CHAPTER 3
THE MODERN PHILOSOPHER’S TAKE ON: SELF, CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE BODY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the 5th century, the Greco-Roman “Age of Reason” was replaced by Christian “Age of Faith”. The result was that at least in Europe an intellectual dark age dominated which lasted till the 15th century. Virtually no progress in the area of the study of human consciousness and the body was made in Christian Europe for about a thousand years. Philosophical thoughts such as it was, were dominated by the dead hand of Plato and Aristotle until the rebirth of learning occurred and an entirely new set of scientific ideas ultimately came to replace the inadequate medieval mindset. By the beginning of the early modern era in the seventeenth century, the ethico-religious centric concept of the ‘self’ propounded by the Greek philosophers took a back seat and the evolution of a modern thought process heralded. This new phase of thought came to be known as modern philosophy in the History of Western philosophy. With the advancement of time, the early modern philosophers became conscious of the growing demands of modern science and adopted a more scientific and rational approach to the problem of the nature of the mind and its relation to the body. It is an outgrowth of science rather than the ethico-religious tendencies of the past that shaped the course of modern philosophy. Given the background of centuries of dogmatic scholastic philosophy, it is not surprising the philosophers decided to take a fresh start and use the shovel of doubt to clear off the debris from the building site of a new philosophical system.

3.2 DESCARTES

It was in the seminal works of Rene’ Descartes that the modern tendency to free philosophy from the grip of ethico-religious interests of the Greeks and the theological bent of mind of the medieval scholastics, and to rest philosophy mainly on the scientific and rational foundations, took its origin. He showed a new freshness and innovativeness in his thought, which was carried on by his successors. To him, we
owe our first systematic account of the mind and body relationship. While it is true that some ancient and medieval philosophers prefigured some vague aspects of the modern concept of self, consciousness and the body but a proper study these in its modern sense started with him. So, it is worthy asking what it is about Descartes’ project that gave rise to a new way of thinking on the concept of the self.

Even though a distinction was drawn between mind and matter as early as Plato, Descartes was the first person to state the distinction between them clearly. He kicked off a principle problem in philosophy by postulating two different and independent kinds of substances: mind and matter. He included the whole range of experiences and the different modes of cognitive faculties within the category of the mind. On the other hand, according to him bodies exist independently of our thinking. It is on this notion of substance and his account of the relation of mind and body that his concept of self depends upon.

His entire project seems to be profoundly epistemological in nature. It is epistemological in the sense that his mind and body dualism came about as a result of his quest for a grounded knowledge of nature. He realized that the principles of philosophy should be based on self-evident truths, which are certain for all times and free from doubt and dispute like axioms of mathematics from which we can correctly deduce all other truths in a logical order, provided we do not go wrong in our calculation and reasoning. He was in search of an indubitable truth on the basis of which a whole philosophical system could be built. He wanted to find out a self-evident principle on which to base all further discoveries and researches. This motive of his to discover an indubitable truth led him to his famous principle – “Cogito ergo sum” – “I think, therefore, I am.”

Descartes employed the methodic doubt with a view to discovering whether there was any indubitable truth. He undertook to “reject as absolutely false” everything in regard to which he “could imagine the last ground of doubt.” His skepticism was at last

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halted by the certainty of his own existence, which he summed up in the famous *cogito* dictum. The central passage containing his line of reasoning is as follows: “But immediately afterwards I noticed that whilst I thus wished to think all things false, it was absolutely essential that the ‘I’ who thought this should be something, and remarking that this truth ‘I think therefore I am’ was so certain and so assured that all the most extravagant suppositions brought forward by the skeptics were incapable of shaking it, I came to the conclusion that I could receive it without scruple as the first principle of the Philosophy for which I was seeking…”\(^3\) From this he argued that however much one may doubt, one must exist in order to doubt, otherwise, one could not doubt have doubted. The certain knowledge about the existence of “I” is the starting point of all knowledge and the absolute stopping point of all doubts: “if you can know nothing else, you can at least know for certain you are real.”\(^4\)

His endeavor, then, was to discover the nature of ‘I’ that he knew for certain, existed: “And then examining attentively that which I was, I saw that I could conceive that I had no body, and that there was no world nor place where I might be; but yet that I could not conceive that I was not. On the contrary, I saw from the very fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it very evidently and certainly followed that I was; on the other hand if I had only ceased from thinking, even if all the rest of what I had ever imagined had really existed, I should have no reason for thinking that I had existed. From that I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think…”\(^5\) He concedes that the nature or essence of ‘I’ is solely thinking – “What then am I? A thing which thinks. What is a thing which thinks? It is a thing which doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels.”\(^6\) Thinking is the essence of the self. He says: “What of thinking? I find here that thought is an attribute that belongs to me; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am, I exist, that is certain……to speak accurately I am not more than a thing which thinks, that is to say a mind or a soul, or an understanding , or a reason, which are terms whose significance was formerly unknown to me. I am, however, a real thing

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\(^4\) Ibid, p.32.

\(^5\) Ibid, p.110.

and really exist; but what thing? I have answered: a thing which thinks……”\(^7\)

Descartes’ ‘thought’ is by no means restricted to the intellectual activities of the mind. He writes: “Of my thoughts some are, so to speak, images of the things, and to these alone is the title “idea” properly applied; examples are my thought of a man or of a chimera, of heaven, of an angel, or even of God…”\(^8\) It embraces everything which we now term as ‘conscious’ states and events. Thus, by employing the method of doubt, he found out that the only thing he could be certain of was his being a thinking being or his self-awareness or consciousness awareness. This activity of thinking was the domain of the ‘mind’ and it was different from the ‘body’. As early as in the year 1641, we have Descartes defining the indubitable existence of ‘I’ in terms of thoughts and then thoughts in terms of awareness or consciousness.

Coming to Descartes’ view on consciousness it can be said that it is a mark of the mental for him. The role of consciousness, for Descartes is primarily epistemic – it makes certain things available to the mind. In the cogito argument, Descartes finds reason to doubt all features of his mind other than what is consciously available to him. And, even than his conscious thoughts serve only as evidence of his own existence – they don’t give any further evidence that what they represent about things external to him either exist at all or exist as represented by the idea in his mind. In the contemporary times when we speak of consciousness we generally speak of it in terms of what it represents. Descartes was not so much interested in an analysis of consciousness in that way. Whatever idea of consciousness we have today of Descartes is just an aftermath of his interest to discover an indubitable truth. By simply having a thought (e.g. ‘I doubt’) I know that I am having a thought and this necessarily entails that ‘I exist’. This inference depends on the transparency of the mental i.e. one’s thoughts being self-evident to oneself and a reflective act i.e. any thought necessarily involving knowledge regarding oneself. Further, the intentionality of the thought is a part of what allows the meditator that he is not alone in the world – he has a thought of an infinitely perfect being, and he has other thoughts of material

\(^7\) Ibid
objects. From his thoughts of other material bodies and what they appear to represent – he is able to infer that God and the material world do in fact exist.

Descartes, thus, provides one of the purely psychological uses of the concept of consciousness when he defines thought in terms of consciousness. However, he does not provide a thorough analysis of the concept. Rather, he employs the concept in a way that grounds his epistemic claims in the *Meditations.* But the way in which he employs the concept is suggestive of an analysis: a conscious thought is a mental state that is somehow self-intimating. And all thoughts, according to Descartes, have this basic property. It is clear that Descartes’ project gives a central role to consciousness, but he nowhere gives us a thorough analysis of it. His attempt to associate thought with consciousness received severe criticisms from other thinkers. His account of consciousness is considered by some to be not an elaborate one but only rudimentary. It does not come close to a satisfying one. Descartes responds by stating that there can be nothing in the mind in so far as it is a thinking thing, of which it is not conscious and this according to him is self-evident. There is nothing that we can understand to be in the mind that is not a thought or dependent on a thought. We cannot have any thought of which we are not conscious at the very moment when it is in us. He says that he cannot doubt that the mind begins to think as soon as it is implanted in the body of an infant. It is immediately aware of its thoughts. Thus, consciousness according to Descartes is an intrinsic property of all thoughts by which the subject becomes aware of the thought itself.

After an analysis of the concept of the human mind as propounded by Descartes, let us proceed to know his idea of the human body so that we get to view his picture of the of the relationship between mind and body. The body in its intrinsic nature is exactly like every other material body. It is essentially an extended thing i.e. extended in space and defined by such properties as length, depth, height, mass, motion and spatial location. Together with other material or extended objects, it is composed of purely physical parts – molecules, atoms and subatomic particles – and governed by the casual process enshrined in the laws of physics. In his own words, “By the body I understand all that which can be defined by a certain figure: something which can be confined in a certain place, and which can fill a given space in such a
way that every other body will be excluded from it; which can be perceived either by touch or by sight, or by hearing, or by taste, or by smell: which can be moved in many ways not in the truth, by itself, but by something which is foreign to it, by which it is touched (and from which it receives impressions): for to have the power of self-movement, as also of feeling or thinking, I did not consider to appertain to the nature of the body: on the contrary, I was rather astonished to find that the faculties similar to them existed in some bodies.”

The body and the vast physical universe of which it is a part can be best thought of through the model of a machine which is governed by mechanical causation.

According to Descartes mind and body are two substances which exclude each other. Since they exclude each other there can be no interaction between them: mind cannot cause changes in the body and body cannot cause changes in the mind. His view is often described as substance dualism – where the soul is distinct from the body but is united with the body. Cartesian dualism argues for a view of the self as the subject of experience, according to which the facts about the body cannot provide logically sufficient ground for inference concerning the self. He says: “I have a clear and distinct idea of myself in as much as I am only a thinking thing” and that “this I (that is to say my soul by which I am what I am), is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body, and can exist without it.”

In holding that he was solely a thinking thing Descartes excluded body from his essential nature. Descartes famously held that, while the essence of the body is spatial extension, the essence of mind is thought. Thinking cannot be attributed to the body i.e. the material substance and extension cannot be attributed to the soul i.e. the spiritual substance. He writes: “For if we examine what we are, we see very clearly that neither extension nor shape nor local motion, nor anything of this kind which is attributable to the body, belongs to our nature, but that thought alone belongs to it.”

The mental and the spatial are mutually exclusive categories. One argument that he offers to support the distinction between mind and body is based on the indubitability of the soul or mind. He says that he can

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10 Rene Descartes, op. cit., p.91.
doubt that the body exists but he cannot doubt that his soul exists. Hence, the two cannot be the same. The relationship between the body and the mind is contingent. Soul can exist without the body even after the destruction of the body and this amount to the survival of a person even in a disembodied state. So, a person according to him is the soul. He held that the human mind (or self, or soul) in its essential nature is not dependent on a physical world. Minds are pictured as bodiless things that are filled with thoughts, impressions, feelings, experiences. Living corporeal persons are thought of as animated by minds. But minds and their contents, in their intrinsic nature, do not require corporeal embodiment.

Thus, he regards the non-physical substance of the mind to be what a ‘self’ essentially is, the body being a mere extra, no more necessary to a human being per se than the clothes one wears. So, according to Descartes, the real ‘I’ is something outside the material world altogether, an immaterial substance or soul temporarily inhabiting in the body. The self is essentially a conscious thinking thing devoid of shape, mass, location in space, or any other physical property, and governed by reason rather than mechanical causation. It is utterly distinct from the associated human body as it is from the material world in general, though it does interact with it. This is Descartes’ dualism: it is the proposition that there is an unextended place called the mind that acts upon the extended things in the body in general and the brain in particular.

In contemporary times, the close relation shared by the mind the brain has been established to a certain extent but Descartes’ dualism is just opposed to that. The self according to Descartes is consciousness rather than the body. But doesn’t Descartes thereby contradict the common sense notion of the self that we all nurture? Don’t we use the term ‘mind’ and ‘brain’ interchangeably, so that they must be regarded as the same thing – in which case the mind is really a part of the body? If the mind and the body are entirely distinct than how can the non-material mind influence the material body? How can mind be localized to the body? Why does consciousness vary with variation in the bodily states? Innumerable questions are what the mind/body dualism of Descartes leads to. So, Descartes’ dualism had to stand the test of the empirical truth that the self is always found in an embodied state. In order to
give an account of that Descartes had to bring in the idea of interactionism into his dualism. Interactionism presupposes a distinction between two substances with distinct essential attributes which nevertheless interact. Changes in the body brings about changes in the mind (as when the body’s sensory organs detect something very tempting to eat in the vicinity and produce, in the mind, hunger and intention to eat) and changes in the mind brings about changes in the body (as when the mind’s intention to eat the tempting food causes the body to salivate and proceed to eat it). Mixing up of dualism with interactionism by Descartes created a mess. It was completely absurd of him to attempt to explain why the one might cause changes in the other, since mind and body are utterly distinct categories. His alternative account (that the union of the mind and he body is a special category of thing which we cannot understand) is no explanation at all – it is merely to give up. There are other notorious difficulties about how that interaction is to be conceived.

But there are some who do not have any problem with the divide created by Descartes. In the introduction to Absar Ahmed’s *Concept of Self and Self-Identity*, Munawwar writes how Ahmed “convincingly vindicates that the basic position of Cartesianism is correct and that within the Cartesian system proper the ontological distinction of mental and physical events is rightly understood as involving a distinction of substances or logical types of subjects. That is, sensations (understood as conscious states) are to be constructed as belonging to, as modes of mental substance or self; while physical states or occurrences, such as neural discharge, are ascribed to, or modally on, body or corporeal substance.”

He further argues that the immediate data of our consciousness reveals to us in the same way a single and continuous self, assuring us that in spite of changes we are the same person that we are in our childhood. This consciousness of the permanent nature of our self that enters into all our actions is just as the one that tells us of the coming and going of experiences. The self is not something that can be divided into pieces, but an organic, indissoluble substantial unity. So, Descartes rightly propounded that the nature of the self to be consciousness.

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By focusing on the problem of true and certain knowledge, Descartes had made epistemology, the question of the relationship between the mind and the world, the starting point of philosophy. By localizing the soul’s contact with the body in the pineal gland, Descartes had raised the question of the relationship of mind to the brain and nervous system. Yet at the same time, by drawing a radical ontological distinction between body as extended and mind as pure thought, Descartes, in search of certitude, had paradoxically created intellectual chaos. Two of the greatest difficulties faced by the Cartesian view on self are the problem of individuation and identification. Descartes conception of the self is now rightly rejected by most philosophers and finds little favor with most scientists. But his misconceived talk of the ‘I’ has not yet been totally rejected.

Whether we agree or disagree with Descartes’ view on self, consciousness and the body, one thing that stands out about him is that after the Greek philosophers, it was he who started the second shift of thought regarding these important issues. This latter transition of thoughts from the Greeks was due to him. With him the soul morphs into a ‘mental substance’ and in his metaphysical dualism, the Christian ‘soul’ becomes ‘cognitivized’. The mind becomes identified with thinking and immediate self-awareness. “He in many ways shaped the early modern framework through mechanizing the lower, vegetative and sensitive, functions of the soul, while allotting cognitive power to the immaterial mind.”13 He has helped us in taking a leap about our views on self by his emphasis on the idea that consciousness is the only mark of the mental and it is opposed to the physical realm and this has been done by him through his insistence on relying only on the truth. He, thus, provides one of the first purely psychological uses of the concept of consciousness. However, he does not provide a thorough analysis of the concept. Rather, he employs the concept in a way that grounds his epistemic claims. But the ways in which he employs the concept is suggestive of an analysis: a conscious thought is a mental state that is somehow self-intimating. All thought, according to Descartes, have this basic property. It is clear that Descartes’ project while analyzing the concept of self, gave a central role to consciousness rather than the body. Of course, interpretations of Descartes’ account

differ significantly. But it is a fact that the phase of transition spearheaded by Descartes was sparked by new theories of mind and body. Therefore, it is striking that in our contemporary philosophy of mind, Descartes is frequently portrayed as the central figure responsible for the current prominence of the study of the self, consciousness and the body. He created a dualistic scheme with which the contemporary philosophy of mind is still in various ways occupied. It is still the case that by subscribing to the concept of matter as extended – with size, shape, motion, and position – and by offering mechanistic explanations of what was before explained by resorting to sensitive and vegetative souls, he reformed the principles according to which human cognitive powers were to be dealt with. Cartesian philosophy as Descartes’ philosophy is popularly known, exercised such a tremendous influence on the minds of people that all the subsequent theories of mind emerged as a reaction – either as an appreciation or as criticism against it.

3.3 LOCKE

Locke took a different route to an equally deep misconception of the nature of the self. In the history of Western Modern Philosophy, he is regarded as the founder of empiricism. His basic concern was with the issues of identity and diversity involved in the concept of a ‘person’ or ‘self’ and hence, can rightly be called the originator of our modern problems about personal identity. Like Descartes he believed that people have souls and produce thoughts. But unlike Descartes’ route to the self which was epistemological, Locke’s was psychological. Locke claims to be unconcerned with mind/matter dualism and mechanical explanation: “I shall not at present meddle with the Physical Consideration of the Mind; or trouble myself to examine, wherein its Essence consists.”14 He focuses on what might be somewhat called the psychological realm, with an aim to explore the domain of human understanding. His Essay is basically his portrayal of ideas of the limits of human understanding.

He begins with ideas. We have in our mind several ideas – such as those expressed by words like whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man,

elephant, army, drunkenness, and others. An idea is a broad concept and includes all the objects of understanding and contents of knowledge (sensory images, thoughts and memories, hopes and desires, and political and moral views etc, are all included in the term ‘idea’). So, thinking is a constituent element of the broader concept he calls “idea”. All of us are conscious of the fact that we think. Question naturally arises as to how do we get these ideas, about the sources of these ideas or from where do we derive them? A prevalent answer was that many ideas are innate as propagated by Descartes. Locke utilizes a great part of his book *Essay* in refuting innate ideas. According to him there are no innate ideas present in the human mind. He maintains that neither logic nor metaphysics nor principles of morality are stamped in our mind from birth. The wide diversity of human views on these matters itself is a strong argument against this concept, but even if an idea is universal and present among all persons, it does not mean that the idea is innate. In fact, the generality of such ideas can be better explained in terms of self-evidence and shared experiences.

Locke upholds the belief that our mind can be defined only in terms of it being conscious. There can be nothing in the mind of which we are not conscious or aware. If innate ideas like God and causality are present from birth, than even infants, savages and untutored men must be aware of them, but we find that even the most learned philosophers differ on these problems. Hence there are no such innate ideas. It must be understood that Locke is denying innate ideas, not innate faculties. The mind has no innate ideas, but it has innate faculties: it perceives, remembers, and combines the ideas that come to it from without. It also desires, deliberates, and wills. These mental activities are themselves the source of a new class of ideas.

All our ideas are derived from experience through senses. He calls the mind at birth a *tabula rasa*, an empty slate. Our mind is like a white paper bare of all knowledge, void of all characters without being furnished by ideas. It is experience and only experience from which the mind ultimately derives its knowledge. The vacant room i.e. the mind is furnished with ideas by two means: external sense (sensation) and internal sense (reflection). Our sense organs are stimulated by external things, producing in us perceptions or sensations. These produce in us such ideas as soft and hard, bitter and sweet, heat and cold and so on. Another class of ideas is
obtained by our perceptions of our own minds. For example, we remember some sensations we have got from external senses by observing the operation of remembering. He writes, “and such perceptions, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and all the different acting of our own minds – which we being conscious of, and observing in ourselves, do from these receive into our understandings as distinct ideas as we do from bodies affecting our senses. This source of ideas every man has wholly in himself : and thought it be not sense, as having nothing to do with external objects, yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be called internal sense.”

All our simple ideas are obtained from either the influence of external material things upon us called sensation, or from reflection in which the mind takes notice of its own acts and passions. It is “not the power of the most exalted wit, or enlarged understanding, by any quickness or variety of thought, to invent or frame one new simple idea in the mind, that has not been taken in by one of these ways.” Thus, sensation and reflection are the two fountains of knowledge from which all the simple ideas we have, or can have, naturally spring. External and internal senses are the windows by which light is let into the bare ‘dark room’ of the mind. We do not have any idea which is not received by any of these means. He calls the ideas that come directly from the senses primary qualities and those that come from reflection upon these he calls secondary qualities.

Locke was a realist. He did not doubt the existence of an external physical world, corresponding in some measure to our ideas. He speaks of ideas not only as resemblances of external things but also as pictures and patterns. Descartes too spoke of ideas and images: “Of my thoughts some are, so to speak, images of the things, and to these alone is the title of ‘idea’ properly applied; examples are my thought of a man or of a chimera, of heaven, of an angel, or (even) of God.” But Descartes did question the validity of the external world and sought to prove it by deduction from the one indubitable truth that he zeroed upon i.e. cogito. A striking view shared by both is that these images, pictures, or patterns are the mind’s only immediate objects even though they differ regarding the way that mind accumulates these ideas.

17 Rene Descartes, op. cit., p.60.
After a glimpse into the basic philosophical beliefs of Locke, now let us endeavor to understand his viewpoint on the concept of self, consciousness and the body with which we are concerned here. Let us begin with his conception of a ‘person’ or ‘self’. Locke often identifies person with self and draws no distinction between them: “Person is the name for this self.”\(^{18}\) It is to one and the same entity we refer to when we use the words – self, mind, soul, subject of experience and conscious agent. The term ‘self’ reflects something about us – namely, that we are self-conscious. He famously makes use of consciousness in his theory of personal identity i.e. the criterion that he thought identifies a person as the same over a period of time. Identity of person is the identity of consciousness. One remains the same person if one is conscious of being so despite the changes that a body might undergo. So, an understanding of consciousness is a must to understand Locke’s conception of the ‘self’ or the ‘person’.

The identity of the self is founded on consciousness of past events (viz. memory) and not on the substance of either the soul or the body. He enumerates the ‘self’ as “…that conscious thinking thing, (whatever Substance, made up of whether Spiritual, or Material, Simple, or Compounded, it matters not) which is sensible, or conscious of Pleasure and Pain, capable of Happiness or Misery, and so is concerned for it self, as far as that consciousness extends.”\(^{19}\) According to Locke, conscious thoughts constitute the self: “…it is that, that makes everyone to be, what he calls self; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things…”\(^{20}\) Locke’s definition of self contains within it the definition of consciousness: “[A person] is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places, which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it. It being impossible for anyone to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive.”\(^{21}\) He adds; “Consciousness is the perception of what passes in a Man’s own mind.”\(^{22}\) In his discussion of consciousness, he often mentions of self-consciousness.

\(^{18}\) John Locke, op. cit., p. 346.  
\(^{19}\) Ibid, p.335.  
\(^{21}\) Ibid  
\(^{22}\) Ibid, p.139.
Although he does not use the term in his Essay, yet, it is reasonable to take Locke as holding that there is such a thing as self-consciousness. He states that “Whilst (the soul) thinks and perceives….it must necessarily be conscious of its own Perceptions”\(^\text{23}\) and that “To be happy or miserable without being conscious of it, seems to me utterly inconsistent and impossible.”\(^\text{24}\) He seems to be suggesting through his writings that a conscious being is or can be conscious of itself. To be conscious of oneself means to be conscious that one exists. Consciousness of oneself is thus for Locke a kind of by-product of one’s consciousness of one’s thoughts and perceptions, that one is having them, what kind of thoughts or perceptions they are, and what they are thoughts or perceptions of.

Consciousness according to Locke stands for an individual thing which can persist and maintain its identity through a period of time. In the Essay this use occurs when Locke distinguishes one consciousness from another, or speaks of two or more consciousnesses, or says that the same consciousness exists at different times. By the same consciousness he means numerically one and the same and not qualitatively or specifically the same. He is definitely not referring to a property of a subject but of a subject in its own right. He took consciousness to be a property of the human mind. Consciousness is both smooth and halting awareness of one’s mental states. This distinguishes consciousness from other forms of awareness, and, in particular, from sensation. Further since consciousness always involves two ideas, a healthy idea of the mental states of the previous instant, and a smooth idea of a particular mental state enjoyed during that instant, it provides one with a conception of oneself as continuously existing, as having duration. This is a distinctive feature of consciousness, which distinguishes it from other mental activities.

Thoughts are elements of consciousness; they cannot exist except as elements of consciousness: “Consciousness….is inseparable from thinking [and] always accompanies thinking.”\(^\text{25}\) The very existence of thought consists in its being present to consciousness. What the mind is employed in thinking are ideas. Thinking is operating on ideas, and ideas exist only insofar as they are experimentally given to the

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\(^{23}\) Ibid, p.37.
\(^{24}\) Ibid, p.36.
\(^{25}\) Ibid, p.138.
subject of thought. By virtue of consciousness the subject knows different acts and states they are, as being its acts and states. Since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes everyone to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself/herself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being. As far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person. It is by the same self that now reflects on it, that the action was done. In the model of consciousness endorsed by Locke, one is not merely conscious of one’s various mental activities but at the same time one is also aware of one’s very existence. To be conscious that one exists involves an awareness of oneself as a thing. For Locke, consciousness that one exists is the same as consciousness that one is a thing. We can say that to be conscious of one’s existence is the same as being conscious of oneself.

In Locke’s philosophy consciousness is very important because it is the identity of consciousness that determines the identity of persons. He states: “As far as any intelligent being can repeat the idea of any past action with the same consciousness it had of it at first and with the same consciousness as it has on any present action, so far as it is the same personal self.” He thus gave a purely psychological account of identity. Locke conceives consciousnesses as successive beings, processes or events that take time to occur. The identity of a person is determined by its consciousness just as the identity of a living creature is determined by the identity of its life. But there is a difference between lives and consciousnesses. If a life existing at time $T_1$ and a life existing at a later time $T_2$ are one and the same life, than that same life must also exist at every time between $T_1$ and $T_2$: it must exist continuously through all the time from one to the other, without breaks or gaps. But the same requirement does not hold for consciousnesses. Locke holds that it is at least possible for a consciousness that exists at $T_1$ and also exist at a later time $T_2$, not to exist continuously at every time between $T_1$ and $T_2$ and yet be the same consciousness. Thus a single consciousness may have a gap and yet exist, and be the same consciousness, on both sides of the gap, or even multiple gaps. This is possible

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26 Ibid, p.139.
and there is no contradiction in it according to him. Something like this actually happens whenever an ordinary person falls asleep and sleeps for a while without dreaming. For there is no consciousness during dreamless sleep. Thus, when a person regains consciousness in the morning, having slept dreamlessly during the night, and the current consciousness being the same consciousness with the previous one, he/she is still the same person that he/she was yesterday, despite the interruption in his/her consciousness during the night. An appropriate account of personal identity must arise from a careful analysis of this concept of the self. Since self-conscious awareness invariably accompanies all human thought, it alone can both distinguish the self from every other thinking thing in the present and preserve its identity through time.

Thus according to Locke every element of our experience, every idea of which we are conscious, is a certificate of our own existence, as the subject of our experience. Since the very existence of self depends on consciousness hence it follows that consciousness is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for a morally vital sense of self identity. “It is necessary because no past thought or action was truly mine unless I now self-consciously appropriate it to myself; and from this it follows that I can now be justly punished as the agent who committed some past action unless I am conscious of having performed that action myself. It is sufficient because consciousness unites temporally distinct thoughts and actions from past, present, and future into a single person; since I can harbor concern for the happiness or misery of the future self that would justly suffer punishment for my present transgressions, deliberations about those consequences are relevant force in motivating our conduct.”

It can be understood as “as far as any intelligent Being can repeat the idea of any past action with the same consciousness it has of any present action; so far it has the same personal self. For it is by the consciousness it has of its present thoughts and actions, that it is self to itself now, and will be the same self as far as the same consciousness can extend to actions past or to come.”

It is often questioned if Locke uses consciousness and reflection (in Locke’s technical term) for the same type of mental actions? “Locke does distinguish between

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27 Ibid
28 Ibid
consciousness (in which thinking itself consists) and reflection (the second major source of ideas). According to Locke, the latter involves a more robust turning reflection upon oneself; children do not make mental operations their objects of thought until ‘pretty late’ and some people never acquire any clear, perfect ideas at all. By contrast, the former is constitutive of thought itself and is therefore ubiquitous. This instances a fairly common view at the time which distinguishes between the consciousness which is inseparable from thought, and second-order examination of one’s thoughts through a second act of perception.”

It is not justified to equate consciousness and reflection, as introspection and inner observation cannot be the same as he seemed to believe. One can be conscious of something (namely, a sensible quality) without thereby reflecting on it.

Does Locke equate consciousness and sensation? Consciousness is, obviously, a form of awareness; this is something in common with sensation, which is also, for Locke, a form of awareness. Consciousness is always directed inward. In this way it differs from sensory perception, which is awareness not of what goes on outside in the mind, but of what goes on outside it. So, consciousness is not the same as sensation according to Locke’s interpretation.

Now let us take a look at what Locke thinks about ‘body’. He believed in the independent existence of bodies as he was a realist. He concludes with certainty that our sensory ideas are directly produced by external objects or bodies that “really exist without us: these external objects affect our sensory faculties and actually produce that idea which we then perceive.” Regarding the role that the human body plays in the identity of the self, he argued that self-identity is not based on bodily identity. Body may undergo changes while the self remains the same. Even the identity of animals is not founded on their body as the body of animal grows and changes during its life. He thought that it is obvious that the identity of man presupposes the identity of body. Man unlike a self is the same man if there is bodily continuity. He says, “But, yet I think nobody, could be sure that the soul of Heliogobolus were in one of

30 John Locke, op. cit., p.289.
his hogs, would say that the hog were a man or Heliogobolus.”31 On the other hand identity of self is based on their consciousness. Take for example a prince’s mind which enters the body of a cobbler; to all exterior eyes, the cobbler would remain a cobbler. But to the prince himself, the cobbler would be himself, as he would be conscious of the prince’s thoughts and acts, and not those of the cobbler. A prince’s consciousness in a cobbler’s body: thus the cobbler is in fact a prince. Locke says that a person can only know herself or himself as the same thinking thing in different times and places by the same consciousness, “which is inseparable from thinking…When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will anything, we know we do. Thus it is always present to our Sensation and Perception.”32

But the interesting border-cases leads to this problematic thought that since personal identity is based on consciousness, and that only one self can be aware of his consciousness, exterior human judges may never know if they really are judging and punishing the same person or simply the same body. In other words, Locke argues that you may be judged only for the acts of your body, as this is what is appropriate to all but God; however, you are in truth only responsible for the acts for which you are conscious. This forms the basis of insanity defense: one cannot be held accountable for acts for which one was unconscious and therefore leads to interesting philosophical questions on moral responsibility. So, Locke’s conception of personal identity is founded not on substance or the body but in the same continued consciousness. If we equate brain with the body as in the contemporary times than Locke himself would not subscribe to such a theory as the brain like the body or any other substance, may change while consciousness remains the same. Therefore, self or personal identity is not the brain, but dwells in consciousness. The criterion of personal identity lies in the identity of consciousness, and in so far as we are concerned with the attributes of responsibility, and are therefore looking back to the past, that consciousness amounts simply to memory. His views seem therefore to entail that we can be legitimately held responsible only for what we remember. Locke’s view of a person is a self which has self-consciousness at least to the extent that he is conscious of his past as his own. It does not necessarily require any bodily identity.

31 Ibid, p. 137.
Thus, for Locke the ‘self’ is dependent for its existence on consciousness. In ‘every act of sensation, reasoning or thinking, we are conscious to ourselves of our own being.”\(^3\) It can be held that according to him the identity of the ‘self’ is actually the identity of consciousness. He being a realist believed in the independent existence of bodies but the human body plays no role in maintaining the identity of the self or person. Self, for its existence is solely dependent on consciousness and nothing else. Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is one of the first modern conceptualization of consciousness. Yet, his theory on consciousness remains remarkably unattended. This is because his remarks on consciousness are scattered and relatively scarce. There is no systematic discussion of the phenomenon.

Many challenges come in the way of interpreting Locke’s “same consciousness” theory of personal identity. The first problem is that it isn’t clear what consciousness is? The second problem is that it isn’t clear what the identity conditions are for acts of consciousness? Bishop Joseph Butler criticized Locke’s theory of self identity as circular, or question-begging, in that it makes identity of self depend on the identity of consciousnesses, but the identity of consciousnesses in turn depends on the identity of the person whose consciousnesses are in question. That is, there is no way to establish, or even conceive, that consciousness C\(_1\) and a consciousness C\(_2\) are the same consciousness C without making C\(_1\) and C\(_2\) be consciousness of the same person. Thomas Reid on the other hand insisted that the identity of a person is a perfect identity, wherever it is real, it admits of no degrees because a person is a monad, and is not divisible into parts. Reid also argues that Locke confused personal identity with the evidence that we have of our personal identity. Reid, in fact thinks that personal identity itself is a perfect identity; it is the identity of a monad and it is not further analyzable.

One of the most important difficulty with Locke’s explanation is that the self-conscious awareness he holds to be constitutive of personal identity is, by its very nature accessible only to the individual self. It follows that third-person judgments of personal identity are systematically liable to error. For the allocation of punishment and reward, human judicatures must rely upon the presumed association of conscious

personal identity with that of a living human body. Locke seems to have been little concerned with the difficulty of proposing an explanation of moral accountability that rests upon a criterion of personal identity that cannot be reliably applied by other observers.

Locke’s notion of the criterion of personal identity has received a great deal of attention in the recent times, largely because of some remarks of Wittgenstein – especially his remark that an “inner process stands in need of an outward criteria.” In modern time’s dissatisfaction with the Lockean account combined with Wittgensteinian views about the necessity of outward and observable criteria for psychological processes have led philosophers to emphasize on the bodily factors as criterion of personal identity.

3.4 DECARTES AND LOCKE – A COMPARISON

Both Descartes and Locke contributed immensely to the philosophical analysis and development of the concept of self. Both believed that conscious experiences play a very important role in defining the self. In fact, both of them considered consciousness to be the distinguishing mark of the self. Body according to both is secondary to the notion of the self.

But their views are not entirely similar. Descartes thought the existence of our own self is substantiated by the fact that we are thinking substances. But he was not so much interested in delving deeply into the constituting elements of consciousness or to know about its composition and structure. Rather he was much more interested in delineating the distinctions between the mind and the body in order to tell which among them represents the true nature of the self. Locke on the contrary wasn’t interested in the distinguishing the mind and the body as Descartes was. Locke was deeply engrossed in knowing the working of the mind or consciousness as he believed it to be the criterion of personal identity. Locke focused on what might be somewhat called the psychological realm with the aim to explore the domain of human understanding. For him what matters for identity is not that one is a substantial thing

34 Wittgenstein Ludwig, op. cit., p. 129.
that exists continuously through time, but instead, that one is in position to have a
unity of experience as oneself. Locke’s theory of personal identity owes a deep debt
to Descartes as he tries to exploit the psychological features of the self as propounded
by Descartes without insisting on the metaphysical aspects of Descartes’ concept of
the self. When we compare the views of Descartes and that of Locke on the self and
its identity, we will find that Locke’s contributions, despite being severely criticized
by Hume later on, stands out.

3.5 SPINOZA

Spinoza’s philosophy was greatly influenced by Descartes. He tried hard to ease
Descartes’ problem of ‘how to account for the unity of human beings given we are
made up of two distinct substances?’ His Ethics seems to be heavily indebted to his
engagement with the dilemma created by the mind-body problem.

According to Spinoza, if substance is to be defined in terms of self-subsistence
than Descartes’ view was misconceived. In Spinoza’s view, Descartes came very
close to a correct understanding when he said that, strictly speaking, God was the only
substance which was entirely self-subsistent (or ‘cause of itself’ in Spinoza’s
terminology). But even after coming so close to the truth, Descartes made a mistake
by claiming even mind and matter to be substances too. Contrary to Descartes’
dualism Spinoza vouched for substance monism. He believed in only one substance,
which he called God. He held that Descartes was wrong to ground his whole system
on the subjective perception of his own existence and thereby move on to prove God’s
existence. If God is the source of all reality and truth, as Descartes believed, than, his
existence cannot depend on the cogito argument. God must come right at the
beginning. Nothing else needs to come before. The world as a whole is a single
substance, whose parts are not capable of existing alone. There is only one underlying
reality of the world, and all other individual or particular things are its expression in
different forms. To use Spinoza’s words, apart from substance itself, everything else
is a ‘modification’ or ‘mode’ of the one substance i.e. God. He states: “So, too a mode
of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in
two ways.”

We, our house, all the different animals and plants, this planet itself are all modes. All the different distinctions like: substance and modes, eternal order and temporal order, active nature and passive nature, god and the world are in fact more or less the same for him. These dichotomies are synonymous and explain the same thing. Due to his acceptance of substance monism, Spinoza did not have to face the problem of interaction of mind and matter which haunted the Cartesian philosophy.

For Spinoza, mind and body are the different ways of conceptualizing what is actually the same thing. Mind and body are not two distinct entities, but different ways of considering one and the same thing – as having certain physical characteristics, or as having certain ideas. A single thing could be both extended and thinking. The body is a finite mode of the one substance considered under the attribute of extension. The mind is the very same mode of the one substance, but considered under the attribute of thought. His most direct statement of this doctrine is: “The mind and the body are one and the same individual, which is conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension.” His theory is a form of psycho-physical parallelism. It upholds that there is an idea in the human mind of anything that happens in the human body, and he argues subsequently that everything that he has shown about human beings applies generally to all individuals. So, every individual has a mind, and there is an idea in the mind of anything that happens in the body. It is important to stress the unqualified nature of this conceptualization: every single thing may be conceived as thinking or extended. This means that not only God is conceivable as thinking or extended but also humans, animals, plants, stars, rocks and any other entity one might contemplate. Here is where the problem arises: while most of us will unhesitatingly agree that humans think as well as at least some other existing things (such as animals and God, if he exists), an equal number of us unhesitatingly reject the notion that rocks and many other things think.

Spinoza believed that for every ‘body’, or ‘mode of extension’, there is a corresponding idea, and vice versa. Corresponding to a chair, there is the idea of the chair, and corresponding to a human body there is the idea of that body. Just as the attribute of extension is the totality of extended things, so the attribute of thought is

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36 Ibid, p. 44.
the totality of ideas. We do not merely have an idea of our body, but we have an idea of that idea. This accounts for human self-consciousness. The soul is not a simple unity, as Descartes maintained, but it is as infinitely complex as the body, since for every part of the body there is a corresponding idea. This explains how it is possible for us to be aware of many things at one and the same time. In modern terms, one might say that there is a single series of events, which can be considered either as brain events or as ideas. Since in Spinoza’s view bodily and mental events are one and the same thing, there is no question of the one causing the other. Nevertheless, they are all caused, since the universe is a deterministic system. Brain events can be understood causally as a part of an evolving mechanistic system; and ideas can be understood causally as part of an evolving logical system.

While many philosophers after Descartes took up the issues related to consciousness brought to prominence by Descartes, one possible exception was Spinoza. Most discussions of Spinoza and consciousness – and there are not many – conclude either that he does not have an account of consciousness, or that he does have one but that is at best confused and not that worthy. On some interpretations, he does not have much to say at all about consciousness. This is somewhat striking, given how much Spinoza had to say about ideas and the mind. But we must take into account that the focus of his endeavor was more to bring together what in Descartes were distinct concepts: will and intellect, judgment and perception, and the like, developing a fully naturalized account of the mind. From whatever can be gathered it can be said that for Spinoza the mental consists simply in representational content. The mind is a particular idea that represents a singular object, namely, the body that it is parallel to. Anything that can be inferred from the mind will have its parallel in the body that it represents. In Ethics, he argues that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things, which is to say that for each extended object, there is a parallel idea. This is called the mind-body parallelism. From this he is able to develop his theory of the mind: “The first thing that constitutes the actual being of a human mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which actually exists.”37 Each mind is itself an idea with a particular object – in the case of humans, the mind is the idea of the body, and whatever happens in the body will be represented in the mind (as he argues). At the end of Ethics, Spinoza describes the

‘wise man’ as the one who is “conscious of himself, and of God, and of things,” the clear implication being that those who aren’t wise fail to be conscious of themselves, god, and of things, even if these things are present to mind through a mental representation. The reference to the term ‘wise man’ suggests that Spinoza’s primary use of the term “consciousness” is moral.

Spinoza’s philosophy is sometimes examined to learn what he said about consciousness and to investigate possibilities which were introduced into the philosophy of mind by his system. But we must not jump to make assumptions that his philosophy of mind has been helpful or he made important contributions regarding consciousness. He did not have much to say about consciousness even though the coherency or at least the plausibility of his system demanded it. Human consciousness, for Spinoza, it seems, is nothing but the complexity of thought that is co-relate of the extra-ordinarily high complexity of the human body in extension. In this respect, Spinoza anticipates the conception of the mind that is presently emerging from studies in the so-called ‘embodied mind’ research program. Even though there can be detected such a contemporary element in his association of ideas with consciousness, yet, there is a strong unattractive implication to: not only am I conscious of absolutely everything that happens in my body; all stones, tennis balls, toasters, apples and frying pans are also conscious of absolutely what happens in their bodies. In order to avoid this implication, Spinoza needs a theory of selective consciousness, a theory about which minds are conscious.

In the Concept of Mind Gilbert Ryle attacked the Cartesian view of the mind as an immaterial entity which acts upon a non-mental body, the ‘ghost in the machine’ view. Another attack that has been raised against the ‘Cartesian’ body is that, the conception of some purely bodily component of a human being …is simply a figment of imagination. Both attacks are well-founded and end surprisingly with the same conclusion: we aren’t ‘bodies plus minds’ but unified beings with both mental and bodily aspects that is persons, agents, human beings. This can also be said to be Spinoza’s concept of man in the Ethics, which may not, however, be immediately apparent.

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Like most other philosophers of his era, Spinoza did not have well-developed views on consciousness and its place in mind. When it comes to consciousness, Spinoza was a man of his times and men of his times did not closely connect the mind and consciousness. He does not say anything about consciousness as such. Instead, it describes the way the mind knows itself and the limits on the mind’s knowledge of itself. Even though Spinoza’s main motive was to improvise Descartes’ dualism in order to pave the way for monism, yet, there is an ambiguity at the heart of Spinoza’s system, a systemic ambiguity that is absent from Descartes’ system. Whether one wants to agree with Descartes or not, it is generally clear what his proposals are; we are free to engage with him at a philosophical level. This is frequently not so in case of Spinoza where we often confront uncertainties regarding meaning. Some of the ambiguities may be representative of deeper problems in his philosophy. The Spinozistic (as well as Cartesianism) legacy regarding consciousness is valuable not because it bequeathed useful solutions to its heirs but rather burdened them with weighty problems that philosophers are still struggling with.

3.6 LEIBNIZ

Leibniz’s Monadology is a very concise and condensed presentation of his theory that the universe consists of an infinite number of substance called monads. Here he discusses the nature of the monadic perception and consciousness, the principles which govern truth and reason, and the relation of the monadic universe to God. His strategy for overcoming the problems apparent in Descartes and Spinoza was to (once again) go back to their basic assumptions and modify the ones propounded by them.

Leibniz opposed to the dualism of extended or unconscious substance and in extended or conscious substance. “Both physical and mental realms contain a series of phenomena which do not depend exclusively either on thought or on extension. If the mind is conscious thought and nothing but that, how shall we explain the countless minute perceptions which baffle all analysis, those vague and confused feelings which cannot be classified, in short, everything in the soul of which we are not conscious?”

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The soul has states, during which its perceptions are not distinct, as in a profound, dreamless sleep, or in a swoon. During these states the soul either does not exist at all, or it exists in a manner analogous to the body, that is, without consciousness of self. Hence there is in the soul something other than conscious thought: it contains an unconscious element, which forms a connecting link between the soul and the physical world.

Leibniz questions that in case matter is inert extension and nothing else like Descartes’ claim then, how can we find such things as attraction, repulsion, heat, and light in matter? Cartesianism can neither deny nor explain these facts. Due to dualism Descartes unhesitatingly affirmed that there is nothing in extended in the material world and nothing unconscious in the spiritual world. But according to Leibniz admission of such a thing is like flying in the face of facts, and asserting an absurdity. The concept of extension, as the Cartesians conceive it, cannot explain sensible phenomena. It is synonymous with passivity, inertia, and death, while everything in nature is action, movement, and life. Hence, we must of necessity suppose that the essence of body consists of something different from extension.

According to Leibniz, the state of extension, which constitutes the nature of the body, presupposes an effort or force that extends itself, a power both of resistance and expansion. Matter is essentially resistance, and resistance means activity. Behind the (extended) state there is an act which constantly produces it, renews it. A large body moves with more difficulty than a small body; this is because the larger body has greater power of resistance. What seems to be inertia or lack of power is in reality more intense action, a more considerable effort. Hence the essence of corporeality is not extension, but the force of extension, or active force.

Cartesian physics deals with inert masses and lifeless bodies only, and is therefore identical with mechanics and geometry; but nature can be explained only by a metaphysical notion that is higher than a purely mathematical notion. This higher notion is the idea of force. It is the power of resistance that constitutes the essence of matter. Only the effects of force are perceptible in matter, otherwise in itself it is an insensible and immaterial thing. According to Leibniz force constitutes the essence of
matter. Though force forms the essence of that which is extended, it is in itself in extended; it is therefore indivisible and simple. It is original; for composite things alone are derived. Finally, it is indestructible, for a simple substance cannot be decomposed. This paradox is intended by Leibniz to overcome the dualism of the physical and the mental world.

Thus far Leibniz speaks of force as Spinoza speaks of substance, and there seems to be merely a verbal difference between him and his predecessor. But henceforth there paths diverge. Spinoza’s ‘substance’ is infinite and unique whereas Leibniz’s ‘force’ is neither one nor the other. If there were as Spinoza claims, one single substance in the world, than this one substance would also be the only force and it alone would be able to act by itself and everything else would be inert, powerless, passive, or rather, would not exist at all. So, according to Leibniz the reverse of this is true. We find that minds act by themselves with the consciousness of their individual responsibility and they resists all other bodies and consequently constitutes a separate force. This force is essentially indivisible. Thus Leibniz denies the infinite diversity of individual forces or the abstract monism of Spinoza. Wherever there is action there is an active force. We find that there is action in all things and so each constitutes a separate center of activity. Hence, there are as many simple, indivisible, and original forces as there are things.

These original forces may be compared to physical points or to mathematical points but they differ from the former in that they have no extension and from the latter in that they are objective realities. Leibniz calls them metaphysical points or points of substance or monads. Each monad constitutes an individual. Each monad is independent of all other monads. It acts and depends only on itself in form, character, and entire mode of life. Whatever happens in the monad comes from it alone. No external cause can produce modification in it. Since it is endowed with spontaneous activity, and receives no influence from without it differs from all other monads, and differs from them forever. It cannot be identified with anything and it eternally remains what it is. It has no window by which anything can enter or pass out. Since each monad differs from and excludes all the rest, it is “like a separate world, self-sufficient, independent of every other creature, embracing the infinite, expressing the
It follows from this that two individual things cannot be perfectly alike in this world.

But here a serious objection arises. If each monad constitutes a separate world which is independent of all other beings, if none has ‘windows’ by which anything can enter or depart, if there is not the slightest reciprocal action between individuals than how to account for the universe and its unity? Are there not, according to his assumption, as many universes as there are atoms? How will he be able to cement these infinitesimal fragments together again to reconstruct the universe?

The answer according to him lies in the principle of analogy of monads and in the notion of pre-established harmony. Though each monad differs from all others, there is an analogy and family resemblance between them. They resemble each other in that they are all endowed with perception and desire or appetite. Those on the lower stages in the scale of things, as well as the highest and the most perfect monads, are forces, entelechies, and souls. Souls alone exist, and that which we call extension or body is nothing but a confused perception. Thus the dualism of soulless matter and denaturized mind is forever overcome. Leibniz empathically maintains that perception is universal. Beings inferior to man do not think as “there are infinite degrees of perception, and perception is not necessarily sensation.” The perceptions of lower beings are infinitely minute, confused, and unconscious; those of man are clear and conscious; that is the entire difference between soul and mind, perception and apperception. Consciousness is a function of perceptual distinctness, which itself is a function of how things are represented in the individual monad.

The perception of monads does not extend beyond itself. Having no windows by which anything can enter or depart, it can only perceive itself. We ourselves, the higher monads, do not perceive anything except our own being. It is our being alone that we know immediately. The real world is wholly inaccessible to us, and the so-called world is merely the involuntary projection of what takes place within ourselves. We know what takes place outside of us and have perception of the external world because we are like all monads, representatives of the universe. Since the monad

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41 Leibniz – University of Idaho in www.webpages.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/texts/weber%20... leibniz.htm.
42 Ibid
directly perceives itself alone and its own contents, it follows that the more adequate an image it is itself, the more complete will its perception of the universe be. The better a monad represents the universe, the better it represents itself.

All monads represent and perceive, or, in other words, reproduce the universe. But they reproduce it in different degrees, and each in its own way. There is a gradation in the perfection of the monads. In the hierarchy thus formed, the most perfect monads rule, the less perfect obeys. The central monad is what is called the soul of the plant, animal, or man; the subordinate monads grouped around it form what is called a body. “Each living being,” as Leibniz expressly states, “has a ruling entelechy, which is the soul in the animal, but the members of the living body are full of other living beings, - plants, animals , each of which has also its entelechy or governing soul.”43 He also says, “Each monad is a mirror of the universe, from its point of view, and accompanied by a multitude of other monads composing its organic body of which it is the ruling monad.”44

In the formation of organisms, the lower monads group themselves around the central monad. An organic body, rock, or a liquid mass is likewise an aggregation of monads, but without a ruling monad. Such bodies are not inanimate; for each of the monads composing them is both soul and the body; but they seem inanimate because their constitutive monads, being of like nature, do not obey a governing monad, but hold themselves in equilibrium.

Each monad remains eternally what it is, and the soul of the plant cannot therefore be transformed into an animal soul, or an animal soul into a human soul. The monads destined to become either animal or human souls wholly resemble inanimate bodies, from the beginning of the world until they are incorporated. By virtue of the law of pre-established harmony, the development of the soul runs parallel with that of the body. Although there is no real and immediate communion between the central monad and the subordinate monads constituting its body, there is an ideal correlation between the latter and the soul. With the reservation made above, it is correct to call the soul the

architect of the body. Human souls and all other souls are never without bodies. God alone, being pure action, exists without body. The immortality of the monads is not a result of a particular divine favor or a privilege of human nature, but a metaphysical necessity, a universal phenomenon embracing all the realms of nature. Just as each monad is as old as the world, so too, each one “is as durable, as stable, and as absolute as the universe of creatures itself.”45 The plant and the grub are no less eternal than man, the angels, and the archangels. Death is but a turning-point in the eternal life, a stage in the never ending development of the monad.

To think of the human being as a monad not only preserves the teleological character of humanity but also articulates the human identity within diversity. The human self is an identity in the sense that it remains the same throughout time and diversity in terms of changes in experiences, thought etc. Leibniz introduced a doctrine of degrees of consciousness. Consciousness is not just a peculiarity of human minds. Consciousness is a continuum and every monad is a focus of sentient experience (a feeling, a life) at some particular level in this continuum. Even though there are monads at many different levels of consciousness yet every monad is a real individual just because at whatever level of consciousness it operates, its experience is its own. The hierarchy of monads is differentiated by the degree of consciousness. This is to say Leibniz installs the individual as the basic metaphysical truth of the universe. In this way, he follows Descartes and the generally modern focus on the individual self.

Body and soul seem to act on each other. The former moves when the latter wills it, the latter perceives and conceives when the former receives a physical impression, and this is due to pre-established harmony, owing to which the monads constituting the body and the ruling monad necessarily agree, just as two perfectly regulated clocks show the same time. According to Leibniz, the harmony between the movements of the body and the states of the soul is the effect of the creator’s perfect work, as the perpetual agreement between two well-constructed watches result from the skill of the mechanic who has constructed them. If we assume that the creator constantly intervenes in his work than we would regard God as an unskillful

45 Gottfried Leibniz, op. cit., p. 79.
watchmaker, who cannot make a perfect machine and so has to continually repair what he has made. Not only does God not intervene at every moment, but he never intervenes according to Leibniz. If we view Leibniz’s theory of pre-established harmony from a theological point of view than it is preferable to the hypothesis of the assistance or perpetual concourse of God but it does not satisfy the curiosity of the philosopher any more than does the Cartesian theory. To say that the body and the soul agree in their respective states by virtue of a pre-established harmony is to say that a thing is because it is.

Leibniz had expected to solve the problem of the reciprocal action of soul and body in the simplest and easiest manner. Thought and extension are not substances which repel and exclude each other, but different attributes of one and the same substance. Hence, he assumed a direct connection between conscious phenomena and the physiological world. Each monad from the lowest to the highest, is both soul and body. However, the metaphysics of Leibniz finds itself as powerless as Cartesianism. The connection just mentioned would have been perfectly apparent if the human individual were a single monad, having as its immaterial essence the soul, and as its sensible manifestation, the body. But the physical individual is not an isolated monad, but a central monad surrounded by other monads, and it is the latter, or this group of subordinate souls, which strictly speaking, constitute the body of the individual. Since each monad is ‘windowless’, hence a real and direct action of the dominant monad upon the subordinate monad, or of soul upon body, is an impossibility in Leibniz’s system. He too faces the same interaction problem like that of Descartes. Leibniz, on the contrary, thought he had diagnosed a significant error in the Cartesian philosophical system and thereby provided a solution to Descartes’ problem in his account of consciousness.

Leibniz’s account treats consciousness as a natural phenomenon to be explained in natural ways. He attempted to bridge the gap between Descartes’ unbridgeable notion of mind and body by arguing that there can be immaterial bodies and material consciousness. Leibniz’s concept of consciousness and body in this light can be said to be the answer to the philosophical problem of mind-body dualism. But in order to have achieved this he would have been able to demonstrate how this theory
will allow for the transition from conscious to non-conscious states. If he could have done that (and he thinks he had done that), then, his theory of mind could have avoided many of the problems plaguing the Cartesian theory of mind. He himself was sure that he opened the door to a new theory, one that will open up a new science of mind. Even though Leibniz’s attempt could not lead to any logical conclusion, yet, his endeavor is praise worthy. Despite all the shortcomings in his theory of mind his very attempt to bridge the gap between material and the non-material entities should be treated as a step forward.

3.7 BERKELEY

Berkeley was greatly troubled by the rise of skepticism and atheism. He viewed materialism as the principle cause of this trend and made it his target to disapprove materialism in order to prove the existence of God. He was one amongst the most prominent proponents of Empirical Idealism. Idealism is the view that physical objects are mind dependent and have no existence outside the mind that contemplates them. That is, a physical thing exists only in the sense that they are perceived. In very simple words: matter doesn’t exist.

Berkeley was a hard-core idealist who tried to demonstrate that the only things we ever experience are perceptions, thoughts and feelings within our own minds. He attacked the theories of externality which to the unphilosophical mind is proved by visual evidence. His first and fundamental thought was that: “The Being of whatever is called by us a thing consists alone in its being perceived,” i.e., our determinations are the objects of our knowledge. “All objects of human knowledge are ideas…which arise either from the impressions of the outward senses, or from perceptions of the inward states and activities of the mind, or finally, they are such as are constituted by means of memory and imagination through their separation and rearrangement…” For him to be is to be perceived. He said that no such thing can exist which neither perceives nor is being perceived. It is not possible to think of a sensible object existing independently of any perceiver. One can conceive of something very far

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46 Berkeley - University of Idaho in www.webpages.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/texts/weber%20.../leibniz.htm.
away – suppose a house in an isolated jungle – which no one perceives. But if one is thinking about it, it is present in mind; and since it is present in mind, the supposed house is nevertheless mental. Thus, in his idealistic view all external reality disappears. The external world of physics is only a figment of imagination. Everything that we see or sense in any way is simply a representation of our minds. He claimed: “All the choir of heaven and furniture of earth – in a word, all those bodies which compose the frame of the world – have not any subsistence without a mind,” 48 But there must be some cause of the thoughts and sensations that occur in our minds. According to him this cause is the one undivided active spirit which produces these effects in our consciousness. Although we cannot perceive this spirit itself (any more than we could perceive such nonsense matter) we still have some notion of it, some apprehension of the greater reality beyond us. He claimed that while spirits are available to consciousness, they cannot be objects of understanding – they cannot be subject to scientific enquiry.

He strongly criticized the idea of abstract ideas. He believed that the human mind possesses no such abstract idea. Matter, an abstract, unperceived substance or cause, is considered to be an impossible and an unreal conception by Berkeley. It is a contradiction to say that matter exists without the mind. Regarding body he said that we do not know what they are. Bodies have no existence without a mind; their existence consists only in their being perceived or known. Being an empiricist he accepted the Lockean principle that all knowledge we obtain comes from sense and experience. However, he criticized Locke for the improper application of this concept. Locke held that primary qualities are present intrinsically in the object. But Berkeley pointed out that perception of so-called primary qualities by Locke such as shape and size depends upon the position of eyes, experience of solidity, sense of touch, idea of motion and so on and hence would always be relative to one’s position. A straight stick appears bent when placed in water; a bacterium appears larger when seen through a microscope. The distinction between primary and secondary qualities is, therefore not valid according to Berkeley and that the primary qualities are as

48 Ibid, p.115.
subjective as secondary qualities. That means everything is mind dependent according to Berkeley and there is no need to ever assume that anything material exists.

For Berkeley the only things which exist are those that are perceived. Since we never experience or perceive matter, therefore, matter does not exist. Johnson responded to this by kicking a stone and proving, as he thought, that stone exists. But did that really prove that the stone exists? Did Johnson actually ‘experience’ the stone? When he kicked it, he must have felt something hard and solid. He had the sensation of hardness, but he never felt the actual matter of the stone. He might have kicked a stone in the dream and experienced the same pain, but there is no stone present in this case. Berkeley insisted that all sensible objects are nothing more than collections of sensible qualities. So, they are merely complex ideas in the minds of those who perceive them. Therefore, there are no material objects or bodies. It must be understood that Berkeley did not deny the existence of sensible things i.e. of what is perceived directly by the senses. What he meant was that these ‘things’ are not material objects, but only ‘ideas’ present in the mind.

Berkeley’s metaphysical views led to his conception of consciousness. In his philosophy, we have the point of view that all existence and its determinations are constituted by self-consciousness. The universe is inconceivable apart from the mind according to him. A perception which is not in a conceiving mind is nothing: it is a direct contradiction. There can be no substance, he said, which neither conceives nor perceives, and which is yet the substratum of perception and conceptions. In the ultimate analysis, nature is constituted of only conscious experiences and not matter. Matter and external things, in so far as they are thought to have an existence beyond the circle of consciousness, are impossible, inconceivable. So, existence denotes conscious spirits.

The concept of the self is very important in grounding Berkeley’s notion of a spiritual substance or conscious spirit. The spiritual substance that perceives is itself the conscious being or the self: “This perceiving, active being is what I call mind, spirit, soul or myself.”49 He wrote: “What I am myself, that which I denote by the term I, is the same

49 Ibid, P.2.
with what is meant by soul or spiritual substance,” suggesting that the self and (self-consciousness) provide the notion of a spiritual substance. Berkeley regarded spirits or conscious substance to be unperceivable. As a consequence, spirits cannot be objects of understanding at all. One way to put the point is this: While spirits can perceive objects (and in doing be aware of themselves qua existent perceivers), they themselves can never be objects of perception. The gap between spirit and idea for Berkeley is therefore very wide. He wrote: “It is therefore necessary, in order to prevent equivocation and confounding natures perfectly disagreeing and unlike, that we distinguish between spirit and idea.”

He further added: “there is nothing alike or common in them: and to expect that by any multiplication or enlargement of our faculties, we may be enabled to know a spirit as we do a triangle, seems as absurd as if we should hope to see a sound.” It is thus obvious that spirits cannot be objects of scientific investigation. It is because of such a conception of Berkeley that Hume out rightly rejected Berkeley’s metaphysical account.

To a degree the Berkeleian spirit can be counted as a genuine substance and it may seem similar to the Cartesian mind, which is nothing but consciousness. For Descartes, the term ‘thought’ is to “… include everything that is within us in such a way that we are immediately aware of it.” A mind is that in which thought immediately resides; and thought itself constitutes the essence of the mind. But Descartes’ account overlooks some of the peculiarities of Berkeley’s account of substance. For Descartes it in not only consciousness but matter as well that constitutes reality whereas for Berkeley reality is only consciousness and nothing else. Locke also gave an important place to consciousness. But Berkeley rejected the central tenet of Locke’s theory, namely the determination of identity over time through consciousness of past actions. For Berkeley, while the ideas one perceives are fleeting, the awareness of oneself is not. In Berkeley’s view, thinking is a relation between oneself and one’s various objects. While one’s objects are fleeting, there is no similar reason to suppose that one’s existence is fleeting. Rather it is a constant against the backdrop of non-intrinsic, relational changes effected by the fleeting ideas. As a result there is a kind of self-consciousness which survives change.

50 Ibid, P.139.
51 Ibid
52 Ibid, p.142.
and continues indefinitely. Thus, Berkeley allowed the spiritual substance to remain self-identical over time unlike Locke. Again in the philosophies of Descartes and Locke a large share of attention had been directed to the idea of matter, which was held to be the abstract, unperceived background of real experience, and was supposed to give rise to our ideas of external things through its action on the sentient mind. Knowledge being limited to the ideas produced could never extend to the unperceived matter or substance or cause which produced them, and it became a problem for speculative science to determine the grounds for the very beliefs in its existence. Philosophy seemed to finally end in skepticism or in materialism. Berkeley took the whole problem in a new light and contradicted Descartes’ and Locke’s concept of an abstract substance. Berkeley declared the unknown and abstract substance to be the most incomprehensible assumption of all. He questioned the existence of matter and his originality as a philosopher consists in posing this important question rather than answering it.

Berkeley’s arguments are not without flaws and can be refuted to a certain extent. Bertrand Russell wrote: “He [Berkeley] thinks he is proving that all reality is mental; what he is proving is that we perceive qualities, not things, and that qualities are relative to the percipient.”54 Referring to the challenges to conceive an object which no one perceives, Russell answered: “I do not mean that I have in mind the image of a house; when I say that I conceive a house which no one perceives, what I really mean is that I can understand the proposition “there is a house which no one either perceives or conceives.” This proposition is composed entirely of intelligible words… I am sure that it cannot be shown to be self-contradictory.”55 It is possible for things to exist, which have never been conceived or perceived before, for example: the series of integers go on to infinity; it means that there would be many integers, which none has ever thought of, and yet, they exist. However, Berkeley can respond to this by saying that the integer only comes into existence when one thinks of it, or perhaps that God has thought of all the integers up to infinity.

Berkeley’s philosophical conclusions have never gained ascendancy within western culture. Nor have they been logically discredited. The logical cohesion of the

55 Ibid, P.627.
idealistic philosophy as developed in Western culture by Berkeley has been unrivaled. Yet logical cohesion is not the sole criterion of a philosophical theory. He was, in fact, only a partial empiricist and had failed to develop the empirical principles to their logical conclusions. This was pointed out by Hume, who we shall consider next.

### 3.8 HUME

Hume was a pure empiricist who assigned certainty only to what is experienced. As we can only directly know the mind he works within this constraint. From his viewpoint, what we call something to be known by senses is pure sense-data. Beyond what is immediately given, he did not recognize anything else as the object of our knowledge. He tried hard to prove that there is no foundation for us to recognize the universals such as substance, unity, identity, relation, causality and that they are only explicable in terms of some psychological laws. One of the most important steps in his philosophy was his endeavor to discover what is given to our consciousness through our senses. According to Hume what is to be found in the experience is nothing other than sense-data. Instead of admitting something like unity, Hume described the same phenomenon as a bundle of ideas.

Hume begins *A Treatise of Human Nature* with a statement, much like that of Locke’s empiricist epistemology: “All the perceptions of the human mind resolve into two distinct kinds, which I shall call IMPRESSIONS and IDEAS.”[^56] “Perception” is a general term and it means anything of which we are conscious. “Impressions” are the product of our five senses – colors, sounds etc. as well as feelings of pleasure and pain. “Ideas” are copies of impressions, differing from them only in being less forceful or vivid. It follows from this view that we cannot have any idea that is not traceable to some impression. Thus, abstract general ideas of the Platonic kind are impossible in Hume’s view. We think by putting simple ideas together, through the employment of memory and imagination, to form complex ones. Since such ideas, however complex they may be, are made up entirely of original materials derived from impressions, the range of our possible knowledge is limited by that of our

impressions. Hume draws a number of important philosophical conclusions from these epistemological assumptions. The physical world, as philosophers and laymen alike have conceived it, has an existence independent of anyone’s awareness of it. Hume, however, was unwilling to accept this account. All that we perceive through our senses are impressions and these are not external physical objects but contents of consciousness. They arise in our minds, he writes, “from unknown causes.”\(^{57}\) He believed that the origin of sensation can never be known. Since our ideas are copies of our impressions, their ultimate causes also must be unknown. We have no way of leaping the gap between the contents of our consciousness and an external, nonconscious physical world. Although such a world may exist, we have no knowledge of its existence.

Hume in the section “Of Personal Identity” [in *Treatise of Human Nature*] raises the issue about personal identity which holds clue to his conception of the self, consciousness and the body. “There are some philosophers,” Hume begins, “who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our Self; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity.”\(^{58}\) He famously questioned the existence of such a self and since then the number, intensity and variety of attacks has increased. Hume’s very famous assault on the self is as follows:“For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or the other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch myself at any time without a perception; never observe anything but the perception.”\(^{59}\) The self, he argues, is not experienced. What we experience are successive, changing impressions all of which are supposed to refer to the self: “Pain and pleasure, grief and joy’ passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is derived; and consequently there is no such idea.”\(^{60}\) One always perceives perceptions

\(^{57}\) Ibid, p.1  
\(^{59}\) Ibid, p.187.  
\(^{60}\) Ibid
and only perceptions whenever one enters most intimately into that we call the self. Therefore, the conclusion that he draws is that the self is nothing but a bundle of perceptions.

In order to affirm the argument in favor of his bundle account of the self he took the example of sound sleep where one would be insensible of oneself. The conclusion he drew from this was that while in such sound sleep one would be a perfect non-entity. Likewise, when perceptions are removed after death (so that one could no longer feel, see love, etc.) one ceases to be an entity. If it is the case that sleep makes one insensible of oneself, than, it must be that, when one is awake, one is sensible of oneself. Then, what is it to be sensible of oneself? The conclusion Hume drew was that: to perceive of one’s perception is to perceive oneself and to remove one’s perceptions would render oneself insensible of oneself and therefore would make one equivalent to being non-existent. The self, then, is equivalent to the contents of its perceptions and ceases to exist when it ceases to perceive, as in sleep or death. The self does not really exist as something truly real because it is not available to introspection. So, those who think that selves are real are plain wrong in Hume’s view.

Thus, “we are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement.” It is an error to think of the self as a substance. Through the process of association, we pass from the idea of succession to the idea of identity. In order to justify this absurdity, “we feign the continued existence of the perception of our senses, to remove the interruption,” or we imagine “something unknown and mysterious, connecting the parts” and thus “run into the notion of a soul, and self….to disguise the variation.” He held that identity is not in the different perceptions themselves, uniting them, “but is merely a quality, which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination, when we reflect upon them.”

The concept of the self is a fabrication achieved through association, imagination, and memory – especially memory as “memory above all [is] the creator, the artist-

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61 Ibid, p.188.
62 Ibid, p.159.
63 Ibid, p.189.
64 Ibid, p.193.
fabricator, of the self.” 65 The self is a retrospective construction of the imagination, and for this reason “memory not only discovers the identity, but also contributes to its production.” 66 It is only through memory that we can create the self by seeing continuity between past and present perceptions. It is only through memory that we can conceive that chain of causes and effects, which constitute our self or person. “The self, in other words, is a necessary fiction.” 67

Thus according to Hume, the true idea of the mind arises from memory, and “thought alone finds personal identity, when reflecting on the train of past perceptions, that composes the mind… [;]” 68 Memory as employed in Hume’s theory of personal identity is analogous to that of Locke’s consciousness of past actions. Indeed, Hume suggests that it is chiefly from memory that our idea of the identity of the mind or the self arises. So, memory is implicated in the very institution of the connections themselves: “We only feel a connection or a determination of the thought, to pass from one object to another. It follows, therefore, that the thought alone finds personal identity, when reflecting on the train of past perceptions that compose a mind, the ideas of them are felt to be connected together, and naturally introduce each other.” 69 Both memory and imagination are involved in this reflection upon the train of past perceptions. This is what yields the feeling of connectedness that is then confounded with identity.

He applied the conception of consciousness in his discussion of personal identity. His understanding of consciousness affects his “bundle” theory of the mind. It is perception that forms the content of consciousness; therefore, an account of consciousness is important in his conception of the self. What is consciousness? Or, more generally, what is a mind that is conscious? Hume remarks: “however extraordinary this conclusion may seem, it need not surprise us. Most philosophers seem inclined to think, that personal identity arises from consciousness; and consciousness is nothing but a reflected thought or perception.” 70 It seems that

65 Ibid, p 186.
68 Ibid, p.443.
69 Ibid, p.442.
according to Hume, there is no more to the self than what is consciousness understood as “reflected thought or perception”. Consciousness of the self is always consciousness of one’s past existence yielded through the associative mechanisms of memory. One is perpetually conscious of one’s past existence through memory which itself helps institute the ‘connections’ by which the idea of the self arises. For Hume, consciousness of the self is nothing other than consciousness of the various perceptions which together constitute the mind.

For Hume consciousness is nothing but a “reflected thought or perception.”

“[Consciousness] is nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.” The whole process “turning reflection upon himself,” can be compared to that of a theatre but the comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. “They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is composed.” If we are to know that mind exists, we must have some idea of them, which requires that we have some sense impression of them. But, Hume says, when he tries to discover his mind, he can find nothing but impressions and ideas, or the contents of consciousness. Since we can have no impression, we cannot have any idea of his mind and hence he concludes that the mind is unknowable. As he puts it, “They are the successive perceptions only that constitute the mind…” Thus he asserts that mind or self as realities different from the contents of consciousness, simply do not exist.

Thus, Spirit or Soul is a name for the totality of our inner state, i.e., an aggregate of ideas which flow regularly in our consciousness. Self or Ego cannot be perceived by reflection (internal knowledge). What we call a spiritual substance or mind or the self is not mind distinct from the contents of consciousness.

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71 David Hume, op. cit., p.443.
74 David Hume, op. cit., p.188.
75 Ibid
What started with absolutely certain knowledge of self’s existence as in the case of Descartes had to eventually face a challenge from Hume’s ultimate skeptical position that the self is not only unknown to us, but also that it is not necessary for us to have our mundane everyday experience. The central concept of the substantive self of the modern Western philosophy had been completely eroded by Hume. Regarding body he did not pay any heed because it was not much of interest to him. He refused to explore the external physical world beyond what was directly given to the sense impressions as contents of consciousness. So, regarding self, consciousness and the body it can be said that for Hume the existence of self is nothing but a myth. It is the flow of conscious thoughts that constitutes perception and it is responsible for creating the myth of a substantive notion of the self. He did not contemplate much on the domain of body.

Hume’s position is a little vulnerable. It seems to rule out the very ‘I’. If Hume really believed what his arguments led him to believe, the ‘I’ to whom he attributed his belief would be a fiction or referring to some fiction. Something in Hume’s concept of the self had clearly gone wrong. His error was to look for the wrong kind of entity. Kant believed that what Hume was looking for in the wrong place was something to tie experiences together. He pointed out in *The Critique of Pure Reason* that Hume was wrong in trying to locate the self in perceptions. Self is not an individual or group of perceptions but something that has to be presupposed for perception itself to occur. But there is an element that is very modern in Hume’s sentiments. In the last century, thinkers approaching the world from different ways have arrived at similar conclusions like that of Hume. Existentialists, notably Sartre, have emphasized how the self is not a thing. Postmodernists have argued that the self is merely a node in a network of symbols and signs. The popularization of neuroscience has done most to disseminate the idea that the self is nothing but an illusion. Nowhere is there a place in the brain where the neurons or neural activities are organized into anything like the self. Hume’s notion of the self can be said to be a prelude to such a school of thought.
3.9 KANT

He can be credited for eradicating the last trace of the medieval world view from the modern philosophy. He not only reformulated empiricism but at the same time thoroughly modified rationalism. It was due to him that the key ideas of earlier rationalism and empiricism were joined into a powerful model of the subjective origins of the fundamental principles of both science and morality, and laid the ground for much in the philosophy of the 19th and 20th centuries. It can be said that Kant had made some very deep-running observations about consciousness and knowledge of the self.

Kant’s quest was to know about the necessary conditions of experience. Reflection upon this led him to bring about a Copernican revolution in philosophy: “Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects…We must…make trial whether we may not have more success in tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge.”76 He argued that experience possible for us due to the mind’s receptive, synthetic and conceptualizing capacities. This further led him to believe that the distinction between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves is fundamental. In trying to answer what can be known by us, Kant was led to consider what minds must be like in order to be capable of knowledge. To Kant, the mind is not Locke’s blank paper waiting to be filled by experience. The mind comes furnished with a set of pure a priori concepts, categories, the function of which is to organize incoming sensory informations. The mind according to Kant synthesizes and actively interprets the incoming informations and imposes meaning on the materials of experiences. This means that the meaning derived from experience is determined by the structure of the mind. This theory of the active cognizer stands behind his famous philosophical doctrine i.e. the thesis that the order and regularity in what we call nature is brought by ourselves. We would not have been able to cognize anything in case the nature of our mind had not originally put it there.

Kant held that the things that we perceive and think about are dependent for their nature and existence on the necessary structure of our sensibility and

understanding. The world as experienced by us, while dependent in part on the nature of the objects we perceive, is also in part dependent on our own cognitive constitution i.e. our psychological and physiological make-up. Experience is the causal outcome of the objects effecting our cognitive constitution. The cognitive constitution is responsible for making objects appear as they do to us. He investigates those general features that constitute the very framework of empirical researches. The spatio-temporality of nature and the existence of discoverable law – are alike attributed by Kant to constitution of the human mind and thereby he draws the conclusion that empirical enquiry can yield us knowledge only of appearances – of the appearances that things present to beings constituted as we are. Experience and scientific investigation can yield no knowledge at all of things as they are in themselves including ourselves. Thus, all the characteristics of natural things including ourselves are thoroughly conditioned by features which have their source in the human cognitive subject. He claimed that three kinds of synthesis are required to organize information: apprehending in intuition, reproducing in imagination, and recognizing in concepts. The primary subjective sources are: the sensibility and the understanding. But considered from the empirical standpoint i.e. without regard to the necessary conditions of possible experience, the things we perceive and think about are perfectly real and mind-independent. Since, things as they are in themselves are transcendentally real i.e. have a reality independent of necessary conditions of any possible experience we can never know anything about them except in the way they appear to us..

Thus, Kant revolutionized philosophy. He showed that the mind through its innate categories constructs our experience along certain lines (space, time, causality, self, etc.). He held that cognitive features of the mind have a priori origins, i.e., they are present in the mind before experience. They are necessary to have experience. They are necessary and universal features. We can know these truths only by using a priori methods. We cannot learn these things from experience. So, in his view thinking and experiencing can give no access to things as they really are. We can think as hard as we like, but we will never be able to escape the innate constraints of our minds. Three ideas define the basic shape or the cognitive architecture of Kant’s
model and its dominant method. They have all become part of the foundation of cognitive science. They are:

1) The mind is a complex set of abilities or functions.

2) The functions crucial for mental, knowledge-generating activity are spatio-temporal processing of, and application of concepts to, sensory inputs. Cognition, thus, requires concepts as well as percepts.

3) These functions are forms of what Kant called synthesis. Synthesis (and the unity in consciousness required for synthesis) is central to cognition.

The major work so far as Kant’s views on the mind are concerned is the monumental *Critique of Pure Reason*. Mind is central to *The Transcendental Aesthetics* and *The Transcendental Deduction* sections of this famous book of his. But Kant never made any attempt to develop a systematic philosophy of mind. He himself acknowledged that his view of mind and consciousness were inessential to his main purpose. He stated that: “Enquiry…. [into] the pure understanding itself, its possibility and the cognitive faculties upon which it rests... is of great importance for my chief purpose, … [but] does not form an essential part of it”77 Indeed, his oft repeated position regarding this was one of skepticism. His concept of the self is a result of his response to Hume in part. Hume had conceived of experience as a series of impressions that provide the raw material for various mental operations in accordance with the strictly contingent laws of human psychology (of memory, of association, etc.). As against this, Kant argued that the content of experience is necessarily subject to the pure concepts of the understanding in general. The subject or the self is a part of what makes experiences possible for us. According to Kant the notions of substance and cause in particular play a necessary and special transcendental role in experience, as against the Humean view of these notions as psychological excrescences entirely without rational justification. He rejected the Cartesian claims that we have a privileged self-knowledge and endorsed that we can have no positive knowledge about the nature of the mind. In the ‘transcendental illusion’, he discerned the study of

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the nature of objects independently of the conditions of possible experience by the self, and ‘rational psychology’, as pioneered by Descartes and claimed to identify four fallacies in Cartesian inferences. They are:

(i) That I am a thinking substance.

(ii) That this substance is simple and indivisible.

(iii) That it is a conscious person.

(iv) That its existence is independent of the body.

He did not agree with Descartes’ conception of the self. Kant wished to justify a conviction in physics as a body of universal truth. In Kant’s thought there are two components of the self: the inner-self and the outer-self. He used inner sense to defend the heterogeneity of body and soul – bodies are objects of outer sense and souls are objects of inner sense.

About the knowledge of the ‘self’ Kant says that “Man…, who knows the rest of nature solely through the sense, knows him also through pure apperception; and this, is indeed, in acts and inner determinations which cannot regard as impressions of senses.”78 Neither apperception of self nor empirical consciousness of self as the object of particular representations yield knowledge of oneself as one is but only as one appears to oneself: “…know even ourselves only… as appearance…”79 “Inner sense… represents to consciousness even our own selves only as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves. For we intuit ourselves only as we are inwardly affected [by ourselves]”80 Even though we seem to be directly conscious of features of ourselves, we in fact have the same kind understanding of ourselves as we have of features of other things in general. We know ourselves in just the same way as we know of any other object – only as it appears to us. When we are conscious of ourselves as a subject and an agent by acts of apperception, we appear to ourselves to be substantial, simple and continuing entity unlike what was assumed by Hume. Kant

80 Ibid. p.367.
states: “I am conscious of myself as the single common subject of a certain group of experiences by being conscious of the identity of the consciousness in… conjoined…representations.”

His concept of the self has a unity of self reference. He confirms that the impressions we perceive have one single common aim and that self is the subject of all experiences. The most important special feature of consciousness of self is that one is not or need not be conscious of any properties of oneself. No matter whatever one is conscious of one has the same consciousness of the self – thinking, perceiving, laughing and being miserable and so on. What Kant had in his mind is nicely captured in the remark: “to think of myself as a plurality of things is to think of my being conscious of this plurality, and that pre-requires as undivided me.”

Kant expressed the thought this way: “through the ‘I’, as simple representations, nothing manifold is given”

Again, “the I that I think is distinct from the I that it… intuits…; I am given to myself beyond that which is given in intuition.” When one is conscious of oneself as a subject, one has a bare consciousness of self in which nothing manifold is given. According to Kant, the identifying properties as well as any other properties of oneself is not required to be known in order to refer to oneself as oneself. Hence, his official view may be said to be that we can know nothing about the mind’s structure and its composition.

When we are conscious of ourselves as a subject, we are conscious of ourselves as the “single common subject,” of a number of representations. But one’s consciousness of oneself as a subject is just bare consciousness of self which yields no knowledge of the self as it is. According to Kant the bare consciousness of self is “very far from being knowledge of the self.” The reason that one appears so is not that the self is some strange, indefinable being but because of our cognitive structure. Whatever the commitments of his philosophy were, Kant the person believed that the soul is simple and persists beyond death. He found materialism utterly repugnant. Regarding the working of the mind we know that it has forms of intuition in which it

81 Ibid, p.240.
82 Ibid
83 Ibid, p.248.
84 Ibid, p.368.
86 Ibid, p.158.
must locate things spatially and temporally, that it must synthesize the raw manifold of intuition in three ways and that consciousness must be unified, and so on. But we can never have concrete knowledge of the working of the mind.

The unity of consciousness is a single act of consciousness, which makes one conscious of a number of representations and objects of representation. By ‘unity of consciousness’, Kant seems to have the following in mind: I am conscious not only of a single experience but of many experiences at the same time. To be a single integrated group of experiences or one person’s experiences requires two kinds of unity:

1) The experiences must have a single common subject.
2) The consciousness that this subject has of represented objects or representations must be uniform.

Therefore, Kant upheld that unity of experience and consciousness are integral to the concept of the self. It is a central feature of the mind because of which all appearances are united into one experience. Kant used consciousness of self as a starting point of deductions. He also called the unity of consciousness as the unity of apperception. But this unity is not the category of unity.

Kant’s model of self is a response to a purely material based inductive model of self proposed by Hume. Hume’s self is a passive observer similar to watching one’s life pass before as a play as on screen. Kant however has a rationalistic motive and posits that the mind actively manipulates data through acts of synthesis. Even though the model propounded by Kant is not without flaws yet, his use of synthesis from the faculties in the mind for unifying objects, representations, experiences, and consciousness into a coherent reference to the self has implications in the present day cognitive psychology. He is the first one to have introduced a radical distinction between two kinds or two aspects of consciousness. On the one hand we are self-conscious subjects and on the other hand we are conscious of ourselves as objects where both subject and object are to be understood as subject and object of thought and experience. For Kant, as a subject of thought and experience, I am conscious of myself as the subject, or perhaps better the agent, of a pure spontaneity or self-
determining activity, ordering given representations so that all objects of representation at all including oneself can be perceived, recognized, thought about. As an object of thought and experience, I am, like any other object, represented to myself by the way of that very activity of ordering representations which makes possible the representations of any and all objects of representation. Therefore, Kant argues, as the active thinking subject, I cannot be an object to myself. For any representation of an object presupposes that activity, whose subjects thus cannot itself be represented as objects.

Kant held that no mathematical model of the mind is possible. His contribution to the understanding of our mind came largely as a by-product of his main project i.e. his attempt to determine what we can know. His treatment of the mind is remarkably scattered and sketchy since mind was never treated in its own right. Even though his ideas on mind came as an off-shoot of his other quests, yet they came to have an enormous influence on his successors. His view has been met in the recent years with a flurry of challenges. Among the issues most commonly raised are the following: Is Kant correct in distinguishing our consciousness of ourselves as subjects and as objects? Supposing he is correct, is he correct in the way he characterizes this distinction? Kant’s subject is a thinking subject. We are for Kant primarily mental objects. Nevertheless, it is clear that he also asserts the existence of human bodies affected by other bodies and as the mediators between external objects and our representations of them. Is our body then, also an essential component of what we call ourselves as an object? Even if it seems so, yet, Kant had not acknowledged the human body as being a component of consciousness neither of when I am conscious of myself as an object of consciousness nor as a component of consciousness of myself as the subject of thought and experience.

A question naturally arises regarding the internal consistency of the ‘critical’ philosophy. When he speaks of our sensibility and our understanding as the source of space, time, and the categories, it must be to ourselves as we are in ourselves that he is referring. But this conclusion appears to be in direct contradiction to the doctrine that nothing can be known of things (including ourselves) as they are in themselves.
Kant’s synthesis sees knowledge as a complex and a composite affair. The sensory element is certainly important, but in sensory reception, the mind is organized, unified by the mind. This is both an active and a rational process. Kant concludes that we come to understand the world of nature neither through sense impressions nor through the clear and distinct ideas of the rationalist. Indeed, nature does not give the human mind its laws at all. Rather, the mind imposes laws on the nature by the way it functions. Mind is the law-giver to nature. We are no longer dealing with an external world to which the mind responds but a world constructed by the mind. The power of the mind to influence perception is now well accepted and illustrated in a variety of illusions. In Kant’s day, the emphasis on the perceived world as opposed to the ‘real’ world was radical. In general structure, Kant’s model of the mind was the dominant model in the empirical psychology that flowed from his work. But surprisingly his ideas on mind which came as an off-shoot of his other quests came to have an enormous influence on his successors. His conception of the mind has traces of contemporary functionalism i.e. the view that to understand the mind, we must study what it does and can do and its functions.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This phase called as the modern age in philosophy can be said to have brought about a renaissance in terms of progress in human ways of thinking. The expositions and discussion of the modern thoughts on the mind and the body have enabled us to get a clear sense of the importance of these philosopher’s ideas, many of which continue to define our current philosophical perspectives. Time and again, we return to the great early modern rationalist and empiricist thinkers for instructions and inspirations. Philosophy of Mind is no exception to this rule and as we unfold their individual perspectives we realize that they have much to offer to the contemporary debates that are ongoing in this branch of Philosophy. The main objective of this chapter was to set out clearly the views on mind-body held by each of these six figures: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz – the rationalist and Locke, Berkeley and Hume – called the empiricists along with the views of Kant – the other important modern philosopher who played a vital role in shaping the course of the philosophy of mind. Each of these modern thinkers has a distinct stance on the nature of mind that can be found in their
central texts. By exploring their concepts of self, consciousness and the body we have come to understand the various contexts in which these philosophers perceive them. It has to be kept in mind that early modern conception of consciousness and body with regard to the self is something that has been extracted from their works by taking into account the particular contexts and their different aims.

For Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza – each in his own highly distinctive way – it is the existence of a rational soul or mind that accounts for the consciousness enjoyed by the individual human being. For Berkeley, Locke and Hume – again, each for very different reasons and in different ways – consciousness cannot or should not be accounted for by designating it as the activity of a particular substance. All of them believe that human minds and their thoughts, feelings, choices and decisions have a genuinely causal role in human actions. It certainly seems worthy to have explored what light each thinker has shed on our topic of discussion, even though what we unearthed is more likely to be a number of interesting hints and exploratory ideas rather than any full-blown solutions. We must keep in mind that in our contemporary philosophy of mind some of the modern philosophers, especially, Descartes, and Locke, are frequently portrayed as central figures responsible for the prominence of consciousness. Thus, it is hoped that by shedding light on their views on self, consciousness and the body, this chapter taken as a whole has managed to advance our understanding of the early modern philosophy of mind more generally.