‘this’ or ‘that’ is a subject.” It is possible that words like ‘this’, ‘that’ etc. latch on to illusory objects when there is actually nothing. On the other hand if making a reference is the supposed meaning of ‘I’ then any use of I is always secure against reference failure. Any utterance of ‘I’ guarantees the presence of its referent, which in turn implies the guarantee of the existence of the referent. According to Anscombe, “It guarantees the existence because it guarantees the presence, which is presence to consciousness.[...] here ‘presence to consciousness’ means physical or real presence, not just that one is thinking of the thing.”

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63 Ibid., d54.
64 But, contrary to Anscombe’s claim, we know that the index-word ‘this’ refers to something definite and particular, and cannot fail to refer. Words like ‘this’, ‘that’, ‘here’ etc. have no meaning other than directly referring to the intended object (except when ‘this’ is used perhaps as an ‘introductory’ word in a sentence, which is only a peculiarity of the English language). Even in the chocolate box example, Anscombe can hardly deny that while uttering “This was gifted by Y,” one is in fact pointing to the box, rather than to the chocolate, whose existence in the first place is uncertain; and consequently the word ‘this’ does not suffer from any reference failure.
65 Ibid., 55. Surprisingly, for Anscombe, thinking may not guarantee the presence. She says, “For if the thinking did not guarantee the presence, the existence of the referent could be doubted.” (Ibid., 55.) Whereas from Cartesian point of view to think is to exist.
Anscombe claims that the thinking of the I-thought secures the guarantee against reference failure. There are two degrees of the guaranteed reference of ‘I’.

a) The user of ‘I’ must exist and he is the guaranteed referent.

b) If ‘I’ is a referring expression and any use of ‘I’ guarantees the existence of its referent, then the ‘I’ user must intend to refer to something.

Now there are two meanings of the term ‘guaranteed reference’. These are:

a) It may mean guaranteed existence of the object meant by the user. (Here object means person)

b) The reference to the name $X$ would entail a guarantee, not just that there is such a thing as $X$ but also that what ‘I’ takes to be $X$ is $X$.

If ‘I’ is a referring expression at all, ‘I’ has both kinds of guaranteed reference. As long as the ‘I’-user is using ‘I’, the object he means by ‘I’ must exist and he cannot take the wrong object for ‘I’.

But Anscombe denies that ‘I’ is a referring expression at all. As we stated, according to her, if ‘I’ were a referring expression, it would refer to a Cartesian Ego and the essence of ‘I’ would be thinking, i.e. thinking itself, without possessing any other property. For, it is imaginable that someone lost all of his bodily awareness, but can utter ‘I’ with consciousness. But according to Anscombe this view is absurd, since it raises some answerable sceptical questions. For example, one could never know whether the self a man called ‘I’ was always connected with him. To overcome the problem Anscombe suggests that there is no subject which ‘I’ refers to, there are just ‘I-thoughts’. ‘I’ is not a referring expression at all.

To be more precise, in Anscombe’s opinion, a person is a living human body. I-thoughts are associated with the reflexive consciousnesses (like ‘I am sitting’) of various states, motions and actions. But these reflective consciousnesses do not refer to any intended object; rather they refer to the actions, motion etc. of ‘this body’. That is why Anscombe maintains that, “It will have been noticeable that the I-thoughts I’ve been considering have been only those relating to actions, postures, movements and intentions. Not, for example, such thoughts as ‘I have a headache’, ‘I
am thinking about thinking’, ‘I see a variety of colours’, ‘I hope, fear, love, envy, desire’, and so on. My way is the opposite of Descartes’s.\textsuperscript{66}

An inconsistency can be pointed out against Anscombe’s theory. First, if ‘I’ only means the human animal that one is, then the meaning of the expressions, ‘I hope’, and ‘I fear’ could not be understood. If asked, ‘Whose fear?’, the reply would not be provided only by saying that ‘this human animal’s fear’, as nobody knows whether a human animal possesses mental states like fear, hope etc. Anscombe repeatedly speaks about the sense of ‘I’, but unfortunately misunderstands the meaning of ‘I’. ‘Fear’, ‘hope’ etc. are sophisticated mental states, and it is doubtful whether a human animal possesses these kinds of states. She explains self-knowledge in an ordinary manner, but knowledge of the human animal that one is, could not be considered as knowledge of self. Her theory no doubt points to the importance of subject-object dichotomy, but fails to provide a coherent thesis.

Second, the word ‘I’, according to Anscombe, is not a referring expression. For, according to Anscombe, there is no unanimity on what ‘I’ exactly refers to. In the following discussion we shall show that ‘I’ is indeed a referring expression and it refers to the person who utters ‘I’.

Like Anscombe some other philosophers have also described ‘I’ as a non-referential term. The main argument which has been forwarded by these people is as follows. It is true that when a person utters ‘I’ he refers to the subject of his I-thoughts. But according to some philosophers ‘I’ refers to an object of knowledge, which we cannot reach except by direct acquaintance. These philosophers are silent on the nature of this directly knowable object. But can we admit a word as a referential term whose meaning we cannot grasp in the first place? In this context let us consider what Godfrey Vesey\textsuperscript{67} has to offer on this subject.

According to Vesey it is possible to use ‘I’ in such a way that it does not refer to anything. Vesey draws a parallel between another demonstrative ‘here’ and ‘I’ to drive home his point. Vesey maintains that the word ‘here’ may be used in two ways. First, there are sentences where ‘here’ refers directly to a definite location. In this case, a person asserts his exact location by means of the word. Second, sentences

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 63.

where ‘here’ only indicates some place, but does not make any direct reference to any specific location. Vesey explained it in the following way: “I shall say that if I say ‘I’m in this study’ I am stating my whereabouts (though not who ‘I’ am). But if I say ‘I’m here’ I am merely indicating my whereabouts. The point is that for the utterance ‘I’m here’ to serve to inform others of my whereabouts they must be able to locate sounds. They must be able to hear the sounds as coming from some direction.”68

That is, if someone states ‘I’m in this study’ then that is an assertion or a statement and consequently is either true or false. But if someone says ‘I’m here’ its truth value is meaningless, since the person is not making any assertion. The word ‘here’ in the last sentence does not have any clear meaning. According to Vesey, “[…] if something is not something about which I can properly be said to be right or wrong then it is not a statement.”69 Vesey opines that the way in which the word ‘here’ has an idle usage without directly referring to any definite location, the word ‘I’ can also be used in a similar idle, superfluous manner. That is, ‘I’ can have usages where it need not refer to anything. He quotes an example from Geach in this connection:

“The word ‘I’, spoken by P. T. G., serves to draw people’s attention to P. T. G.; and if it is not at once clear who is speaking, there is a genuine question ‘Who said that?’ or ‘Who is ‘I’?’ Now consider Descartes brooding over his poêle and saying: ‘I’m getting into an awful muddle – but who then is this ‘I’ who is getting into a muddle?’ When ‘I’m getting into a muddle’ is a soliloquy, ‘I’ certainly does not serve to direct Descartes’s attention to Descartes, or to show that it is Descartes, none other, who is getting into a muddle.”70

Through this example Vesey wishes to convey that the usage of ‘I’ in soliloquies is non-referential – here ‘I’ does not directly refer to any object of acquaintance. The utterance of ‘I’ in a soliloquy neither attracts the attention of the utterer to himself, nor that of any other person to the utterer. Clearly, according to Vesey in order for ‘I’ to have a reference it must draw the attention of some person or the other. That is,

68 Ibid., 25.
69 Ibid., 26.
every utterance of ‘I’ by a person must be a conscious utterance (as opposed to an utterance as in a soliloquy).

Some objections may be raised against Vesey’s argument. First, when someone soliloquises he does that in order to make himself heard by himself, i.e. he is the speaker as well as the listener. Since the speaker and the listener of a soliloquy is one and the same person the question of drawing someone’s attention is irrelevant. But that is not to say that the words in a soliloquy are idle or meaningless. If a word in a sentence is meaningless the sentence as a whole becomes meaningless. But, perhaps even Vesey would not deny that when a person soliloquises the words are not meaningless to him.

Second, it is true that the veracity of all first-person statements is not determined by the speaker. But none other than the speaker can verify the truism of a soliloquy, which is a special type of first-person statement. That is because the purpose of the statement is known only to the speaker. As a result, the ‘I’ of the soliloquy cannot be idle or superfluous to the speaker. On the other hand, if soliloquies are also verifiable by others then clearly the sentence uttered by the speaker (and therefore the ‘I’ of the sentence) is surely able to draw the attention of others. But in that case, by Vesey’s own admission, the sentence will no longer be a soliloquy and consequently the use of ‘I’ in it can be no more superfluous.

Vesey pointed to the similarity between ‘I’ and ‘here’. Geoffrey Madell on the other hand maintains that philosophers who think that ‘I’ has a reference are of the opinion that the difference between other demonstratives such as ‘here’, ‘this’, ‘that’ etc. and ‘I’ are far more prominent than the similarities between them. Demonstratives like ‘here’, ‘this’ etc. are parasitic on ‘I’, e.g., ‘here’ is where I am, ‘this’ is what is in front of me, ‘now’ is the moment at which I am speaking. That is to say, it is impossible to capture the complete meaning these other demonstratives without the help of ‘I’. Besides, one can conceive of a language that can be devoid of the other demonstratives, but ‘I’ is an integral part of any language spoken by human beings.

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Those who think that ‘I’ is a referential term hold the view that ‘I’ refers to self, which is the object of direct awareness. Question is, is this object, or self, a person? It is undeniable that if ‘I’ refers to an object of acquaintance then every utterance of ‘I’ must be a conscious utterance. That is, through every utterance of ‘I’ a person will identify the object of awareness referred to by all the previously uttered ‘I’. Clearly if ‘I’ is uttered without any consciousness or awareness, according to these theorists ‘I’ will have no reference. But at the same time they also hold that such unconscious use of ‘I’ is not possible and in every use ‘I’ unfailingly refers to the object of direct acquaintance. For them, ‘I’ refers to person or self, because the proper use of ‘I’, according to them, is impossible without consciousness and possession of consciousness is an essential characteristic of person or self.

It is to be noted that, in English language ‘I’ does not have any meaning except its reference. Whether or not it is uttered consciously by the speaker ‘I’ always points to him and there are no exceptions to this rule. Question is, can ‘I’ refer to anything other than a person or a self? Or, in other words, is only a person capable of uttering ‘I’? In this context, Eddy M. Zemach⁷² makes certain important observations.

Eddy M. Zemach in his paper ‘The Reference of ‘I’’ claims that the reference of ‘I’ is not restricted only to persons; rather, it refers to every sort of creature that can utter ‘I’. At the beginning of his article he differentiates between indexicals or token-reflexives⁷³ and classifies them into four categories according to their degrees of restriction to certain sortals. The first one is the category of level zero indexical. The example of this category is ‘this’; for, ‘this’ can be used to refer to any sort of objects whatever it is without any confusion. ‘Here’, ‘now’, ‘we’, ‘you’, ‘they’ etc. are level one indexicals in the sense that each of them can be applied to one or the other kind of object but not restricted to any particular object of a specific kind. For example, we can use ‘here’ to refer to a city or an entire galaxy. ‘Here’ is not restricted to any particular spatial location. ‘Today’, ‘tomorrow’, ‘next house’, ‘my car’ are examples of level two indexicals. These indexicals are restricted to particular or specific objects and not to the kind of object to which these particulars belongs. ‘My car’ denotes a specific car, not to the entire car class. The distinction between level one

⁷³ ‘I’, ‘here’, ‘this’, ‘that’ are token-reflexives or indexicals.
and level two indexicals is that level one indexicals are absolutely indeterminate with regard to size, whereas level two indexicals are not absolutely indeterminate. For example, by ‘now’ I may denote the moment of uttering, the present day, the present era, or even the time that starts from the beginning of the universe. Proper names are level three indexicals (actually they are non-indexicals), for, in all contexts a proper name refers to one and the same entity.

It is generally held that ‘I’ is a level two indexical ranging over persons. Every utterance of ‘I’ refers to that person who utters ‘I’. And ‘I’ denotes only persons.

In the *Blue and Brown Books*, Wittgenstein points out that there are two different uses of the word ‘I’: the use as object and the use as subject. ‘I am five fit tall’, ‘my arm is broken’, are examples of the objective use of ‘I’. ‘I see so and so’, ‘I am in pain’ are examples of the subjective use of ‘I’. Wittgenstein comments, “One can point to the differences between these two categories by saying: The cases of the first category involved the recognition of a particular person, and there is in these cases the possibility of an error ... On the other hand, there is no question of recognizing a person when I say I have a tooth-ache. To ask ‘are you sure it is you who have pains?’ would be nonsensical.”

It appears that the second category statements where ‘I’ is used as a subject are of a specific sort. These statements are immune to error through misidentification of the subject and the truth or falsity of these statements does not depend upon the question that whether the entity denoted by the subject term satisfies the criteria to become an entity of a certain sort. Without knowing who I am, or what sort of entity I am, I can be certain that I am in pain. I do not need to know whether I am a physical entity or immaterial spiritual substance of a certain kind. Statements like, “I am in pain” (i.e. statements having ‘I’ as a subject) does not need ant recognition of the person who is asserting the statement.

Now according to Zemach, understanding the logic of ‘I’ and its meaning removes all philosophical puzzles related to ‘I’. It is obvious that if ‘I’ is a level one indexical then any person can use ‘I’ without presupposing any criterion of self-identity. Statements like ‘I am hungry’ (where ‘I’ is used as a subject) are absolutely immune to error through misidentification. When someone says ‘I am hungry’, it is certain

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that he has the property of having uttered the said token of ‘I’ and when that creature (to Zemach it is logically possible that creatures other than human beings can also utter ‘I’) utters this proposition, it is also certain that at that particular time and place it is hungry. ‘I am hungry’ is distinct from ‘Jones is hungry’ in the sense that in the latter statement Jones may be misidentified. I can misidentify myself as Jones and therefore, the truth of the statement ‘I am not Jones’ implies the falsity of the statement ‘Jones is hungry’. This sort of misidentification is not possible for propositions like ‘I am hungry’. Zemach comments, “If I tell you that there is a garage in the next block when it is in fact in the block after the next, then I am wrong. But if I tell you that the garage is here, then, no matter where it is, if I used ‘here’ in a non-restricted way I cannot be wrong.”75

In response to Zemach we would like to argue in favour of the view that ‘I’ is a ‘level two’ indexical which refers only to persons. Proposition like ‘I am hungry’ is immune to misidentification not only because ‘I’ is used as a subject of this proposition, but because when one utters that proposition one is conscious of his utterance. Here ‘consciousness’ means self-consciousness. Having self-consciousness is an obvious prerequisite for proper utterance of ‘I’. In the last sentence the term ‘proper’ is important. That is because, though ‘I’ as a word is meaningful, mere utterance of ‘I’ is by itself vacuous. If somebody utters ‘I’ he does not essentially say anything. It is, therefore, not a proper use of ‘I’. In languages ‘I’ always comes as a part of a sentence. Sentences like ‘I am five fit tall’ (where ‘I’ is used objectively) and sentences like ‘I am in pain’ (subjective use of ‘I’) are analogous from one point of view. In both statements ‘I’ is the subject term to which predicates are ascribed. In the first statement the predicate of my bodily height is ascribed and in the latter statement the predicate of my feeling of pain is ascribed. Again both are alike in the sense that having self-consciousness is essential to assert both statements truth-functionally. That is, to render both statements as true or false.

Second, having self-consciousness is not essential for every sort of creature. To explain this we would like to recapitulate Anscombe’s thought experiment. Suppose that there exists a society in a different world where everyone has two names. One of them is labeled on each one’s back and also on the top of her chest which that creature is not able to see or know. These names range from ‘B’ to ‘Z’. The other

name is ‘A’ and it is stamped on the inside of each one’s wrist and is same for everyone. Everyone knows that his or her name is ‘A’ and reports all of his own actions and experiences through ‘A’. So, in that society everyone refers to oneself by ‘A’ as we refer to ourselves by ‘I’. These beings or entities are different from us in the sense that they do not possess self-consciousness as we do. That is to say ‘I’ users possess self-consciousness which ‘A’ users do not. For, according to Anscombe, self-consciousness is something manifested by the use of ‘I’ as opposed to ‘A’. That is why many philosophers extend the notion of self – identifies self with person and defines person in terms of possession of self-consciousness. Anscombe comments, 

“This – that they have not self-consciousness – may, just for that reason, seem not to be true. B is conscious of, that is to say he observes, some of B’s activities, that is to say his own. He uses the name “A”, as does everyone else, to refer to himself. So he is conscious of himself, so he has self-consciousness. But when we speak of self-consciousness we don’t mean that. We mean something manifested by the use of “I” as opposed to ‘A’.”

What Anscombe argues regarding self-consciousness is significant in the sense that she confers the right to utter ‘I’ only on the world of persons. According to her only persons can utter ‘I’ since only persons possess self-consciousness. Now it is notable that there are certain kind of similarities between the use of ‘I’ and the use of level one indexicals. The reference of the word ‘here’ and reference of the word ‘I’ both are not restricted to any particular object. The word ‘here’ can be used to refer to any size of particular spatial location. Similarly ‘I’ may also be used to refer to any sortal beings. Significantly, when someone says “I am here” he says that about some particular spatial location no matter how large it is (that is to say even the propositional use of the word ‘here’ includes some kind of indeterminacy. Only for that reason ‘here’ remains level one indexical). But when someone says “I am in pain” he refers only to particular sortal beings, i.e. person. Any type of creature can utter ‘I’, but any sortal beings could not utter “I am in pain”. That is because they could not claim, at least in the empirical world, that they had that amount of self-consciousness without which such propositions could not be immune from error.

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76 Anscombe, “The First Person” 50.
through misidentification. To establish the immunity of propositions like ‘I am hungry’ or ‘I am in pain’ self-consciousness is an essential prerequisite.

Zemach is right when he claims that the reference of ‘I’ is absolutely indeterminate with regard to size, that is, it completely depends upon the person that how much he wants to include within itself. When I utter ‘I’, I refer to myself, and it is completely up to me what I understand as myself. ‘I’ can mean the speaker of ‘I’, can mean my entire past, can include my entire existence within myself, or can even include all beings and even the entire universe within me. In that context Zemach comments, “If the “size” of the self-referrer is deemed to be large enough in space or in time, the self-referrer may not have at any time or place adequate non-inferred information about his own experiences at every other spatial or temporal location. (For example, adult persons may lack adequate non-inferred information about their experiences at a very young age.)”

It appears that to understand the logic of ‘I’, even from Zemach’s point of view, reference to persons is unavoidable: “‘I’ can be used to denote Whiteheadian ‘actual entities’, Strawsonian ‘persons’ or Bradley’s ‘absolute’.” But this is only a logical possibility. Empirically ‘I’ can be used to refer only to persons; especially only to those who are self-conscious thinking intelligent beings. Level one indexicals are unrestricted with regard to size not only logically but also empirically. Mere logical possibility of the unrestrictedness of the word ‘I’ does not imply any empirical possibility or does not render ‘I’ a level one indexical. Therefore, ‘I’ is a level two indexical, at least empirically.

Therefore, we can say that ‘I’ refers to persons. Other entities can utter ‘I’, that is, they may utter ‘I’ (as in Anscombe’s society people utter A) to refer to themselves but from this it cannot be said that their every utterance of ‘I’ is truly founded in self-consciousness. We do not deny the logical possibility of uttering ‘I’ by other entities. But that could not prove ‘I’ as a level-one indexical. Empirically the utterance of ‘I’ is restricted only to persons, especially only to those who are self-conscious thinking beings. Therefore, ‘I’ is a level-two indexical.

Madell argues, ‘I’ cannot fail to refer. ‘I’ is immune from referential error through misidentification. The reference of ‘I’ is direct and is accompanied with referential

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Self, Person and I

guarantee. That is, it is impossible to misidentify the referent in any present tense use of the first person. The suggested parallel between ‘I’ and other demonstratives, especially ‘here’, is that they can be used without referring to any essential property at all. The term ‘here’ can refer from a tiny spot to an entire galaxy, and the term ‘I’ can refer from the present self of me to my entire self-knowledge.

Some critics may argue that ‘I’ can be used without any meaning and, therefore, without any reference. For example, if an amnesiac completely loses his consciousness regarding his past and present, then he can only utter ‘I’ or ‘it’s me’ without any awareness of himself. Two things can be said here. First, in spite of all misfortunes if the amnesiac utters ‘I’ it still refers to himself, for, the reference of ‘I’ does not depend upon the knowledge or the awareness of ‘I’. Second, these cases are mere exceptions, those persons unwittingly use ‘I’ as a meaningless word. In everyday world and in normal circumstances ‘I’ does not fail to refer to the speaker himself.  

It can be asked, the referential aspect of ‘I’ is not relevant for our present concern. For we are actually looking for the nature of ‘I’, not the reference of ‘I’. In reply, it can be said that to explore different aspects of ‘I’ we need to explore whether ‘I’ is a referential term, as this is an important aspect of ‘I’. Second, if ‘I’ refers to something, then we have to know what the thing is, and whether that thing is substantial. Third, whether knowledge of ‘I’ is knowledge of the referent of ‘I’. From various discussions it now appears that ‘I’ is a referential term and refers to the self or the person of the self-referer. In the next chapter we shall discuss the nature of ‘I’ or persons and shall try to find out whether persons knowledge of self is actually the knowledge of the referent of ‘I’.

We have already stated that the terms ‘I’, ‘self’ and ‘person’ are synonymous. Let us now explain the reasons for the same. First, we have noticed that an essential characteristic of self is that it must possess consciousness and self must be aware of its own identity. It should be noted that the term ‘self’ can never be employed to refer to other persons. We have also observed that all the characteristics of self are present in a person, at least if by person we mean first-person. Again, ‘I’ refers to self or

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78 Therefore, when someone has consciousness he has the knowledge that his utterance of ‘I’ refers to himself. And if that person loses consciousness then without his knowledge his utterance of ‘I’ refers to himself.
person who possesses these characteristics. Moreover, possession of self consciousness is a common feature of I, self and person. The terms are also synonymous from this angle.

We had also mentioned at the outset that there is a subtle difference between the notions behind each of these terms. In the literature on personal identity, the terms ‘person’ or ‘self’ are used to refer to some entity or being. Self is not definable – to understand self it has to be looked upon from the first-person point of view. Only the term ‘person’ has a definition and the meaning of this definition should be understood from both first and third-person viewpoints. Besides, the question of body or that of physical continuity arises only in discourses on person. On the other hand, the term ‘I’ may be employed to mean an index-word or to refer to the subject of thought or experience. It should be mentioned that ‘person’ and ‘self’ can also refer to subject of experience; however, they cannot be used as index-word.

The notion of the subject of experience is closely related to the question of personal identity. That is because, when a person identifies himself with his past experiences, he probably looks upon his I-thoughts as that of a single subject. But is this subject immaterial and independent? That is, is this subject a substance which unifies all I-thoughts? The other pertinent question that comes to one’s mind is whether knowledge of this subject is possible. In the next chapter we shall investigate these questions.