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*Meeting of the Aristotelian Society at 21, Bedford Square, London, W.C.1, on 11th March, 1957, at 7.30 p.m.*

## IX.—PERSONAL IDENTITY AND INDIVIDUATION.

*By* B. A. O. WILLIAMS.

THERE is a special problem about personal identity for two reasons. The first is self-consciousness—the fact that there seems to be a peculiar sense in which a man is conscious of his own identity. This I shall consider in Section 3 of this paper. The second reason is that a question of personal identity is evidently not answered merely by deciding the identity of a certain physical body. If I am asked whether the person in front of me is the same person as one uniquely present at place *a* at time *t*, I shall not necessarily be justified in answering ‘yes’ merely because I am justified in saying that this human body is the same as that present at *a* at *t*. Identity of body is at least not a sufficient condition of personal identity, and other considerations, of personal characteristics and, above all, memory, must be invoked.

Some have held, further, that bodily identity is not a necessary condition of personal identity. This, however, is ambiguous, and yields either a weak or a strong thesis, depending on one’s view of the necessity and sufficiency of the other conditions. The weaker thesis asserts merely that at least one case can be consistently constructed in which bodily identity fails, but in which the other conditions will be sufficient for an assertion of personal identity; even though there may be some other imaginable case in which, some other condition failing, bodily identity *is* a necessary condition of personal identity. The stronger thesis asserts that there is no conceivable situation in which bodily identity would be necessary, some other conditions being

always both necessary and sufficient. I take it that Locke's theory<sup>1</sup> is an example of this latter type.

I shall try to show that bodily identity is always a necessary condition of personal identity, and hence that both theses fail. In this connexion I shall discuss in detail a case apparently favourable to the weaker thesis (Section 1). I shall also be concerned with the stronger thesis, or rather with something that follows from it—the idea that we can give a sense to the concept of a *particular personality* without reference to a body. This I shall consider chiefly in Section 4, where the individuation of personalities will be discussed; the notion occurs, however, at various other places in the paper. The criterion of bodily identity itself I take for granted. I assume that it includes the notion of spatio-temporal continuity, however that notion is to be explained.

In discussions of this subject, it is easy to fall into ways of speaking that suggest that “bodily” and other considerations are easily divorced. I have regrettably succumbed to this at some points, but I certainly do not believe that this easy divorce is possible; I hope that both the general tenor of my thesis and some more direct remarks on the subject (Section 2) will show why.

1. *Deciding another's identity.* Suppose someone undergoes a sudden and violent change of character. Formerly quiet, deferential, church-going and home-loving, he wakes up one morning and has become, and continues to be, loud-mouthed, blasphemous and bullying. Here we might ask the question

(a) Is he the same person as he used to be?

There seem to be two troubles with the formulation of this question, at least as an *identity* question. The first is a doubt about the reference of the second ‘he’ if asked the question “as *who* used to be?”, we may well want to say “this person”, which answers the original question (a) for us. This is not a serious difficulty, and we can easily avoid it by rephrasing the question in some such way as

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<sup>1</sup> *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, 27.

(b) Is this person the same as the person who went to sleep here last night?

We do not, however, *have* to rephrase the question in any such way; we can understand (a) perfectly well, and avoid paradox, because our use of personal pronouns and people's names is malleable. It is a reflection of our concept of 'a person' that some references to *him* cannot be understood as references to *his body* or to parts of it, and that others can; and that these two sorts of reference can readily occur in one statement ("He was embarrassed and went red.") In the case of (a), the continuity of reference for 'he' can be supplied by the admitted continuity of reference of 'his body', and the more fundamental identity question can be discussed in these terms without any serious puzzlement.

The second difficulty with (a) is that it is too readily translated into

(c) Is he the same sort of person as he used to be?  
or possibly

(d) Has he the same personality as he used to have?

But (c) and (d) are not identity questions in the required sense. For on any interpretation, 'sort of person', and on one interpretation, 'personality', are quality-terms, and we are merely asking whether the same subject now has different qualities, which is too easy to answer.

But this is only one interpretation of 'personality'. It corresponds interestingly to a loose sense of 'identity', which is found for instance in Mr. Nigel Dennis' novel *Cards of Identity*. There 'identity' is often used to mean 'a set of characteristics', and 'giving someone an identity' means 'convincing someone that he is a certain sort of person'. It does not, however, only mean this; for Mr. Dennis' Identity Club do not stop at giving someone a new character—they give him a new background as well, and a local sponger is made by their persuasive methods not just into a submissive old-style butler, but into such a butler who used to be at sea and has deserted his wife.

We might feel that this was the point at which something specially uncanny was beginning to happen, and that this

was the kind of anomalous example we were really looking for—the uncanniness of someone's acquiring a new past is connected with our increasing reluctance to describe the situation as one in which the same man has acquired a new set of qualities. Here we have one powerful motive for the introduction of memory. It can be put by saying that there are, or we can imagine, cases where we want to use some term like 'personality' in such a way that it is not a type-expression, meaning 'set of characteristics', but is a particular term meaning something like *individual* personality. It may seem that this particularity is attained by reference to memory—the possession of a particular past. Thus we are concerned here with cases more drastic than those in which for instance people say "it has made a new man of him", or even "he is not the same person as he used to be" in the sense suggested by a change of character; these cases we can too readily redescribe. Thus we may put our question in the barbarous form

(e) Is the (particular) personality he has now the same as the one he had before?

We must now see whether we can make sense, in terms of memory, of the idea of a particular personality; and whether there can be personal identity without bodily identity.

In doing this, two obvious but important features of memory have to be borne in mind.

(I) To say "A remembers x", without irony or inverted commas, is to imply that x really happened; in this respect 'remember' is parallel to 'know'.

(II) It does not follow from this, nor is it true, that all claims to remember, any more than all claims to know, are veridical; or, not everything one seems to remember is something one really remembers.

So much is obvious, although Locke<sup>2</sup> was forced to invoke the providence of God to deny the latter. These points have been emphasised by Prof. A. G. N. Flew in his discussion of Locke's views on personal identity<sup>3</sup>. In formu-

<sup>2</sup> *loc. cit.* §13 He is speaking, however, only of the memories of actions.

<sup>3</sup> *Philosophy*, 1951.

lating Locke's thesis, however, Prof. Flew makes a mistake; for he offers Locke's thesis in the form "if X can remember Y's doing such-and-such, then X and Y are the same person." But this obviously will not do, even for Locke, for we constantly say things like "I remember my brother joining the army" without implying that I and my brother are the same person. So if we are to formulate such a criterion, it looks as though we have to say something like "if X remembers doing such-and-such, then he is the person who did that thing." But since "remembers doing" means "remembers himself doing", this is trivially tautologous, and moreover lends colour to Butler's famous objection that memory, so far from constituting personal identity, presupposed it. Hence the criterion should rather run: "if X claims to remember doing such-and-such. . . ." We must now ask how such a criterion might be used.

Suppose the man who underwent the radical change of character—let us call him Charles—claimed, when he woke up, to remember witnessing certain events and doing certain actions which earlier he did not claim to remember; and that under questioning he could not remember witnessing other events and doing other actions which earlier he did remember. Would this give us grounds for saying that he now was or had, in some particular sense, a different personality? An argument to show that it did gives us such grounds might be constructed on the following lines.

Any token event E, and any token action A, are by definition particulars. Moreover, the description "the man who did the action A" necessarily individuates some one person; for it is logically impossible that two persons should do the same *token* action.<sup>4</sup> In the case of events,

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<sup>4</sup> This is to ignore the case of joint or co-operative actions. Thus when three persons A, B and C jointly fell a tree, it might be said that each of them has done the same action, that of felling the particular tree. But this would not be quite accurate. They have *all* felled the tree; what *each* of them has done is to share in the felling of the tree, or to have felled the tree with the help of the other two. When the variables implicit in this last expression are replaced with names, we obtain descriptions of token actions which indeed individuate; thus it is true of A, but not of B or C, that he is the man who felled the tree *with the help of B and C*.

it is possible that two persons should witness the same token event; but nevertheless the description "the man who witnessed E" may happen to individuate some one person, and "the man who witnessed  $E_1, E_2 \dots E_n$ " has a proportionately greater chance of so doing. Thus if our subject Charles now claims to remember doing certain actions  $A_1, A_2$ , etc., and witnessing certain events  $E_1, E_2$ , etc., which are themselves suitably identified, we have good grounds for saying that he is some particular person or has some particular personality.

Now by principle (II), we have no reason without corroborative evidence of some kind to believe Charles when he now claims to remember A or E; so we must set about checking. How are we to do this in the present case? Ordinarily if some person X claims to have witnessed E, and we wish to check this, we must find out whether there is any record, or anyone has any memory, of X's witnessing E. This is evidently inapplicable to the present case. For either the evidence shows that Charles was *bodily* present at E, or it does not. If it does, then Charles is remembering in the ordinary way, which is contrary to the hypothesis. If it does not, then there is no corroboration. Here we have a first important step. We are trying to prise apart "bodily" and "mental" criteria; but we find that the normal operation of one "mental" criterion involves the "bodily" one.

However, the situation may not be quite as desperate as this makes it appear. We can examine Charles' putative memories, and we may find that he can offer detailed information which there is no reason to believe he would ordinarily have known, and which strongly suggests the reports of an eye-witness of some particular events. What we can do with this information in the present case depends on a number of considerations. I shall now examine these, first in connexion with events, and then with actions. Events can in principle be witnessed by any number of persons, or by none. Some of the events which Charles claims to remember witnessing may be events of which we have other eye-witness accounts; others may be events which

we believe to have occurred, though we do not know whether or not anyone witnessed them; others again may be events which we believe to have occurred, but which we believe no-one to have witnessed.

For all these, there is an hypothesis about—or, perhaps, description of—Charles' present condition which has nothing to do with a change of personality: the hypothesis of clairvoyance.<sup>5</sup> To describe Charles as clairvoyant is certainly not to advance very far towards an *explanation* of his condition; it amounts to little more than saying that he has come to know, by no means, what other people know by evidence. But so long as Charles claimed to remember events which were supposedly or certainly unwitnessed, such a description might be the best we could offer. We might do better than this, however, if the events Charles claimed to remember were witnessed; in this case we could begin to advance to the idea that Charles had a new identity, because we would have the chance of finding someone for him to be identical *with*. Thus if the events were witnessed, we might say that Charles was (now) identical with a witness of these events. This is ambiguous; it might mean that he was identical with anyone who witnessed the events, or with some particular person who witnessed the events. The former of these is no advance, since it comes to a roundabout way of saying that he claims to have witnessed the events, *i.e.* is possibly clairvoyant. The situation is different, however, if we can identify some one person who, it is plausible to suppose, witnessed all the events that Charles now claims to remember. That this should be possible is, indeed, a necessary condition of describing what has happened to Charles as *a change of identity*; I shall return to this point a little later.

If we now turn to actions, it looks as though we can find even better grounds for describing the case in terms of a change of identity. While there can be unwitnessed token events, there can be no unwitnessed token actions; moreover, as we noticed above, each token action can be

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<sup>5</sup> Together, of course, with the loss of his real memories.



performed by only one person. So if we can find out who performed the actions that Charles now claims to remember performing, it looks as if we can find out who he now is. These supposed advantages, however, are largely illusory. We may say, crudely, that there are many features of actions in which they are just like events—which, from another point of view, they indeed are. What differentiates actions from events are rather certain features of the agent, such as his intentions. In a particular case, some of these latter features may be known to, or inferred by, observers, while others may remain private to the agent. In neither case, however, do these special features of actions much help our investigation of Charles' identity. In so far as these special features may be known to observers, they are still, for the purposes of the investigation, in the class of events, and Charles' claim to remember them may still be plausibly described as clairvoyance; and in so far as these features remain private to the performer of the actions in question, we can have no ground for saying whether Charles' claims to remember them are even correct.

Again, the logical truth that a description of the form "the person who did the (token) action A" individuates some one person, does not give unfailing help. How much help it gives depends on how effectively, and by what means, we can identify the action in question. Suppose that several men at a certain time and place are each sharpening a pencil. In these circumstances the description "the man sharpening a pencil" fails to individuate: the action of sharpening a pencil is common to them all. If, however, the pencils were of different colours, I might be able to identify a particular pencil, and through this a token action of sharpening; thus "the man sharpening the red pencil" may individuate. But such methods of identifying token actions are not always available. In particular, there are some cases in which a token action can be effectively identified only through a reference to the agent. Thus if several men were all dancing the czardas, I might be able to identify a token dancing only as *e.g.* 'Josef's dancing of the czardas'. In such a case reference to a token action

cannot help in identifying its agent, since I must identify him in order to identify it.

However, we often can effectively identify actions without actually identifying the agents, and so have a use for descriptions like "the person who murdered the Duchess, whoever it was". It is obvious that such descriptions can play a peculiarly useful rôle in an enquiry into identity; and this rôle may, for several reasons, be more useful than that played by descriptions like "the man who witnessed the event E". For, first, granted that I have identified *an action*, the description cannot fail of reference because there is no such agent; while the mere fact that I have identified a certain event E of course does not guarantee the description "the man who *witnessed* the event E" against failure of reference. Secondly, it is inherently less likely that the description referring to an action should fail of unique reference because of multiplicity, than it is that the description referring to an event should so fail. For it is in general less probable that a certain action should have been co-operatively undertaken than that a certain event should have been multiply witnessed; and, as we noticed above, for every description of a co-operative action, we can produce a series of descriptions of constituent actions which have progressively greater chance of unique reference. Last, knowledge of a particular action can give one knowledge not only of the location, but of the character, of its agent, but knowledge of a particular event will standardly give one knowledge only of the location of its witnesses.

Let us now go back to the case of Charles. We may suppose that our enquiry has turned out in the most favourable possible way, and that all the events he claims to have witnessed and all the actions he claims to have done point unanimously to the life-history of some one person in the past—for instance, Guy Fawkes. Not only do all Charles' memory-claims that can be checked fit the pattern of Fawkes' life as known to historians, but others that cannot be checked are plausible, provide explanations of unexplained facts, and soon. Are we to say that Charles is now Guy

Fawkes, that Guy Fawkes has come to life again in Charles' body, or some such thing?

Certainly the temptation to say something on this pattern is very strong. It is difficult to insist that we *couldn't* say that Charles (or sometime Charles) had become Guy Fawkes; this is certainly what the newspapers would say if they heard of it. But newspapers are prone to exaggeration, and this might be an exaggeration. For why shouldn't we say that Charles had, except for his body, become just like Guy Fawkes used to be; or perhaps that Charles clairvoyantly—*i.e.* mysteriously—knows all about Guy Fawkes and his *ambiance*? In answer to this, it will be argued that this is just what memory was introduced to rule out; granted that we need similar personal characteristics, skills, and so on as necessary conditions of the identification, the final—and, granted these others, sufficient—condition is provided by memories of seeing just *this*, and doing just *that*, and it is these that pick out a particular man. But perhaps this point is fundamentally a logical trick. Granted that in a certain context the expressions “the man who did A”, “the man who saw E”, do effectively individuate, it is logically impossible that two different persons should (correctly) remember being the man who did A or saw E; but it is not logically impossible that two different persons should *claim* to remember being this man, and this is the most we can get.

This last argument is meant to show only that we are not forced to accept the description of Charles' condition as his being identical with Guy Fawkes. I shall now put forward an argument to strengthen this contention and to suggest that we should not be justified in accepting this description. If it is logically possible that Charles should undergo the changes described, then it is logically possible that some other man should simultaneously undergo the same changes; *e.g.* that both Charles and his brother Robert should be found in this condition. What should we say in that case? They cannot both be Guy Fawkes; if they were, Guy Fawkes would be in two places at once, which is absurd. Moreover, if they were both ncaltiied

with Guy Fawkes, they would be identical with each other, which is also absurd. Hence we could not say that they were both identical with Guy Fawkes. We might instead say that one of them was identical with Guy Fawkes, and that the other was just like him; but this would be an utterly vacuous manœuvre, since there would be *ex hypothesi* no principle determining which description was to apply to which. So it would be best, if anything, to say that both had mysteriously become like Guy Fawkes, clairvoyantly knew about him, or something like this. If this would be the best description of each of the two, why would it not be the best description of Charles if Charles alone were changed?

Perhaps this last rhetorical question too readily invites an answer. It might be said that there is a relevant difference between the case in which two persons are changed and the case in which only one is changed, the difference being just this difference in numbers; and that there is no guarantee that what we would say in one of these situations would be the same as what we would say in the other. In the more complicated situation our linguistic and conceptual resources would be taxed even more severely than in the simpler one, and we might not react to the demands in the same way. Moreover, there is a reason why we should not react in the same way. The standard form of an identity question is "Is this  $x$  the same  $x$  as that  $x$  which . . . ?", and in the simpler situation we are at least presented with just the materials for constructing such a question; but in the more complicated situation we are baffled even in asking the question, since both the transformed persons are equally good candidates for being its subject, and the question "Are these two  $x$ 's the same ( $x$ ?) as the  $x$  which . . . ?" is not a recognizable form of identity question. Thus, it might be argued, the fact that we could not speak of identity in the latter situation is no kind of proof that we could not do so in the former.

Certainly it is not a proof.<sup>6</sup> Yet the argument does

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<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Mr. P. F. Strawson for making this clear to me.

indicate that to speak of identity in the simpler case would be at least quite vacuous. The point can be made clearer in the following way. In the case of material objects, we can draw a distinction between identity and exact similarity; it is clearly not the same to say that two men live in the same house, and that they live in exactly similar houses. This notion of identity is given to us primarily, though not completely, by the notion of spatio-temporal continuity. In the case of character, however, this distinction cannot be drawn, for to say that A and B have the same character is just to say that A's character is exactly similar to B's. Nor can this distinction be drawn in the case of memories—if you could say that two men had the same memories, this would be to say that their memories were exactly similar. There is, however, an extreme difficulty in saying these things about memories at all; it is unclear what it would mean to say that there were *two* men who had exactly similar, or the same, memories, since to call them real memories is to imply their correctness. Thus if we are to describe Charles' relations to Guy Fawkes in terms of *exact similarity* of everything except the body, we are going to have difficulty in finding a suitable description in these terms of his memory claims. We cannot say that he has the same memories as Guy Fawkes, as this is to imply, what we want to deny, that he really is Guy Fawkes; nor can we say that the memory claims he makes are the same as those made by Guy Fawkes, as we have little idea of what memory claims Fawkes in fact made, or indeed of how much he at various times remembered. All we actually know is that Charles' claims fit Fawkes' life.

These difficulties, in applying the concept of exact similarity in the matter of the supposed memories, are (I suspect) a motive for the thought that we *must* describe the situation in terms of identity. This is where the reduplicated situation of Charles and Robert gives some help. In that situation it is quite obvious that the idea of identity cannot be applied, and that we must fall back on similarity; and that one respect in which the trio are similar is—however we are to express it—that of “memory”. (If the

situation sometimes occurred, we might find an expression; we might speak of “similarity of one’s supposed past”.) This eases the way for doing the same thing in the case of Charles alone, whose relation to Fawkes in his unique case is exactly the same as both his and Robert’s in the reduplicated one. We can then say that Charles has the same character, and the same supposed past, as Fawkes; which is just the same as to say that they are in these respects exactly similar. This is not to say that they are identical at all. The only case in which identity and exact similarity could be distinguished, as we have just seen, is that of the body—“same body” and “exactly similar body” really do mark a difference. Thus I should claim that the omission of the body takes away all content from the idea of personal *identity*.<sup>7</sup>

I should like to make one last point about this example. This turns on the fact, mentioned before, that in order to describe Charles’ change as a change of identity, we must be able to identify some one person who might plausibly be supposed to have seen and done all the things that Charles now claims to remember having seen and done; otherwise there would be nothing to pin down Charles’ memory claims as other than random feats of clairvoyance. We succeeded in doing this, just by discovering that Charles’ memory claims fitted Fawkes’ life. This could be done only by knowing what Fawkes did, and what Fawkes did could be known only by reference to witnesses of Fawkes’ activities, and these witnesses must have seen Fawkes’ *body*. In order for their accounts to be connected into the history of one person, it is necessary to rely on the continuity of this body.

Now the fact that Fawkes is in this sense identified through his body does not rule out the possibility that Charles should later be identified with Fawkes without reference to a body; *i.e.* this fact does not rule out the weaker thesis about the non-necessity of bodies. To illustrate this, one might compare the case of someone’s going to a crowded

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<sup>7</sup> I am indebted here, and elsewhere in this paper, to Mr. D. F. Pears.

party, where he sees a girl who is very like all the other girls at the party except that she has red hair. This girl sings various songs and quarrels with the band; she is easily identified on each occasion by the colour of the hair. The man later meets a platinum blonde who recalls singing songs at a party and quarrelling with the band. He can identify her as the red-haired girl at the party, even though she has changed the colour of her hair in the meantime. There is an important difference, however, between this case and that of Fawkes. If the girl had remarkably changed the colour of her hair between songs and before the quarrel, identifying her at the various stages of the party would have been more difficult, but not in principle impossible; but if the Fawkes-personality changed bodies frequently, identification would become not just difficult but impossible. For the only other resource would be the memory criterion, and the operation of this would once more make exactly the same requirements. Hence it is a necessary condition of making the supposed identification on non-bodily grounds that at some stage identifications should be made on bodily grounds. Hence any claim that bodily considerations can be absolutely omitted from the criteria of personal identity must fail; *i.e.* these facts do rule out the stronger thesis.

2. *Some remarks on bodily interchange.* Anyone who believed that personalities could be identified without reference to bodies might be expected to make sense of the idea of bodily interchange; and anyone who thought that they might always be identified in this way would presumably require that for any two contemporaneous persons we should be able to make sense of the idea that their bodies should be interchanged. It is worth considering how far we can make sense of it, if we look at it closely.

Suppose a magician is hired to perform the old trick of making the emperor and the peasant become each other. He gets the emperor and the peasant in one room, with the emperor on his throne and the peasant in the corner, and then casts the spell. What will count as success? Clearly not that after the smoke has cleared the old emperor should

be in the corner and the old peasant on the throne. That would be a rather boring trick. The requirement is presumably that the emperor's body, with the peasant's personality, should be on the throne, and the peasant's body, with the emperor's personality, in the corner. What does this mean? In particular, what has happened to the voices? The voice presumably ought to count as a bodily function; yet how would the peasant's gruff blasphemies be uttered in the emperor's cultivated tones, or the emperor's witticisms in the peasant's growl? A similar point holds for the features; the emperor's body might include the sort of face that just *could not* express the peasant's morose suspiciousness, the peasant's a face no expression of which could be taken for one of fastidious arrogance. These "could's" are not just empirical—such expressions on these features might be unthinkable.

The point need not be elaborated; I hope I have said enough to suggest that the concept of bodily interchange cannot be taken for granted, and that there are even logical limits to what we should be prepared to say in this direction. What these limits are, cannot be foreseen—one has to consider the cases, and for this one has to see the cases. The converse is also true, that it is difficult to tell in advance how far certain features may suddenly seem to express something quite unexpected. But there are limits, and when this is recognized, the idea of the interchange of personalities seems very odd. There might be something like a logical impossibility of the magician's trick's succeeding. However much of the emperor's past the sometime peasant now claimed to remember, the trick would not have succeeded if he could not satisfy the simpler requirement of being the same *sort* of person as the sometime emperor. Could he do this, if he could not smile royally? Still less, could he be the same person, if he could not smile the characteristic smile of the emperor?

These considerations are relevant to the present question in two ways. First, the stronger view about the identification implies that an interchange is always conceivable; but there are many cases in which it does not seem to be con-



ceivable at all. Secondly, there is connected with this the deeper point, that when we are asked to distinguish a man's personality from his body, we do not really know what to distinguish from what. I take it that this was part of what Wittgenstein meant when he said that the best picture of the human soul was the human body.<sup>8</sup>

3. *A criterion for oneself?* I now turn to a different supposed use of a criterion of identity for persons. It may be objected that I have been discussing all the time the use of memory and other criteria of personal identity as applied to one man by others; but that the real rôle of memory is to be seen in the way it reveals a man *to himself*. Thus Locke speaks of "consciousness" (and by this he means here memory) as "what makes a man be himself to himself."<sup>9</sup>

It is difficult to see what this can mean. If we take it to mean that a man could use memory as a criterion in deciding whether he was the same person, in the particular sense, as he used to be, the suggestion is demonstrably absurd. I hope that a short and schematized argument will be enough to show this point. Suppose a man to have had previously some set of memories  $S$ , and now a different set  $S_1$ . This should presumably be the situation in which he should set about using the criterion to decide the question of his identity. But this cannot be so, for when he has memories  $S$ , and again when he has memories  $S_1$ , he is in no doubt about his identity, and so the question does not even occur to him. For it to occur to him, he would have to have  $S$  and  $S_1$  at the same time, and so  $S$  would be included in  $S_1$ , which is contrary to the hypothesis that they are, in the relevant sense, different.

Alternatively, let  $S_1$  include a general memory to the effect that he used to remember things that he no longer remembers. This would again present no question to him, for it is the condition of most of us. So let us strengthen this into the requirement that  $S_1$  include a general memory  $\Sigma$

<sup>8</sup> *Philosophical Investigations*, II, iv.

<sup>9</sup> *loc cit.*, §10.

to the effect that he used to remember things empirically incompatible with memories in  $S_1$ . In this situation he might set about trying to find out what kind of illusion he was under. His most economical hypothesis would be that  $\Sigma$  itself was an illusion. If he were not satisfied with this, or if some parts of  $S$  were left over in  $S_1$ , so that he seemed to have definitely incompatible "memories", there would be nothing he could do with the help of his own memory; he would have to ask others about his past. In doing this, he would be relying on other people's memories of his past; but this is certainly not what was meant by the suggestion of memory as a criterion for the man himself. It is just a reversion to the case of such a criterion being used by some persons about another. Thus there is no way in which memory could be used by a man as a criterion of his own identity.

A criterion, however, must be used by someone. This is a point that has been notably and unhappily neglected by theorists of personal identity. Thus Hume, for instance, in the course of his account revealingly says<sup>10</sup> "Suppose we could see clearly into the breast of another, and observe that succession of perceptions, which constitutes his mind or thinking principle, and suppose that he always preserves the memory of a considerable part of past perceptions . . ." Others, in criticising or expanding Hume's account, have written in terms that similarly require an externalized view of the contents of a man's mind, a view obtainable from no conceivable vantage-point. Theorising which is in this sense abstract must be vacuous, because this privileged but positionless point of view can mean nothing to us.

At this point it might be objected that if what has been said is true about a criterion of identity, then it was not a *criterion* that memory was supposed uniquely to provide. "You have argued", it might be said, "that no man can use memory as a criterion of his own identity. But this is just what shows that memory is the essence of personal identity; figuratively speaking, memory is so much what

<sup>10</sup> Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk. I, Pt. IV, Sec. VI.

makes him a certain person that when provided with certain memories, he cannot doubt who he is. This is just the heart of the thesis." Or the objection might be put by saying that a man might conceivably have occasion to look into a mirror and say "this is not my body", but could never have occasion to say "these are not my memories." Or, again, a man who has lost his memory cannot say who he is.

If this is what the thesis asserts, however, it comes to little. A man who has lost his memory cannot say who anyone else is, either, nor whether any object is the same as one previously presented, since he will not remember the previous presentation. So the last argument shows nothing about personal identity as such; it just shows that identifying anything is a process that involves memory. Nor is the first argument more illuminating. It comes really to no more than the trivialities that in order to remember, you have to have something to remember, and that if you are remembering everything you can remember, there is nothing else you can remember. Again, the example of the man looking into the mirror does not do what is required. In order to sustain the objection it would be necessary to show not just that a man might say "this is not my body", but that if he said it, he would necessarily be right; or at least that the question whether he was right or not did not involve any reference to other people's memories. It is obvious that neither is the case, because the situation of the example *might* be best described by saying that this was a man who misremembered what he looked like, and the question whether this was the best description of the situation would have to be decided by other people conducting the kind of enquiry into identity that was earlier discussed at length.

It is not part of my aim to discuss in general consciousness of self. I have tried in this section to show in a limited way that although we may have the feeling that, by consideration of it alone, we may be given the clue to personal identity, this is in fact an illusion. That it is an illusion is disguised by those theories of personal identity which, by assuming

no particular point of view, try to get the best of both worlds, the inner and the outer. If we abandon this for a more realistic approach, the facts of self-consciousness prove incapable of yielding the secret of personal identity, and we are forced back into the world of public criteria.

If we accept these conclusions, together with the earlier ones; it may seem that the attempt to give a sense to 'particular personality' that omits reference to the body has failed. However, there is another and familiar class of cases that seems to provide strong independent grounds for the view that such a sense can be given: these are the cases in which more than one personality is associated with one body. I shall end by discussing this type of case and some related questions.

4. *Multiple personality and individuation.* Examples of multiple personality, such as the notorious case of Miss Beauchamp,<sup>11</sup> raise identity questions interestingly different from those that arose in the case of Charles. In that case, we identified, by means that turned out to involve the body, what would normally, if tendentiously, be called a different person, and asked whether the person in front of us was identical with him. In the cases of multiple personality, we are in a sense more directly confronted with personalities, and naturally make direct reference to them in order to ask our identity questions at all. The standard type of identity question about Miss Beauchamp is whether the personality that is now being manifested in her behaviour (or some such description) is the same as that which was being manifested two hours ago. In asking a question of this type, we may in fact feel a doubt about the reference of descriptions like "the personality now manifesting itself", because the principal question here just is what personalities there are to be referred to—how many personalities there are, and how the subject's behaviour is to be "sorted out" into the manifestations of different personalities.

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<sup>11</sup> See Morton Prince, *The Dissociation of a Personality* (1905), *passim*.

For this reason, there is a strong motive for not putting our questions about Miss Beauchamp in the form of identity questions at all. Instead of asking something of the form "Is this personality the same as that?" we may prefer to ask, "Do these two pieces of behaviour belong to one personality or to two?"; that is, instead of referring to personalities *through* their manifestations and asking whether they are identical, we may refer *to* manifestations and ask how they are to be allocated to personalities. A parallel to this would be the case of a tangled skein of wool, where, catching hold of a piece at each end, we might ask either "Is this thread the same as that?" or "Are these pieces parts of one thread?" The second formulation in each case might seem to be strictly preferable to the first, because the references that are being made are more determinate; I can tell you exactly which *part* or which *manifestation* I am referring to in the second formulation, but can tell you much less exactly which *thread* or which *personality* I am referring to in the first. It is useful to distinguish these sorts of questions, and I shall call the first, questions of identity, and the second, questions of individuation. I shall also in this section speak of our having individuated a personality when, roughly, we have answered enough questions of this type for us to have picked out a certain personality from the pattern of manifestations. I shall not here examine the complexities involved in a proper formulation of these concepts.

We have just seen that it might be preferable to put our questions about Miss Beauchamp in the form of individuation, and not of identity, questions. It might seem, indeed, that it is essential to do this. Because asking an identity question about personalities involves referring to personalities, and this involves knowing what personalities one is referring to, it is tempting to think that we could not use the identity form in a case where our problem was just what, and how many, personalities there were. This, however, would be an exaggeration. I do not have to be able to answer the question "which personality are you referring to?" in the thorough-going way suggested by this

argument. I may do enough to establish the reference by saying "I just mean the personality now being manifested, whichever that is", without committing myself thereby to more than the belief that there is at least one personality to be referred to, and possibly more. I should be *debarred* from using the identity form only in a situation where I was in doubt whether there was even one personality to be referred to.

The case of Miss Beauchamp is more relevant to the discussion of the rôle of the body in the individuation of personalities than it is to the straightforward question whether bodily identity is a necessary condition of personal identity; since bodily identity is granted, this case can have no tendency to show that bodily identity is not a necessary condition (though it will of course tend to show that it is not a sufficient condition). It will, however, lend colour to the idea that we can individuate particular personalities, and not through bodies; if there are here four different particular personalities, and only one body, it is clear that there can be some principle for distinguishing personalities without at least *distinguishing* bodies. There is such a principle; but it does not yield as exciting a result from this case as might be hoped.

Miss Beauchamp's strikingly different personalities were individuated in the first place by reference to personal characteristics, in which they were largely opposed; also by tastes and preferences (B1 and B4 hated smoking, for instance, and B3 loved it); and by skills (B3, unlike the others, knew no French or shorthand). Memory did not serve straightforwardly to individuate them, because their memories were asymmetrical. B1 and B4, for instance, knew only what they were told by the investigator about the others, but B3 knew, without being told, everything that B4 did, and in the case of B1 knew all her thoughts as well; she referred to them both in the third person.<sup>12</sup> These

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<sup>12</sup> Prince, *op. cit.*, p. 181. The extent of memory discontinuity in such cases varies: *cf.*, *e.g.*, William James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, pp. 379 *seq.*

remarkable and systematic discontinuities in Miss Beauchamp's behaviour, together with the violent and active conflict between her various selves, who abused and tricked each other, make the reference to different particular personalities completely natural. Thus we have individuated various personalities by reference to character, attainments and (up to a point) memories, and without reference to bodies.

This claim, however, is liable to serious misinterpretation. There has been no reference to bodies only in the sense that no such reference came into the principles used; but it does not follow from this that there was no reference to a body in starting to individuate at all. Obviously there was, because the problem arose only in connexion with the fact that too many and too various things were going on in connexion with one body; if Miss Beauchamp had been four sisters, there would have been no problem. Thus the individuation by reference to character and so on alone, was individuation in the context of the continuity of a certain body; and the fact that these principles were successful in individuating in this case does not show that they would be successful in so doing generally. The point may be put by saying that what we have succeeded in doing on these principles is individuating particular personalities of *Miss Beauchamp*, who is bodily identified; this is not to say that they provide us with a principle for individuating particular personalities without any reference to bodies at all.

This is quite obvious if we look at the principles themselves. Leaving aside memory, which only partially applies to the case, character and attainments are quite clearly general things. *Jones'* character is, in a sense, a particular; just because "*Jones'* character" refers to the instantiation of certain properties by a particular (and bodily) man.<sup>13</sup> Even so, the sense in which it is a particular is peculiar and limited. This can be seen from the odd workings of its criterion of identity. Consider the statement

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<sup>13</sup> *cf.* P. F. Strawson, *Particular and General*, PAS Vol. LIV (1953-4), pp. 250 *al.*

- (i) He has the same character as his father (*or* he has his father's character)

and compare the two statements

- (ii) He wears the same clothes as his father  
 (iii) He has his father's watch.

Of these, (ii) is ambiguous, the expression "his father's clothes" see-sawing over the line between particular and general (though its companion "he wears his father's clothes" seems to allow only the particular interpretation). Neither (i) nor (iii) is ambiguous in this way; and in (iii) "his father's watch" obviously refers to a particular. But (i) is quite different from (iii). If (iii) is true, then if the watch he has is going to be pawned tomorrow, his father's watch is going to be pawned; but it does not similarly follow from (i) that if his character is going to be ruined by the Army, his father's character is going to be ruined. This illustrates how little weight can be laid on the idea of Jones' character being a particular, and throws us back on the familiar point that to talk of Jones' character is a way of talking about what Jones is like.

Miss Beauchamp's various personalities are particulars only in the weak sense that Jones' character is a particular, a sense which is grounded in the particular body. In using character and attainments to individuate them, I am telling the difference between them in just the sense that I tell the difference between sets of characteristics; Miss Beauchamp was peculiar in having more than one set of characteristics. Her personalities, like more normal people's, each had *peculiarities*, the combination of which might well have been, as a matter of fact, uniquely instantiated; but this does not affect the fundamental logical issue. About her memories, it need only be said that if different personalities have the same memories, memory is not being used to individuate; if they have different memories, the bodily identity connecting the various remembered occasions makes it easy to describe the situation as one of Miss Beauchamp's sometimes being able to remember what at other times she could not.



When Miss Beauchamp was nearly cured, and only occasionally lapsed into dissociation, she spoke freely of herself as having been B1 or B4. "These different states seem to her very largely differences of moods. She regrets them, but does not attempt to excuse them, because, as she says, 'After all, it is always myself.'"<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Prince, *op. cit.*, p. 525.