CHAPTER – 4

CONCLUSION:

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE AND IDENTITY
In the last chapter we have said that problems related to personal identity have no
definite solutions. One of the reasons behind this fact is that the nature of persons is
really hard to analyse. No universally accepted account could be given of the nature
of persons. Most probably this is the reason why Parfit argues in favour of
indeterminate nature of personal identity. In spite of knowing all the facts no strict
yes or no answer could be given to any problem of personal identity.

From our discussion it follows that there exists an intimate and deep-rooted
relationship between nature and identity of a person. In this chapter we shall show
that to understand this relationship it is important to confront it from both sides – i.e.,
from the perspective of person as oneself (first person) and person as other (third
person).

In most of the discourses on personal identity the words ‘person’, ‘self’ and ‘I’ are
used interchangeably and they refer mainly to the first person.¹ Consequently in the
discourse the question ‘what is a person’ is very often reduced to the question ‘what
am I’. However, if we look at the word ‘person’ from the perspective of a layman
(i.e. if ‘person’ is an empirical person) then its meaning encompasses both oneself
and others. That is, if the word ‘person’ does not refer to any separate entity but to
‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘he’ or ‘she’² then all people in the universe will come under the
purview of the word. In that case the question ‘what is a person’ will assume an
independent meaning and to answer it we shall have to refer to some essential
properties to be possessed by every person and which defines the nature of persons
uniquely. These properties should also help distinguish a ‘person’ from all other
beings in the universe. For example, according to Wiggins, to be a person not only
possession of self-consciousness is required, one must have a considerable amount of
past history and one should be aware of his own identity through this history. I am
certain that I have all these characteristics (Wiggins calls this “characteristic

¹ Notable exceptions to this generalisation are philosophers like Williams, P. F. Strawson,
Wiggins, Parfit etc.
² To Locke, Reid, Butler etc. ‘you’ and ‘he/she’ are not persons but just human beings.
However, according to Strawson they are also persons provided P-predicate can be ascribed
to them.
functioning\(^3\), and can assume that there are other persons who also have a considerable amount of past history and who are equally aware of their identities through their pasts. According to philosophers this self-consciousness is the property that distinguishes persons from all other beings in the universe.

On the other hand, the meaning of the word ‘nature’ is extensive. Though ‘nature of persons’ primarily stands for all the essential properties possessed by a person, it may comprise some contingent properties as well. Let us elaborate the idea with an example. Philosophers who hold the view that the essential properties of a person are possession of self-consciousness and the ability to become a subject of thought, will consider possession of a body with a particular shape as a contingent property. For instance, to Descartes,\(^4\) even though possession of a body may be characteristic of a person (because Descartes believes in interactionism) it is not essential. On the contrary, Bernard Williams or P. F. Strawson will classify possession of a spatio-temporal body as one of the essential properties of persons. Therefore, to understand the nature of a person it is important to incorporate all these properties.

What, on the other hand, do we mean by ‘identity’ of a person? Like ‘nature’, the word ‘identity’ also has a broad meaning. Generally, in philosophy, ‘identity’ refers to a particular type of binary relationship. Any two objects are said to be identical to each other if and only if the properties possessed by the first object are exactly same as those possessed by the second object and the second object is a spatio-temporal continuation of the first object (‘identity of indiscernibles’). This is the relationship of an object with itself. This type of identity (i.e., \(a = a\)) is also referred to as ‘numerical identity’. However, in common usage, the word ‘identity’ has yet another meaning, which is characteristic or qualititative similarity between any two objects without any claim to spatio-temporal continuity. Here, being identical does not mean \(a = a\); what it actually purports is identification. In the phrase ‘personal identity’, the term ‘identity’ may not only refer to numerical identity but may imply identification.

as well. To explore the relationship between ‘personal identity’ and ‘nature of a person’ we must take both meanings of identity into account.

But to find out the relationship between nature and identity we must first understand what ‘other person’s are. That is because if by the term ‘person’ we understand only first-persons we may not fully appreciate the deep-rooted relationship between identities of persons and nature of persons. Only one aspect of this relationship would be revealed to us, but not the entire picture. If it is logically possible that there are other persons, they must possess all the properties of persons. They should have self-consciousness and must be subjects of experience. In this context, Galen Strawson’s observation is important. He argues that, “If one is self-conscious, one must possess the concept of (ONE)SELF [and] one must possess some conception of the subject of experience.” Accordingly, “one must in some manner possess the concept of what is not-self, [and] one must in some manner possess a conception of what is not a subject of experience.” According to him, it follows that “[...]self-consciousness not only requires possession of conceptions of not-self and subject of experience. It also requires possession of a conception of that which is both not-self and a subject. So that [...] one must possess the concept of other subjects.”

What is a subject? Strawson replies, “[...] a physical being that has experiences of various sorts, and is actively self-conscious in the sense that it actually has thoughts of the form ‘I

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5 The logical possibility of reduplication, fission, teletransportation etc. excludes numerical identity in some cases of personal identity. Identity in all these cases is a matter of identification, for the resulting person(s) could not claim numerical identity with the original person. The only claim is that of characteristic similarity without any assertion of spatio-temporal continuity. The term ‘original person’ is also ambiguous, for it brings up the question whether resulting persons are original or not. Since this is another issue, we are not discussing it here.


7 Ibid., 309.

8 Ibid., 310. In the discussion on persons and substances it has been pointed out that the meaning of the phrase, ‘a person is a substance’ means a person is a subject of experience or subject of thought and it is verifiable by the first-person. Therefore, if there are other persons, he must be a subject of his own experiences and can verify his experiences as his experiences.
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am $F$" or ‘My $F$ is $G$’ – is my candidate for the position of minimal self-conscious subject.”

The question is why conception of a self requires a conception of not-self? The question can be restated in the following way: why is it important to me that there are other persons in the universe except myself? The obvious reply is that only in this way we can grasp the entire domain of persons and therefore can understand the nature of persons. It would be easier to understand the relation between self and not-self in terms of logic, specifically in terms of set theoretical notations. According to set theory there is a complementary set of every set that has some specific properties. For example, if the set of Indian dog and the set of non-Indian dog constitute the domain of dog, that is the set of all dogs, then the complementary set of the set of Indian dogs will consist of all dogs that are not Indian. Accordingly, to admit the existence of a self, one must automatically admit the existence of others (i.e. not-selves). And to analyse the relation between nature of persons and identities of persons, it is necessary to include both selves and non-selves, for nature of a person means nature of both selves (i.e., first persons) and not-selves (third persons or others).

We now turn to the central question: Does the nature of persons determine the criterion of identity for persons (i.e., both first and third-persons)? If not, then how is identity related to the nature of persons? In the present chapter we shall make some important observations on this subject.

Our entire discussion will be divided into three sections. In the first section we shall discuss the views according to which there is a close relationship between nature of persons and identities of persons. We shall try to establish that only in case of others (non-self) nature of persons determines identities of persons. In the second section we shall discuss how nature presupposes identity, specifically in the case of self-identity. In the last and third section we shall describe a few case studies to throw light on some aspects of the nature of persons that are not adequately covered by existing prominent philosophical views.

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9 Ibid., 309.
10 $\neg A$ is the complement of $A$. “The complement of a set is simply its complement relative to the given domain of individuals”. (Patrick Suppes, Introduction to Logic, Affiliated East-West Press Private Limited, New Delhi, 1957, p. 188)
4.1 Does Nature of A Person Determine The Identity of That Person?

Let us begin the discussion with the example of a tree. A tree goes through various structural changes in its entire life span. From the very beginning till the end the tree evolves continuously in spite of continuous change. Since these changes are not accidental (i.e. these changes have not occurred in a brief moment of time) and are not inconsistent with each other (i.e. any one of these changes is not contradictory to any other), the bodily continuity (that is, continuity of the specific form\textsuperscript{11} and same matter) of that tree determines its criterion of identity. Bodily continuity involves spatio-temporal continuity between various tree phases of the same tree. That is, every present existence of that tree is spatio-temporally continuous to its prior existence. Spatio-temporal continuity can be understood in terms of a temporal chain among various existences of that tree. For example, $X$ at time $t_5$ is spatio-temporally linked with $X$ at time $t_4$, $X$ at time $t_4$ is spatio-temporally linked with $X$ at time $t_3$, $X$ at $t_3$ is linked with $X$ at time $t_2$ and so on. Therefore $X$ at time $t_5$ is spatio-temporally linked with $X$ at time $t_2$. Hence the identity criterion of a tree (i.e., continuity of the same body) is determined by its nature that involves various kinds of changes of the form (i.e., bodily form) throughout the spatio-temporal existences of that tree.

Philosophers, who think that there is a deep relationship between the identity-criterion of an object and the nature of that object, mainly argue that the direction of the relationship is from nature to identity. From this view it transpires that the knowledge of the nature of persons is a necessary precondition for determining the identity criterion of persons. Notable among these philosophers are Hume, Locke, Perry etc. However, not all of them have used the word ‘nature’. Locke has used ‘idea’ and Perry has employed the word ‘concept’. Obviously, in order to possess an ‘idea’ or a ‘concept’ an object must have certain essential properties and we have already mentioned that essential properties are part of nature. Below we discuss each of these views at length.

\textsuperscript{11} Each and every kind of tree has a specific structural form that is generally treated as an identification mark. For example, an oak tree has a specific form that is distinct from the form of a mango tree. Similarly every tree has a particular chemical-physical composition that uniquely defines that tree and generally remains unchanged.
In Hume’s opinion every object undergoes a series of changes, the quality (and not just the magnitude) of those changes is crucial in determining whether the object remains same. A very small change can destroy the identity (or sameness) of an entire object, whereas an object can retain its identity through a slow but continuous process of quite radical changes. He comments, “Thus as the nature of a river consists in the motion and change of parts; tho’ in less than four and twenty hours these be totally alter’d; this hinders not the river from continuing the same during several ages.”\(^{12}\) Clearly, according to Hume, the identity of a river is determined by its nature.

Here the term ‘nature’\(^{13}\) refers mainly to the essential properties and sometimes to contingent properties too. Philosophically, the term ‘nature’ refers to the way in which things happen by themselves or ‘naturally’ or without interference from anything outside of what is considered normal for the things being considered. Specifically, the nature of an object includes all the essential properties that are also important for the consideration of the criteria of identity of that object.

Let us go back to the example of a tree. If ‘nature’ means whatever is ‘essential’ and therefore ‘natural’ for the object being considered, then obviously in case of a specific type of tree, nature means a specific bodily form (that includes a particular shape, a particular colour etc.) that naturally changes from time to time; a particular chemical-physical composition; spatio-temporal continuity for a long period of time.

\(^{12}\) David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby Biggie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 258. Spatio-temporal continuity is a part and parcel of the nature of any object. But objects which are spatio-temporally continuous are not invariant with respect to time. Whichever thing has a definite birth and death cannot remain invariant throughout its lifetime. Because of this reason philosophers like Hume have maintained that for objects that undergo changes throughout their lifespans, the notion of ‘invariance with respect to time’ or, synonymously, that of ‘identity’ is fictitious. But philosophers who speak about identity do not generally use the word in the sense of invariance with respect to time. That is because if identity implies invariance with respect to time then the whole idea of criteria of identity becomes unnecessary or redundant. For, the question of identity of an object that is ever invariant (namely, eternal objects like space, time etc.) is irrelevant and for such objects the existence itself is a statement of identity.

\(^{13}\) The word “nature” derives from Latin “Natura”, a philosophical term derived from the verb for birth, which was used as a translation for the earlier ancient Greek term “phusis” which was derived from the verb natural growth, for example, that of a plant.
Some of the contingent properties (e.g., number and size of the branches) are also considered as natural for that tree.

Locke argues, “It being one thing to be the same Substance, another the same Man, and a third the same Person, if Person, Man, and Substance, are three Names standing for three different Ideas; for such as is the Idea belonging to that Name, such must be the Identity: Which, if it had been a little more carefully attended to, would possibly have prevented a great deal of that Confusion, which often occurs about this Matter, with no small seeming Difficulties; especially concerning Personal Identity.”[...]

From Locke’s view it transpires that the name of an object is associated with the idea of that object and the idea of an object determines its identity conditions. It is clear that the term ‘idea’ and the term ‘nature’ are more or less synonymous. That is because by ‘idea’ of an object we actually refer to some of its essential properties those are an indispensible part of its nature.

John Perry employed the term ‘concept’ instead of ‘nature’. “Criteria of Identity” is according to him the “unity relations, between simultaneous events or non-simultaneous object-stages”. He argues, “the concept of a personal history is intimately associated with the concept of a person; someone could not be said to have mastered the concept of a person if he could not say, given the requisite information, whether two events belonged to the history of one person.”

As we know, according to Hume the concept of identity is illusory, but he claims that if there were any such concept (that is, the ‘concept’ of ‘identity’ of an object) then certainly the nature of the concerned object would determine its identity. Hume does


16 According to Perry, the life or personal history of a person is a process, a sequence of events, and criteria of identity is “unity relations between simultaneous events or non-simultaneous object (here person) stages”. It follows that the unity relation between sequence of simultaneous or non-simultaneous person stages, comprise the identity criteria of a person. And obviously, the identity criteria of a person are related with the concept or idea or nature of that person.

17 Ibid., 10. Emphasis mine.
not recognize person as a separately existing entity, while Locke and Perry have admitted separate existence of persons.

It is to be noted that, philosophers who have argued about the relationship between the nature and identity of persons have mostly implied first-person by the term ‘person’. Because, according to them, determining the identities of other persons or third-persons or not-selves is a trivial issue and can therefore not be a part of any serious philosophical debate. This type of first-person ascriptions has been regarded as a necessary step as otherwise the discourse on personal identity would become indistinguishable from that on the identity of any other object. In this connection Shoemaker argues that if persons are in all respects similar to material objects or organisms, then “there would be no more reason for speaking of a problem of personal identity than there is for speaking of a problem of canine identity, and there would be no more of a philosophical problem about the nature of persons (as such) than there is about the nature of stones (as such).”

But let us assert that if there is no ‘other’ and ‘person’ refers only to the first-person then how the nature of a person plays an important role in determining his identity criteria becomes obscure. Even the philosophers who by the term ‘person’ have otherwise implied first-person, have nonetheless employed third-person metaphors and assumed the third-person viewpoint while describing thought experiments on the nature or criteria of identity. The problem with their views is the following. Each of them admits the logical as well as empirical possibilities of the existence of other or third-persons. However, they demonstrate the peculiarity of the questions related to the nature of persons and that of personal identity from first-person perspective. The only meaningful interpretation which is possible out of this apparent contradiction is that the nature of a person is a crucial decisive factor only for identification of other or third-persons.

The last point can be illustrated in the following way. Let \( X \) be a person whom I know and assume that I have been a witness to various incidences of \( X \)’s life. Whenever I see \( X \), I immediately identify him as the \( X \) that I know. Question is: what

is the basis on which I am able to identify X as a person and also able to conclude that X is identical with his/her previous existences? My answer to this question will be the following. I know that X is a person for I know what a person is. A person is an entity that possesses self-consciousness, who is the owner of various experiences and is able to recollect his/her past experiences, and finally, who is spatio-temporally continuous. It is true that I have not observed X continuously all throughout his life to be able to infer that X is spatio-temporally continuous. But from X’s behaviour, his bodily similarity, his memory I can verify whether the claims made by X about his past life is true. The factors on the bases of which I had identified X as X were indeed part of X’s nature.

In the above account, what is meant by X’s spatio-temporal continuity? Any discussion on the matter would inevitably involve the idea of a particular body with a particular shape. It has been mentioned that possession of a body is part of the nature of a person to philosophers who regard person as a psycho-physiological construct. For, according to these philosophers, it is impossible to understand the spatio-temporal continuity of a person without reference to a particular body. Personal identity may be established only by means of (some or the other version of) the bodily continuity criterion. But in order to establish the identity of X of yesterday with X of today I need to observe X incessantly since yesterday. Otherwise, there is a possibility that at some moment when I was not looking X might have been replaced by his/her replica or an identical twin. It is logically possible to establish the identity, i.e. spatio-temporal continuity, of X using the bodily continuity criterion, but for an individual observer it is practically impossible to attain this feet. It is possible only for an automated device, which can incessantly watch X for enabling the application of the bodily continuity criterion.

It is clear that to establish the identity of a person by means of the bodily continuity criterion we have to stretch our imagination a bit too much. In most attempts of establishing personal identity by bodily continuity we end up assuming the identity of the concerned person on the basis of bodily similarity. Possibly this is the reason why Williams did not attempt to explain personal identity solely on the basis of bodily continuity, but admitted memory as the other important criterion.
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If, on the other hand, memory is accepted as the only criterion of personal identity then it is impossible for a person to establish the identity of any (third) person barring himself. For, it is not possible for witnesses to verify the memory claims of a person without a bodily counterpart. Clearly, in case of third-person identification bodily continuity is an important characteristic. This problem can be shown to exist for other psychological criteria as well. In each case the recognition or reidentification that ‘it is the same person’ is possible, but that is not sufficient for establishing numerical identity. That is, in each case, establishing the identity of a third-person ultimately reduces to an inductive generalization. Qualitative similarity may be a necessary precondition for numerical identity, but it is by no means a condition necessary as well as sufficient.

But we have already admitted that one cannot rule out the fact that in each of the above cases it may be logically possible to establish identity. For instance, we can imagine a highly sophisticated device that is capable of recording the exact mental and physical states of a person every moment. That is the only way in which identities of third-persons may be established using memory or advanced psychological criteria. But, again, such a possibility seems remote outside the world of science fictions.

But it is by no means ambiguous whatever criteria I may employ to identify a third-person they are part of the nature of that person. Whether the identity criteria of a person will be physical, psychological or psycho-physiological is decided by what I understand by the term ‘person’ or what I consider to be the essential properties of the nature of a person. Whatever it may be, except for a few obviously impossible imaginary situations, it seems trivially true that any criterion of third-person identity boils down to conditions of identification. Clearly, therefore, the true meaning of the assertion that the nature of a person determines the identity of that person is that the nature of the person provides certain identification marks.

4.2 Does Nature Presuppose the Identity of A Person?

In this section we shall establish that in case of self-identity, nature presupposes identity and this view is drastically different from the conventionally received
wisdom about personal identity. It is unbelievable that I acquire knowledge of my
own identity from my nature; that is, I first analyse my nature and then deduce my
identity. In case of first-person the matter is different altogether. I do not have to
analyze my own nature to convince myself that I am myself. The conviction that I
am myself is self-evident, natural and primitive.

We begin with a thought-experiment from Shoemaker’s *Self-knowledge and Self-
identity*. Shoemaker imagines that in a fine morning he finds himself with a new
appearance and comes to know that his original body has been replaced by another,
though his brain remains same. He is also informed that the actions and events he
claims to have done in the past were done, not by the person whose body he has now,
but by the person whose body he had in the past. Shoemaker comments,

“let us imagine that I have found myself in the position just described, and
that I am listening to a debate whether I am S.S., the person who did certain
things in the past, things which, as a matter of fact, I have a clear memory of
doing. It is agreed by all concerned that the body of S.S. (or at any rate the
body S.S. had in the past) is now a corpse, and that my present body is the
body (or at any rate the former body) of someone of whose past history I have
no knowledge at all. It is also agreed that my memory claims correspond to
facts about the past history of S.S., that my interests, tastes, mannerisms,
personality traits, and the like closely resemble those of S.S., and so on.
Naturally I agree with those who say that I am S.S. But their reasons for
saying that I am S.S. can hardly be my reasons for saying this. I say that I am
S.S., not because I claim to remember doing the things that S.S. did, but
because I do remember doing those things. [...] And if I clearly remember
doing something, I have no choice but to believe that I did do that thing,
whether or not I can think of something that explains my ability to remember
doing it. Other persons may be convinced that I am S.S., not simply because I
display knowledge of S.S.’s past history, but also because my interests,
mannerisms, and so on are like those exhibited by S.S. in the past. But the
latter fact, again, would carry little weight with me, for if I were to remember
doing a certain thing, and were to remember having at the time a set of
interests, mannerisms, and so on quite unlike those I have now, I would still have to say that I am the person who did that thing.”

Clearly in this quotation a sharp demarcation exists between the third-person and first person versions of personal identity. To determine the identity of a person the facts which are considered from a third-person point of view are in no way similar to the facts that are considered by the person himself. Some facts or events which had happened to me may be relevant to you for judging my identity, but these are distinct from the facts that I consider as important for discerning my identity. From the above account of Shoemaker it appears as though a person deduces the knowledge of his identity from his memory of past events. That is, if I remember a past event and am sure that that is an event of my past life, then that certainty of memory helps me prove my identity to myself. It also transpires that the memory which a person uses for deducing his identity is always genuine and not apparent memory. That is because, as has been already noted, apparent memory leaves the possibility of misidentification.

But there is question. When Shoemaker, on the basis of his memory, states “I am S.S.”, does the statement really establish the identity of Shoemaker with himself? That is, is the statement, “I am S.S.,” really a statement about identity? Had he been suffering from amnesia and had forgotten his name, could Shoemaker still not prove his own identity to himself? In other words, if one fine morning I forget that my name is Shewli and claim that “I am Sita”, the latter claim, according to Shoemaker, would not be an identity statement; since my memory had failed me and I could not remember my true name. It is not clear how a statement whose subject is ‘I’ and predicate is an arbitrary proper name can be a statement about identity. Besides, if memory and other psychological continuities become the criteria of identity then self-identity cannot be established in case of a brain damage leading to amnesia.

Here, we shall probe the statement “I am myself” or “I am I”. Clearly, this statement is a statement of identity, since denying it would lead to a contradiction of the form $p \neq p$. If someone asks me whether I can prove to myself that I am indeed myself the question will sound meaningless to me, because the fact is self-evident to me and does not require any proof, certainly not the evidence of any memory. As Thomas

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Reid claims, “One would think that the definition of a person should perfectly ascertain the nature of personal identity, or wherein it consists, though it might still be a question how we come to know and be assured of our personal identity.”

Reid further comments, “The conviction which every man has of his Identity, as far back as his memory reaches, needs no aid of philosophy to strengthen it, and no philosophy can weaken it, without first producing some degree of insanity.” The conviction about one’s own identity is so deeply rooted in one’s mind that any criterion or evidence to that effect is considered as superfluous. My knowledge about my own identity cannot, therefore, be verified using any criterion – including that of memory of past events of my life, since to me such verification is devoid of any meaning.

The conviction which Reid talks about depends crucially on a particular property possessed by a person, namely consciousness. Without consciousness the utterance “I am I” is impossible. For this reason, every philosopher has termed consciousness a defining characteristic of persons. Anscombe makes it clearer that a dead body can never be a person. But again consciousness cannot be a criterion of self-identity, since in that case the question whether a person is aware or conscious of his own past naturally arises and memory is inevitably invoked. But we have already seen that memory cannot be a criterion of personal or self-identity.

How can a person who does not have consciousness know his identity? Suppose a person has turned into an automaton because of brain damage. He can follow orders but his brain does not register and store any experience. Even if this person is capable of uttering the statement “I am myself” he cannot assert it. How can such a person prove his identity with himself? This problem may be addressed in two ways. First, the question whether a person can know his identity does not arise for those who do not have any consciousness, for we have repeatedly mentioned that a person is one who has self-consciousness and is aware of his own identity. People devoid of

21 Ibid., 200.
22 We have already noted in the last section that memory or other psychological continuities provide evidence for identification, but cannot establish identity from a third-person perspective. Here we illustrate that in case of establishing identity from first-person perspective memory or other (psychological) criteria are not necessary.
any consciousness, therefore, are outside this discourse. Second, some sort of identity claim can be established even for people in such vegetative states. When somebody else sees a person without self consciousness the former person can identify the latter by means of the latter’s body, i.e. physical features. In this case that particular human being does not have any other continuity except spatio-temporal continuity like an inanimate object, and the case cannot be judged from a first-person perspective. That is to say, for people in vegetative states identity must be criteria-based (or determined by nature as in the case of inanimate objects); for them first-person identity claims are impossible.

We are claiming that the knowledge expressed by the statements “I am myself” or “I am I” is primitive and does not require any criteria. But, it may be argued that, it does not imply that no criterion is needed for any first-person knowledge of identity. Personal identity is the identity of a person between any two moments (i.e., present and any past moment). In this case the form of a first-person identity statement should be, “I broke the front window yesterday.” But then the identity between my past and present selves is established using memory. Hence it may be alleged that memory or other psychological continuities are veritable criteria for establishing first-person identity and our claim that no criteria is needed for establishing first-person identity is baseless. Further whether or not a person asserts an analytic statement like “I am myself” with full consciousness of the reference of ‘I’, it can never be falsified. It may be said that the literature on personal identity is not concerned with identity statements like “I am myself” but with first-person statements such as “I broke the front window yesterday” and that the knowledge of identity expressed by the latter statement is not primitive.

In response to such objections we shall maintain that they have been raised without first realizing our point on first-person identity. What we have termed as primitive is the knowledge of first-person identity. Such knowledge may be expressed by any first-person identity statement; whether that is “I am myself” or “I broke the front window yesterday.”

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23 Those who admit artificial intelligence will ascribe consciousness even on automata. They will claim that an automaton has memory since a device such as a computer or a robot can store information. But in our discussion such an automaton is not a person even though it can utter sentences like “I am myself”. That is because it cannot be claimed that an automaton is certain of the meaning or reference of the word ‘I’.
window yesterday” does not make any difference whatsoever to our claim. We have used statements like “I am myself” or “I am I” since these are direct and analytical identity statements of the form “\(A = A\)”. But we have an independent reason for delineating first-person identity as primitive.

It may be explained in the following manner. A person’s knowledge of his own identity may be corroborated by evidences of various types but it may not be determined by any criterion. Whenever a person remembers anything about his past, the form of such remembrances is “it is an incidence of my past life”, not that “it is an incidence of some or other person’s past life and since I am remembering it I am that person”. It is not the case that I first remember the experience of some past occurrence and infer next that since every experience must have a subject therefore I am identical to that subject of experience. That is to say that neither my memory nor consciousness provides me with the requisite criteria for establishing my identity with my past self. Further the distinguishing feature of the remembrance “it is an incidence of my past life” is that I am the subject of the statement and it is also I who is asserting the statement. Such assertions are impossible without the knowledge of identity of one’s own self. Exactly the same thing can be said about the statement “I broke the front window yesterday”. Possibly this is the reason why Butler had observed that, “But though consciousness of what is past does thus ascertain our personal identity to ourselves, yet to say, that it makes personal identity, or is necessary to our being the same persons, is to say, that a person has not existed a single moment, nor done one action, but what he can remember; indeed none but what he reflects upon. And one should really think it self-evident, that consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal identity.”

In this context, the following comment of Williams is relevant: “A criterion, however, must be used by someone. This is a point that has been notably and

24 We are not claiming that statements such as “it is an incidence of my past life” imply that all memories are veridical and misremembering leading to misidentifications are not possible. The meaning of the word ‘misidentification’ in the context of self identity is to confuse events of other persons’ past lives with those of one’s own. But that in no way affects the knowledge of self-identity.

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unhappily neglected by theorists of personal identity." At least two persons are needed for applying a criterion of personal identity – the first one is the person whose identity will be verified and the other one is the person who will apply the criterion. But for verifying self-identity no criterion is required.

Question is, if at all, how does identity determine the nature of one’s own self? When someone tries to understand why he is identical with his past existences, then one has to probe one’s own nature (i.e. essential and contingent properties) in search of an answer. But this necessarily means that to a person the knowledge of his identity precedes any analysis as to the causes of that identity which are ingrained in his nature. This knowledge or conviction of one’s own identity can never be regarded as deduced from nature. Rather, this conviction is primitive, and when we analyze it the nature of the person may be derived. Thus, only in case of first-person or self the numerical identity ‘a = a’ is trivially or tautologically true.

Let us elaborate this idea further. The conviction that ‘I am identical with myself’ is not verifiable by means of any verification principle. It is possible that a lot of drastic changes have taken place throughout my life, my body may have been partly replaced and my memory has partially lapsed so that it has become very difficult for others to identify me as myself. But to myself, my identity is clear and obvious. My memory (recollection of past experiences) may be an important yardstick of my identification for others or an important tool to myself for proving my identity to others; but the conviction that ‘I am myself’ is independent, underived and not based on any criteria. It is by nature unanalyzable and causa sui. What comes out of this conviction is my own typical nature (i.e. essential and contingent properties) which includes the consciousness that I am identical to myself. Even if I am unable to

27 The statement, ‘I am myself’ or ‘I am identical with myself’ is a statement about my thinking. This statement expresses that I am a thinking being. I can assert the statement, ‘I am myself’ at any moment of my existence, and every assertion is no doubt true. This ‘I’ (i.e., the ‘I’ of the statement ‘I am myself’) is the subject of my thinking, and remains identical with every next and previous utterance of ‘I’. The thinking being that ‘I’ refers to conjoins every personal existence of myself. ‘I’, therefore, refers to persons, persons are thinking beings and thinking beings are substances that remains identical in spite of various changes. Probably this is the reason why anti-reductionist philosophers have opined that persons are substances.
recollect important facts of my life my identity with myself is not affected. But this conviction can never be a yardstick of my identity to others. Perhaps Russell would like to christen this kind of knowledge of one’s own identity a ‘knowledge by acquaintance’.

If we try to provide any reason behind this kind of knowledge of identity, we have to commit the fallacy of infinite regress. Precisely, I can in no other ways prove the statement “I am identical with myself” but by saying that, “I know that I am identical with myself”. The justification of the last statement is certainly taking place by resorting to a second knowledge. That is to say that the only way to justify the statement “I know that I am identical with myself” is to say that I know that I am identical with myself. This way, the process of justification will go on \textit{ad infinitum}. To avoid this kind of infinite regress we have to admit that the statement “I am identical with myself” is self-evident.

When someone says that “I am I” he basically claims that he is identical with himself, that he has no doubt that he is himself. Here knowledge of identity provides the only criterion of identity. My knowledge that ‘I am myself’ is sufficient to identify myself as myself and I do not require any further criteria. Mohapatra argues that, “Of course by claiming that persons are self-knowers it is not denied that people could be sometimes unsure of, even wrong about, their own identity; but what is important is that they can be, and generally are, right about it. It is this fact that people can make identity-judgements about themselves and are in a position to make them without using any criteria and without needing any justification of their judgements, and further that they can be and generally are, right about them, which constitutes an important difference between the identity of persons and that of other material things, and accounts for their being a special problem about the matter”.

In this context, it is possible to distinguish between the identities of first and third persons in the following way. If a person analyzes his own nature in search of the causes of his identity and concludes that his nature is responsible for this identity then he is analyzing nature from the perspective of a third person. That is to say, when a person claims that he is himself because his bodily features, memory, past experiences, physical and mental characteristics etc. bear evidence to the fact, then

\footnote{P. K. Mohapatra, \textit{Personal Identity} (New Delhi: Decent Books, 2000), 57.}
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he is essentially regarding himself from the viewpoint of a third person. The person is actually applying all the criteria he uses to identify a third person upon himself. But, as mentioned already, there are important distinctions between identifying a third person and identifying oneself. Self-identity is immediate and does not require any proof whereas the identity of a third person has to be established by means of the criteria of identity. Probably because of this unique self-evident nature that self-identity is so well received and widely discussed in the literature on personal identity. Perhaps this is the reason Reid, Butler etc. have called it ‘strict’ and ‘philosophical’ and Descartes has described it as first principle.

In this context, we should however note that it remains uncertain which characteristics a first-person will make use of while analysing his own nature from a third-person point of view. According to most philosophers memory, character trait etc. are crucial for determining first-person identity whereas body takes a backseat. A person can assert, “This is my body”, and also, “This is not my body”, while facing a mirror. It is not clear whether a person regards his body as an identifying essential property while analysing his identity from a third-person perspective.

4.3 Identity and Nature of Persons: Unexplored Aspects

We have explained that a close relationship exists between the nature of persons and identities of persons and that it can be viewed in two ways. Now we shall explore this relationship from a different viewpoint. We shall evaluate some of the remarkable thought experiments on the so called borderline cases of personal identity, imagined and experimented by distinguished philosophers, and some empirical laboratory based case studies of various psychological disorders. Our motive is to find out whether the relation between nature and identities of persons exists in all imagined and empirical cases. Particularly, we are interested in learning if there are aspects of nature of persons or of personal identity which are exceptions and pose a serious problem for the proposed relationship. If there are, then we have to reconsider and reconstruct the relationship in a different way.

Thought experiments are designed to demonstrate and analyse the border-line cases of personal identity – cases that bring up serious difficulties for criteria of personal identity. First, let us analyse Locke’s famous thought experiment on Prince and
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cobbler. In Locke’s experiment a prince’s soul with the consciousness of prince’s past life enters into a soul-less empty body of a cobbler, and immediately afterwards the cobbler’s body becomes the person prince. This thought-experiment absolutely fits Locke’s definition of person and the concept of personal identity. For, according to Locke, consciousness makes personal identity, no matter which body that consciousness is annexed to. In Locke’s view consciousness is the only criterion to decide who is who. Thomas Reid argues that by the term ‘consciousness’ Locke means memory. In Locke’s view, if I can display full consciousness of a past action, that is, if I can distinctly remember some of my past actions, then I am the person who did that action and also accountable for that action, no matter which material body I am conjoined with. Locke purports to show that because cobbler’s empty body with prince’s soul shows the consciousness of prince’s past life, it is prince.

In Locke’s theory, identity of one’s own is a matter of first-person verification, for according to him “Consciousness makes a man be himself to himself.” Only a person can know whether he is a person, and whether he is identical with himself. But we claimed that from first-person point of view knowledge of identity does not require any criteria. Criteria are required for personal identification (of others), but not for establishing personal (or self) identity. Whether or not I can remember some of my past actions, it does not affect my knowledge of identity. It follows that Locke did not fully realize the true sense of first-person identity, which is that a person himself does not require any criteria of identity for being identical with himself.

It follows that from first person point of view the prince-cobbler case is not a non-trivial borderline case of identity. It becomes problematic only to the third-person, i.e., to the other viewer, who wants to decide whether or not the resulting person having cobbler’s body and prince’s soul is prince. Suppose there is an outsider who knows every fact about the event. He may also have some distinct criterion in his mind that helps him to identify a person with his earlier existences in normal circumstances, but since this is a borderline case, his criterion may not be sufficient to identify cobbler’s body with prince’s soul as cobber or prince. The decision must be based upon some convention. And most importantly, there is no way in which a

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third-person could claim identity of the resulting person with prince or cobbler in the sense of \( a = a \). For it is not known in this particular case of reincarnation what kinds of properties are necessary and sufficient to establish \( a = a \).

Second, the brave-officer’s example by Reid\(^\text{31}\) is another important thought experiment in the literature on personal identity, though it is not a borderline case. Briefly, a brave officer who is at present an army general is conscious of taking a standard from the enemy on his first campaign, though he could not remember robbing an arcade when he was a school boy; although, when he took the standard as an young officer, he was conscious of his having been flogged at school for robbing the arcade.

Reid constructed this thought-experiment to criticise Locke’s views on the criteria of identity, and to show that Locke’s theory of personal identity violates the property of transitivity. If \( A \) is identical with \( B \) and \( B \) is identical with \( C \), then certainly \( A \) is identical with \( C \). Accordingly, if the general can distinctly remember taking the standard, and if the person who took the standard can distinctly remember being flogged at school, then necessarily the general is the person who was flogged at school. This thought-experiment tries to bring home the fact that if someone could not remember any of his past actions or experiences, nevertheless he remains accountable for those experiences, for he is identical to the person who did those actions or had those experiences. According to Reid, identity from first-person point of view is a matter of mere conviction, not a result of application of any criteria. Knowledge of identity cannot be lost by any kind of forgetfulness. Reid’s theory regarding personal identity prominently supports our claimed relationship, that is, from first-person point of view identity is primitive.

Third, Shoemaker’s famous thought experiment of Brown-Robinson-Brownson case\(^\text{32}\) again points out that there is no fixed criterion of personal identity. Briefly, the brains of two persons, Brown and Robinson, were exchanged. Brown’s body with Rabinson’s brain unfortunately ceased to exist, and Rabinsons body with Brown’s brain survived. In this connection, Shoemaker’s viewpoint is the following: The third-person version of personal identity (which in most of the cases is a matter of


dispute of words) needs a criterion based on convention. On the other hand the first-person version of personal identity is person-dependant in the sense that only a person can answer how he considers his identity. We have seen that according to Shoemaker memory assures personal identity, one knows one’s identity by recollecting one’s own past. In Shoemaker’s body-swap case the problem is not whether Brownson is a person, rather who is who; i.e. is Brownson Brown or is Brownson Robinson?

The Brown-Robinson thought experiment clearly shows that the third-person version of personal identity is based on nature of persons, and from third-person point of view identity is identification, that depends on the characteristics of persons. We know all the facts about Brown’s and Robinson’s latest incident. We know that the new person with Robinson’s body and Brown’s brain shows all the psychological continuity with Brown and all the bodily continuity with Robinson. Supporters of the psychological criterion will claim that the survived one is Brown, and supporters of the bodily criterion will claim that he is Robinson. From a third-person standpoint the decision is completely convention-based, and according to our adopted convention about the nature of persons (that is what we understand by the term ‘person’) we decide upon the criteria of identity. But the nature of identity from first-person point of view is a different matter, and cannot be analysed from third-person point of view. Nothing more can be said on this matter, since this thought-experiment is nothing but a modified version of Locke’s prince-cobbler example.

The fourth thought experiment is William’s famous reduplication case. In this case, the person Charles apparently claims to remember certain events and actions which are not actually done by him. Rather, those events point unanimously to the life-history of an ancient person, Guy Fawkes. Similar to Charles, another person Robert simultaneously claims to remember Fawkes’ past deeds and experiences. The problem is who is who? Here the main concerns are as follows:

a. Is Charles identical with Guy Fawkes?

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33 Though it is a matter of debate whether supporters of bodily continuity criterion will accept that the resulting person is Robinson; as Williams argues that bodily continuity provides the necessary criterion of personal identity, but without the memory continuity criterion the bodily continuity criterion alone might not be sufficient.

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b. Is Robert Identical with Guy Fawkes?
c. If both Charles and Robert are identical with Fawkes then is Charles identical with Robert?
d. If the answers of the last three questions are negative then what should be the correct answer? That is, how can we know who is who?

Here also the concern is not about the ascription of person-property to Charles and Robert. Williams has no hesitation in considering both Charles and Robert as persons, since both Charles and Robert display all the essential characteristics for being a person. Williams constructed the thought-experiment to indicate the insufficiency of any psychological continuity criterion of personal identity and to point out the necessity of bodily continuity.

But this experiment is significant for another reason. It apparently raises a serious problem for self-identity. If a person undergoes irreversible loss of all kinds of autobiographical memory (as Charles and Robert undergo) then it would be impossible for that person to identify himself as himself. Charles, while claiming that he was Guy Fawkes, could not claim that he was Charles.

Two things can be said here. First, in the last section we have claimed that self-identity is primitive and could not be contradicted. The point is when a person claims, “I am myself” then without any consideration of who he is, his claim is veridical. If Charles claims to remember everything that fits with the life and actions of Guy Fawkes and if Charles has no memories regarding his own past, then it would be a major problem to the supporters (that is, to the outsiders, who identifies Charles as other) of psychological continuity criterion (including those of brain-continuity criterion as well) to find out whether Charles is Charles or Charles is Guy Fawkes. Precisely, when I claim to remember some other person’s (say, X) actions and experiences I remember all those experiences as my experiences, and I have no doubt regarding my identity. It is the problem of other persons who wants to decide whether I am Shewli or X, for they have to rely on some criteria to take any decision. But from my point of view I am always myself.

Williams’ thought experiment is silent about Charles’s present experiences. Let us take a present experience of feeling a pain. If a person asserts that “he is in pain” then it is beyond reasonable doubt (provided the person does not make false
assertion) that his statement is true. Now when Charles says “I am in pain” then if Charles is Charles his claim is true, and if Charles is Guy Fawkes then also his claim is true. Even if Charles himself claims that he is Guy Fawkes and thinks and experiences in the same way in which Guy Fawkes used to think or experience then the assertion “I am in pain” could not be falsified. When Charles claims that he is Guy Fawkes he does not claim that he is Charles. When I say “I am myself” my claim is true, no matter whether I know what my name is, or whether I am a person.

Significantly, these thought-experiments do not violate the stated two-way relation between nature and identities of persons, and these experiments are alike in one respect. Almost each of these experiments questions the notion of criteria and creates a borderline case by putting a person’s consciousness in a new body. Now we should turn to Parfit’s thought-experiment of teletransportation. Parfit provides two versions of teletransportation. In the first version the person looses consciousness for about one hour. In the earth the scanner destroys his original brain and body while recording exact states of all his cells. The replicator on Mars creates exactly the ‘same’ person out of new matter and out of the original person’s recorded cells. As Parfit says,

“It will be in this body that I shall wake up. Though I believe that this is what will happen, I shall hesitate. But then I remember seeing my wife’s grin when at breakfast today, I revealed my nervousness. As she reminded me, she has been often teletransported, and there is nothing wrong with her. I press the button. As predicted, I lose and seem at once to regain consciousness, but in a different cubicle. Examining my new body, I find no change at all. Even the cut on my upper lip, from this morning’s shave, is still there.”

In the second thought-experiment of teletransportation the person does not lose consciousness. The scanner records his blueprint without destroying his brain and body and creates a replica. Even the original person can see his replica and can communicate with that organic replica. Parfit imagines, “The attendant later calls me to the Intercom. On the screen I see myself just as I do in the mirror. But there are


36 Ibid., 199.
two differences. On the screen I am not left-right reversed. And, while I stand here speechless, I can see and hear myself in the studio on Mars, standing to speak.”

Undoubtedly Parfit’s example of teletransportation is highly imaginary but nevertheless does not put our claimed relation into jeopardy. Rather it questions any accepted criteria of personal identity. Parfit argues that problems of personal identity are about numerical identity and qualitative similarity. He says, “…we claim that he, the same person, is not now the same. We merely mean that this person’s character has changed. The numerically identical person is now qualitatively different.”

What Parfit did not observe is that from a third-person’s point of view numerical identity is a matter of inductive generalisation, and cannot be easily established; for it is practically impossible for any human observer to observe a person incessantly and continuously from beginning till the end. In both cases of teletransportation the organic replica is no doubt qualitatively similar to the original person, but it is not numerically identical. Parfit argues in favour of degrees of identity, or degrees of persistence, and if personal identity is a just matter of degrees, one person can be at most exactly alike with his temporal predecessors but cannot be identical.

Primarily, it appears that the possibility of the co-existence of I and my replica violates the law of identity, namely, $p$ is identical to $p$ ($p = p$). There is a contradiction in thinking that I co-exist with myself. But Parfit clarifies that although I and my replica are qualitatively similar we are not spatio-temporally continuous, and therefore are not numerically identical. Though the imagined case of teletransportation as described above is a common feature of science fictions, the thought experiments do not raise any serious problem for the nature of persons and for the relationship between nature and identities of persons.

Finally, we would like to discuss Wiggins’ case of fission, where two hemispheres of a person’s brain are inserted into two empty skulls of two different human bodies. If each hemisphere is capable of retaining all the psychological features of the original person then after the event of replacement two new persons come to exist.

37 Ibid., 200.
38 Ibid., 201-202.
39 Though we admit that even from third-person point of view verifying numerical identity is logically possible.
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from an earlier person. Each of the resulting persons has the memories of living the life of the original person. The problem is, if at all, who retains the numerical identity with the original one?

If this kind of highly imaginary cases actually occur, the concept of numerical identity will have to be abolished from the world of personal identity; for no doubt there will exist some person who desires to survive in two future persons. It would be impossible to establish the identity of two future persons with an earlier person, since, identity means (in case of persons) both spatio-temporal and psychological continuity. In Wiggins' case both the resulting persons no doubt retain psychologically continuity with the original person, but none is spatio-temporally continuous with the original one. Since this case violates the law of identity, no criterion is adequate to establish the identity of the two resulting people with the earlier person from a third-person’s point of view.

But again this case does not violate our claim regarding the nature of personal identity from first-person perspective. Both the resulting persons know their identities from first-person point of view. Whoever they are, from their own points of view they are identical with themselves, and also identical with the earlier person.

It follows that no thought-experiment violates our claimed relation between nature and identities of persons. Let us next explore some laboratory based empirical case studies, for we want to find out whether such cases pose serious problems for the notions of person and personal identity.

There are some pathological cases in psychiatry in which patients, though completely normal from all other aspects, tend to misidentify or mentally duplicate persons, places, objects or events. The scientific name of this syndrome is delusional misidentification syndrome (DMS). The most commonly reported form of misidentification syndrome for persons is known as Capgras Syndrome, first reported by Capgras and Reboul Lachaux41. The essence of the disorder lies in the delusional belief in the patient’s mind that a person or persons have been replaced by their respective doubles or imposters.

“One of the first-reported and perhaps the best known is the case reported by Alexander and co-workers (1979) of a 44 year old man who sustained a traumatic brain injury and right frontotemporal encephalomalacia. This patient claimed that his first and actual wife and five children had been replaced by substitutes. Another well known instance of this disorder was described by Staton and colleagues (1982), who described a 31-year-old man, who 8 years after a traumatic brain injury that resulted in right frontotemporal and parietal injury, claimed that his parents, siblings, and friends were not ‘real’ but were ‘look-alikes’ or ‘doubles’ of the originals.”

The quoted cases of Capgras syndrome explicitly show third-person misidentification. A related type of misidentification is the Frégoli Syndrome (Courbon and Fail, 1927). This condition involves the symptom that a person who is unknown to the patient takes on the appearance of a known person in the patient’s eyes. There are many reports of patients with brain lesions who develop Frégoli Syndrome in later life and tend to misidentify persons or places. For example, a sixty year old woman after removal of a right frontal subdural hematoma claimed that the patient in the bed next to her was her husband. She was actually pleased that her husband no longer snored. Some researchers described a sixty one year old man who sustained traumatic brain injury with right frontal and left temporoparietal confusions. He developed Frégoli misidentifications for many stuff members of his rehabilitation hospital, claiming they were actually sons, daughter-in-law, co-workers, and town officials, and he even claimed that an ice-skater on TV was himself.

There is a sharp distinction between actual cases of DMS and thought experiments. DMS patients actually exist but most of the thought-experiments are highly absurd to have actually occurred. It should be noted that DMS patients do not misidentify themselves, they misidentify others persons, and this shows that identification is not immune to misidentification. Patients suffering from DMS have no problem identifying others as others, but they identify others as duplicates of the original

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persons. These cases are just the reverse of the case of reduplication, where a completely new person claims to be identical with the original one. Like Fawkes’ case here also the problem lies in the notion of identifying criteria, since no criteria can establish identity from third-person point of view.

Medical practitioners and researchers have observed that there exist a vast range of misidentifications, disorders, amnesias that indicate identification always includes misidentification. But none of these cases point to any exception to the notion of self-identity. There are some cases in which patients cannot distinctly remember their past actions. In medical science these patients are known as amnesiacs. Laboratory tests differentiate among various types of memory, e.g. episodic memory, (often used interchangeably with autobiographical memory), semantic memory, perceptual memory, priming, procedural memory. “Episodic memory requires conscious and self-related reflections, or autonoëtic consciousness, and the experiencing self, allowing time travel to the past and containing context embedded specific and distinctive events.”

The autobiographical memory embraces episodic and semantic aspects, but frequently the term “autobiographical memory” stand for retrieval of personal past experiences. Clearly episodic or autobiographical memory is closely related to the knowledge of self and identity. Confabulation, the production of fictitious narratives (as Charles does in Williams’ thought experiment), can be understood as specific form of autobiographical memory disorder. It is claimed that complete and irreversible loss of the entire autobiography is really rare among all psychiatric diseases. If that is the case then it seems that the notion of self is deeply rooted in a person’s mind and cannot be completely dissipated. The similarity between philosophical concept of self and scientific concept of self is that in both cases complete loss of self-identity is impossible.

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Semantic memory refers to present-oriented general knowledge and contains context-free facts, like knowing one’s own name. Perceptual memory refers to feelings of familiarity on the basis of presemantic (sensory) information only. Priming facilitates the nonconscious processing of previously perceived information. Procedural memory refers to highly automated sensory-motor skills.

45 We have described the narrativity theory of self, according to which a person narrates or describes his life-history in the form of a story.
The peculiarity of these cases attains its highest level in the mirror sign delusional misidentification symptom, where persons otherwise normal become abnormal only in front of the mirror or any reflecting surfaces. The patient cannot recognise himself in the mirror, rather he finds the reflection of some other person in the mirror. Some patients can even recognise themselves in photographs but cannot recognise their reflections in mirrors.

These cases typically report the behaviour of psychiatric patients and do not violate any claims made by various theories of personal identity. Clearly self-identity is not violated in any of these cases, but at some point of time in the patient’s life self-identity merges with other-identity. If front of mirror the person identifies himself as other. It implies that for identifying oneself one does not necessarily take into account the information regarding how one looks like. This case evidently shows that sometimes bodily features are not necessarily included in the notion of self, and identifying oneself in terms of a particular body becomes problematic. The empirical evidences of such cases point out to the fact that there is no strict line of difference between self, ‘I’ and the other.

In our entire discussion we have claimed a number of things. First, we have claimed that consciousness and ‘I’ are inseparably linked with each other. Second, the notion and nature of person is closely linked to the notion of substance and the notion of self-knowledge. Third, discussions related to the criteria of identity for persons are determined by the nature of persons if and only if third-person-identity criterion is concerned. Fourth, in case of self-identity, nature presupposes identity. The entire discussion explicitly shows that various kinds of complexities are associated with the term ‘person’ and sometimes this is due to the difficulties concerning its meaning. Because of this personal identity involves a number of problems, some of which do not have any closed form solution. For example, some philosophers claim that every problem of personal identity (read ‘self-identity’) has strict yes or no answer. On the contrary some philosophers claim that there are no definite answers to the problems of personal identity and identity is often a matter of degrees. In other words, problems of personal identity are by nature empty problems and therefore
indeterminate. It appears that problems of personal identity give rise to fresh problems and one is inevitably led to the conclusion that until unanimity on the notion and nature of persons can be reached every solution to the problems of identity would beg new questions.

Mirror sign delusional misidentification syndrome supports this opinion. These empirical evidences are more crucial than previously mentioned thought-experiments, since they once again show the peculiarity of the nature of persons. Here the distinction between ‘self’ and ‘other’ becomes blurred. These case studies point to the fact that a proper understanding of ‘self’ cannot exclude understanding of the concept of ‘other’ and vice versa.

Actually the notion and nature of persons are so complicated that it is impossible to provide a complete analysis of what a self or a person is. The nature of persons as others is complicated, because we have observed that no criteria can be said to be logically adequate to identify others, and to establish who is who. The nature of persons as oneself is abstract in the sense that except the fact that ‘I am I’ or ‘I am myself’ nothing more can be universally claimed. The tautological nature of the last statements only reveals that from first-person point of view identity is primitive. The understanding of the nature and identity of persons is completely person-dependent in the sense that only a person can state what he understands by the term ‘nature’ and how he realises his own identity. May be there is an essential characteristic of persons, which till now has been overlooked by all the philosophers, and which is sufficient to explain every aspects of persons, and therefore personal identity. Until the revelation of such characteristics we cannot conclude whether the problem related to the nature and identities of persons is an empty problem.

But, is the problem concerning personal identity or nature of persons a genuine problem? Or is it just a figment of imagination of some philosophers? Should we, in concordance with Hume, maintain that the notion of self or that of identity are illusory in this ever changing phenomenal world and what we can really observe is only similarity? Ordinary human beings regard this illusion as truth, since they never have the knowledge of denial of identity. The crucial question therefore is whether the problems of nature of person and that of personal identity are actually non-trivial
and worth philosophical speculations. In that respect, one may object to the Humean conclusion on the following grounds.

First, according to Hume when he introspects he perceives certain mental states like pain, pleasure etc., but does not observe any ‘self’ beyond these mental states. As he cannot form any perception of self he does not possess an idea of that thing. But, this assertion by Hume is really not tenable. It is not true that without perception one cannot form the idea of any object. That is because there are objects in the world whose perceptions we do not have, yet we can form ideas of such objects. For instance, we have the idea of a fictitious animal called ‘unicorn’; however, as it does not have a real existence it is impossible to have a perception of it. Hume himself maintains that, “We have a distinct idea of an object, that remains invariable and uninterrupted thro’ a suppos’d variation of time; and this idea we call that of identity or sameness.” But if idea is impossible without perception, how can we possess the idea of identity of an object? For it is not clear how our imagination can form the idea of identity from the perception of diversity using laws of association. The same is true of self; even though we may not have any perception of self it is nonetheless possible for us to conceive an idea of it.

Second, the claim that things which we cannot perceive do not exist is contestable. For instance, one can reasonably conceive the idea of an owner of perceptions, at least someone whose imagination is responsible for giving birth to the illusory idea of identity among different fleeting sense-perceptions. In the sense of Cartesian doubt, what one cannot doubt is such an existence of the owner of these perceptions. Even Hume admits that he cannot deny someone the perception of something “simple and continu’d”, or what “he calls himself”. That is, however, not the same thing as saying that things can exist in the empirical world without being perceived. In his own framework Hume’s theory is never falsifiable within the empirical world; which implies that it is not subject to empirical verification and is therefore in the nature of a tautology. Whether or not one will allow for independent existence of an owner of perceptions, i.e. ‘self’, is therefore ultimately a matter of decision. Even if we concede that nothing exists beyond perceptions, yet it is possible to conceive of demarcating features which distinguish between of bundles of perceptions of two

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empirical persons $A$ and $B$ at an instant when both are looking at a tree. We, however, chose to adopt the view that ‘self’ or ‘person’ has an existence independent of our perceptions in agreement with a gamut of eminent philosophers. Clearly, therefore, for us the problems related to the nature and identity of persons are genuine and worthy of extensive philosophical speculation.