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Rethinking the Lockean Approach to the Problem of Personal Identity

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ABSTRACT

The problem of personal identity among others may stem from the following question—what does be the person that you are, from one day to the next, necessarily consist of? The diachronic problem of personal identity raises question on the necessary and sufficient conditions for the identity of the person over time. The synchronic problem is grounded in the question of what features or traits characterize a given person at one time. To answer these questions, John Locke discarded the soul and the body as necessary and sufficient substances for personal identity over time. He accepted consciousness as the only criterion for personal identity; the only thing capable of remaining the same and preserving personal identity through change. Though Locke's argument is somewhat clear and coherent but what remains vague and incoherent is embedded in the question—what exactly is consciousness? How and why should it be the basis or criterion for the determination of personal identity? Using the method of critical analysis, I argue that Locke's choice of consciousness as the determinant of personal identity, though quite novel, is incoherent and vague. Secondly, Locke had already presumed and anticipated clearly though fallaciously the very thing he wishes to substantiate. I therefore conclude that Locke's argument is just another way of trying to escape but inadvertently prolonging the difficulty of apparently articulating a distinction between the psychological approach and physiological approach to the problem of personal identity. However, in my submission, I propose the concept of the "other" as alternative approach— a sort of an extrinsic-intrinsic approach to the problem of personal identity.

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Introduction

The problem of personal identity, ever since its emergence with Locke, remains a cardinal problem in philosophy. It raises questions on the real identity of a person, given that from birth to death, a person undergoes many changes and stages. These changes/stages are reflected or seen as the person advances in age. These changes occur with time, such that a person existing at time t_1 may not be the same person existing at time t_2. What exactly determines these changes? Many answers have been provided and articulated. First, Aristotle gave us two accounts of change. These are accidental change and substantial change. The former is change due to a biological and physiological process, for example, when a female or teenager starts developing mammalian glands that were not previously there when she was a baby. This, inevitably, brings about changes in her body structure. Another example is the change experienced when a person increases in height and size. These changes do not transform the person completely from his/her previous state or status. The increase in height or body mass may account for change in the person but the identity of the person has not been significantly affected or transformed. Friends and folks may very well recognize the fellow.

This is unlike substantial change when a substance completely undergoes change. For example, a paper turns into ashes when burnt. This change also occurs when a person turns into dust after death. Similarly, in some cultures where cremations are permitted, the dead person is turned into ashes. These changes manifest at different times. If we use our examples above— using substantial change to illustrate how these changes are manifested with time, we discover that at time t_1 the identity was a paper but at time t_2 it is turned into ashes. In the case of a person, at time t_1 the identity was a body but at time t_2 it is turned into ashes. How and with what do we account or say that the same substance at different times is the same? John Locke was the first philosopher to articulate a clear and distinct answer to this question but how well he succeeded is our focus in this paper. First, we shall begin by explicating what personal identity is.

1. What Personal Identity Is?

A conceptual clarification is necessary in order to illuminate or reinforce the meaning of the terms— "personal" and "identity." The term 'personal' implies or connotes something subjective (in contrast to inter-subjectivity) either of a person's attributes or general characteristics. Similarly, the word 'personal' is sometimes taken to mean individual's possessive qualities. These qualities define the humanity or essence of a particular human being. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the term "personal" means 'belonging or relating to a particular person', 'made or designed to be used by one person.' It also means 'of, relating to, or affecting a particular person', 'relating to the person or body', 'relating to an individual or an individual's character, conduct,

motives or private affairs.' In the whole, it is what constitutes a person's property—private or personal.

The term "identity", on the other hand, has French and Latin origins. In French, it is *identité* and Latin, *identitat*. Both literally mean 'same and same'. Logically, going by this definition, *p* is *p*, *q* is *q*, *r* is *r*, no more, no less. That is, we cannot say *p* is *p* at one time and at another time *p* is not-*p* or that *p* is something else. Metaphysically, the term identity refers to the specific, unique or peculiar nature of a thing or its essence that distinguishes one thing from another. It is the defining qualities of a thing. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, it means 'sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing' or 'the distinguishing character or personality of an individual' or 'the condition of being the same as something described or asserted.'

John Locke, in his book *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* in Four Books, Chapter XXVII, "Of Identity and Diversity", explicates the meaning of identity thus:

> Another occasion the mind often takes of comparing, is the very being of things, when, considering anything as existing at any determined time and place, we compare it with itself existing at another time, and thereon form the ideas of identity and diversity. When we see anything to be in any place in any instant of time, we are sure (be it what it will) that it is that very thing, and not another which at that same time exists in another place, how like and indistinguishable so ever it may be in all other respects: and in this consists IDENTITY, when the ideas it is attributed to vary not at all from what they were that moment wherein we consider their former existence, and to which we compare the present (Locke, 1689,202).

Two things come out clearly from the above quotation. First, identity is formed by the mind comparing things at any determined time and place. Second, in all respects, the things being compared must be alike and indistinguishable from each other. In other words, identity is when a thing varies not or remains the same (in all respects) when we compare its former existence with the present.

Personal identity, as we can see, intuitively entails the absence of change or variation relating to a particular person, such that the person's character, attributes, or personality remains same from time to time. This means a person existing at time t_1 remains, and is the same person existing at time t_2 in as much as both possess the same thinking feature (which Locke considers as consciousness) and one is annexed to the other. Given the palpable and undeniable reality of change that takes place from the day a person is born until the time he or she dies, obviously seems or suggests that the discussion of personal identity is exercise in futility. The implication of this and what make the discussion fashionable from the time or moment a person is born to the time he or she dies, is that he or she is not the same person but a different person. The reason is that there are

times we are unable to remember or annexes our present actions to our experiences in the past, judging from Locke's consciousness criterion (as we shall see later). Then, if we accept, we are different person(s), this raises serious (moral and religious) problem and if we accept, we are not then it raises another problem: how do we justify or explain the apparent change (bodily or psychologically) a person undergoes from one time to another time? This takes us to the statement of the problem.

2. Statement of the Problem

The critical issue in personal identity is hinged on the continuity of the self or the identity conditions of a person. The problem of personal identity in philosophy raises the following questions: what about the identity conditions of persons are; and about when we have a case of one and the same person, and when we don't. To recast the same point, are you one and the same person now, who wore a diaper as a baby twenty years ago? Apparently, though you are qualitatively different from that baby who wore a diaper twenty years ago, you are numerically identical to him or her. What exactly makes you the same person as that baby who is now twenty years old? More so, what makes you different from the person sitting next to you? Main while, it appears there is a disconnection between the person now and the person in the past. Here, time seems to be the yardstick. It raises the issue of discontinuity between the present person and the past person. We see as Bleich remarks that, the "problem of identity arises only because of change; the adult is so markedly different from the neonate that it is difficult to recognize them as one and the same person" (Bleich, 2012,83). The inability to tell or pint-point exactly whether a person *A* at time *t1* is the same at time *t2* creates the impetus to investigate the necessary and sufficient conditions for affirming the belief that a person can persist through time without change. This takes us to examine the various approaches to personal identity.

3. Approaches to the Problem of Personal Identity

Basically, there are two approaches to the problem of personal identity— the psychological approach and the physiological approach. We shall explicate each briefly starting with the psychological approach.

3-1. Psychological Approach

According to the proponents of this view, personal identity can be determined. The determinant is consciousness. It is the only thing that is capable of persisting through time without variation. The human brain, like the physical body, may be wear-off, degenerates and varies with time and none of them can be taken as the necessary and sufficient conditions for the survival of a person. The soul or pure ego in this respect has also been dispensed with as the necessary condition for personal identity. Although Plato, Descartes and a good number of other scholars especially world religions hold the view that, human beings or person(s) are immaterial souls or pure ego and they possess

bodies only contingently and not necessarily. So they can live after bodily death, though the soul or pure ego is capable of surviving the body, it does not make it an essential criterion in the determination of personal identity.

The simple reason advanced by the psychological approach proponents, especially Locke, is that the soul, like the body, is a substance that thought or consciousness can inhere. So, the soul, like the body, alone cannot be taken as the self without consciousness inhering it. The soul in this regard is not an independent or self-subsisting. It is a soul because it carries consciousness. It is therefore erroneous to regard it as persisting with time because it is merely a substance, unlike consciousness. The soul is not capable of its own existence; it is dependent on and requires consciousness to exist. It may well be that Locke's rejection of the soul's criterion is based on the unsettled confusion of where the soul is precisely located in the human body. While some groups argue that the soul is primarily present in a determinant part of the body, like the heart for instance, others like St. Augustine and St. Bonaventure argue otherwise. For the latter, the soul is present in the whole body because it is simple. It is not partly here or partly there because it is the sufficient moving principle (*motor sufficiens*) of the body (Copleston, 1993, 278).

To this end, psychological criterion of personal identity holds that "psychological continuity relations, that is, overlapping chains of direct psychological connections, as those causal and cognitive connections between beliefs, desires, intentions, experiential memories, character traits and so forth, constitute personal identity" (Korfmacher, 2006). This view is found in the thought of Locke (1689, II. xxvii, 9-29); Parfit (1971a; 1984); Perry (1972); Shoemaker (1970) and Shoemaker and Swinburne (1984). John Locke perhaps is the first to articulate this view. For him, personal identity is a matter of psychological continuity. "According to this view, in order for a person *X* to survive a particular adventure, it is necessary and sufficient that there exists, at a time after the adventure, a person *Y* who psychologically evolved out of *X*" (1689, II. xxvii, 9-29).

Here, there must be overlapping chains of direct psychological connections—causal or cognitive, i.e., for a person stage-A at t_1 and a person stage-B at t_2 to be the same, there must be a causal and cognitive link between the beliefs, desires, intentions, experiential memories, character traits of the two person-stages. Both causal and cognitive features must match. So, a person-A at t_1 is the same person at t_2, if and only if there exist direct psychological connections at the different time variation. Mostly, consciousness is used here as the basis (because memory can also be used). If I claim to be Socrates now who existed a million years ago, this is true if only I possess Socrates' consciousness and our thoughts are connected in all ramifications, then we are one and the same person. This version rejects the physiological approach, which is based partly on bodily continuity and somatic criterion, on the ground that bodily continuity and the somatic criterion do not constitute necessary and sufficient conditions for personal identity.

However, if we appeal exclusively to direct psychological connections and take identity as a transitive relation, we may encounter a serious problem. This problem is well-articulated thus:

> Take memory as an example: suppose that Paul broke the neighbour's window as a kid, an incident he remembers vividly when he starts working as a primary school teacher in his late 20s. As an old man, Paul remembers his early years as a teacher, but has forgotten ever having broken the neighbour's window. Assume for reduction, that personal identity consists in direct memory connections. In that case the kid is identical with the primary school teacher, and the primary school teacher is identical with the old man; the old man, however, is not identical with the kid. Since this conclusion violates the transitivity of identity (which states that if an X is identical with a Y, and Y is identical with a Z, then the X must be identical with the Z) (1689, II. xxvii, 9-29)

Obviously, the above raises the problem of having two future "persons" from one existing person now. The question is, is it possible for two "persons" to exist in one person? The example illustrated above clearly suggests this possibility. Hence, personal identity relations cannot consist in direct memory connections. There must be some sort of appeal to overlapping layers or chains of psychological connections. Call it indirect relations; "according to the view, the old man is identical with the kid precisely because they are related to each other by those causal and cognitive relations that connect kid and teacher and teacher and old man" (1689, II. xxvii, 9-29). The foremost problem psychological approach faces as we shall see later in the criticisms leveled against Locke is how to overcome the alleged circularity and absurdity associated with explaining personal identity relations in terms of memory or psychological notion. We shall now explain the physiological approach next.

3-2. Physiological Approach

This view is opposed to the psychological approach. There are two main strands—the bodily criterion and the somatic criterion. The bodily criterion holds that the *spatio*-temporal continuity of a functioning human body constitutes personal identity (1689, II. xxvii, 9-29). Advocates of this thought are Williams (1956-7; 1970) and Thomson (1997). For them, the cardinal requirement for personal identity is the functioning human body. A person stage-A at t_1 is the same as a person stage-B at t_2 if both possess or have resemblance of the same body. This is *physical-ism* theory. Here, the body is a necessary requirement. According to this view, body features are enough to establish the identity of a person. This line of thought is somewhat in consonance with African belief in reincarnation; where for instance, birth marks (on the person's body) are used to establish the identity of a person who reincarnated. The bodily criterion argument may well be supported by Bleich's reflection on Rashi's argument that:

> Personal identity is a product of a cause-and-effect relationship. Change certainly does occur in the course of human development and maturation but where there is no baby, there would be no adolescent, where there is no adolescent, and there would be no adult. The baby, in a very significant sense, is the cause of the adolescent, and the adolescent is the cause of the adult. That causal nexus gives rise both to personal identity and to identity as a member of a species because despite any physical change that may occur, the cause is always present in its effect. Accordingly, the mother is present in her offspring and hence the offspring shares in the species of its progenitor (Bleich, 2012, 73).

If Hume's skepticism of causality was to be followed strictly, Rashi's defense of the bodily criterion would suffer a huge setback. Nonetheless, the somatic version of physiological approach to personal identity offers a more promising insight.

The somatic criterion holds that the *spatio*-temporal continuity of the metabolic and other life-sustaining organs of a functioning human animal constitutes personal identity (Korfmacher, 2006). Proponents of this view are Mackie (1999), Olson (1997a, 1997b) and Snowdon (1991, 1995 & 1996). Though the similarity of the bodily criterion and somatic criterion has been argued, everything depends on how the notions of "functioning human body" and "life-sustaining organs" are understood (Korfmacher, 2006). The defenders of the somatic criterion (physiological approach) have presented arguments to defeat the psychological approach. We shall consider two of the problems later—the human vegetable and the fetus arguments as criticisms against Locke since he is the main proponent of the psychological criterion. We shall now examine Locke's idea of personal identity.

4. John Locke On Personal Identity

John Locke's task in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, chapter XXVII, "Of Identity and Diversity", was to inquire wherein identity consists. Locke began by explicating the identity of three substances —God, finite intelligences and bodies. Concerning the identity of the first, Locke asserted that "God is without beginning, eternal, unalterable, and everywhere; therefore, concerning his identity, there can be no doubt" (Locke, 1689,202). For the identity of the finite intelligences or spirits, Locke held that "finite spirits having had each its determinate time and place of beginning to exist, the relation to that time and place will always determine to each of them its identity, as long as it exists" (Locke, 1689, 202). For the identity of bodies, so long they do not experience any change either as an addition or subtraction of matter; their identity is the same as that of finite spirits.

It is clear that Locke was not perturbed about the actual identity of God, finite intelligences or spirits and particle of matter because the identity of each of these three substances is definite. But

for permanent beings, this cannot be determined. He rendered the argument thus: "as permanent beings can at different times exist in distant places; and therefore, no motion or thought, considered as at different times, can be the same, each part therefore having a different beginning of existence" (Locke, 1689, 203). What is apparent in Locke's quest or inquiry is that the identity of permanent beings in relation to time and place, having a different beginning of existence cannot be the same.

Concerning the identity of animals, Locke has no suspicion as to what their identity consists of. He remarks that "an animal is a living organized body and consequently the same animal, as we have observed, is the same continued life communicated to different particles of matter, as they happen successively to be united to that organized living body" (Locke, 1689, 203). This is contrary to the identity of a man, while the soul is absent in animals and present in humans, so is what constitutes their identities. Perhaps, this may have informed Locke to opine that we must understand what the idea of identity is suited to or the idea it is applied to, because it is not unity of substance alone that comprehends or determines it in every case. By this, Locke is arguing that we must understand the idea of the word it is suited to, "it is one thing to be the same substance, another the same man and a third the same person" (Locke, 1689, 205). Therefore, what makes the idea of a man is not only thinking or rationality; the body and the soul are essential components. To this end, what makes the same man is that it must compose of the same successive body as well as the same immaterial spirit.

5. Consciousness as Locke's Criterion of Personal Identity

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the idea of man and the idea of the self or person in Locke's thesis are two different things. More so, his definition of "person as a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself" (Locke, 1689, 206) clearly underscores these differences. Having made this distinction, it was easy for Locke to apply the idea of identity to the idea of person or self, using consciousness as the underlying factor. "Since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes everyone to be what he calls self and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal identity" (Locke, 1689, 206). It is apparent that what goes into making personal identity for Locke is consciousness. What then makes the same person? Locke's answer to this is sameness of consciousness, not sameness of substance or identical substance but uninterrupted consciousness that makes the same man be himself to himself.

The difficulty arising from Locke's criterion of consciousness is that sometimes consciousness can be interrupted either by forgetfulness, loss of memories, or sleep. Locke himself noted this thus:

> But that which seems to make the difficulty is this, that consciousness being interrupted always by forgetfulness, there being no moment of our lives wherein

> we have the whole train of all our past actions whilst they are viewing another; and we sometimes, and that the greater part of our lives, not reflecting on our past selves, being intent on our present thoughts, and in sound sleep having no thoughts at all, or at least none with that consciousness which makes our waking thoughts, —I say, in all these cases, doubts are raised whether we are the same thinking thing, i.e. the same substance or no (Locke, 1689, 206).

The difficulty raised here is germane for three reasons. First, the thinking self is different from the substance that houses it. Second, how is it possible for several substances to be united by one self? Third, it reinforces the distinction made previously between the idea of substance, man and person —which presupposes that one person can inhabit different bodies, substances or man, the same way it is possible for one soul to reincarnate in different bodies. We shall try to attend to these issues later but to be sure Locke maintained that sameness of substance does not concern personal identity at all. "The question being what makes the same person; and not whether it be the same identical substance, which always thinks in the same person, which, in this case, matters not at all?" (Locke, 1689, 206). Locke buttressed his argument further that there can be different substances and different bodies. These changes are preserved by the same consciousness in the case of different substances, and by the same continued life, united into one animal, in the case of different bodies. In so far as there is unity of one continued life in different substances, identity is preserved.

But with regard to the identity of a person, Locke remarked that:

> For 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 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 so will be the same self, as far as the same consciousness can extend to actions past or to come; and would be by distance of time or change of substance, no more two persons, than a man be two men by wearing other clothes today than he did yesterday, with a long or a short sleep between the same consciousness uniting those distant actions into the same person, whatever substances contributed to their production (Locke, 1689, 206-207).

Though the substance which personal self consisted at one time may be varied at another time, it does not in any way affect or brings about change of personal identity. For example, if a person *X* at stage-A possesses complete limbs and at stage-B, *X* loses one of the limbs, this variation—from previously possessing full limbs to having an incomplete limb does not in any way necessitate

a change of the person *X* to a different person *Y*, rather the person *X* remains as *X* because the change of substance is without change of personal identity. This is tantamount to the law of thought (in logical reasoning), particularly the law of identity which says that everything is what it is (Chukwugozie, 1996,75). This presupposes that personal identity should not be viewed qualitatively but numerically, the criterion being consciousness. If a person for example undergoes a hair-cut; the person before the hair-cut and the person after the hair-cut are the same except there is a change of substance. This change does not affect the person's identity in as much as personal identity is not identity of substance. It is clear that Locke was not concern about qualitative identity in his discussion of personal identity.

In another vein, Locke while trying to convince his readers wherein personal identity consists may have triggered what appears to be a paradox; the possibility for more than one person to exist in one substance but at different time variation. This is to say, it is possible for person *A* and person *B* to exist in one substance (man) but at different time variation. Such that to punish person *A* for what person *B* did at his time would amount to injustice. In fact, Locke (1689, 211) puts it this way:

> If the same Socrates; *one substance*, waking and sleeping do not partake of the same consciousness, Socrates waking and sleeping is not the same person. And to punish Socrates waking for what sleeping Socrates thought, and waking Socrates was never conscious of, would be no righter than to punish one twin for what his brother-twin did, whereof he knew nothing, because their outsides were so like, that they could not be distinguished; for such twins have been seen (italics mine).

In what follows, it will be absurd to say that two "persons" can exist in one substance at the same time. The emphasis of Locke was on the identity of person(s) and not substances and this must be consistent with time. If a person who is sixty years old now can extend his memories to all his past experiences or actions, let say when he was ten years old; he is still the same person. Where he is unable to, such that he has forgotten something he did when he was thirty years old but only remembers what he did when he was ten years old, he is the same person when he was ten years old but different person when he was thirty years old. We see that consistency of consciousness or memory is what matters nothing more and it is the core argument of Locke's theory.

6. Arguments For and Against Locke's Theory

6-1. Arguments for (Merits):

Though Locke's view on personal identity was heavily repudiated, there are however some undeniable merits. The first merit is the fact that Locke was the first to pose the problem of personal identity, though his specific solution was profoundly criticized (Allison, 1966, 41). The significant contribution of John Locke to the subject is evidenced in David Hume's remarks, less than fifty

years later, that personal identity "has become so great a question in philosophy, especially of late years in England" (Hume, 1951, 259). The direction and impact of Locke's thought to modern and contemporary philosophy are inestimable and worthwhile. As John Barresi (2006, 124) puts it: "Locke's discussion of personal identity, along with the rest of his *Essay*, had an enormous impact in the eighteen centuries. It is primarily through Locke's use of the term consciousness in the context that the term came under general use both in England and the continent." Locke's contribution has in no small measure provoked thought, not only in philosophy but also in psychology, medicine, theology, and education. Though his solution was rejected, it has somehow provided adequate explanation for and to the possibility of resurrection of the self on the last day.

Another impressive contribution of Locke is the distinct identification of the self to moral responsibility and justice, and not the soul. Prior to now, with Plato, it is believed that man possesses a material body and immaterial soul. Plato elevated the soul over and above the body because he believes the soul is capable of surviving the body at death. More so, that the soul is the seat of human's intellect, that is, the rational part of human being, is adequate to consider it as superior. Plato's doctrine of the transmigration of the soul further elucidated the profound difference between the soul and the body. In a nutshell, in Plato's philosophy, the soul is seen as the moral person and by extension the basis of human's identity.

On the contrary, Locke's analysis of man is simply that the "idea of man entails certain determinate size and shape. Man cannot be adequately defined either in terms of his immortal soul or of his rationality" (Allison, 1966, 44). To define man in terms of his immortal soul and rationality as Allison noted, while reflecting on Locke's theory of personal identity, leads to two alternatives:

> The first alternative, the location of the essence of man in his soul, renders conceivably the absurd consequence (Locke is here no doubt thinking of the doctrine of transmigration of the souls, which was much discussed by the Cambridge Platonists) that "men, living in distant ages, and of different tempers, may have been the same man." The second alternative is disposed of with the fantastic account of an allegedly rational parrot. Despite its intelligence, Locke argues, such a creature could never be considered a man because it is lacking the requisite physical appearance (Allison, 1966, 44).

Having discarded the possibility of planting the idea of man on immaterial substance or soul, he therefore categorizes man as a corporal term but this, for him is inadequate to account for a man's personality and moral responsibility. Finally, he was led to distinguish the idea of man from the idea of a person by defining a person as "a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places" (Locke, 1689, 448). And essentially possessing "consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it" (Locke, 1689, 448).

By differentiating man (corporeal substance) from a person (conscious thinking thing called self), Locke made a profound contribution and solved what seems hitherto obscure; the resurrection of the dead, in which focus is on the soul instead of a person which in Locke's submission may connote an abstract term. The consequence here is that the idea of a man is concrete, but the idea of a person is abstract. Thus, personal identity cannot be founded on a concrete platform other than on something intrinsic. In all, "the problem of personal identity is at the centre of discussions about life after death and immortality. In order to exist after death, there has to be a person after death who is the same person as the person who died" (Nimbalkar, 2011).

The second merit of John Locke's theory is the articulation of personal identity as the ultimate source of all rights and justice of reward and punishment. To illustrate this point, Locke noted that we must admit the possibility for the same man to be two distinct individuals (persons), as any two that have lived in different ages without the knowledge of one another's thoughts (Locke, p. 459). Given this scenario, a man who is asleep in the night and awake in the day are two different individuals (persons). Similarly, one man who is drunk and sober at another time is two different individuals (persons). The wrong done by the one asleep should not be imputed to the one awake. But in Locke's view, the human law inconsiderately punishes both, only divine law of God will be able to rectify the injustice on the last-day. He puts it thus:

> But is not a man drunk and sober the same person? Why else is he punished for the fact he commits when drunk, though he was never afterwards conscious of it? Just as much the same person as a man that walk, and does other things in his sleep, is the same person, and is answerable for any mischief he shall do in it. Human laws punish both, with a justice suitable to their way of knowledge; — because, in these cases, they cannot distinguish certainly what is real, what counterfeit: and so, the ignorance in drunkenness or sleep is not admitted as a plea. But in the Great Day, wherein the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, it may be reasonable to think, no one shall be made to answer for what he knows nothing of; but shall receive his doom, his conscience accusing or excusing him ((Nimbalkar, 2011,463-464).

6-2 Arguments Against (Demerits)

First, is the argument raised by David Hume? Hume attacked Locke's theory of personal identity purely from an empirical ground and from his criticism of causality. Hume says we should ask from which perception, the idea of the self emanates from? The answer is that all perceptions are gotten from sense impressions. The idea of the self is nothing but bundles of impressions. That is, there is no single idea called self but collections of sense impressions. As Allison (1966, 50) puts it:

> Hume rejects the doctrine of an abiding substantial self in the light of his fundamental tenet that for every idea there must be a corresponding impression. Reflection upon one's mental life discloses only a succession of fleeting and distinct perceptions. There is no single impression from which the idea of self could be derived, hence there is no such idea.

We can say that Hume gave an account of personal identity that accepts both reductionist and skeptical interpretations. He denies any direct awareness of a persisting subject of experience. He describes it thus:

> If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. 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 (Hume, 1951, 251-52).

That is to say, we cannot have a single impression of the self, other than collections of sense data such as heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. In fact, Hume continues as follows:

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception and never can observe anything but the perception. … if anyone upon serious and unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different notion of *himself*, I must confess I can reason no longer with him (Hume, 1951, 253).

This argument of Hume struck at the very heart of Locke's idea of the self and consequently the basis of his theory on personal identity.

The second attack came from Joseph Butler and Thomas Reid. Butler was the first to point out the circularity and illogicality in Locke's argument. He called Locke's idea of personal identity a "wonderful mistake" because Locke fails to recognize that the relation of consciousness presupposes identity and thus cannot constitute it (Butler, 1736, 100). Nimbalkar Namita (2011, 268) writing of Butler's objection of Locke buttressed Butler's criticism thus:

> I can remember only my own experiences, but it is not my memory of an experience that makes it mine; rather, I remember it only because it is already mine. So, while memory can reveal my identity with some past experiencer, it

> does not make that experiencer me. What I am remembering, then, insists Butler, are the experiences of a substance, namely the same substance that constitutes me now.

Similarly, Thomas Reid called Locke's memory theory absurd. One of the reasons for criticizing Locke is that personal identity cannot be determined by operations but by something indivisible. Another reason is that Locke's main problem stems from confusing the evidence of something with the thing itself (2011, 268) and finally the officer paradox introduced by Reid (1785, 317-318) to demonstrate how Locke's memory theory can be reduced to absurdity:

> Suppose that as he was stealing the enemy's standard ("standard" is the food store or food provisions), a 40-year-old brave officer remembered stealing apples from a neighbour's orchard when he was 10 years old; and then suppose further that when he was 80 years old, a retired general, he remembered stealing the enemy's standard as a brave officer but no longer remembered stealing the neighbour's apples. On Locke's account, the general would have to be both identical to the apple-stealer (because of the transitivity of the identity relation: he was identical to the brave officer, who himself was identical to the apple-stealer) and not identical to the apple-stealer (given that he had no direct memory of the boy's experiences).

Reid also pointed out that the link between identity and ethics in Locke's memory theory are logically irreconcilable. Since a person would never remain the same from one moment to the next and since "the right and justice of reward and punishment are founded on personal identity, no man could be responsible for his actions" (2011, 117) because identity which implies sameness cannot be based on consciousness that varies from moment to moment. It is instructive that both Butler and Reid rejected Locke's relational view in favour of a substance-based view of identity (Shoemaker, 2005). Nevertheless, though Butler and Reid were critical of Locke's view, especially what identity consists of, they however agreed with Locke that "identity is the foundation of all rights and obligations, and of accountableness, and the notion of it is fixed and precise" (Reid, 1785,112).

As stated earlier, there are two main arguments the somatic criterion (physiological approach) raised against the psychological approach, which equally stand as criticism of Locke's theory. They are as follows:

(i) Human Vegetable

X has at t_1 a motor bicycle accident.

The being Y that is transported to the hospital is at t_2 a persistent vegetative state.

Our alleged intuition: X at t_1 is identical with Y at t_2.

Alleged conclusion: all views which postulate psychological continuity as a necessary condition are false.

(ii) Fetus

Since a fetus does not possess the cognitive capacities necessary to satisfy the demands of the psychological criterion, if the latter is true, no person can be identical with a past fetus.

Our alleged intuition: Each of us is identical with a past fetus.

Alleged conclusion: all views which postulate psychological continuity as a necessary condition are false (Korfmacher, 2006).

The arguments above are weighty and may not be easily defended. This is because Locke's psychological approach does not accommodate the idea that humans (persons) are human vegetable as well as fetus. Whereas, it is obvious we are. This is similar to the problem raised by Ayers (1990), Snowdon (1990) and Olson (1997a-2002a) that we are human animals, in contrary to Locke's view which implies supposedly that we are not human animals. "The underlying problem, however, is that it seems undeniable that there is a human animal located where each of us is. If this human animal has persistence conditions different from those that determine our persistence, then there must be two things wherever each of us is located. This conclusion raises important questions and problems Locke must address" (Korfmacher, 2006).

7. My Submissions

The main problem of Locke is not that he rejected the bodily criterion of identity but that he conceives consciousness (viz: memory) as the only basis and determinant of personal identity and his analysis at the end is incoherent and vague. The problem is further compounded by his view that personal identity is a matter of psychological continuity. He does not accept a momentary pause or suspension of continuity of consciousness. Where such is to happen, he believes the person before the pause and the person after the pause are no longer the same person, except if the person after the pause is able to extend or annex his thoughts and memory to his past actions. Here, I slightly disagree with Locke, to propose rather the idea of personal identity based on contingent grounds and the concept of the "other."

To start with, it is mistaken to x-ray or take the issue of identity and relate it with sequence of events present and past without being cognizant that present and past are two different times. The error of past scholars including John Locke is to consider consciousness as the basis of our identity and with remembrance of past events as though present and past events are the same thing. The basis of my argument is hinged on the fact that we cannot tell precisely when we/or humans started having or possessing consciousness. No doubt that humans (or persons) possess consciousness. The fact that we think is a demonstration that we possess consciousness but when precisely did we

receive or begin to be conscious? What stage of our life did we start having cognitive faculty? Is it as embryo, fetus, infant or adult? Is consciousness inherent in persons? Locke would in fact take it as the stamp of person-hood. Descartes' submission and the thesis of the *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore, I am) is a clear indication that consciousness or thought is the essence and affirmation of human existence. Aristotle's assertion that man is a rational animal is also indication that humans possess independent thought. The fundamental question is if consciousness is the same as thought or thinking then at what time precisely did humans (or persons) start having or possessing consciousness?

The disagreement among scholars on the clear-cut nature of consciousness is not in any way helpful either. While some think that consciousness is inherent and infused at the point of conception (this is commonly reported among medieval scholars), others believed it is received the moment a child is born. It may come to be present in every normal human being, in some form, in children (Strawson, 2003, 338). Those who exclude children as rational agents may think that consciousness is received the moment the mind or intellect is filled with experience. More so, the disparity between the rationalists and empiricists on the matter assuming consciousness is taken as mind, is even more problematic. What worries more is the definition offered by the twentieth-century British psychologist Stuart Sutherland that: consciousness is a fascinating but elusive phenomenon: it is impossible to specify what it is, what it does, or why it evolved. Nothing worth reading has been written about it (Twisselmann, 2002). The fact that most people associate consciousness with brains shows it is not innate.

It is clear from the foregoing that it is impossible to fix or assign specific time to when a person or humans start to be conscious. To use Locke's definition of consciousness, at what point does a child begin to be sensible or conscious of pleasure and pain, happiness or misery? Intuitively, the time a person begins to be conscious is indeterminate. Somehow, during the episode of our life in this existential world, from infant to adult, we just became aware of ourselves, others, environment and things in general. It is vague when this awareness started. It could not be ascertained or determined when, assuming is the infant stage we start to be conscious. This indeterminacy shows that though it is apt for Locke to ground personal identity on consciousness, it is arbitrary and misleading to determine the continuity or persistence of one person's stage to another only by extending or annexing thought or consciousness to previous actions, in order to retain same identity with the present and past person. What I am arguing here is that human beings or persons are conscious contingently in relation to time.

Furthermore, I quite agree with Locke that personal identity is sustained when a person extends his thoughts to his previous actions but the present-time and the past-time are two different events. Consciousness of events as it relates to the idea of the self or person cannot be recorded in linear, unbreakable sequence but contingently. The idea of reading past or current events to consciousness

makes us think that when we are unable to remember past events then we are different persons. Existentially, we are not what we are at the time of our birth, and we are not also what we are now or would be in the future. We can talk of personal identity with almost accuracy when we cease to extend consciousness to past events but relate it to events as it unfolds. This is why some commentators speak of the indeterminacy of identity. In so far, we do not at a glance see our whole past life; it is incorrect to reason that we are different from our past. As a child, I only know myself as it develops or unfolds contingently, even as adult. Human life and mental cognition cannot be read with precision. There is no permanent stage. Everything passes ceaselessly, our life unfolds ceaselessly, but we are only conscious of the stage contingently.

Another germane point to bring out is the fact that though bodily identity has no place in Locke's memory theory, yet it cannot be over-looked if we are to accept consciousness as the criterion of personal identity. Before one can talk about consciousness as the determinant of personal identity, there has to be a person who has a body and is conscious. How do we arrive at consciousness as the only thing that is permanent, or that persists through time amidst change without first intuitively noticing change physically? Consciousness does not exist in a vacuum as Locke himself affirmed; it either exists in substance or body. But how do we come about the discussion of consciousness as basis of personal identity, if we have not seen or perceive change as it relates to the body? Suppose a blind man/person from birth, without having both physical and mental pictures of his self, would the discussion of personal identity make sense to him? Suppose also, I have no idea of myself, how I look, what I have grown up to become, no image or photo, no mirror, when I look into the river or water, all I see is shadow of myself, I have no idea of others, how they look, in fact, I exist in isolation. From these suppositions, it is likely that nobody will raise discussion about identity, let alone personal identity based on consciousness.

The point I am making is that discussion of personal identity makes sense because it involves everything in my environment. Since I do not exist in isolation, I exist with others; I have intuitive idea of myself, I have cognitive awareness of my environment and things that go on around me, then it is not only consciousness that should matter in the determination of my identity but also everything around me. This is to say "the person though a separate substance, must nevertheless relate to other person-substances" (Iroegbu, 2000, 63) around him. Locke would argue that when a person is unable to extend or annex his memory or thought to past actions is a different person, such that, if Socrates waking and Socrates sleeping lack continuous psychological existence, he is no longer the same person but different persons. To this, I argue that, since it is seldom common to see a person whose memory or consciousness has not been interrupted either by sleep or forgetfulness but feel intuitively the same person. It is as a result of the phenomenon of the "other" (everything; including other persons and the environment) which help to fill the gap during the temporary discontinuity of memory or consciousness. Even in the case of total forgetfulness or

unconsciousness, the person can still be aided to get back his memory or consciousness with the help of the "other." Though "is the individual who remembers, the activity of remembering is extended, being distributed between that individual and things in her environment" (Wilson & Bartlomiej, 2015, 432). To this end, the fact that "…individuals engage in some forms of cognition only insofar as they constitute part of a social group" (Wilson, 2005) is enough to explicate the tenability of the "other" in the determination of personal identity.

There is no denying "the sense of having a continued psychological existence over time, such that one can remember oneself having done certain things in the past, matters to us and is what allows us to guide our current actions and plan our futures in light of who we are" (Wilson & Bartlomiej, 2015). In the light of this, the essential role of the other can help to reinforce and reinvigorate the statute of the psychological criterion. If we take the infant for example, granted that he has not attained full consciousness, the fact that the infant can be aided by the narrative of the "other", is a clear indication that what matters in personal identity is not only consciousness but the presence of the "other."

Conclusion

So far, we have examined the meaning of personal identity, approaches to personal identity, the problem of personal identity, Locke's account of personal identity; its merits and demerits and finally presented an alternative approach. We see that Locke's argument is just another way of trying to escape but inadvertently prolonging the difficulty of apparently articulating a distinction between the psychological approach and physiological approach to the problem of personal identity. The crux of my submission is that the inherent and intrinsic order of viewing the theory of personal identity should be reversed. It should rather be viewed from an intrinsic-cum-extrinsic and communal (collective) perspective. This new order aligns with my notion of the "other." It is my hope that if thoroughly followed may be the alternative solution to the problem of psychological approach to personal identity.

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