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# Roots of the Western Self: Dualist and Monist Philosophies of Personal Identity

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## Abstract

Personal identity has recently appeared in the agenda of social sciences and humanities in a variety of ways. There is a huge and expanding body of literature on identity, and "identity studies" has gained significant importance in the social sciences and humanities across the globe. This article aims to trace back the history of theories on Western personal identity from an interdisciplinary angle. Defining identity raises many questions and invites different disciplines ranging from hermeneutics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, anthropology, and many more. Answering questions about the nature of the self and the relationship between a person and her body led this article to trace back two lines of thought: a dualist view that sees identity in terms of soul and body dichotomy, and a monist view that focuses on the body as a defining element of identity. The enormous philosophical interest in the idea of personal identity is due to concerns with the nature of personal identity throughout time and the relationship, if any, between personal identity and bodily identity.

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**Index terms**— identity-identity formation- soul-spirit- mindbody- dualist view-monist view- idealist- physicalist.

## 1 Introduction

he concept of identity is strangely perplexing and puzzling; What am I? What kind of object/subject am I? Or to overgeneralize: what kind of thing is a person? What are we made of? Is it possible to determine someone's identity with certainty? What constitutes the core components of the self? Is it plausible to get clear on what is the identity of a person? What are the fundamental building blocks of the self? Emmanuel Kant sums up the question in *The Critique of Pure Reason*: "What is the human being?" Alluding that when defining human nature, we can easily at least know ourselves. The same approach was conducted by David Hume in his *Treatise on Human Nature*, defining the human being so that we can grasp the human identity. Is it that constant persistent unit, that stable flow of "stream of consciousness" -to use William James' terms in his seminal book *Principles of Psychology*-or that inconsistent oscillating hybrid and fragmented construction? Identity as a concept is oddly perplexing, if not puzzling and so complex. More to the point, identity, or the self as a lived experience is uncannily paradoxical. The post-modern state in which we live offers us a scene distorted by fragmentation, "mimicry" like the apostate of Ralph Sing in *The Mimic Men* by V.S Naipaul 1 , "hybridity" 2 , "liquidization" 3 , "corrosion of character" 4 At first glance one might think that we can get clear on the answer: we need to know what am I? What is a person? What is the metaphysical composition of people on the one hand? On the other, we need to get clear on the nature of identity or persistence, or more specifically personal identity. For to persist as recognizable individuals in the present implies to , deeply suffering in what Charles Taylor qualifies as in his book *a Secular Age*: "Malaise of modern identity", or what Julia Kristeva describes in *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* as "maladies of the soul". What is it for something that exists in the past, present, or future to be me? What's the nature of the persistence of identity over time? What is the vital key, the nature, or the basis of personal identity? Or to put it in other words: What is it for somebody like me who is here today, and

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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44 maybe next year, to be the same person as me? What is the nature of personal identity? 1 Here is what Ralph  
45 Singh says: "We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New  
46 World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new" 2  
47 Nowadays, the word "hybrid" is used more frequently and in different contexts. Both major postcolonial theorists  
48 Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha have examined the idea of hybridity in their works, albeit they approach it in  
49 slightly different ways. In his seminal book "Orientalism" (1978), Edward Said mainly concentrated on how the  
50 "Orient" was portrayed in Western literature and conversation. On the other hand, Homi K. Bhabha is renowned  
51 for his more overt use of the postcolonial theory's notion of hybridity. The concept of hybridity is explored in  
52 Bhabha's work, particularly in "The Location of Culture" (1994), as a means of subverting rigid classifications  
53 and identities that are, in his words, "almost the same but not quite"p123. 3 According to Zygmunt Bauman in  
54 his *Liquid Modernity*, our social, political, economic, and personal lives have grown more fluid and unpredictable  
55 throughout time "'fluidity' or 'liquidity' as fitting metaphors when we wish to grasp the nature of the present, in  
56 many ways novel, phase in the history of modernity." P2. 4 Sociologist Richard Sennett wrote the book entitled  
57 *The Corrosion of Character*. Sennett examines how the modern world's evolving nature of labor and employment  
58 has eroded character and identity. He explores how more adaptable and sporadic kinds of jobs have taken the  
59 place of old job structures, which provide security and a sense of identity. Sennett contends that this change has  
60 had a significant impact on people's sense of self and their capacity to form lasting commitments and meaningful  
61 connections in both their professional and personal life.

62 survive, in the sense that concerns us in this article. Once more, many of our core feelings and attitudes are  
63 primarily focused on our own pasts and futures, which is closely related to how we view our responsibility for  
64 past actions, and how we practice giving and receiving praise. It is difficult to conceive the profound effects, this  
65 would have on our perception of the world and our emotional and moral reactions to it if we were to abandon  
66 the idea of a person as a unified ongoing entity. Yet, questions like what am I? What kind of an entity am  
67 I? What am I made of? May seem in philosophical jargon, metaphysical. So, we're enquiring about the same  
68 metaphysical questions in a kind of survey already asked earlier by many thinkers: What is the common human  
69 ground upon which we can define identity? Is it the soul (Plato's Republic, St. Augustine's confessions)? Is it  
70 the "cogito ergo sum" (Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy.")? Is it pure reason (Kant's Critique of Pure  
71 Reason), or spirit (Hegel's Phenomenology of the Spirit, Berkeley's Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human  
72 Knowledge), or being as a unit/one (Spinoza's Ethics), or monad (Leibnitz's Monadology)? Or impressions,  
73 vivid forceful creeds, habits, and emotions that we acquire by our bodily sense through experience (Locke's Essay  
74 Concerning Human Understanding, Hume's Treatise of Human Nature)? Or, the dualist dichotomy soul-body in  
75 metaphysical continental philosophy? Is it the body as suggested in various hypothetical empirical, materialist,  
76 and mechanical philosophies? Is identity synonymous with becoming (Kierkegaard's *The Sickness Unto Death*),  
77 or being (Heidegger's *Being and Time*)? Or a reflection of a dialogue, or a dialectical synthesis with the other  
78 whether it is God (Kierkegaard's *Concept of Anxiety*), or nature (Spinoza's Ethics), or human (Bubber's *I and*  
79 *Thou*, Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*)? Can't the identity be linked to society because "the human being is  
80 social by nature" as Ibn Khaldun emphasizes in his *Muqaddimah*<sup>5</sup> sometimes also called the "*Prolegomena to*  
81 *History*" or "*Introduction to History*"), written in 1377 by Abdurrahman Ibn Khaldun and is considered as a  
82 foundational text in the fields of historiography and sociology.

83 for humans are inherently social creatures and society is the natural environment for human identity  
84 development. Isn't the self a productive and consumer entity belonging to a social class (Marx and Engels's  
85 *German Ideology*), or an ideological discursive reproductive subject (Althusser's *Ideology and Ideological State*  
86 *Apparatuses*, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, though Foucault does not treat ideology explicitly but his  
87 exploration of ideology is intertwined with his broader examination of power, knowledge, and the ways in which  
88 they shape society)? Isn't the debate about sex and sexed, or gender ignoring feminist identity relevant to the  
89 topic? Isn't it racial, ethnic, and religious...Or the unconscious, the sexual drive, the death drive (Freud's *Beyond*  
90 *Pleasure Principle*)? Or the cycle of desires (Lacan's *Ecrits*)? Is it the linguistic (Aristotle's on Interpretation,  
91 St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Richard Rorty's famous quote: "The world does not speak for us; we speak for the  
92 world" in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*), or the social, or the political, or the cultural animal (Giorgio  
93 Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, Umberto Eco's *The Search for the Perfect Language*)? What kind of a subject/object  
94 is a person? It seems plausible to think that understanding identity should depend on how it is built, and what  
95 is it made of? what are its components?

96 We can sum up the whole matter of identity into two basic positions, or two hermeneutically and historically  
97 deep theoretical trends though they are not the only possible positions on the question of the metaphysics of  
98 identity. Yet, we think that the two most prominent positions, and definitely the ones most worth taking seriously  
99 for our purposes, are as follows: First, Identity is a combination of a body and something else, say a soul, a spirit,  
100 a mind, a reason and the like. The crucial thing about this continental first view is that the soul, spirit, or mind  
101 are thought of as something prior, independent, separate from, and distinct from the body and controlling it. To  
102 use a commonly known enough word, this entity is the soul. So, human beings are, or have, or consist of bodies  
103 and souls with the soul as something distinct with priority over the body. We can call this position the "dualist  
104 view" or what Richard Swinburn (1984) calls "the dualist theory", or the soul/body dichotomy, or mind/body  
105 "binary opposition" 6 6 A Key structural concept coined and discussed by Claude Lévi-Strauss oppositions in  
106 his influential work *Structural Anthropology*.

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107 . The second position, also called by Sidney Shoemaker (1984) "the materialistic account", is that which  
108 considers the body, that lump of organs, flesh, bones, and muscles that is always there in front of you when  
109 you see it reflected in the mirror, or in the gaze of others, and that entity in each one of us which drags around  
110 with us. It's the sort of object/subject that we can put on a scale, that is physical, and the biologists can  
111 study, and doctors can heal or treat, and undoubtedly made up of matter of various kinds of cells, molecules,  
112 atoms, and so forth. In contrast to the first view that considers that identity is constructed by an immaterial  
113 thing, or something that's not the body, or something that's not a material object, something metaphysical not  
114 composed of cells, molecules, and atoms: the soul as the house of life and being, or the basis of consciousness,  
115 thinking, and therefore it is perhaps the personality. What is crucial in this point of view is that the proper  
116 theoretical metaphysical understanding of the soul/spirit/mind is to think of it in nonphysical, antirealistic, ideal,  
117 and nonmaterial terms.

118 We can qualify "the dualist view" dualist obviously because there are two basic components: the soul and  
119 the body. The soul is something infinite, immaterial, and nonphysical, and the body is a palpable, material,  
120 and tangible substance. The other alternative view is not dualist but monist: it says that there's only one basic  
121 substance that determines the self, and only one basic kind of thing that is crucial in defining identity, i.e., the  
122 body. Accordingly, identity is just a certain kind of material subject/object, it is just a body that can do activities  
123 that most other material objects can't do. The monist view can be called hypothetical empirical "physicalism"  
124 because it says that what human beings just are made of, are these physical bodily objects: the self is just a body  
125 that can do various activities as an extension to it like thinking, speaking, writing poetry, falling in love... On the  
126 other hand, the dualist view suggests that people are bodies and souls. These are the two basic interpretations,  
127 with others that can be found in other disciplines.

128 From a logical point of view, and with the advent of progress in Identity studies more possible views have  
129 emerged. If the monist is right and there are bodies but no souls, then suppose someone who is also right and  
130 advocates that there are souls but no bodies, and someone else who might oscillate between both. This closely  
131 corresponds to a viewpoint that says there are thoughts but not genuinely physical things, or supposes that there  
132 are no stable notions and that identity is a dynamic process of becoming (like Kierkegaard for instance). Perhaps  
133 we fall into a kind of illusion when we look at physical stuff. Or one can be seriously misled or confused if they are  
134 thought of in just materialistic terms. The belief that only minds and their ideas exist is referred to as idealism.  
135 The use of physical items is merely an analogy for mental concepts or something similar. In both literature and  
136 philosophy, idealism has a very long history. In a nutshell, there are viewpoints in which the body and the mind  
137 are merely two perspectives on the same fundamental reality, which is neither physical nor psychological. The  
138 dualist position, which holds that humans have both bodies and souls and the physicalist view, which holds that  
139 our bodies are all we have and all we are, are the two viewpoints we will concentrate on.

140 To elaborate further on the dualist viewpoint; the crucial determinant is the soul, spirit, or mind as an  
141 immaterial substance at times transcendental (Plato, Kant), at others immanent (Aristotle), or both (St.  
142 Augustine), and we could call it by different names. The soul/spirit/ mind is based in or just is something  
143 nonphysical something nonmaterial. On the one hand, the soul can guide, control, and command the body.  
144 On the other hand, the body produces input that the soul eventually senses or feels. As is always the case in  
145 philosophy and other disciplines, there are more complex varieties of dualism in which the interaction may not  
146 be two-way, but for the purposes of this article, we will stick with the standard two-way interactionist dualism.  
147 My body is therefore under the power of my thoughts. There are many ways that my body might impact my  
148 thinking. Nevertheless, both of the entities are separate things.

149 However, there is still a strong relationship between such two poles. Even if talking about physical locations  
150 may be somewhat figuratively intended, we sometimes say that the soul is in the body. It's not like we believe  
151 that if you start opening up the body, you'll eventually find the specific location of the soul and say the location  
152 of the soul is just here. With the dualists, we tend to believe that the soul has a very intimate connection with  
153 the body, but identity is not the soul and the body, it is just the soul. So even if that intimate connection gets  
154 destroyed the soul could continue to exist. The second thing to make clear is that we could be interested in three  
155 separate concerns: Are bodies and souls really two separate things? Is the soul, an immaterial object, to be used  
156 to explain the mind? If the physicalist is correct, then we are bodies with the capacity for thought, planning,  
157 bodily feelings, and emotion as well as dreams and goals. We are physical beings with the ability to communicate.  
158 We are embodied persons or we are persons in bodies. These are the kinds of queries and problems this article  
159 addresses. You will gain a better understanding of yourself and the kinds of issues you deal with daily by using  
160 this as an introduction to the subject of social and personal identity.

## 161 2 II.

## 162 3 Literature Review

163 The philosophical account of the issue of identity is so complex. Charles Taylor sees in his seminal book Sources  
164 of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity that the modern identity or the Western Self to be scientifically  
165 more precise is basically moral with 'self-mastery' of reason and dates back to antiquity with Greek philosophy  
166 and Plato's Republic in particular: "Plato's moral doctrine, as he sets it out in the Republic, for instance, seems  
167 quite familiar to us. We are good when reason rules, and bad when we are dominated by our desires." (Taylor,

168 115) Eventually what Taylor is doing is tracing the historical evolution the modern self has undergone. Taylor's  
169 methodology of making recourse to the history of philosophy starting with Plato, moving to St. Augustine, and  
170 arriving at Descartes and other enlightened philosophers is not strange for he underwent a similar strategy in  
171 another interesting work, *Politics of Recognition*.

172 Another way is to discuss this perplexing topic from a Kantian approach, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, in the  
173 sense that when we reach a clear definition of "what is man?" consequently we will define what human identity  
174 is. This approach will lead us to a kind of transcendental metaphysical idealism that requires hermeneutics in an  
175 attempt to decipher intricate philosophical views on human nature. We will propose in this respect two major  
176 trends of thought which propose two versions of identity; a dualist view, and a monist view.

177 One last approach is to follow what John Locke explained concerning the issue. Locke, being the first to write  
178 overtly about such a concept in Book II, Chapter XXVII entitled 'Of Identity and Diversity' in his seminal book  
179 *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, saw that talking about identity needs not only a historical timeline  
180 but also a place reference, in other words, a spatiotemporal reference. Giving an account of the logically necessary  
181 and sufficient conditions for a person recognized at one moment to be the same person as a person identified  
182 at another is the problem of personal identification over time. In other words, it is the challenge of explaining  
183 what personal identity through time always entails, or as many philosophers put it, the challenge of defining the  
184 standard of personal identity over time (diachronic personality). In a different sense of the traits, or properties  
185 defining a criterion of personal identification across time would mean stating what constitutes acceptable personal  
186 identity proof.

### 187 4 III.

### 188 5 Identity as a Whole Unit

189 In both philosophical versions of the identity, whether it is a dichotomy of soul and body with mastery of soul  
190 in the Platonic-Cartesian tradition of qualifying the soul as a notion of an immaterial, incorporeal, unextended  
191 soul that could be interpreted as unproblematically ensuring a personal identity separately and independent of  
192 physical changes over time, or the opposite, the dominance of the body in what Harold W. Noonan calls in his  
193 book *Personal Identity 'the Bodily Criterion'*, we are still talking about one whole totality that can be described  
194 as self, or personal identity. The dualist philosophers were heavily preoccupied with unreal transcendental issues  
195 such as the nature of the soul (immanent or transcendental), the nature of the relationship between the soul and  
196 body (separate or connected), and the supremacy of the soul or mind. However, the main purpose was to define  
197 the human being, a common connection point between this movement and the physicalist approach. The latter,  
198 which associated the body with material ideas like time, space, mobility, performativity, memory, and causation,  
199 appeared to be gaining appeal. The prevalence of the aforementioned philosophical currents also indicates that  
200 a stable definition of one's own identity was sought after as a common goal.

### 201 6 a) The dualist view

202 This view can be considered as the most historically dominant dating back to the times of ancient Greek  
203 philosophy up to now. Charles Taylor in *Sources of The Self* refers back to Plato as the first to highlight the self-  
204 mastery of the soul over the body. Yet, Plato was not alone in this respect, a whole list of philosophers followed  
205 this custom. Taylor mentions St. Augustine and Descartes as leading figures that deepened this tradition.

206 i. The transcendental soul Idealism started with Plato mainly with his utopian Republic. Plato proposes the  
207 soul, or the psyche, as a separate entity self-controlling the body. Every human being has a unique soul with  
208 three parts: first, the head's logos controls the other components and is connected to reason. Second, the thymos  
209 is connected to spirit and is situated close to the chest area. Desires are connected to the eros which is found in  
210 the stomach. Dialogues on the soul in the Republic demonstrate that Plato's views on ethics and metaphysics  
211 are consistent with the idea of a tripartite soul. A close relationship with the body is necessary for the soul,  
212 which is expressly described as being tripartite. The treatment of the soul is also holistic; the focus is on the  
213 whole soul rather than on its individual components, i.e., the health of the soul does not depend on the health  
214 of each component acting independently. Plato in this sense says in *The Republic*, Book 1, 353d. (Translation  
215 found in Campbell 2021: 523.): "Is there any function of the soul that you could not accomplish with anything  
216 else, such as taking care of something (epimeleisthai), ruling, and deliberating, and other such things? Could we  
217 correctly assign these things to anything besides the soul, and say that they are characteristic (idia) of it?"

218 No, to nothing else. What about living? Will we deny that this is a function of the soul? That absolutely is."

219 In modern philosophy, Kant and following him Fichte introduced a new perception of identity in their theories  
220 of knowledge. According to Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, our cognitive abilities rather than reality  
221 itself are responsible for our experience's formal structure, which includes its unity and law-governed regularity.  
222 Because our mind generates experience in a way that is law-governed, it has a consistent form, it sees concepts  
223 rather than palpable objects. Therefore, for Kant, self-consciousness is the awareness of the mind's law-governed  
224 process of merging or synthesizing sensible elements to create a single experience. According to him: "this unity  
225 of consciousness would be impossible if in the cognition of the manifold the mind could not become conscious of  
226 the identity of the function by means of which this manifold is synthetically combined into one cognition". This  
227 premise is reflected in what we might call Kant's principle of apperception, which states that "The I think must be

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228 able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be  
229 thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would  
230 be nothing for me” Although Fichte argues in his Foundations of Natural Right (1797), that self-consciousness is  
231 a social phenomenon that necessitates communication between the “I” and society, he develops in his Foundations  
232 of the Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre) a system where identity or “absolute I” is a synthesis of an  
233 active “I” and a passive “I”. The first statement of the Jena Wissenschaftslehre’s first principles begins with the  
234 phrase “the I posits itself as an I.” The first principle states that “the I posits itself as self-positing,” since this  
235 activity of “self-positing” is considered to be the fundamental characteristic of I-hood in general. The verb “To  
236 posit” (setzen) here means simply “to be aware/ conscious of,” so to even exist, the I must posit itself; but, the  
237 I can only posit itself to the extent that it divides against itself by positing itself as imperfect and limited (and  
238 thus as unlimited or “absolute” in the same way). Additionally, it is incapable of constructing or creating its  
239 own restrictions, which is to say, it cannot even hypothesize these limitations for itself. The intellect-as a finite  
240 entity-can’t serve as the source of its own passivity.

241 ii. The immanent soul According to Aristotle, the union of a person’s body and soul constitutes the substantial  
242 existence of that person: “The soul neither exists without a body nor is a body of some sort. For it is not a  
243 body, but it belongs to a body, and for this reason is present in a body, and in a body of such-and-such a sort”  
244 (414a20ff). The soul is necessary for the existence of the body as a whole, and the body cannot exist without the  
245 soul. Plato’s multifaceted soul is rejected by Aristotle, the soul cannot be separated from the body even though  
246 it is not a corporeal object. He claims that I don’t experience desire in one area of my spirit and wrath or shame  
247 in another area at the same time. I have a single soul with several different abilities. Now, according to Aristotle,  
248 the soul is not a substance in the truest meaning of the word, but rather a composite that the soul creates by  
249 actualizing matter into a body that has been endowed with soul. As a result, Aristotle does not find the topic of  
250 the unity of the body and soul to be particularly intriguing, what is puzzling is: How does the soul bring the body  
251 into being? What do these different actualizations entail? According to Aristotle, the soul is indivisible from the  
252 body since it is the original actuality of it. The soul is the initial actuality of the body, according to Aristotle.  
253 The soul acting is the second reality of the body. Being alive is being constantly focused on, involved in, and  
254 oriented toward that form in its appropriate substance. Therefore, having a life is the first reality, followed by  
255 having a good life. According to Aristotle, the soul is not a particular action but rather the capacity or ability  
256 to engage in a variety of acts, particularly those involving cognition, feeling, and sustenance. Additionally, it  
257 is the actualized potential to engage in specific activities rather than an underdeveloped potential. Therefore,  
258 the fundamental abilities of the soul are those of development and nutrition, which are characteristics of plants.  
259 These are the abilities that animals possess when sensation, movement, and the ability to experience pleasure  
260 and suffering are included. The final powers of the soul are those of mind and intellect, which are only possessed  
261 by humans.

262 iii.

## 263 7 St. Augustine and the Illuminated Self

264 The modern reader will face some paradoxical impressions about Augustine’s writings. The quantity of  
265 Augustine’s writings much outweighs that of nearly all other ancient authors whose works have survived “In  
266 the *Retractationes* (“Revisions”, a critical survey of his writings in chronological order down to 428 CE)  
267 he suggests a threefold division of his work into books, letters and sermons (*Retractationes* 1, prologue  
268 1); about 100 books, 300 letters, and 500 sermons have survived. 7 7 Tornau, Christian, “Saint August-  
269 tine”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =  
270 <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/augustine/>>. Aristotle’s theory of the soul as presented  
271 primarily in his book *De Anima* (or *On The Soul*) contrasts with Plato’s dualistic theory of the soul as presented  
272 earlier in this article. To answer the question “What is soul?” at the beginning of *De Anima* II. 1 Aristotle  
273 made a distinction between matter (potentiality), form (actuality), and the compound of matter and form as  
274 inseparable. Second, according to Aristotle, all temporary existence follows the law of causality, changing from  
275 potential to actual. For instance, a seed develops into a tree. The tree’s shape and material are not lacking  
276 in the seed, but they are not appealing to it. But why do we not state that it is identical to the tree if it has  
277 the same form and substance? The seeds in the tree are similar to each other in a certain sense. They aren’t  
278 exact duplicates, though. They stand out for whatever reason, and Aristotle wants to discuss that distinction.  
279 A different manifestation of the seed’s form, the tree, is created as it grows. This shape, which is the inner  
280 “telos” or “entelechy” of the living thing’s seed, has always existed in potential form but became actualized  
281 through growth. As this process of growth develops over time, it represents the progression from potentiality to  
282 actuality. *immortalitate animae*). The immateriality of the soul (*De quantitate animae*), language and learning  
283 (*De magistro*), freedom of choice and human responsibility (*De libero arbitrio*), and the numerical structure of  
284 reality (*De musica*) were all topics that Augustine continued to explore. Augustine’s early Christian philosophy  
285 is kind of summarized in the essay *De vera religione*.

286 St. Augustine, like the majority of ancient thinkers, held the view that the human being is a composite of  
287 body and soul and that the soul, which was viewed as the origin of life and the focal point of consciousness,  
288 perception, and thought, is, or should be, the controlling portion within this composite. St. Augustine was also  
289 the first to invent the notion of cogito: “Augustine was the inventor of the argument we know as the ‘cogito’

290 because Augustine was the first to make the first-person standpoint fundamental to our search for the truth.” 8  
291 The human being is in a triadic dialectical relation between his soul and God on the one hand, his soul and his  
292 body on the other, and his soul and the external forms. The agency of the soul as a free will makes us accountable  
293 for our actions: “The world as I know it is there for me, is experienced by me, or thought about by me, or has  
294 meaning for me. Knowledge, awareness is always that of an agent.” 9 According to Augustine, illumination and an  
295 interior teacher are necessary for authentic knowledge. Such first-hand acquaintance is attainable through sense  
296 perception in the case of perceptible objects, which, strictly speaking, do not admit knowledge at all but only of  
297 opinion. The ability to understand intelligible objects, however, cannot be acquired empirically through the use  
298 of abstraction or communicated to us linguistically by a human teacher; rather, it requires personal intellectual  
299 activity that yields an intellectual insight, which we judge by a standard we can only find within ourselves.  
300 Mathematical, logical, and fundamental moral facts serve as the model for this type of cognition since we grasp  
301 them for ourselves rather than by accepting them from a teacher or a book (De magistro 40; see also De libre  
302 arbitrio 2.34). God-a view explicitly attributed to the Platonists in De civitate dei 8.7-who, in the manner of a  
303 Neoplatonic immaterial principle, is both immanent and transcendent in a The rational mind should control its  
304 sensual tendencies and appetites so that it can grow wise and intelligent by turning to God, who is simultaneously  
305 the Supreme Being and the Supreme Good. The so-called concept of illumination, which is Augustine’s theory of  
306 knowledge, is a clearly non-empiricist epistemology based on a likely Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato’s notion  
307 of recall. dialectical relation to our soul-is the condition of possibility and the criterion of truth of this intellectual  
308 insight.

309 From sensory perception to theoretical reason or contemplation, Augustine finds three elements in all of our  
310 cognitive acts. They are as follows: [1] an object that is either external to the mind (such as sense perception) or  
311 internal to it, in which case it is an image or a concept stored in our memory; [2] a cognitive faculty that must be  
312 activated or “formed” by the object for cognition to occur; and [3] a voluntary/intentional element that causes  
313 the cognitive faculty to be “formed” by the object. The third element ensures the active character of perception  
314 and intellection and also supports the idea that we cannot comprehend something until we deliberately direct  
315 our attention to it.

## 316 8 iv. Cogito, all-inclusive reason, and infinite spirit

317 In a very remarkable manner, René Descartes was the first philosopher to announce the centrality of the “I”. The  
318 reflective “I” first appeared in French as “Je pense, donc je suis” in his Discourse on the Method, then Descartes  
319 referred to it in Latin as “Cogito ergo sum” in Meditations on First Philosophy and eventually reappeared again  
320 in Latin in his later Principles of Philosophy. Descartes popularly saw that the existence of my “I” seems beyond  
321 any serious question. To question anything even my own existence by myself has to exist first. I am myself  
322 the only solid and dependable certainty. The existence of anything beyond me, however, is not so quickly and  
323 obviously recognized. “It began with the Promethean defiance of René Descartes, who decided to go it alone, to  
324 step outside the custom and prejudice of his own age and culture, and to seek truth on his own. He thought it  
325 would be possible to judge the culture in which he had been reared from the vantage point of a solitary individual  
326 purified by doubt, who accepts nothing other than that which his own reason compels him to accept. Cosmic  
327 exile, as Quine aptly named it, was, above all, cultural exile. It expresses extreme distrust of culture, one’s own,  
328 and all others. Moreover, Descartes felt an acute contempt for culture, which he called ‘custom and example’  
329 and considered to be the source of all error. The human mind was so made as to ensure that, on its own, it would  
330 find the truth: this was Descartes’ solution to the problem of evil, for it enabled him to exonerate God from the  
331 charge of leading us into error. It was not man as made by God who erred, but man as perverted by culture.”

332 René Descartes asserts that: “While we thus reject all of which we can entertain the smallest doubt, and even  
333 imagine that it is false, we easily indeed suppose that there is neither God, nor sky, nor bodies, and that we  
334 ourselves even have neither hands nor feet, nor, finally, a body; but we cannot in the same way suppose that we  
335 are not while we doubt of the truth of these things; for there is a repugnance in conceiving that what thinks does  
336 not exist at the very time when it thinks. Accordingly, the knowledge, I THINK, THEREFORE I AM, is  
337 the first and most certain that occurs to one who philosophizes orderly.” 10 IV.

## 338 9 The Physicalist View

339 Provided that I am still trying to determine the world’s existence on the foundation of my own being, I make  
340 myself the center of the globe and the referee of the world. My mindset is that if there is to be anything at all,  
341 it will have to be on my own conditions and laws, satisfying and meeting my individual requirements of proof  
342 standards that are set down by my confidence that I myself exist. All my knowledge depends on my personal  
343 comprehension of my existence: the only way for me to know anything else is for me depends on tracing it back  
344 to my personal knowledge of myself.

345 The point that “I think, I am, I exist” is Descartes’ response. I can question and doubt the existence of  
346 any exterior object outside my own mind, and I can question the existence of what seems to be my whole  
347 body. But when I try to also question the existence of my inner self, I discover that I am still there alone as  
348 a questioning thinker. Besides, if I try to question the being of this questioning, then I still discover the action  
349 of my questioning. Also, no issue how difficult I try to question this questioning; I cannot help but discover

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350 the operation of questioning. My questioning is what in the end I cannot question. Doubting is thinking, and  
351 the existence of thinking indicates the being alone of a thinker. Hence, Descartes' popular conclusion: "I think,  
352 therefore I am". A castle and a barrier are built between the "I" and the world: the jail of my doubt, the process  
353 of thinking itself about any existence at all of anything beyond my mind. The 'Self' becomes unavoidable because  
354 my Self becomes the only factor I can know for sure. I end up with the issue of the unavoidable solitary self, a  
355 kind of estrangement that happens between myself and the world.

356 The most common idea of personal identity is that it is made up of bodily identity, which is practically  
357 everyone's first assumption. The self as we understand it in daily life is actually established by physiological  
358 identity or as Harlod Noonan puts it: "P2 at time t2 is the same person as P1 at time t1 if and only if P2 has  
359 the same body as P1 had." Our bodies-that mass of organs, skin, bones, and muscles that always looms large in  
360 front of us when we look in the mirror or into the eyes of others-are the things that each of us carries around  
361 with us. It is the kind of physical item or subject that can be measured, that biologists can study, that medical  
362 professionals can heal or treat and that unquestionably consists of matter made up of different types of cells,  
363 molecules, atoms, and so forth.

## 364 10 a) Monism

365 Perhaps Aristotle was the first to talk about the inseparability between body and soul but his theory insisted on  
366 the existence of dualism. Descartes followed the same tradition but believed that the soul/mind was separate from  
367 the body and could exist outside of it. Descartes asserts that the self is an immaterial substance that is separate  
368 from its body. This immaterial self has a body, and it is attached to that body so closely that they become  
369 one. Descartes maintains that the relationship between one's ego and one's body is fundamentally different from  
370 that of a pilot and his craft. Spinoza was the first to refute Descartes's theory and propose that being is one  
371 stable totality. Adopting a geometric methodology with precise definitions, axioms, demonstrations, and clear  
372 conclusions he asserts that there is a unity between God and Nature in a pantheist manner.

373 In his most important work, *Ethics Demonstrated in a Geometrical Manner*, Spinoza draws a fundamentally  
374 different conception of the universe. The book is divided into five sections: Of God, of the Nature and Origin  
375 of the Mind, the Origin and Nature of the Affects, Of Human Bondage, or the Power of the Affects, and Of  
376 the Power of the Intellect, or of Human Freedom. Aspects of general metaphysics (such as the presence of God,  
377 free will, the nature of bodies and minds, etc.) are covered in Part I. Part II addresses two mental topics: (i) a  
378 general theory of knowledge and (ii) what the mind is and how it interacts with the body. Spinoza outlines his  
379 theory of emotions (which he refers to as "affects") and a wholly deterministic view of human psychology in Part  
380 III. Spinoza offers his ethical philosophy in Parts IV and V.

381 Spinoza starts part one of his *Ethics* by definitions. He says the following: II. "That thing is called finite in  
382 its own kind (in suo genere) which can be limited by another thing of the same nature. For example, a body is  
383 called finite, because we always conceive another which is greater. So a thought is limited by another thought;  
384 but a body is not limited by a thought, nor a thought by a body. III. By substance, I understand that which is in  
385 itself and is conceived through itself; in other words, that, the conception of which does not need the conception  
386 of another thing from which it must be formed. IV. By attribute, I understand that which the intellect perceives  
387 of substance, as if constituting its essence. V. By mode, I understand the affections of substance, or that which  
388 is in another thing through which also it is conceived. He defines 'substance' as something that is not dependent  
389 on other things, which is where he begins his argument. Everything that exists, in Spinoza's view, is either a  
390 substance or a mode. A substance is something that cannot exist or be created without the presence of other  
391 things. Both conceptually and ontologically, substances are distinct entities. The only substance after this is  
392 God/nature. A mode or property is something that depends on and cannot exist in the absence of a material.  
393 Humans are limited beings with interdependent traits. He claims that there is no transcendent and personal  
394 God, no eternal soul, no free will and that there is no ultimate reason or objective for the cosmos to exist using  
395 a geometrical approach. Instead, Spinoza contends that all of nature, including humans, is governed by a single  
396 set of laws, negating the notion that humans are special. He also contends that nothing that occurs could have  
397 happened any other way, that the universe is one inherently active totality (which can be thought of as either  
398 "God" or "Nature"), and that the mind and body are one and the same thing conceived in different ways.

## 399 11 b) John Locke's notion of person and memory

400 In the well-known chapter "Of Identity and Diversity" of his seminal book *Essay Concerning Human Understand-*  
401 *ing* (Book II, Ch. 27), John Locke was the first to formulate the identity question in a way that could be easily  
402 recognized. Yet, before dealing with Locke's theory on personal identity we need to bear in mind that the Lockean  
403 approach is highly hypothetical and empirical. In other terms, he is among the founders of the Anglo-Saxon  
404 empirical school in opposition to the transcendental continental school of thought. Empiricism relies on bodily  
405 senses, physical experiences, and palpable universal mechanical laws. So, the Lockean project has the purpose of  
406 defining the human being by defining it according to the faculty of understanding or consciousness. Yet, John  
407 Locke's approach to identity was misunderstood and at times misread by other scholars. More to the point it  
408 even received many objections. Galen Strawson in his book entitled *Locke on Personal Identity: Consciousness*  
409 *and Concernment* asks: "Why has he been so misunderstood? I blame certain influential commentators; in whose

## 11 B) JOHN LOCKE'S NOTION OF PERSON AND MEMORY

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410 vanguard one finds one of the worst readers of other philosophers in the history of 11 philosophy: the good Bishop  
411 Berkeley. Thomas Reid is also to blame, for although he is a great (and often funny) philosopher, and sometimes  
412 accurate enough in his renderings of the views of his predecessors, he enjoys mockery too much to be reliable,  
413 he's too free with the word "absurd," and his misreading of Locke's views on personal identity, which follows  
414 Berkeley's, is spectacular."

415 By identity and diversity, Locke means "the very being of things, when, considering anything as existing at  
416 any determined time and place, we compare it with itself existing at another time, and thereon form the ideas of  
417 identity and diversity." Individuation, time, and space are central key concepts in this theory, in other words, we  
418 are talking about a diachronic identity.

419 Locke was essentially starting from scratch when he developed his idea, thus despite the very simple language  
420 he uses, it is a somewhat complex and intricate theory. He held the quite rational position that the right identity  
421 criterion is what makes for consistency through time. Anything's identity seems to be a rather simple matter  
422 as long as it exists and remains selfidentical. If A and B were identical particles of matter with a continuous  
423 history connecting them at various points in time, they would only be identical particles if a continuous pathway  
424 led from one to the other. What makes up a human body's identity, and how does that identity differ from  
425 other bodies? The answer is simple: a continuous history of such ordered life forms a living organism's identity  
426 over time. The fact that you are systematically changing through time is actually a key component of what it  
427 means to be a living entity. The best way to sum up what Locke has to say about personal identification is to  
428 say that a person is a thinking, intelligent being with reason and reflection who may conceive of themselves as  
429 the same thinking thing at different times. This is only possible because of consciousness, which is inseparable  
430 from thinking and crucial to it: "Self is that conscious thinking thing?which?is concerned for itself as far as that  
431 consciousness extends" (Essay II, xxvii. 17)

432 Locke is making a crucial distinction between a human being and any other living organism whether vegetal  
433 or animal. In contrast to other living things, humans are thinking, intelligent beings, and Locke claims that  
434 consciousness, which is inextricably linked to thought, is the key to the development of a person's identity  
435 over time. This continuity of consciousness will unquestionably be based on memory. It will be some type of  
436 consciousness of continuity of consciousness, mediated by memory, that makes me the same person as myself  
437 from years ago. Harold Noonan highlights that "The heart of Locke's account of personal identity is the claim  
438 that identity of substance is irrelevant. What matters for personal identity is sameness of consciousness and  
439 this may relate states of different substances and may fail to relate states of the same substance." 12 Locke  
440 indicates that any individual only looks back on those mental occurrences or deeds that they believe to be  
441 their own when he argues that "sameness of person consists in sameness of consciousness." In other words, the  
442 "subjective constitution of the self"13 c) David Hume's identity illusion is the ideal lens through which to view  
443 the permanence of any person or self.

444 Half a century after John Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding David Hume wrote a book with  
445 almost the same title Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding but with the same purpose solidifying an already  
446 empirical school of thought that already started from the days of Francis Bacon. Eventually, this book didn't  
447 include any chapter on identity. Hume wrote about this topic in his earlier book Treatise of Human Nature:  
448 "Hume discusses personal identity in two places: in the main body of the Treatise of Human Nature (1778), in  
449 Section VI of Part IV of Book I, entitled 'Of personal identity', and in an Appendix published a year later with  
450 Book III, in which he declares himself wholly dissatisfied with his treatment of the topic in that section, but  
451 confesses that he now finds the whole matter a 'labyrinth' and that he knows neither how to correct his former  
452 opinions nor how to render them consistent: there is no discussion of the topic in the Enquiry Concerning Human  
453 Understanding." 14 There is no such thing as a personal identity, and there is no actual concept we can refer to  
454 as personal identity, so why do people believe so strongly that personal identity is something that is taken for  
455 granted and exists in reality? Where does the idea of identity come from? This is how David Humes, who is  
456 known for his skepticism, begins his essay. Hume asserts, in contrast with Locke's theory, that we do not have  
457 an idea of ourselves that is founded on such a single, unchanging impression. When common people speak of  
458 personal identity, they feel that they possess some sort of unchanging core over time. Hume is searching for  
459 a single constant and invariable impression because it is what is widely thought to make up the impression of  
460 self. When we reflect and observe, all we see are perceptions that are grouped together in bundles. We cannot  
461 discover a straightforward concept of who we are or a constant perception of who we are in these collections  
462 of perceptions. Hume is a proponent of the bundle theory of personal identity, which he invented. This view  
463 contends that "the mind itself, far from being an independent power, is merely 'a bundle of perceptions' without  
464 unity or cohesive quality." 15 The self is nothing more than a collection of experiences connected by relations of  
465 cause and similarity, or, more precisely, the idea of such a collection is what constitutes the empirically supported  
466 notion of the self. Hume, therefore, believes that a person is similar to a series of mental occurrences that are  
467 connected to one another as cause and effect: "We may observe, that the true idea of the human mind, is to  
468 consider it as a system of different perceptions or different existences, which are link'd together by the relation  
469 of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other. Our impressions give rise  
470 to their correspondent ideas; and these ideas in their turn produce other impressions. ...as the same individual  
471 republic may not only change its members, but also its laws and constitutions; in like manner the same person



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472 may vary his character and disposition, as well as his impressions and ideas, without losing his identity. Whatever  
473 changes he endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation.” 16 V.

## 474 12 Conclusion

475 Although there are other alternative viewpoints on the issue of the metaphysics of personal identity, we may distill  
476 the entire issue into two fundamental positions, or two hermeneutically and historically significant theoretical  
477 movements: the dualist continental trend of thought, and the physicalist monist approach. According to the first  
478 view, identity is a fusion of a body and another element, such as a soul, a spirit, a mind, a reason, or anything  
479 like. The most important aspect of this continental first view is the idea that the soul, spirit, or mind is something  
480 that comes before, is independent of, is distinct from, and controls the body. The other alternative viewpoint,  
481 which is monist rather than dualist, maintains that there is only one basic object-the body-that defines identity  
482 and that there is only one basic kind of thing that decides the self. Personal identity, then, is merely a particular  
483 class of material subject or object; it is merely a body with abilities that most other kinds of material objects  
484 lack. The dualist philosophers were highly concerned with unreal transcendental issues like the nature of the  
485 soul (immanent or transcendental), the nature of the relation soul and body (separate or connected) with the  
486 supremacy of the soul or mind, but more to the point the purpose was to define the human being a common  
487 ground that relates this trend with the physicalist approach. The latter proved to be gaining popularity linking  
488 the body with material concepts like time, space, 15 Maurer, The Reverend Armand (27 May 2013). "Western  
489 philosophy. Basic Science of Human Nature in Hume". Encyclopaedia Britannica. 16 mobility, performativity,  
490 memory and causality. The uprise of the monist physicalist theories has led to a reverse trend: the importance  
491 of the practical mind over the critical, hypothetical "pure reason". Such reversal of interest signifies a possible  
492 unbalance which explains the uprise in the materialist Western culture. The dominance of the already mentioned  
493 trends in philosophy denotes also the common ground was to find a stable definition of personal identity. The  
494 existence of other elements that participated in sharpening the epistemological gap like history, religion, and  
495 culture were hidden in both philosophical trends and reveal that they are context bound to the Western mind  
496 and typical to the Western personal identity. <sup>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Muqaddimah" (also known as The Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldun

<sup>2</sup> Roots of the Western Self: Dualist and Monist Philosophies of Personal Identity

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, Charles. Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity. Harvard UP, 1989. p133.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, Charles. Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity. Harvard UP, 1989. p130.

<sup>5</sup> Descartes, René, and John Veitch. The selections from the Principles of philosophy. Hamburg, Germany: Tredition GmbH, 2012 page 10.

<sup>6</sup> Noonan, Harold W. Personal Identity. Routledge, 2004.p 46.

<sup>7</sup> Winkler, Kenneth, 1991, "Locke on Personal Identity", Journal of the History of Philosophy, 29(2): 201-226. doi:10.1353/hph.1991.0041

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## 12 CONCLUSION

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