

**The Concept of Personal Identity as a Complex System:
Interfaces between Gender and Personal Identity**

by

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree**

Masters (MA)

in the Department of Philosophy at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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October 2018

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims to offer a more holistic approach to the philosophical analysis of the concept of personal identity than current approaches. Given the complex character of the phenomenon of personal identity as an aspect of our mental life, a holistic approach is preferable above a one-dimensional approach. Personal identity is too rich and complex a subject to approach or analyse from a single line of questioning, which is what seems to be happening in both the Western analytic and continental traditions. I argue that a holistic concept of personal identity does more justice to this concept, and I show that such a concept can be viewed as emerging from (at least) social, psychological, and biological elements in a complex and interconnected manner.

Why are the analytic and continental approaches one-dimensional or reductive? Each of them builds a line of questioning around their own specific concept of personal identity. In the continental approach, the focus is on the *self*, as a concept of one's essential features, those features that are one's own and that one knows through introspection. In this sense, one can have different identities, as one's concept of *self* changes through one's life. In the analytic approach, the concept of personal identity is a logical relation between different stages of one's life. In this sense, a person only has one identity throughout one's life. This seems to imply that the continental focus is, as it were, on the stages of one's life, while the analytic focus is on what strings these stages together. Thus, in the continental sense one may have multiple identities throughout one's life, and yet be the same identical person in the analytic sense throughout these changing identities (in the continental sense).

My argument is that we need an approach to the concept of personal identity which encapsulates both views, as well as other aspects of personal identity in terms of the *self*, such as gender identity, as well as the role that recognition plays in both gender identity and the concept of the *self*. I analyse the concept of gender identity with the aim of investigating its relation to personal identity in the sense of the *self*, seeing as gender identity appears to be at least a necessary condition for personal identity in that we always experience the world as gendered subjects. An analysis of gender identity is thus suggested in the sense that it too, as does the notion of the *self*, emerges from (at least) social, psychological, and biological elements, with emphasis on the social. I will only focus on analysis of gender identity on these terms, and will not focus on a fully fledged analysis of gender identity, as the focus of the dissertation is not on gender identity as such.

The solution that I offer to bridging the conceptual gap between the analytic and continental lines of questioning, is to argue for a more holistic concept of personal identity that undercuts this gap. The approach or line of questioning I suggest, is an analysis of the concept of personal identity using the conceptual apparatus of complex systems theory. Approaching the concepts of gender- and personal identity in this way, captures the fact that both emerge from (at least) three primary elements and are in constant interaction with one another, which, in turn, enables me to more effectively portray the complexities of the interactions among these elements. Consequently, my analysis results in a better understanding of the richness of the concept of personal as a major factor in the lived experience of human beings, than working in only one of the mentioned traditions would allow.

The dissertation is laid out as follows. Chapter 1 questions whether either of the Western traditions of continental or analytic philosophy speak adequately to the richness of the concept of personal identity by looking at how researchers in these traditions respectively analyse the concept. Each tradition is discussed in terms of the questions that frame them; the limiting nature of these questions is then critiqued. The idea is briefly introduced in this chapter that the concept of personal identity relates to three primary elements, namely a social, psychological, and biological element; the concept of gender identity is also briefly introduced in this context. Overall, this chapter familiarises the reader with the existing traditional Western arguments pertaining to the concept of personal identity – divergent as they are – and introduces a line of analysis which allows a notion of the concept of personal identity as a potentially holistic concept, which is developed further in the following chapters.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first provides a critical analysis of the analytic tradition's approach to the concept of personal identity, while the second does the same regarding the continental tradition. Finally, the third section summarises the critiques made of both traditions and consider which of these approaches, if either, allows for discussions that can reflect fully on the rich nature of the concept of personal identity.

To offer a critical analysis of the analytic approach to personal identity, Section 1 of Chapter 1 focuses on the metaphysical question of personal identity as persistence through time. I highlight the relevance of personal identity as a concept in metaphysics and then move toward a discussion of the work of analytic personal identity theorists. The section concludes with the argument that the continuity at issue, in terms of identity persisting through time, is actually a meta-property of the concept of personal identity and not a necessary and sufficient

internal condition for it. The theorists selected for this discussion present an adequate overview of the development of personal identity in the analytic tradition, although there are many other theorists that have added valuable contributions to the subject, including more than those selected would only belabour the chapter.

The approaches to personal identity discussed in this section include: soul and bodily identity, personal identity as psychological continuity, and the ‘further fact view’ of personal identity. Soul and bodily identity is mentioned only briefly as this chapter focuses on contemporary views of personal identity. The soul identity theorists include: Plato, Saint Thomas Aquinas, René Descartes, and Richard Swinburne. The bodily identity theorists mentioned are: Aristotle, John Jamieson Carswell Smart, and Ullin Thomas Place. The theorists on personal identity selected to describe and analyse personal identity as consciousness include: John Locke, Thomas Reid, David Hume, and contemporary writers such as Sir Bernard Arthur Owen Williams, Sydney Shoemaker, and John Richard Perry. Finally, a discussion of the work of Derek Parfit is included to explore personal identity as a “further fact”.

Section 2 unpacks and critiques the problem of the *self* in the continental tradition. I establish whether a social approach to the concept of personal identity can speak adequately to the richness of the concept and how the concept of recognition relates to that of personal identity in this tradition. I conclude with the argument that the concept of the *self* is always read against the background of, among others, issues relating to recognition as a core element of the social. This chapter will give special relevance to the concept of recognition in that it is an ever-present concept in discussions of the *self*. The discussion includes reference to the work of Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Charles Taylor, Iris Marion Young, Judith Butler, and a brief discussion of an article by South African philosopher Hennie Lötter. The positive and negative aspects of the continental approach to the concept of personal identity are considered in the discussion.

Both Section 1 and 2 of this chapter aim to facilitate the critique of the analytical and continental traditions respectively, with a specific focus on the phrasing of the questions pertaining to personal identity in each tradition. A summary and critique of these two approaches are finalised in Section 3.

Chapter 2 builds on Chapter 1 and offers an analysis of the concept of gender identity as a social construct in order to illustrate how analysis of one of the building blocks of the concept of personal identity in continental terms may assist in working toward a more holistic

approach to the concept of personal identity, to be set out in Chapter 3 using the mechanism of complex system theory. This chapter introduces the social, biological, and psychological elements of identity formation, with the emphasis on the social; and, it illustrates how both the concepts of gender- and personal identity contain these elements, as well as how the concept of gender identity relates to that of personal identity. Given the focus on the social constructedness of the concept of gender identity, the concept of recognition (as one among many others) is introduced as a primary component in the construction of gender identity.

The chapter draws from the arguments in Chapter 1 to illustrate that a holistic approach to the concepts of personal- and gender identity does more justice to the richness and multifaced-ness of these concepts than a reductive approach. I argue, from the conclusion of Chapter 1, that persistence is a meta-property of personal identity; this conclusion is then extended to the concept of the persistence of gender identity. Finally, given the depiction of the matrix of elements feeding into both the concepts of gender and personal identity, the conclusion of the chapter briefly introduces the complex systems theory as an approach enabling a potential holistic analysis of the concept of personal identity.

The theorists selected for Chapter 2 offer a summary of the contemporary concept of gender identity, but are not meant to be exhaustive. The theorists selected for discussion include: Don H. Zimmerman, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Candice West, and Judith Butler. The chapter discusses the necessity of gender identity in personal identity formation. Gender theorists such as C. Jacob Hale, Naomi Zack, Laurie J. Shrage, and Gale Salomon have been selected to illustrate how integral the notion of gender identity is to the reflection on, and framing of, the concept of personal identity in terms of the *self*; people are indeed always, in some form or another, “gendered beings”.

Together, Chapter 1 and 2 thus make the case for a richer, more holistic approach to the concept of personal identity. Chapter 3 suggests a complex systems theory approach to an analysis of the concept of personal identity as one possibility for a holistic solution. To this end, I explain the previously mentioned primary elements from which the concepts of gender and personal identity emerge – *i.e.* biological, social, and psychological elements – fully in Chapter 3. I also give a brief explanation of complex systems theory in this chapter.

The main argument is that a conceptual analysis of the concept of personal identity, viewed as an emergent concept, emerging from (at least) psychological, biological, and social elements, offers the possibility of doing justice to the full richness of the phenomenon of personal identity. The chapter argues that the concept of personal identity, from a meta-level

perspective, functions akin to a complex system in that the elements from which it emerges cannot be separated from one another without effecting the entire system, and also that the concept cannot be broken down to any one of them. An important, secondary argument is that the concept of gender identity, in its turn, also emerges from the three primary elements, with emphasis on the social element of which the concept of recognition is a major sub-component. Therefore, the overall aim of this chapter is to argue for an analysis of the concept of personal identity as resembling an integrated complex system that comes into being through a multitude of constant interactions. The theorists that have been selected for discussion in Chapter 3 include, but are not limited to: Judith Butler, Paul Cilliers, Tanya de Villiers-Botha, Sarah Mercer, and Yaneer Bar Yam.

The Conclusion of this dissertation aims to bring together the separate lines of questioning with regards to the concept of personal identity in the analytic and continental approaches, showing that a complex system approach undercuts the conceptual gap between the two traditions, and allows for significant acknowledgement of the rich complexity of the concept of personal identity. The final section of the conclusion will point to the potential of complex systems theory for addressing new challenges to the concept of personal identity in contemporary contexts such as artificial intelligence research and human enhancement. It will also point out the research potential of modelling personal identity as a complex system which has not been attempted in this dissertation, but only highlighted as a potential avenue for research due to the scope of this dissertation.

This dissertation also does not focus on African approaches to the concept of personal identity, as this would make the scope too wide, but the cultural elements in African accounts of personhood surely will make for richer analyses of the concept of personal identity than current Western traditional approaches do. Further study of interchanges among African approaches and the complexity theory approach to the concept of personal identity outlined here, will make for very interesting future research.

CHAPTER 1: CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO PERSONAL IDENTITY

Personal identity is a mental phenomenon, typically described in philosophy of mind as one of the arguments against monistic approaches to the mind-body problem. It is broadly the concept one has of oneself that develops through the course of one's life. To some extent it relates closely to the feeling what it is like to be oneself. While aspects of this concept one develops of oneself changes throughout one's life, one always has some notion of one's own identity, how one appears to oneself in the 'theatre of one's mind'. The analytic tradition focuses on the continuity of personal identity, allowing one to have only one identity through the stages of one's life; while the continental tradition focuses on the various identities one may have in each of these stages, in terms of changing perspectives on one's notion of oneself.

The following chapter unpacks and explores the concept of personal identity in relation to the separate lines of questioning pursued in the analytic¹ and continental² traditions. This situates the dissertation within the context of philosophical debates concerning the concept of personal identity. This chapter is not intended to offer and does not pretend to be a full overview or critique of any individual view in any of the two traditions discussed. Rather, the aim is to give an overview of the lines of questioning in these traditions in order to make the point that the conceptual frameworks scaffolding these approaches do not do justice to the richness of the concept of personal identity. This chapter starts by first discussing the analytic approach to the concept of personal identity in terms of the line of questioning pertaining to persistence through time. The continental approach's line of questioning in terms of the *self* is then considered in the next section, before drawing together the questions considered by both traditions and critiquing their lines of inquiry conclude the chapter in a last section.

¹ Analytic philosophy as a tradition came into being in the 20th century after WWII. It is focused on language, meaning, and thought, and the relation of the mind to the world and is broadly associated with the English-speaking world although there are many exceptions.

² Continental philosophy is based on views of 19th and 20th century (Western) European philosophy. It is focused on specific themes such as politics, freedom and the self. Where analytic philosophers use logic, proof and analyses of language concepts in their methodological approach, continental philosophers tend to use close historical text analysis, and lived experience as methodological approaches.

1. PERSONAL IDENTITY AS A PROBLEM IN ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

The analytic tradition of philosophising has its origins in the early 20th century. Analytic philosophers generally tend to focus on the relation between philosophical argument and scientifically verifiable facts, logical inference, clarifying concepts, and the analysis of the collective experience of human beings. Movements commonly associated with the analytic tradition include: logical positivism, empiricism, some forms of pragmatism, and naturalism. As an example of how proponents of the analytic tradition typically view themselves, consider Russell's description:

Modern analytical empiricism [...] differs from that of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume by its incorporation of mathematics and its development of a powerful logical technique. It is thus able, in regard to certain problems, to achieve definite answers, which have the quality of science rather than of philosophy (Russell, 1945:788).

In a philosophical context, specifically in the analytic tradition, analysis of the concept of personal identity is primarily concerned with the question of persistence of identity through time, based on a certain set of criteria. A criterion is itself a necessary and sufficient condition that verifies, as far as it is possible, whether separate person-stages are certainly stages of the *same* person over time, or whether it is a set of such conditions.

A condition B is said to be necessary for another condition C, if and only if, the occurrence of C cannot happen without the occurrence of B, *i.e.* a necessary condition for getting a distinction in FIL 890 is that the student submits a dissertation. Thus if a student does not submit a dissertation, the student cannot – has no chance to – get a distinction, or, equivalently, if a student receives a distinction, then the student had submitted a dissertation. Condition B is said to be sufficient for condition C if, in the case that B is satisfied, it guarantees that C will obtain, *i.e.* a sufficient condition for getting a distinction in FIL 890 is getting a distinction on every submission in the course. This means that if a student receives a distinction on every submission in the course, the student then receives a distinction.

Therefore, to specify a criterion in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions for personal identity is to give a logically persuasive account of what personal identity essentially consists in. Specifically, the question analytic philosophers of personal identity ask is: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for person P₂ at time t₂ being the same person P₁ at t₁? This is an important philosophical issue, in that it seems almost impossible for humans not

to view themselves as persisting, unified persons, and as separate from other persons. But under which conditions may they do so?

The approaches that will now be discussed in order to explore the persistence question include whether the concept of personal identity has any relevance at all, personal identity in terms of soul and bodily identity, personal identity as psychological continuity, and finally personal identity as a “further fact”.

1.1. *Relevance of Personal Identity*

Does personal identity in terms of persistence through time have any philosophical relevance? This is an important question to ask at the beginning of any discussion on the concept of personal identity, in that whether one persists as the same identity seems at first glance to be a selfish question. Does it matter who we were at an earlier stage of life if we are content in our current stage of life? Identity matters practically as the ability to identify one person from another, however personal identity and its persistence have no significant importance over and above this practical importance for some. For instance, a philosopher such as Derek Parfit (2003:136) maintains that the question of personal identity merely arises out of a self-interested concern that “I” will continue to survive into the future as “myself”.

It is perhaps an admirable endeavour to view the persistence of personal identity of human beings as an objective fact with biological and psychological underpinnings, however this view neglects lived experience and our everyday dependence on the “I”. On the other hand, we rely on the concept of personal identity for concepts like punishment, agency, vows, recognition, accountability, and empathy to name just a few. For example, if we do not assume a person is the same person they were a day or a week ago our juridical system would collapse, in that we would never be able to punish anyone for any crime they committed in the past. In the same vein, promises, oaths, or debts could not be held to because we would assume the future person differs from the person making the promise or creating the debt.

If personal identity were not a concern, we would not be able to identify with others through projected empathy because there would be no “I” to imagine things happening to. We care about others because we can put ourselves in their shoes and imagine their experience happening to us. If we were unable to do this, others’ suffering would just be an objective fact of something that happens in the world, not something we should care about. As demonstrated by the above factors, we can see that our daily lives and the basic structures

of society rest on this notion that we remain the same person though time. In light of these factors concerning the relevance of personal identity, we can now move toward a critical discussion of the approaches to personal identity in the analytic tradition.

1.2. Soul and Bodily Identity

In the interest of focusing on contemporary approaches to personal identity, this section will only briefly mention soul and bodily identity arguments as they are generally considered outdated. These theories cannot be entirely disregarded, however, in that most modern theories on the concept of personal identity are based on these original arguments. Several of the thought experiments in these approaches also need to be considered in contemporary arguments regarding personal identity in that they still provide a challenge to contemporary theories.

The soul identity approach involves asking the question whether a person persists after death. This question has existed in Western philosophy at least since the pre-Socratic period. Philosophers over centuries, including Plato, Descartes and, more recently, Swinburne, characterise identity as *sameness of soul*. The concept of the soul within this context refers mostly to that of consciousness or mental activity. Philosophers who argue from this perspective are most often substance dualists. Supporters of substance dualism hold the view that the material body and immaterial soul (mind) are two separate and distinct substances that interact in a particular way. The biggest challenge the substance dualist faces is that there is no manner in which to account for how interaction between these distinct substances occurs.

This problem regarding the “relation between man’s conscious life of thought and sensation and the physical events in and around his body” (Swinburne, 2007:7) is referred to in philosophical literature as the mind/body problem. Substance dualists, such as Plato and Descartes, believe that the soul is capable of existing separately from the body and also that the soul persists after the death of the body. Additionally, substance dualists often argue that the existence of a soul can account for certain conscious experiences in a way that materialist or empirical theories, *i.e.* purely brain/bodily interpretations of identity, cannot.

Plato attributes all mental and psychological function to the soul. In his famous allegory of the chariot, which appears in *Phaedrus* (380BC), he argues (246b-246e) that the soul has three aspects, namely, *reason* (represented by the charioteer), *spirit* (represented by

one of the horses), and *appetite* (represented by the other horse). With this view he explains (246b-246e) how *appetite* refers to bodily desires; *spirit* relates to honour and combat, the so-called *noble* emotions; whereas *reason* is the aspect of the soul concerned with knowledge, truth, and wisdom. *Spirit* and *reason* are described as naturally complimenting whereas *appetite* is described as a threat to both of the aforementioned aspects. *Reason* must always be in control to ensure a virtuous life.

Plato uses the above allegory to explain sameness of soul persisting even after death. He does this by arguing that there are two worlds, the world of Ideas (*Forms*), the perfect world, and the sensible world (imperfect imitation of the world of *Forms*) in which we live. In this example, the soul is the only part of the human being that is from the world of *Forms*. The wings of the horses are fed by virtue, goodness, etc. and through this positive force, the horses work in harmony with one another and the chariot soars upward toward the world of *Forms*. When the wings of the horses are fed by evil and foulness the soul drops toward the sensible world and finds a place in a mortal creature. The soul only resides in the mortal creature until the end of its life and then the allegory starts again; this is how Plato explains the soul persisting after death. The concept of the body is largely overshadowed by that of the soul in Plato's work, except for the ancient Greek concept of the body being alive when it contains a soul.

Supporters of modern substance dualism, as proposed by Descartes, make the claim that the material body and the immaterial mind causally interact, while remaining ontologically distinct substances. In this view immaterial minds have mental properties and only physical objects can have physical properties. The mind-body problem arises in this instance in that there is a persisting problem of interaction related to the question how and where the physical body and the non-physical mind interact. Descartes categorised the 'I' or the soul as an immaterial substance that could act independently of the body. The identity of the introspective, private Cartesian self is inevitably related to the immaterial substance (soul) that harbours this self.

Substance dualism does not have many modern proponents because it presents several epistemological and metaphysical difficulties. These difficulties include, but are not limited to: the inability to prove how mental and physical substances interact, the problems involved in conceiving of the mental as a non-physical thing, and the difficulties involved in constructing a unified theory of the mind based on this account. Although Richard Swinburne

is a contemporary substance dualist, his work will not be discussed further in this chapter in the interest of more commonly occurring contemporary debates on personal identity.

Substance dualism is met with a number of objections and is currently considered as one of the least popular views in the context of personal identity theories. For instance, Nagel, famous for his argument in favour of subjective experience³ in his 1986 book *The View from Nowhere*, argues that “the main objection to dualism is that it postulates an additional non-physical substance without explaining how it can support subjective mental states whereas the brain can’t” (Nagel, 1986:29). Another common objection is that supporters of substance dualism cannot account for what souls consist of or what distinguishes one soul from another. These common objections are applicable to Plato, Descartes, and Swinburne’s theories. In these views the soul is a non-physical, immaterial substance so no knowledge claims about it can be proven or disproven conclusively. We cannot discount substance dualism, in that it has contributed greatly in developing the field of personal identity by highlighting which questions need to be asked, however most personal identity theorists avoid this theory in favour of arguments that can be scientifically validated.

This section will now move forward from the concept of personal identity as soul identity to examining the concept of personal identity as bodily identity. Materialists, physicalists, or bodily identity theorists maintain that personal identity is exclusively related to physiology, the body, the physical matter of the body to be exact; “there are no purely mental objects, states, or events” (Parfit, 2008:118). Well-known bodily identity theorists include Aristotle, Smart, and Place.

A famous problem that bodily identity theorists are faced with is the *ship of Theseus paradox*. This paradox is presented as follows: In Greece there was a king named Theseus who supposedly founded the city of Athens. Due to his success in naval battles the citizens of Athens preserved his ship in the port as a memorial in his honour. The *ship of Theseus* remained there for centuries. As the years progressed the wooden planks of the ship started to rot. The rotten planks were then replaced in order to keep the ship complete. The paradox then is that if one, or indeed all, of the planks making up the ship are replaced, does it remain the *ship of Theseus*? One can say that it is not the same ship in that, once one original plank was replaced, the ship lost its identity. One can also argue that the ship retains its identity up to a certain point *i.e.* the moment more than half the planks are replaced it ceases being the

³ Subjective experience: The feeling-what-it-is-like, the world as experienced from the subject’s point of view, internal interpretation, or impression of the world.

ship of Theseus. Finally, one can also attempt to establish a criterion which should be met for the ship to retain its identity *i.e.* if the *ship of Theseus* satisfies criterion X it remains the same ship, however, this is problematic in that a ship possesses several properties and it is difficult to establish which of these should be considered *essential* properties. Thus in the context of personal identity, if personal identity is purely a question of having the same body, can we still say that it is the same person if they look different, sound different, and have a different cellular make-up than before? Can one establish an *essential* criterion for the persistence of personal identity and which properties would be deemed *essential*?

Aristotle proposes a materialist resolution to the *ship of Theseus paradox* by making a distinction between individual substances and properties. Substances are individual things such as plants, books, tables, etc. which possess properties such as being dense, square or purple. Properties are *universal* as many substances can possess the property of being square or purple. Substances however are individual in that their composition makes them the substances that they are. If a rose bush is defined in terms of *essential* properties such as having a certain appearance, life cycle, root stock, and shape, regardless of its *accidental* properties such as height, exact colour or distribution of flowers, if it is pulled from the ground and cut up into an arrangement, it loses its essential properties and thus the rose bush ceases to exist.

Similarly, to the rose bush example one may attempt to resolve the *ship of Theseus paradox* by distinguishing between *accidental* and *essential* properties in human beings. Accidental changes in humans would be considered perhaps part of aging and thus minor physical changes that still preserve the identity of the person throughout their life, where *essential* changes would be bodily death that causes identity to cease entirely. Thus if a person's features change throughout their lives, Aristotle maintains that they can remain one and the same with a past person, because their *essential* properties have not changed.

Again, in terms of the *ship of Theseus paradox*, this could mean as long as the ship maintains its outward appearances, exchanging one plank with another will make no difference; but really perhaps the *essential* property of the ship is the fact that it is the particular ship it is. Thus as soon as it ceases to be the *ship of Theseus* it would cease to be the *ship of Theseus* as then the *essential* properties would have changed – and it would have undergone what Aristotle refers to as substantive change. This attempt to resolve the *ship of Theseus paradox* is clearly reliant on the fact that there is a clear distinction between

accidental and *essential* properties into which I am not going here further as this will lead us a bit off course, towards an analysis of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

Through looking at the bodily criterion for persistence of personal identity we can see that it alone does not speak to the richness of the concept of personal identity. By focusing on the persistence question, the bodily criterion does not include lived experience or indeed a social component of the body as interacting with the world. We are always embodied and therefore it is important to consider the body as forming a part of our concept of personal identity, however the persistence criterion in and of itself appears to be limiting, especially in our lived experience. We do not see ourselves as persons or indeed as the same person through time based on whether our bodies remain exactly the same throughout our lives. Bodily and soul views of the persistence of personal identity both fall prey to the mind/body problem in metaphysics. This is the reason why these theories are not the norm today. In the following section this dissertation will analyse and critique another persistence of personal identity approach, namely the psychological continuity view of personal identity in order to see whether it better speaks to the richness of the concept of personal identity than the above mentioned views.

1.3 Personal Identity as Psychological Continuity

This chapter will now move from soul and bodily identity theory toward a discussion of personal identity in terms of psychological criteria, that is, personal identity as consciousness, memory, brain identity⁴, or, psychological identity, which is largely considered as the most familiar contemporary version of the debate concerning the persistence of personal identity. The argument proposed by identity theorists who support the psychological continuity view, is that identity is an exclusive property of the mind, as "all states and events are, when understood correctly, purely mental" (Parfit, 2008:118). Such theorists - e.g. Perry, Shoemaker, and John Locke - who in many respects is the founding father of this view of identity - often make an argument for psychological continuity in terms of a *chain of memory*.

⁴Brain identity: Brain identity can fall under either body or psychological continuity of identity depending on the thinker. Brain identity can be an argument from the physicalist standpoint where mind and brain states are related or interconnected and nothing beyond the physical is posited. It can also be an argument for memory or psychological connectedness where memory is posited as the necessary criterion for personal identity.

Let us now specifically consider Locke's account of personal identity. Locke is better known for his work in epistemology and politics, however he has made a considerable contribution to the field of metaphysics. In *On Identity and Diversity*, contained in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke becomes the first philosopher to propose the above-mentioned psychological continuity view of personal identity, which specifically states: "as far as any intelligent being can repeat the idea of any past action with the same consciousness it had of it first, and with the same consciousness it had of any present action; so far it is the same personal self" (Locke, 1689:40). This means that in far as a person's memories are connected, that person can be said to be the same person persisting through time. Before Locke's pioneering theory most philosophers argued that personal identity was a matter of bodily continuity, or of sameness of the soul through time (Described in previous section).

When Locke speaks of living organisms in general, such as animals or plants, he sets the criteria for identity as partaking of the same life *i.e.* if a pine tree changes from a seed to a young tree to an old tree, as long as the tree partakes of the same life cycle it can be identified as the *same* tree. It is thus not the exact matter or particles the living organism consists of that determines continuity of its identity, but the notion of partaking in a common life that is at issue when determining personal identity. But Locke draws a distinction between the concepts of 'man' and 'person', which he then describes as having separate criteria for personal identity in that a man has the same criteria as any other living organism *i.e.* common life, but a person as an entity with the capacity for self-reflection requires a different set of criteria to be called the *same* through time.

Locke defines 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; which it does only by the consciousness which is inseparable from thinking..." (Locke, 1689:241). The criterion for sameness of persons Locke puts forth is then that of consciousness (memory). Thus, if P_2 at t_2 remembers the thoughts and actions of P_1 at t_1 they can be said to be the same person. If a person has a set of interrelated memories that trace back throughout their life he/she has an identity, or alternatively, if a person is conceived of as having an identity he/she must necessarily possess memories of a (the same) life.

The example of *the prince and the cobbler* in Locke's, *Of Identity and Diversity* (1689), aims to demonstrate that psychological continuity is necessary for a person to be said to be the *same* person. In this thought experiment, Locke suggests (1689:118) that a prince's

consciousness, awareness, and memories are transferred to the body of a cobbler and *vice versa*; thus the cobbler's consciousness being in the body of the prince and the prince's consciousness in the body of a cobbler. Locke argues that the prince will still consider himself a prince although 'he' – *i.e.* his consciousness – is in the body of a cobbler. The conclusion Locke draws from this experiment is that the criteria for the persistence of persons is different from the criteria for the persistence of matter. Although the physical attributes of the prince do not change after the swap, we no longer believe that the prince is the same person.

Williams responds to Locke in *The Self and the Future* (1970) by arguing that the *prince and the cobbler* example does not achieve its aim of proving that psychological continuity is the criterion for personal identity. Williams demonstrates this through his variation of the *body swap* experiment that goes as follows: Two persons, *A* and *B*, will undergo a body swap, after which they will possess one another's psychological characteristics. We will call the resultant person with *B*'s body and *A*'s consciousness *B-body-person*, and the resultant person with *A*'s body and *B*'s consciousness *A-body-person*. Before the swap the following proposition is announced to *A* and *B*: one of the two resultant persons after the body-swap will be tortured and the other will be given \$100,000. Both *A* and *B* are asked before the swap which resultant person should receive which treatment. Suppose both *A* and *B* choose to receive the \$100,000 and the other person be tortured. The day before the experiment it is announced that *A*'s request will be granted. After the swap, *B-body-person*, who now has *A*'s consciousness, is rewarded with \$100,000 and *A-body-person*, who now has *B*'s consciousness, is tortured. It seems logical to expect that *A-body-person* will be dissatisfied with his request not being met, while *B-body-person* will be satisfied with his request being met – if we suppose that *B-body-person* will have *A*'s memory and *A-body-person* will have *B*'s memory. Williams' variation of the body swapping thought experiment however only further solidifies Locke's conclusion and does not disprove it, in that both participants preserve their psychological continuity, and consequently their identities, after the *body swap*.

Williams however presents a second thought experiment that does produce the contrary conclusion. Suppose a mad scientist announces that he will torture me tomorrow and this inspires feelings of fear and anxiety and anticipation in me. He then goes on to announce that before the torture commences, he will administer a powerful amnesiac, causing me to forget being informed that I would be tortured. The second announcement does not comfort

me in that I can only imagine being unexpectedly tortured because I had forgotten the warning, and the idea of being tortured still frightens me. On top of this the mad scientist informs me that, not only will I not remember the warning that I would be tortured, but I will also receive a new set of memories and psychological traits from another person. Williams argues that:

No amount of change in my character or my beliefs would seem to affect substantially the nastiness of tortures applied to me; correspondingly, no degree of predicted change in my character and beliefs can unseat the fear of torture which, together with those changes, is predicted for me (1970:82-83).

This second thought experiment presents a challenge to Locke's psychological identity due to the fact that if it was only *my* psychological continuity that mattered, why would *I* remain fearful, given that *I* would have a new set of memories and psychological traits? The introduction by Williams of new psychological traits and memories, however, does beg the question of psychological continuity in that once a person is not psychologically continuous with themselves they would not be the same person. So, in terms of psychological continuity arguments Williams has created a new person in the second half of his argument by breaking the psychological continuity of the persons involved in the experiment, nevertheless his argument does present a challenge to psychological continuity in and of itself.

Locke's account has also been criticised for being circular - most notably by Reid and Bishop Joseph Butler. Butler, in Appendix 1 of his work *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and the course of Nature* (1860), argues that "by defining personal identity in terms of consciousness of personal identity, Locke has confused knowledge of personal identity with what actually constitutes personal identity; that is, he has confused an epistemological question with a metaphysical question" (Butler, 1860:326). On this argument one remains unable to know what one's personal identity consists in even if one is able to know who one is as a subject of one's memories. This is problematic in that Locke is taking what his theory is supposed to explain as a given.

The fact that the questions raised by Butler and Williams even surface, raises the question of whether the richness of the concept of personal identity can be properly demonstrated through psychological continuity alone. I would suggest in this case that psychological continuity should rather be viewed as a property of personal identity, instead of the criterion for it. Through Locke's argument we can see that memory is an important aspect of how we experience ourselves and our lives as continuous, however his argument does not

fully capture how we form a concept of personal identity, or indeed what a concept of personal identity consists of. His argument assumes that the concept of personal identity is already formed and this *chain of memory* that functions as an inherent property of this concept of personal identity proves that it persists through time. Due to the fact that Locke cannot attest to how the concept of personal identity is formed through his memory argument one can conclude that there are more elements involved in the formation and indeed persistence of personal identity than memory alone. Let us now consider another objection to Locke's psychological continuity argument to see if this conclusion holds.

Reid, in his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) used his famous *brave officer paradox* thought-experiment to object to Locke's notion:

[T]hat personal identity, that is, the sameness of a rational being, consists in consciousness alone, and, as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; So whatever has the consciousness of present and past actions is the same person to whom they belong (Reid, 1785:114).

The brave officer paradox is presented as follows: As a boy (A) Jones was flogged for stealing apples; which he recalls while performing a feat as a brave officer (B); he remembers this deed even as an old general (C), however by then he has forgotten being flogged as a boy (A). Therefore, there is no transitivity between his memories.⁵ Reid demonstrated through this thought experiment that Locke's account violates transitivity in that in this example, according to Locke's view the identity of the general is simultaneously the same identity as the boy and not the same identity as the boy, thus identity cannot hold.

It has also been argued; by philosophers such as Parfit and Reid; that Locke's account of identity is reductive as it limits the concept of personal identity to being constituted by memory alone. The case of an amnesia victim demonstrates this problem well. Locke's theory implies that a complete amnesiac will have identity instantaneously if they are conscious, rational and self-aware, however they would not have identity over time. The past person stages that allow for identity over time would be forgotten and therefore according to Locke cease to exist. This presents a problem particularly in the sense of moral responsibility. The person having lost all memories of past transgressions, would therefore cease to be the

⁵The concept of transitivity implies that if $A = B$, and $B = C$, then $A = C$. This concept is also known as the principle of associativity.

person that committed that transgression, since for Locke continuity of identity is purely psychological and not physical. By following Locke's reasoning: if a person is guilty of a crime but does not remember committing the crime, God would (have to) find the person innocent of the aforementioned crime. This implies that the person who committed the crime is a completely different person and not the same person that has merely undergone a personality change due to amnesia. It discounts the entire history of the person as well as other evidence of their past identity such as the testimonies of others. This objection further demonstrates that there are several other factors necessary for the persistence of the concept of personal identity besides memory. Through this objection we can see the necessity of accounting for a person's physical body that interacts with the social world, allowing for the testimony of others and an account of the persistence of personal identity besides that of internal memory.

Another psychological continuity advocate, Perry, in his work, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (1978), makes the Lockeian argument that "we are presented, at different times, with the same person (or what is alleged to be the same person), but not the same live human body" (Perry, 1978:5). Perry is a contemporary advocate of the psychological continuity view and he critiques both immaterial substance (soul) identity and body identity theory. Perry, along with other psychological continuity theorists discussed in this dissertation, assume that two person-stages are related if one of the stages contains a memory of an experience that is also included in the other, for instance, if a later person stage (adult man) contains the memories of a former person stage (young boy), they are related through a chain of memory leading from the former stage to the latter.

Perry is well known for his arguments against so-called *fission* thought experiments⁶ which are typically posed against the psychological continuity (based on memory) approach to personal identity. Fission examples demonstrate that, if the only thing that makes a present and past identity the same identity is a psychological relation, such a relation could be maintained within one person on one occasion and between two separate people at another. Suppose that a single brain could be divided and each hemisphere could be implanted into separate bodies. It seems then, according to psychological continuity arguments, that one should be identical to both bodies that have each required a side of a single brain. This would

⁶ As Perry (1978:viii) points out, Samuel Clarke, a significant figure in British Enlightenment philosophy in conjunction with Berkeley and Locke, was the first to put forward the *reduplication* or *fissioning* argument against psychological continuity claims.

imply that the left-brain identity and right-brain identity would be identical with one another. Thus, any account that is dependent on the memory criterion as a sufficient condition for personal identity over time creates the possible implication that one object can be numerically identical to two objects. This is problematic due to the fact that identity is, on the face of it, necessarily a one to one relation.

Supporters of the psychological continuity argument of personal identity commonly respond to the *fission* problem on the grounds of the *non-branching view*. This view goes as follows: neither the left– nor the right–brain is the current identity, due to the fact that they are in two bodies. Thus for a future identity to be the same identity as the current identity it is necessary for the future identity to be the sole heir of the current identity’s mental properties. This argument is problematic in that one would be able to survive if half of one’s brain is destroyed and the other half transplanted. Thus the *non-branching view* implies that whether one survives, as the receiver of the right half of a brain, is dependent on what happens to the left half. In the event that the left half is destroyed, one survives; if it is preserved, one dies (or one’s identity ceases to persist).

Shoemaker, an American philosopher, influential in the fields of metaphysics and philosophy of mind, is also an advocate of psychological continuity as the criterion for personal identity. His paper *Persons and the Pasts* (1970) outlines his view. Shoemaker attempts to counter the circularity objection to Locke’s argument that was pointed out by Butler and discussed above. Shoemaker (1970:269) argues that: “Persons have in memory a special access to facts about their own past histories and their own identities, a kind of access they do not have to the histories and identities of other persons and other things”. Thus, his criterion (1970:269) for memory as a basis of identity consists of two central claims, namely the *previous awareness condition* for remembering as well as *error though misidentification of the first person*.

According to the *previous awareness condition* if an individual says that they remember event an *X*, they must have, in one way or another, had a direct experience of or had knowledge of *X* during its occurrence. The possibility exist that said person could be mistaken and did not actually witness the recalled event, however, provided that a memory coincides with reality, such as a person’s memory of graduating, there can be no doubt with regards to the fact that said event was experience. Shoemaker (1970:271) further makes a distinction between *remembering* and *quasi-remembering*: *Remembering* is when one actually remembers an event that occurred in reality. *Quasi-remembering* however is what

occurs when we remove the implication that the memory actually happened. Therefore, not all *quasi-memories* coincide with reality, *i.e.* with “real” memories. “One way of characterizing the difference between quasi-remembering and remembering is by saying that the former is subject to a weaker previous awareness condition than the latter” (Shoemaker, 1970:271). Both Parfit and Shoemaker attempt to circumvent Butler’s circularity argument by using the notion of *quasi-memory*: “Butler’s charge was that memory presupposed identity. If we take this to consist in the claim that in order for x to remember (in the sense relevant to grounding our identity over time) an experience of y , x must be the same person as y , a move to quasi-memory avoids the objection” (Buford, 2009:467). This is true in that we do not have to establish the identity of a person before we can say that said person quasi-remembers an event in the same way that we need to establish the identity of a person before we can speak of *their* memory of an event.

The *error though misidentification* claim states that, if an individual claims to recall something, there can be no doubt that they are in possession of the memory. Take for example the statement “I remember reading Shakespeare on Thursday”. When considering this memory one could be mistaken in a several ways with regards to what one recalls; one might be mistaken with regards to the day, or have incorrectly recalled the author. Although one can be mistaken with regards to the content of the memory however, one cannot be mistaken with regards to the fact that it is *I* who has the memory.

By showing how arguments for the persistence of personal identity through time neglect the lived experience of persons, and often elements of one another in the sense of focusing on the bodily or on the psychological element of personal identity only, the above discussion has aided in demonstrating that persistence of personal identity arguments that rest on the soul, bodily or indeed psychological continuity, cannot properly speak to the richness of the concept of personal identity. When we consider consciousness as a whole and not merely in terms of memory, we can see that a large part of how we experience our personal identity is constituted by psychological experience, memories, intelligence, emotions, and so forth. However, as a criterion for the formation, rather than the persistence, of personal identity through time, consciousness or indeed a psychological element is not without its problems⁷, as already illustrated above in the context of psychological continuity arguments.

⁷ See Chalmers (2002), Nagel (1986) and Jackson (2003, 2004) for discussion of the complexity of consciousness and how it relates to personal identity in terms of arguments for subjective experience for instance.

Let us now consider a view of the concept of personal identity that states that personal identity is simply a *further fact* about human existence, nothing more, and nothing less.

1.4 Two Critiques of Metaphysical Accounts of Personal Identity

This section focuses on two critiques of metaphysical accounts of personal identity, such as those discussed above. First this section will consider Hume's *Bundle theory* of the *self* and, secondly, Parfit's *Further Fact View* of personal identity, which is based on a notion of the ontological status of persons.

A notable challenge to metaphysical views of the concept of personal identity comes from the modern European empiricist, David Hume. His *bundle theory* of personal identity defines the *self* as a bundle of sense impressions. Hume's sceptical, empiricist view of personal identity presents a challenge to metaphysical views such as that of Locke and Reid in the following way. In *Of Personal Identity in A Treatise on Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* (1738), Hume argues that there is no true *self* or personal identity which remains perfect and unchanging. Rather there is a fictitious concept of identity that consists of various bundles of perceptions linked causally to one another and creating the idea of a singular unchanging identity.

These *bundles of perceptions* consist of images, sensations, thoughts, etc. that one experiences throughout one's life: "I never catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception" (Hume, 1738:301-2). According to Hume we create the illusion of one continuous personal identity by linking various memories and perceptions together through relation and causation. He (1738:302) also states that "when my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long as I am insensible of myself, I may truly be said not to exist". This insensibility of oneself for Hume extends to death, thus he does not postulate a soul that continues to survive after the body has perished, as the body is what enables one to perceive and as a result contains all perceptions.

To better understand Hume's account, let us consider the concept of being "psychologically connected". As opposed to viewing a person as purely psychologically *continuous* due to the memory criterion, one can view someone as psychologically *connected* through causal dependence. A being is psychologically *connected* if, and only if, their current mental state is in some way caused by their past mental states. *Memory* or *quasi-memory* of

an earlier experience is only one form of causal psychological connection. Consequently, Hume (1783:304) argues that due to the causal link between the changes we go through (physical and mental) we have a tendency to perceive ourselves as the same identity even if we have changed significantly: “our propension to confound identity with relation is so great that we are apt to imagine something unknown and mysterious”. This means that what we perceive to be our personal identity is not actually there, it is only the causal link between perceptions that creates the impression of identity.

As far as Hume is concerned, memory is our only access to personal identity in that it serves to demonstrate cause and effect as well as the causal relations between our past and present bundles of perception. As they are linked with memory, perceptions constantly succeed one another and are constantly shifting. Hume’s primary focus is the mental state, as the body merely functions as an attachment to this mental state. He believes that we favour this unity formed by a relation of ideas in order to maintain simplicity with regards to the concept of personal identity. Personal identity for Hume is thus nothing more than an illusion we construct through inference. We assume that because we observe perceptions as connected within one mind, that there has to be something above and beyond perception that we can call identity.

Hume’s focus is also on whether the concept of personal identity persists through time in his *bundle theory* of personal identity. By viewing personal identity purely in terms of a relation of ideas, it is easy to disprove it in that one does not have to account for the lived experience of persons as social or embodied beings in such an account. When one looks at the above-mentioned reasons for the relevance of personal identity such as accountability for punishment and promises, one can see that Hume does not take this into account. If there is no doer behind the deed, no concept of personal identity, which adequately describes the meaning of the concept, we are presented with quite a large problem, especially when it is applied to approaches to personal identity focused on the social lived experience of persons, such as those in the continental tradition (Discussed in Section 2 of Chapter 1).

The contemporary British philosopher Derek Parfit also makes an argument against metaphysical views of personal identity. His view entails a critique of the psychological continuity account of the persistence of identity, as he attempts to take a more non-reductionist approach, given that his concern is more with *survival* than with what *real* identity consist in. He (1971:4) argues that, “Certain important questions do presuppose a question about personal identity. But they can be freed of this presupposition. And when they

are, the question about identity has no importance”. So his focus is not on what personal identity is or what its continuity is constituted by, as personal identity and its persistence through time are just *further facts* about existence – and reality in general. Thus ultimately: “personal identity is a further fact, which does not just consist in physical and/or psychological continuity” (Parfit, 1984:119). He uses the examples of teletransportation and duplication to demonstrate this point.

In *Reasons and Persons* (1984), Parfit proposes a thought experiment in which he requests the reader to imagine entering a “teletransporter”. This is a machine that makes one lose consciousness, destroys one’s body and brain while recording one’s exact cellular makeup. The machine then copies the information and relays it to Mars via radio at the speed of light. A replicator machine on Mars then re-creates one from new matter identically to how one was before. Therefore, on Mars, *you* would recall entering the teletransporter before travelling to Mars, *you* would feel the cut on your lip from your morning shave; in short *you* would feel like *yourself*.

Parfit continues this thought experiment by adding the *Branch line case* where the teletransporter on Earth is then modified to not destroy the person who enters it, but instead to just replicate the person on Mars. The replica would be exactly the same as you, however your body is not destroyed so you are now able to talk to yourself on Mars. Additionally, you are told that the machine is not functioning correctly and you can expect cardiac failure in the next few days. This is the scenario in which a person branches off from the main line of personal identity in that they will no longer be able to continue surviving.

Parfit explains the two ways in which people can interpret this example according to their own view of personal identity. One view is that the person on Mars *would be you* and the other is that your original self is destroyed and there is *another person* on Mars constructed to be exactly like you. “If we believe that my replica is not me, it is natural to assume that my prospect on the *Branch-line*, is almost as bad as ordinary death” (Parfit, 2003:118), however if you hold the view that the person on Mars is *you*, as Parfit does, your death on Earth is inconsequential, as you will continue to survive on Mars. “Being destroyed and replicated is about as good as ordinary survival” (Parfit, 2003:118).

There is no general consensus between philosophers regarding whether the original is the same person as the copy in terms of psychological continuity without physical continuity. A common objection to the latter version of the fission example however centres on the issue of expectation. According to this objection, the being on earth would plead with the being on

Mars to take good care of his/her family or continue to work on their life goals for instance, however, the earth being would not be satisfied if the being on Mars says it will take care of *our* family or continue *our* life's work. The being on earth wants *it* to be the person taking care of its family, not the being on Mars. Parfit is trying to argue (2003:148) that this should not matter, however, from how persons view the world it does seem to matter. Once fission occurs there is a clear disconnect between a future *you* and a past *you*. There is nothing preventing the replica from denying any obligation to *you*, even though *you* are similar beings. Take marriage for example: if two duplicates of *you* are made and the original is destroyed who is then bound by the oath? If both beings are identical to *you* it stands to reason that they should both be bound, however due to the discontinuity of physical matter and the change in circumstance (since there are now two of one person) it is equally plausible for neither to be bound by the oath.

Parfit uses the above mentioned fission examples as well as another scenario where endless duplicates are made of the person who enters the machine who can all recall entering the machine, to demonstrate that human beings can survive into the future without the use of the concept of *persons*. Parfit argues (1984:24) that we should describe the world in terms of states of affairs, not in the personal self-interested manner that we do, since it is not necessary.

Parfit takes the view that the whole of reality is actually a giant complicated set of objective facts, and "person" is simply a subset of reality – a subset of facts within a wider complex of facts. We can, then, refer to both personal identity and reality without ever using the word "person" (Atkins, 2005:174)

Thus personal identity is just a *further fact*. Parfit thus believes that the concept of a *person* should be done away with as, otherwise, we remain under the impression that the *self* is some form of special entity that takes precedence over and above the body or the mind, similar to the Cartesian Ego. Persons are not ontologically distinct, therefore persons are not substances that exist separately from everything else and do not have to be mentioned separately in an account of what exists.

According to Parfit the existence of a person consists in nothing more than the existence of a brain and body and the occurrence of an interrelated series of mental and physical events. Continuity of identity is therefore not necessarily the same thing as existence. He argues that personal identity is a *further fact* about existence, and thus the crucial issue for continuity of identity debates lies within the survival of the psychologically

continuous person and not in whether person *A* is the same as person *B*. For Parfit, psychological continuity and biology are the necessary conditions for survival, there are no facts about identity that go beyond bodily or psychological identity.

Consider the following example: A necklace is made of silver. Although the silver and the necklace certainly exist, these objects have different conditions for persistence: if melted down, *the necklace* stops existing while the silver it was made of, does not stop existing. Subsequently, they are not identical; rather, the silver constitutes the necklace. The same holds true for persons, who are constituted by, but not identical with, a body, a mind, and a series of interrelated cognitive and causal events. The *further fact*, their identity, is not what matters in survival. Survival only necessitates that our ambitions, beliefs, memories, etc. continue into the future; thus, it should not matter if these things are continued by a duplicate or in fact multiple duplicates of the original. A shared one-to-one identity relationship with this future person is irrelevant, what matters is how this person relates to your current mental states.

Thus, although Parfit makes an attempt at a non-reductionist view, he does not seem to achieve this, rather he cheats in a sense, – in that he removes the problem of personal identity altogether and instead posits a theory of survival. Consider the basic structure of persons similarly to how one looks at the silver of the necklace, instead of the necklace itself, one cannot speak to how persons function in, or indeed experiences, the world; one can only say that they are bodies with some degree of psychological connectedness. This presents the same problem as Hume’s argument in that it contradicts the way in which people experience themselves and indeed ignores to a certain degree the societal implications related to not viewing a person as persisting. If a person commits a crime for instance, and thereafter enters the teletransporter, should both he and his duplicate be punished for the crime, neither of them, or only one of them; and if only one should be punished, who should it be? This example illustrates that if we approach the concept of personal identity purely in terms of persistence or indeed as nothing more than survival, we are left without any real way to relate analyses of the concept of personal identity to our own personal lived experience.

Cassam, in *Parfit on Persons* (1993), criticises Parfit’s treatment of the first person perspective in that Parfit is accused of neglecting the fact that the unity of consciousness or indeed psychological continuity is established through a first person perspective. One cannot prove psychological continuity as described by Parfit from an external objective view. “There is an internal question which asks: ‘[w]hat, within a given mental life underpins experience?’

and there is an external question which asks ‘What does the unity of consciousness in a given life consist in?’” (Atkins, 2005:175). Parfit does not draw a distinction between the external and internal questions on the *self*, he draws a distinction between two external questions in order to negate the first person perspective. On this view, Parfit only draws the distinction between (1) the unity of consciousness at a given/specific time and (2) the unity of consciousness over the passage of time. This does not prove that personal identity is irrelevant, it merely ignores the internal question in favour of the objective external questions. This is another demonstration of how Parfit’s argument ends up being reductive, even though he aims at a non-reductive argument.

To further explore this problem in Parfit’s argument, this dissertation will now examine another thought experiment Parfit mentions (2003:131), namely his *complete division case*: “In this case, each half of my brain will be successfully transplanted into the very similar body of one of my two brothers. Both resulting people will be fully psychologically continuous with me, as I am now. What happens to me?” He then presents the reader with four possible outcomes: (1) the original person does not survive, (2) the original person survives as one of the two resulting people, (3) the original person survives as the other one of the two resulting people, or, (4) the original person survives as both the resulting people. Throughout his work *Why Our Identity Is Not What Matters* (2003) he rejects all four of these options on different grounds and argues that our focus is, yet again, on the wrong aspect, we are bothering with identity when what we should be considering is survival.

However, in arguing against the fourth option, Parfit once again disregards the unity of consciousness as well as the first person perspective. Parfit does argue (2003:122) that: “It might be objected that my description ignores “the necessary unity of consciousness”. But I have not ignored this alleged necessity. I have denied it”. When we look at the experiment from the third person perspective, we can assume that the original person ceases to exist and two new people now exist, however if we consider the subjective perspective in both cases, both people would be the original person, they will have the same memories, the same life, the same continuity of consciousness at the moment of division. It is only after the original moment of division that the two people begin living life as two separate identities, with individual experiences, separate from one another, however, for a few brief moments they could be said to be *one and the same* person.

1.5 Conclusion to Discussion of the Analytic Approach to Personal Identity

In conclusion to this section, the analytical approach to the problem of personal identity is metaphysical, and thus focused on what constitutes personal identity. Answering this question in terms of a criterion for determining the persistence of identity is both reductive and perhaps, in the context of Parfit's *further fact* argument, misguided. Firstly, it is reductive in so far as all of the soul, body, and psychological continuity arguments each to a degree disregard one another as elements of being a person. Both the psychological and biological elements of personal identity, as demonstrated by the concerns of the philosophers mentioned throughout Section 1 of this chapter, are in a way important for personal identity formation, but neither on its own, facilitates a formulation of a rich concept of personal identity. Moreover, little to nothing is said about the social or lived experience of persons.

Secondly, and given the above, this dissertation suggests that the continuity at issue in terms of identity persisting through time is perhaps better viewed as a meta-property of the concept of personal identity; and not in terms of a necessary and sufficient internal condition or criterion for it. This is because most persistence arguments do not account for the formulation of personal identity, they presuppose the personal identity and argue for its persistence only. In other words, this dissertation suggests that in order to frame a rich enough concept of personal identity, the focus should come back to analyses of what the concept of personal identity consists in. On such a view, what actually persists through time, is simply the meta-fact that humans have a concept of their personal identity. What is important, in other words, is to realise that all humans have such a concept throughout their lives, but that their subjective conception, as well as the societal view of it, change through time. This dissertation will elaborate further on this argument in Section 3 of this chapter. For now, however, we will move on to a discussion of the continental tradition of philosophising about the concept of personal identity in order to complete the historical framing of the concept of personal identity in philosophy.

2. PERSONAL IDENTITY AS A PROBLEM IN CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

Following from the discussion of accounts of the concept of personal identity in the analytic tradition, this chapter will now move toward unpacking and exploring the concept of the *self* as a philosophical problem in the continental tradition as these are the terms in which analyses of the concept of personal identity are framed in this tradition. The *self* is a concept concerning one's private view of one's essential features which distinguish one from others. It is viewed by philosophers such as Kant and Hegel as an immortal soul transcending the body. By exploring the continental approach to the *self*, this section will attempt to build on the previous section by considering whether questions concerning the problem of personal identity in the continental tradition in terms of analyses of the *self* fully speak to the richness of the concept of personal identity, in light of the fact that we have established in the previous section that the analytic question regarding the persistence of personal identity cannot do so.

Establishing a general definition of the continental approach in philosophy is problematic as approaches are diverse, however, there are some generally agreed to qualities of the tradition: The continental question of the *self* is often centred on an existential question, in that continental philosophers question how beings experience the world. While supporters of the continental tradition commonly focus on personal experience, imagination, transcendental ideas, and concepts of *absolute experience* (beyond scientific knowledge – such as Hegel's notion of *Geist*, Kant's notion of the noumenal *self*, and Descartes's *Cogito*) they also focus on the lived experience of persons. Movements that are commonly associated with the continental tradition include existentialism, post-structuralism, and deconstructivism. The concept of personal identity in this school of thought is thus primarily concerned with questions regarding selfhood, personhood (the quality or characteristic of being an individual person, usually in a political or legal sense), and agency (the ability of individual persons to act on their own). The focus here will primarily be on the question of the *self* as it relates to personal identity.

The theorists selected to illustrate thinking in terms of the *self* in the continental tradition include, but are not limited to, Kant, Hegel, Sartre, and Beauvoir. The following section will discuss some of the arguments of these theorists in order to demonstrate continental lines of questioning regarding the *self*, and thus again, the focus is not on the individual thinkers own views, but on the line of questioning used to explore the notion of personal identity in terms of the *self*. Core concepts in the continental line of questioning

pertaining to the problem of personal identity such as recognition, the role of society in individual lives, lived experience, and *selfhood* will also be addressed. This section will first move toward discussing Kant's transcendental idealism and how it relates to the concept of the *self*. Secondly, it will consider the theories of Hegel, Sartre, and de Beauvoir with regards to the importance of the concept of recognition to the concept of selfhood. Finally, it will look at whether the continental tradition speaks to the richness of the concept of personal identity in order to lay the groundwork for the following section, which will conclude the chapter by comparing and contrasting the two traditions in light of how they investigate questions pertaining to the concept of personal identity.

2.1. *Transcendental Idealism and the Self*

Kant is a central figure in modern European philosophy who contributed extensively to epistemology, moral philosophy, political philosophy, and aesthetics. The current discussion will focus only on Kant's arguments pertaining to the notion of the *self*. Although Kant did not write extensively on the *self*, he did deliver an important account of the *self* in response to Hume. In addition, his work gave rise to phenomenology as well as to analytic philosophy of language, both of which have developed into completely different lines of inquiry concerning questions on the *self* and the concept of personal identity.

Kant, like Hume, does not believe that the *self*, or the "I" as proposed by Descartes, is a substance. However, unlike Hume who believes that the concept of the *self* is a fiction and that the *self* is merely a *bundle of perceptions* (as discussed in the previous section), Kant believes that the *self* is part of the structure of consciousness and does, in fact, exist in the structure of apperception, where "[a]pperception is a principle of the unity in consciousness that says that all representations in a single consciousness must have a single logical subject" (Kant, 1781:131-2). Specifically, Kant views the *self* in three ways: the logical, phenomenal, and noumenal. The *logical self* is the notion a person or an "I" has of themselves in apperception. The *phenomenal self* is a person's sense of themselves as they appear to themselves. The *noumenal self* refers to a person's thought of themselves as a moral agent or an agent that is responsible for their own actions in the world.

The “I” is not a substance in that “the category of ‘substance’ is a rule for uniting intuitions⁸ such that a representation of a logical subject is formed” (Kant, 1781:B149). It is because all thought is unified in a single subject that we believe in a single *self*; however, this does not mean that we can claim to really know anything about the *self* since it is beyond empirical interpretation. We can know the *self* as it appears to us in apperception as a logical notion, but we cannot experience other *selves* or *ourselves* in an objective manner in order to make claims about it, *i.e.* that it is a substance, or that it persists after death.

The *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) contains eight paralogisms⁹, of which only the first three will be discussed here as they are the only ones pertaining to the identity of persons. In the first three paralogisms, which are all based on claims made by Descartes, Kant identifies three common reasoning mistakes made when claims are made about the *self*. The first paralogism, *Of Substantiality*, argues that the *self* is a substance in the Cartesian sense of “I think therefore I am”. Kant rejects this argument as faulty reasoning on the basis that nothing can be deduced from the concept of the *self* as a soul, because if we cannot experience it empirically we cannot claim to know what it consists of or how it is constructed: “We have no knowledge of the subject in itself, which as substratum underlies this ‘I’, as it does all thoughts” (Kant, 1781:A351). This reflects a similar argument made against all substance dualism arguments (Section 1 of this chapter); all soul theories of personal identity are unable to account for the existence of the soul and by extension for how it relates to the body (*mind/body problem*).

In addressing the second paralogism, *Of Simplicity*, Kant argues (1781:A355) that the *self* is a simple, *i.e.* non-composite, being. This argument originates from Descartes’ claim that the soul cannot be divided. Once again, on a similar note as the above, Kant argues that we cannot know anything about the soul and that this argument is merely a category mistake. Descartes mistakes the continuity of consciousness as experienced in apperception as the indivisibility of a non-material substance that he takes to be the soul. “It is obvious that in attaching ‘I’ to our thoughts we designate the subject of inherence only transcendently, without noting in it any quality whatsoever – in fact, without knowing anything of it either by direct acquaintance or otherwise” (Kant, 1781:A355). The claim that the soul is simple is neither an *analytic proposition*, a *synthetic proposition*, nor a *priori/a posteriori* knowledge.

⁸ ‘Intuitions’ as used by Kant refer to the way in which sense perception effects the way we view the empirical or indeed ‘the phenomenal’ world.

⁹ A Paralogism: Faulty reasoning within a syllogism.

Due to the fact that it does not fit into any form of reasoning that can lead to a knowledge claim, the claim that the soul is simple cannot be a knowledge claim. The “I think” is also a tautology due to the fact that in order to know that one thinks, one has to appeal to oneself as a thinking thing. The concept of a *self* is only a subjective (conceptual knowledge) view of what we are able to know and not an object of experience.

In addressing the third paralogism, *Of Personality*, Kant notes (1781:A362) that the “I” refers to a person that is conscious of its identity through time, *i.e.* that the soul constitutes personal identity. Kant argues that this paralogism confuses the permanence of objects that persist through time in the empirical/external world with the sameness of the “I” in apperception, *i.e.* it confuses the unity of consciousness we find in apperception with the persistence of a single *self*. Kant concludes (1781:A362) that when we speak of the *self*:

... it really says nothing more than that in the whole time in which I am conscious of myself, I am conscious of this time as belonging to the unity of myself; and it comes to the same whether I say that this whole time is in me, as individual unity, or that I am to be found as a numerical identity in all this time.

Thus this Kantian *self* is merely a transcendental, subjective identity and not an objective identity that knowledge claims can be made about. This objection can be applied to many persistence of personal identity arguments in that the formulation of a concept of personal identity cannot be assumed, and knowledge claims cannot be made about it based purely on whether it persists. Persistence arguments assume what they are trying to prove when making such knowledge claims about the concept of personal identity (think back to the critique of circularity against Locke, discussed in the previous section).

Kant’s view of the *self* thus resembles the psychological continuity arguments (see § 1.1.3) in analytic personal identity theory only in so far as he believes that the transcendental unity of consciousness in apperception is a necessary feature of the mind, an *a priori* capability. Kant however does not believe that anything can be claimed about the *self*, based on this continuity alone:

I can give none but tautological answers to all questions (about the *self*), in that I substitute my concept and its unity for the properties which belong to myself as object, and so take for granted that which the questioner has desired to know (Kant, 1781:A366).

Although this does not allow one to make any knowledge claims about the *self*, *i.e.* whether it persists after death, is simple or whether it is a substance, Kant does at least present us with a knower (an *a priori* mind that exists before [and during] perception that can refer to itself as itself) through the unity of consciousness argument. This is, again, unlike Hume who neglects to illustrate a knower, or indeed even the possibility that there is a knower, behind his *bundle of perceptions*.

Kant's classifies (1781:B519) his own view as a *formal idealist* view of the *self*. This kind of view is not compatible with empirical views of the *self*. This is problematic in that there are no empirical facts about the *self*, and it neglects consideration of social and biological influences on personal identity. Kant's view of the *self* thus falls prey to a similar problem as that of the Cartesian *Ego* in that it offers an internal view of the *self*. Kant's internal view of the *self*, however, is problematic in that it is unable to address the lived experience of persons in the world. Kant's internal view of the *self* in isolation does not speak to the richness of the concept of personal identity, and is vulnerable to the same objection than the Cartesian *Ego* in that it can lead to solipsism where the mind and the world are unable to interact. We cannot construct a more holistic view of the concept of personal identity from it, which is what this dissertation is ultimately working toward. To illustrate the role of social factors in a continental account of personal identity, and to see whether a social approach to the *self* can speak to the richness of the concept of personal identity, this chapter now moves toward the concept of recognition and how it relates to the *self*.

2.2. Selfhood and Recognition

The concept of recognition, along with the Hegelian *Lord/Bondsman* dialectic, is a recurring theme in discussions on personal identity in the continental tradition. Recognition consists of two dimensions, namely, normative and psychological. In terms of the normative dimension, recognition is focused on acknowledging the validity of another's existence in terms of one or more features. This implies a "positive attitude towards her for having this feature. Such recognition implies that you bear obligations to treat her in a certain way, that is, you recognize a specific normative status of the other person, e.g., as a free and equal person" (Iser 2013). In terms of psychological recognition, the focus is on developing one's view of oneself based on the feedback of others, which implies that if there is no feedback there is a

negative impact on one's concept of *self*. In this sense, self-awareness is a pre-requisite for psychological recognition.

This dissertation's discussion of the concept of recognition is limited and focused more on the psychological dimension of recognition, specifically on how it relates to the concept of the *self* in order to link to the consideration of the concept of personal identity in hand. Thus, apart from acknowledging self-awareness as pre-requisite for the psychological aspect of recognition, and discussing the relation between self-consciousness and recognition in terms of Hegel's lordship and bondsman context (see below from p.33), any issues regarding what self-awareness or self-consciousness itself requires, fall beyond the scope of this dissertation. Our discussion here begins with the Hegelian concept of the *self* and recognition. This section will highlight the possibility of misrecognition and its impact on the lived experience of a person through Iris Marion Young and Judith Butler's arguments. It will then move toward Sartre and de Beauvoir's¹⁰ conceptions of the *self* and their interpretations of the dialectic. Contrary to Hegel and Sartre, de Beauvoir introduces the concept of gender into her existential argument. This makes her argument more inclusive of how persons experience themselves in the world. This will be demonstrated below. Taylor and Lötter are finally discussed in order to illustrate contemporary accounts of the concept of recognition and how it pertains to the concept of personal identity. Taylor and Lötter have been selected because neither of them works explicitly in a single philosophical tradition. Taylor and Lötter present more holistic theories on the subject of personal identity due to their wide focus, thus providing groundwork for a holistic approach to the concept of personal identity.

First, consider the concept of recognition itself. The concept of recognition implies both a subject, capable of recognising, and an object, which can be recognised. In its most simplistic form recognition is a process by which a subject recognises an object. Recognition with regard to subjects, as it is generally understood through the work of the authors discussed here, is not a simple interaction where two people present themselves as objects or subjects to one another. It is a process that begins when the subject sees herself in the other; it does not result in the collapse of the subject into the other, or in a complete annihilation of the alterity of the other. In society, this amounts to one person who acts as an autonomous

¹⁰ Several other existential philosophers also discuss the dialectic with regard to the *self*, however Sartre and de Beauvoir have been selected in that they build on one another's arguments. The fact that their arguments relate and follow from one another allows for a succinct discussion of the concept of recognition within this section.

individual recognising another person as their equal and therefore as an autonomous *self*, who is capable of recognising them in return.

Hegel, a prominent philosopher in the era of German idealism, wrote extensively on the subject of recognition, and shed light on the importance of the notion of recognition for the concept of personal identity, and the social aspect of the concept of personal identity. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), influenced by the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Hegel extends transcendental idealism further than Kant did or envisioned. Hegel argues that there can be no *noumenal* world, in that we cannot experience it, and therefore it is meaningless to us. All that exists in the world is what we are able to know through experience. To maintain the focus on recognition I will focus only on the section *Self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage* in *The Phenomenology*, where Hegel discusses the *self* and how it relates to others and to the world.

First and foremost, *self-consciousness* in Hegel's interpretation cannot exist in complete isolation from the world, it is not a *self-sustaining* substance such as the Cartesian *Ego*; it is always interacting with the world, present in time, space and in history. *Self-consciousness* is considered by Hegel (1807:108) to be an achievement. *Being* is always a being-in-relation to other things. *Self-consciousness* is always a mediation between two extremes *i.e.* the *self* and the *other*. One begins by *being-for-oneself*, by being aware of oneself as a *self-consciousness*, as separate from objects. One then becomes a more developed *self-consciousness* by interacting with objects in the world.

One interacts with objects in the world at first, approaching them, interacting with them, and ultimately mastering them. One negates these objects in the world by mastering¹¹ them, in the sense that the object is no longer recognizable as an object with potential *self-consciousness* but rather, as a mere object incapable of consciousness. Through the subjugation of objects, we satisfy our desire for knowledge. The object is now recognizable as a static object, knowable in its entirety, as opposed to a *self-consciousness* capable of development. Objects however do exist separately from ourselves and it is by virtue of the fact that they are enduring and external that they present challenges to *self-consciousness*. One has to work to learn how to master objects and acquire skills, *i.e.* learning to ride a bike,

¹¹ To master and object means to have knowledge of the object. One encounters the object in-itself as it exists in the world, and through forming an understanding of the object and thus building a relation between the knower and the object, one masters it. This relation between the object and the knower of the object is known as consciousness.

write, or read. Through mastering and thereby negating objects, we become more realized subjects.

If we go beyond simple object relations (consciousness) to the relationship with the *other*, *i.e.* when a person encounters another *self*-consciousness in the world, this interaction becomes more complicated. Hegel refers to the interaction between two *self*-conscious beings as arising from the desire to be recognised. This ‘Struggle to the Death’ between the ‘lord’ and the ‘bondsmen’ is commonly referred to as the *Lord/Bondsman* or *Master-Slave dialectic*. The initial encounter occurs as follows:

Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; which means it has come *out of itself*. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other as an essential being, but in the other it sees its own self (Hegel, 1807:110).

The *self* and the *other* are always both self-contained and interdependent. Being-for-itself has no meaning, it is only through the recognition of others and the interaction with the world that one comes to know the truth of one’s own *self*-consciousness. Both *self*-conscious beings put themselves at risk by engaging in the dialectic, however they both stand to gain. This dialectic seems at first glance to be an extremely obscure notion, however it is quite applicable to everyday interpersonal relations. There are stronger and weaker personalities, workplace relations, gender relations, etc., where people are struggling to be recognized as subjects by other people. Hegel’s argument also already begins to show how we depend on other people to give us insight into our concept of ourselves and of our experiences.

After this initial encounter has occurred the struggle commences, from this the weaker *self*-consciousness, in fear for their life, submits to the stronger one. The victor then becomes the *lord/master* and the loser becomes the *bondsman/slave*. The *lord* gains recognition and the enjoyment of the *bondsman* working for him. The *bondsman* has had the experience of being shaken to the core by their brush with death, is made to work for the *lord* and is taught to internalize the fear of the *lord*. This is where Hegel brings in a twist: “Through work, however, the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is” (Hegel, 1807:114). In the end of this struggle the *bondsman* is the one that gains true *self*-consciousness in that through working for the *lord* on objects in the world, the *bondsman* keeps developing, where the *lord* stagnates:

But just as lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness (Hegel, 1807:193).

This struggle occurs every time one encounters a new *self*-conscious (person) in the world and, moreover, the position between the *self* and *other* is not always the same; some struggles are won and others lost, however one cannot be a recognized subject in the world if one does not participate in this dialectic, by being in– and interacting with the world and other persons. The seemingly simple concept of recognition becomes highly complex in light of Marion Young’s concepts of the *politics of difference*¹² and the *desire for recognition*¹³. Young was a political theorist and feminist that focused on concepts such as social difference and the nature of justice. She highlighted the problems associated with the *desire for recognition* and *the politics of difference* in terms of access to equal recognition within a social and political context. She uses these terms to address the fact that democratic society often homogenises groups and tend to disregard cultural groups that are not identifiable within the homogenous public. These concepts are introduced in the general context of recognition, and this dissertation does not offer a discussion of them in the context of political philosophy, however they are rather discussed in order to demonstrate how persons can easily be misrecognised or potentially fail to be recognised entirely – as well as how this failure to be recognised can effect both their concept of their gender identity and, by extension, their concept of their personal identity.

Misrecognition often leads to a violation of identity in that persons who are not recognised by others often fail to relate to themselves. Persons who are considered to deviate from normative society, e.g., in cases of intersexual, homosexual, or racial minorities, persons are often misrecognised. This issue is problematic in that acknowledgement of any deviation from societal norms is highly likely to lead to misrecognition and therefore to a violation of one’s identity as a subject.

¹² The politics of difference is a comprehensive term that deals with issues of inequality, struggles for justice, recognition, interaction with, persecution of people from different social groups, and other issues relating to identity politics. This term is notably used by the American political and feminist theorist Marion Young in her classic work *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990).

¹³ The desire for recognition refers to the desire of each person to be recognised as an agent in the world. This concept is often used to refer to the desire to be recognised as an equal in terms of social equality.

Hegel in some sense, neglects the conditions for recognition in terms of epistemic injustice¹⁴ in that he takes as a given that all subjects are inherently recognisable. His criteria for recognition include being an individual *self*-conscious subject, as well as being part of the collective conscious or “spirit of the age” (*Zeitgeist*). As illustrated by Judith Butler in her works *Gender Trouble* (1995) and *Undoing Gender* (2004), not all persons however conform, or indeed are capable of conforming, to the cultural norm.

The terms by which we are recognized as human are socially articulated and changeable. And sometimes the very terms that confer ‘humanness’ on some individuals are those that deprive certain other individuals of the possibility of achieving that status, producing a differential between the human and the less-than-human (Butler, 2004:2).

As a result, some are incapable of taking part in the *dialectic*, as others do not recognise them as another *self-consciousness*. This, by extension, inhibits the personhood and thus the freedom of unrecognisable subjects as they are only able to achieve freedom as subjects through a mutual recognition, which is inaccessible to them under circumstances relating to the politics of difference and not being able to conform to social norms for various reasons.

Following from the discussion of Hegel, this dissertation is now able to move toward a discussion of Jean-Paul Sartre who also addresses the concept of recognition in terms of its relation to the *self*. Sartre utilises Hegel’s dialectic in his own argument, entitled *The Body* (1943), which provides additional insight into the *dialectic*, and indeed into the concept of recognition itself. This discussion serves to further highlight the importance of a social analysis of the concept of personal identity in terms of its speaking to the richness of the concept of personal identity.

Sartre was an influential French philosopher, who wrote predominantly in the fields of existentialism and phenomenology. Sartre’s work is considered to be a prime example of existentialism. His work is also closely associated with that of Simone de Beauvoir¹⁵, Albert Camus, and several others. Unlike Hegel, Sartre favoured an ontological approach to philosophy over a metaphysical approach, in that he viewed metaphysics as an approach that raised questions that could not be answered such as the question regarding the “true nature of objects”. On “the true nature of objects” Sartre (1943:xliv) states that:

¹⁴ Epistemic injustice: Miranda Fricker most notably uses this term to demonstrate that a person could be treated unjustly as a result of their capacity to understand, interpret, or utilise knowledge.

¹⁵ Simone de Beauvoir’s view of the *self* will be discussed following the current section on Sartre.

this true nature [...] if it is to be the secret reality of the thing, which one can have a presentiment of or which one can suppose but can never reach because it is the “interior” of the object under consideration – this nature no longer exists.

In his work *Being and Nothingness* (1943) Sartre (1943:568) argues that "existence precedes essence" and seeks to demonstrate the existence of free will. This dissertation will focus primarily on the chapter in *Being and Nothingness* entitled *The Body*, as it contains the fundamental basis for his argument regarding the *self* specifically.

Sartre critiques (1943: lxii) Descartes by arguing that he failed to recognise the *self* as reflective and not immediate and *self*-knowing. To make his argument, Sartre distinguishes between the *pre-reflective cogito* and the *reflective cogito*. The *pre-reflective cogito* is not a particular “I” but rather a consciousness of something. The *reflective cogito* is what Sartre considers to be the *ego*, the “I”, that arises when the *pre-reflective cogito* is reflected upon by itself and becomes aware of the unity of its own consciousness. The *reflective cogito* is not an object but rather a new way of being conscious. Sartre also distinguishes between three ways of being, the first two being, *being-in-itself* and *being-for-itself*. *Being-in-itself* refers to objects that exist conceptually for the subject of experience. *Being-for-itself* refers to consciousness which Sartre views as nothingness, not an entity, simply a “not-this”. First and foremost, then, we exist in the world as objects, as *being-in-itself* and we base all of our ideas of essence or *being-for-itself* on this basic existence.

Being-for-itself, or consciousness, functions as something that continually draws distinctions between things, such as between objects in the world as well as between itself and other objects. In order to make such distinctions, things must continue to be the same as opposed to another thing *i.e.* the ball is a ball by virtue of the fact that it is not a cube. Specifically, Sartre (1943:617) classifies consciousness as negation. “The For-itself, in fact, is nothing but the pure nihilation of the In-itself; it is like a hole of being at the heart of being”. Consciousness is thus nothing (no-thing) in that it is not an object and it is always engaged in a process of nihilation.

Sartre argues (1943:619) that the facticity¹⁶ of our lives does not determine whom we are, as we can always decide how we respond and act toward any given situation. Thus, the notion of the *self* is no bare facticity, but is always bound up with the concept of freedom. When we run away from our freedom of choice or make excuses for ourselves based on

¹⁶ Given things concerning existence such as location in history and geographical location. Heideggerian term.

facticity, Sartre (1943:44) characterizes it as *bad faith*¹⁷. For Sartre, emotions, personality, as well as preferences, all involve bad faith in that we are always free to choose what we want to feel, how to act and what to like by developing ourselves. We cannot claim that any of these things are problematic as they can always be changed; we are always free to change them. However, due to the fact that freedom is completely without guidance or direction, we tend towards bad faith or acting inauthentically in an effort to avoid the pressures involved in having freedom - “man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being” (Sartre, 1943:553). It is in this way that Sartre views freedom negatively.

Finally, Sartre discusses his additional third category of being namely, *being-for others*. This type of being occurs in the social realm through the phenomenon of *the look*. This model for an interpersonal interaction is based on the Hegelian *lord-bondsman dialectic* (see above). When subjects first encounter one another in the world they always see each other first as objects and, in turn, are seen as objects. They are thus initially objectified by *the look* of the *other*. The subject then notices that they are not the centre of the world as in their subjective view, but rather an object in another world, the world of the *other*. This relation to the *other* is not the same as an object relation in that the awareness of the *other* completely alters one’s view of the world. It alters one’s experiential field as well as one’s view of oneself. One ceases to be a free agent in that one’s “physical body [is] propelled into a project determined by an Other” (Sartre, 1943:89). Unlike the arguments by Hegel or Heidegger, the subject is not a metaphor for oneself in this scenario, but rather an unknowable *other*. Possible responses to *the look* include: fear, shame, or pride. One then, in a similar fashion to that discussed in terms of the *lord-bondsman dialectic*, chooses to either succumb to the *other* or threaten them with annihilation. There is no final resolution to this encounter as it is merely a matter of assertion and counter-assertion.

If the dialogue is understood as an ontological moment, it is bound to fail in that it is inherently solipsistic. A constant reaffirmation of subjectivity (as lived experience) is necessary to render the *other* as an object of the look. Both participants are unknowable to one another and become weary of becoming objectified once again, resulting in a stalemate of pre-empting the look of the *other*, in order to preserve their own freedom as a subject. This

¹⁷ In accordance with both Sartre and Beauvoir’s views, bad faith is when people act inauthentically due to societal pressure.

does not allow for progress beyond a one-on-one encounter with the aim of avoiding objectification.

Hegel's argument only includes two categories of being, namely, *being-for-itself* and *being-in-itself*. By adding the category *being-for-others* Sartre's argument demonstrates, more in depth than Hegel's argument perhaps, that there is a social aspect involved in how we see ourselves and that the way in which we experience the world has an effect on how we formulate a concept of personal identity. This approach to the *self* is more holistic than those discussed in the previous section in that it considers the body, consciousness, as well as the lived experience of human beings. It does not go into the same depth as analytic arguments on the individual elements that allow for the formulation and persistence of a concept of personal identity, however it does present us with a broader view of how human beings experience themselves in the world.

As is the case with Hegel, Sartre also views the subject as inherently recognisable within a social context. This presents the same problem highlighted above by Young and Butler in that one cannot contextualise a subject that cannot be recognised as a subject in the first place. To address this problem that has now arisen within two existential arguments for the *self*, we now move toward de Beauvoir's argument. De Beauvoir addresses the question of whether all people are equally recognisable as subjects by applying the Hegelian dialectic to the roles of men and women in society. Let us now look at her application of the *lord/bondsman dialectic* in *The Second Sex* (1949).

Simone de Beauvoir was a philosopher, working primarily in existentialism and phenomenology, influenced by Hegel, and a contemporary of Sartre. Similar to Sartre, de Beauvoir works from a Hegelian conception of consciousness. In *The Second Sex* she begins by asking the question, "What is a woman?" She turns this question into an ontological inquiry of whether the notion of a woman is legitimate in that there is no natural/concrete societal definition of what a woman is or should be, but rather simply a collection of vague, mysterious qualities that are attached to the concept of femininity. De Beauvoir defines "man" as encapsulating both the neutral and the positive in society, defined by itself as itself, whereas "woman" functions as a negative, only defined in terms of lack, of what it is not, as the *other* to man. "Thus, humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (De Beauvoir, 2011:26). This view considers women as less capable of achieving recognition than men due to the way they

are viewed within society. Women are therefore also less likely to construct a well-rounded concept of personal identity as a result of being inherently less recognisable within society.

De Beauvoir focuses on the lived experience of human beings in order to highlight the hidden aspects of psychological oppression directed toward the *other*. She utilizes the *lord/bondsman dialectic* to demonstrate that even though the *lord* is less enlightened than the *bondsman*, the *bondsman* remains in a subordinate position, dependent on the *lord*. The theme of the one as opposed to the *other*, or man as opposed to woman, is recurrent through the entirety of *The Second Sex* (1949). She argues (2011:73) that women remain in this subordinate position due to existing political/societal structures as well as biological features that tie them more to the home.

This makes subjectivity and recognition more difficult to obtain for women than men. We can begin seeing in this argument that de Beauvoir's thoughts are more nuanced than those of Sartre and Hegel, as she sees that not all subjects are equally recognisable. This illustrates that subjectivity, recognition, and by extension, freedom, are situational and not *a priori* capacities. In reference to the difficulty of women attaining subjectivity, Beauvoir states:

These phenomena would be incomprehensible if in fact human society was simply a *Mitsein* or fellowship based on solidarity and friendship. On the contrary, they become clear if, following Hegel, a fundamental hostility to any other consciousness is found in consciousness itself; the subject posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as inessential, as the object (De Beauvoir, 2011:26-27).

De Beauvoir describes the effect of the *lord/bondsman dialectic* in similar terms to Sartre in *The Body* (1943), in that she argues that one's experience of oneself as an object/subject is always mediated through *other's* experiences of one as an object or subject. In a similar manner to Hegel as well, this means that subjectivity is always a case of inter-subjectivity, it is always mediated through *others* and one's experience within the world. This once again, points to the experience of subjectivity and by extension, to the concept of personal identity as related, and in some senses dependent, on lived and social experiences.

In her approach to the Hegelian *dialectic*, de Beauvoir's argument shifts from a philosophical argument to a more sociological one, where she branches off from both Sartre and Hegel. For de Beauvoir freedom is situational in that there are certain freedoms that are not available to one due to one's situation – e.g., education to the poor, flying to humans.

This does not mean however that one is entirely without freedom, however freedom is limited, and this limitation cannot be overcome through simple individual resolve. This is due to the fact that the social framework in which a person has to participate in the *dialectic* is structured in such a way that certain persons are automatically placed in the position of *otherness* and, by extension, are then automatically assigned to the position of the *bondsman*. Women are her key example, however she also mentions the situation of class separation¹⁸ to illustrate this automatic separation of subject and *other*. “Unlike the Other of the master-slave dialectic, women are not positioned to rebel. As Inessential Others, women’s routes to subjectivity and recognition cannot follow the Hegelian script” (De Beauvoir, 2011:xix–xxii). David Sandin, in his text *From De Beauvoir to Butler* (2010), criticises de Beauvoir’s biological description of women:

[O]ne thing that I find striking about this description is the lack of theoretical analysis. Here the female body is not viewed from the psychoanalytical perspective that she later uses. Women’s fragility is simply taken for granted and so is the female biology (2010:17).

Butler, in her work *Gender Trouble* (1995), also critiques de Beauvoir for taking female biology as a given, however she adds a further critique on the dualism inherent in the *Second sex*: “For de Beauvoir, gender is ‘constructed,’ but implied in her formulation is an agent, a cogito, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender and could, in principle take on some other gender” (Butler, 1990:8).

De Beauvoir alludes to this distinction through arguing in her existential argument that we are all subjects capable of recognition and, more importantly, of being recognised, however in her shift toward a sociological argument, we may no longer be in the position to be recognised as an equal due to our societal status. Ultimately this divides the subject into two mutually exclusive positions that cannot be reunited. She does not point specifically to subjects that are incapable of achieving recognition, but rather to the problem of not being able to achieve equal recognition as subjects. This however is already a step further than Hegel and Sartre in that de Beauvoir considers the potential misrecognition of subjects, as well as the concept of gender being an extension of lived experience and therefore an extension of the concept of personal identity.

¹⁸Two other examples she uses are the case of the Jewish and anti-Semites, and “The Jim Crow laws put into practice with regard to black Americans” (De Beauvoir 2004:12).

Building on de Beauvoir's argument, this dissertation will now move toward a discussion of Judith Butler's argument concerning recognition in which she focuses specifically on the unrecognisability of certain subjects. Butler's argument is only given brief mention in that she does not present her own formulation of the concept of recognition, she only points to how the concept of recognition has been problematic in other theories of the *self*. Butler, in her work *Undoing Gender* (2004), focuses on the concept of recognition with regards to transformative gender identities. By approaching recognition in this manner, she attempts to illustrate that the subject is not *inherently* recognisable, but rather, in order to be recognised one must conform to certain normative societal structures that allow for recognition:

The critical relation depends as well on a capacity, invariably collective, to articulate an alternative, minority version of sustaining norms or ideals that enable me to act. If I am someone who cannot *be* without *doing*, then the conditions of my doing are, in part, the conditions of my existence (Butler, 2004:3).

Following from this quotation we can see that one needs to be recognisable in society to be able to sustain one's personal identity, in that one is always in the world and needs to be intelligible to that world in order to develop a concept of personal identity, and to have a liveable life through that identity. Subjects, in Butler's view, are thus relational and cannot be understood as separate from those relations. She (2004:2) critiques the Hegelian tradition which "links desire with recognition, claiming that desire is always a desire for recognition and that it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially viable beings", for the above-mentioned reason – that Hegel fails to acknowledge the incapability of certain subjects to be recognised.

Butler's notion that society determines who is recognisable as a human being and who is not, is also not fixed in that who can be articulated as a human being changes through time; take for example the recognition of homosexuals in certain social environments and the lack of recognition in others. Butler (2004:2) also states that in certain instances "the very terms that confer 'humanness' on some individuals are those that deprive certain other individuals of the possibility of achieving that status, producing a differential between the human and the less-than-human".

Butler discusses the concept of recognition in order to demonstrate the value of being recognised as a subject in the world and how important society is to formulating a concept of

personal identity. It is made clear through the arguments of Hegel, Sartre, and de Beauvoir (to a lesser extent) that the inherent recognisability of subjects is often taken for granted.

Through a brief above allusion to Butler's argument – and by de Beauvoir's more sociological slanted arguments concerning the situatedness of the freedom of the subject – it is demonstrated that being recognisable as a subject is contingent on the society in which one lives.

By examining the concept of recognition, this chapter has demonstrated that the social context of a person plays a crucial role in the formation of the concept of personal identity. Persons cannot live without *others* and thus are in some way constituted by society. This dissertation will elaborate further on this point in the following chapter. We can however begin to recognise at this juncture, given the above-mentioned arguments, that the concept of personal identity cannot be understood in its entirety without considering the social sphere of the person, which is something that analytic philosophers tend to do by only focusing on the persistence question.

Continental lines of questioning with regards to the concept of personal identity however consider the social situatedness of a person in several different ways. One of these ways, which has just been demonstrated, is by linking the concept of personal identity to the concept of recognition. This dissertation will now further expand on this relation by considering the work of two philosophers who approach the relation of recognition and personal identity even more holistically than the aforementioned theorists.

Charles Taylor and H. P. P. Lötter are two contemporary philosophers that focus their discussions of the concept of personal identity on the relation between personal identity and recognition. Both of these philosophers do not write exclusively in either tradition, thus their arguments lead this dissertation towards a less reductive and more holistic approach to the concept of personal identity than the aforementioned arguments. This section will now briefly consider their arguments in the context of discussions of the concept of personal identity, before moving toward a critique of the analytic and continental lines of questioning with regards to the concept of personal identity.

Taylor is a highly influential philosopher in both the fields of social science and politics. Philosophers such as Hegel, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Merleau-Ponty have influenced him. He does not write in distinctly one tradition, but rather that his influences stem from both the analytic and continental traditions. In *The Politics of Recognition* (1992:25), Taylor makes the argument that “our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its

absence ...” in the sense that we are who we are as a result of being recognisable or recognised by others. The recognition of others assures us that we are persons worthy of respect, and the lack of recognition implies the inverse. “Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (Taylor, 1992:25). We can see by this view that Taylor is trying to illustrate that persons are fundamentally dependent on *others* for recognition, and, by extension, for identity formation. “We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us” (Taylor, 1992:32-33), where ‘significant others’ are parents, friends, teachers, etc. in short, those people whose opinion one values.

“Democracy has ushered in a politics of equal recognition, which has taken various forms over the years, and has now returned in the form of demands for the equal status of cultures and of genders” (Taylor, 1992:27). We can see from the politics surrounding the notion of recognition that it is related to difference, individuality, freedom of *self-expression* and *self-determination*. It would not be necessary to seek recognition from or to give recognition to *others* if everyone were the same.

In light of this, Taylor makes the argument for an *authentic*¹⁹ personal identity that is inwardly generated:

[T]he importance of recognition has been modified and intensified by the new understanding of individual identity that emerges at the end of the eighteenth century. We might speak of an *individualized* identity, one that is particular to me, and that I discover in myself (Taylor, 1992:28).

He also relates this individualised ‘authentic’ identity to the way in which we live our lives:

There is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s life. But this notion gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for me (Taylor, 1992:30).

Here, therefore, is another example of how one can draw upon the continental focus on the lived experience of human beings, the experience of identity, how it feels to be a person, what it means to be a person, to create a more holistic representation of the concept of

¹⁹ Taylor selects Lionel Trilling’s usage of “authenticity” and uses it in the same idealistic manner Trilling uses it in his work *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1969).

personal identity, instead of focusing purely on whether a concept of personal identity exists and/or persists. When we focus on this lived experience of identity, and by extension, on the need for recognition in society, we begin to see how identity can change through interaction with the world. We make choices that effect whom we will be and how we will act, based on how others will react to us.

Lötter expands and develops Taylor's view of personal identity. Lötter is a South African philosopher who is internationally known for his work on poverty and global justice, as well as work in the field of moral philosophy. In *Personal identity in multicultural constitutional democracies* (1998), Lötter aims to "show how people define, construct, and change their personal identities to make themselves into unique individuals" (Lötter, 1998:1). He uses his view of personal identity to make a political argument for the accommodation of diverse identities into multicultural constitutional democracies, however this dissertation will not be elaborating on this section of his article in that it does not pertain to the argument being made. It will rather focus on his thoughts on the uniqueness of the concept of personal identity.

Lötter argues (1998:2) that "personal identity is the fingerprint of the conscious mind which expresses the unique individuality of a human being". Through this argument it becomes evident that he demonstrates that personal identity is unique to an individual. The individual develops into a specific and specifiable identity due to their life experiences. Lötter looks at this notion from two perspectives: "viz. personal identity viewed as a product and as the processes that continually shape and modify personal identity" (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990:300).

Lötter provides an overview of Taylor's article (above) to ground his discussion of the individual and personal identity, however he argues that Taylor's argument is too vague. According to Lötter (1998:3) Taylor "does not explain exactly what he means [by personal identity], nor does he indicate the components one could expect to find in such a personal identity, how they are related and what causes them to change". Expanding on Taylor's definition of personal identity, Lötter argues (1998:3) that "personal identity is a configuration of diverse components ranging from interpretations of a persons' body, abilities, skills, ethnic origin, moral values, and so on".

These components, according to Lötter (1998:3), are what make people unique in that "they can use [said components] in an endless variety of ways to construct their own identities". By demonstrating that the concept of personal identity has various components,

Lötter's argument speaks to the complexity inherent in a social construction of personal identity as well as the richness of the concept of personal identity itself.

The diverse components of the concept of personal identity Lötter considers include body image, sexual identity, talents, values, origin, age group, and ethnicity. Body image includes the perceptions and feelings one has with regards to one's body. Elements such as weight, height, proportion, etc. may change the way persons view themselves and also how others view them, "features of a person's body might become part of his or her identity, because a person regards it as definitive of who he or she is" (Lötter 1998:3). Lötter also argues (1998:4), as does this dissertation (see Chapter 2), that one's concept of one's own gender identity and how one chooses to perform one's gender identity as a part of one's concept of personal identity. Gender identity develops in the sense that one chooses which heteronormative standards one wants to adhere to and which not. Through making these decisions one develops a more complex gender identity consisting of what is considered to be masculine, feminine, and gender neutral traits, regardless of one's anatomical sex.

According to Lötter (1998:4), developed skills, talents, and abilities make up another set of personal identity forming components: "Some people have the perception of themselves - often confirmed by others - that they are intelligent, good with handiwork or machines" (Lötter 1998:4). This confirmation will often be internalised and forms a large part of one's personal identity in that one can define oneself according to these traits. Being intelligent might lead to a career in academia and thus defining oneself as "an academic". Being athletically talented might lead one to one defining oneself as "an athlete".

The values one chooses to commit to also play an important role in identity formation. "These values can be about moral, political, religious, or cultural issues" (Lötter 1998:4). These values can be specific to a situation or be relevant in all situations, change or remain the same throughout one's life. Religious values often remain largely unchanged, but values pertaining to politics often change due to the political situation one is in. By aligning oneself with certain values one also often identifies oneself through them. A person could identify themselves as a Christian, a democrat, a republican, and so forth.

Lötter provides several other examples of the components of the concept of personal identity in his article, however the last one that will be addressed here is age. Age is a constantly changing component of personal identity in that one is often treated differently by others in different stages of life, one is recognised differently by others, one behaves

differently in different life stages, and one often identifies oneself according to the life stage one is in. According to Lötter:

The status of a student could have a significant effect on personal identity, as it implies being a young adult not yet saddled with the responsibilities and duties of mature adults. Mature adults engaged in full time careers find that involvement in a career can significantly focus their personal identity as they develop the characteristics and qualities suited to their chosen career. The personal identity of mature adults is also drastically affected by their marital status - being married, divorced, or single – and by their becoming parents or not (Lötter, 1998:5).

Lötter further addresses the potential challenges to viewing personal identity as a coherent whole when many of the components are constantly developing and changing. This dissertation will be addressing these challenges in the next two chapters. As demonstrated by Lötter, our concept of our personal identity changes throughout life in that the components/elements that make up that identity, change. Factors such as gender identity, age, values, morals, culture, and so forth all influence the way we see ourselves, how others see us, and how we behave in society. If all these factors are constantly in flux, identity cannot be said to be fixed. It can however be argued that identity can persist without it being understood or interpreted in terms of content as the exact same thing at all times. This argument has been made by several of the abovementioned personal identity theorists, and this dissertation has also made an argument for a related view at the end of Section 2.1. This argument will also be expanded on in the following chapters.

Lötter is not presenting an existential analysis of the *self* in the continental theorist style. He is also not presenting an analytic empirically inclined analysis that only considers the persistence of identity question. *Personal identity in multicultural constitutional democracies* (1998) is an important example of both continental and analytic questions/concerns being taken into account when addressing the broader issue of personal identity. Lötter addresses the malleability of the concept of identity thoroughly through his analysis of identity forming components, however he neglects the persistence argument somewhat in that he only mentions that malleability and persistence seem contradictory, but he fails to posit a solution to this apparent contradiction.

2.3 Conclusion to Discussion of the Continental Account of Personal Identity

The above section has outlined the concept of the *self* (personal identity) in terms of the lines of questioning commonly pursued in the continental tradition in order to see whether it properly speaks to the richness of the concept. By examining core concepts such as recognition, *selfhood*, lived experience, transcendental idealism, and existentialism this section has established that there are positive and negative aspects to the continental line of questioning with regards to the concept of the *self*. These aspects will be examined further in relation to analytic lines of questioning within the following section.

The above section also examined the more holistic theories of Taylor and Lötter to illustrate the importance and indeed benefit of approaching the concept of personal identity in terms of questions asked in both the analytic and continental traditions. The value of Lötter's article for this dissertation is the emphasis he places on viewing identity as based on a large set of fluid, changing, developing components/elements, which seems to imply that the very concept of personal identity develops and changes through life. This dissertation will come back to this emphasis both in Chapter 3 and in the Conclusion by suggesting that viewing the concept of personal identity as resembling a complex system may do more justice to the developmental richness and the changing nature of the concept than either current continental or analytical lines of questioning regarding the concept can offer. For now, however, this dissertation will move toward a critique of both the analytic and continental lines of questioning with regards to the concept of personal identity in light of the above discussion, before moving to the next chapter.

3. CRITIQUE OF THE ANALYTIC AND CONTINENTAL TRADITIONS

Following the discussion of both the lines of questioning pursued in the analytic and continental approaches to the problem of personal identity this section can now consider whether neither, both, or only one approach – in terms of its lines of questioning – is able to truly or adequately speak to the richness of the concept of personal identity. This dissertation has been making the argument that following one line of questioning with regards to the concept of personal identity is reductive, and thus does not do full justice to the complex nature of the concept of personal identity. However, the questions on which proponents of either the analytic, or the continental tradition focus in turn, differ and as a result they focus on different aspects of the concept of personal identity. Theorists writing in either tradition, therefore, do not necessarily intentionally disregard the focus of the other; they simply have different aims when approaching the concept of personal identity, because they work with different concepts. The arguments and discussion in the previous sections of this chapter indicate that the varying lines of questioning in the two traditions are perhaps better pursued together, instead of separately, in order to construct a more holistic approach to the problem of personal identity.

The work of philosophers writing in the analytic tradition is important from the point of view of this dissertation, due to the fact that the analytic line of questioning highlights the importance of the concept of persistence in discussions around the concept of personal identity. If persons do not have a persistent, albeit changing in terms of content or nature, concept of their personal identity they cannot be held accountable for past actions or future promises. Viewing a person's life and, by extension, their identity as continuous is necessary, also in terms of how important it is to be recognised as the person one is. This dissertation, however, as pointed out at the end of Section 1, suggests a change of focus from persistence as the necessary and sufficient condition for personal identity – arguing that the focus of the persistence question should not be on which criterion enables one to speak about persistence, but rather on whether one has *a* notion of personal identity that persists.

As demonstrated in the above chapter, analytic lines of questioning often take for granted that one has an already formed concept of personal identity in order to focus on whether this concept of personal identity persists, thus viewing the concept in terms of the logical property of persistence of a single identity, and this makes for a circular approach. On the other hand, as Hegel, Descartes, and many others argue, our subjective (introspective)

view of the world and ourselves is inescapable, and although this *self* is difficult to define, the fact that it is an integral part of the lived experience of persons cannot be dismissed. Persons have a subjective concept of personal identity in which they view themselves as persisting – persons know that they persist as a certain person, but, the focus is on *how* they experience their concept of this *self*, their identity which changes throughout their lives. In other words, in the continental sense, one can have different identities through the stages of one’s life. Thus, this dissertation suggests that persistence of personal identity, in the sense that analytic philosophers engage with it, should be viewed as a meta-property of the concept of personal identity instead as the criterion for it, while the focus on what makes up ones various identities throughout one’s life must not be lost.

Philosophers writing with a continental approach, as this dissertation has demonstrated thus far, add to the discussion of the concept of personal identity in that they factor the lived experience of a person into their formulations of the concept of personal identity, rather than focusing on the concept purely as a logical property. The social lived experience of every person is viewed by each such person from a subjective perspective, and whether this is an illusion we create for ourselves or not, it does not change the fact that this is how we perceive the world. Persons may be able to achieve momentary objectivity in some contexts, yet a person’s interpretation of any such objectivity is always framed by that person’s opinions, emotions, memories, and perspective. The lines of questioning perused within the continental tradition place emphasis on the social element, and to some extent also the psychological element, of the concept of personal identity.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, and demonstrated throughout it, there is a lack of discussion of personal concerns such as recognition, agency, and our general being in the world in the analytic tradition due to the focus on a persisting essence of identity in and of itself. Proponents of the continental tradition, on the other hand, do however thoroughly consider what it means to be – and to be recognised as – a being in the world, interacting with the world and other human beings. Key concepts that constitute human experience and the development of an identity on the continental account include concepts of recognition, acting, suffering, being, and so forth. Theorists working in the continental tradition thus add further dimension to the question of identity, what it means to be an identity within a certain time, body, context, etc. This, in turn, adds to the richness of the concept of personal identity as a more holistic and complex construct.

Proponents of the continental tradition provide a well-rounded concept of personal identity in terms of social and personal experience and the different elements making up our notion of our personal identity at a time, however they do to a large degree disregard the persistence question in that there are very few arguments that consider whether a person continues to be the same person that speaks, acts, promises, etc. the next day, year, and so forth. Addressing the persistence question is central to the notion of personal identity in that the very notion of a developing identity becomes moot if it can change completely from one day to the next. Personal identity can develop gradually throughout time, however for it to be a specific concept of personal identity which belongs to a certain person, this development needs to take place over time in a continuous manner, maintaining certain aspects and changing others. A person's concept of personal identity does not develop spontaneously; it is a process that requires time, which makes continuity/persistence of personal identity a central component to the concept of personal identity itself.

In short, continental philosophers tend to ask the question "What are the conditions for a concept of the *self*?" and analytic philosophers tend to ask, "Which conditions or criteria constitute personal identity as persisting?" Both of these questions are central to any investigation into the problem of personal identity, however they both fall prey to the trap of disregarding the other. To combat the issue of neglecting key aspects of human life, a more holistic approach to the concept of personal identity is necessary that includes both analytic and continental lines of questioning, and more, in a novel approach.

This chapter has demonstrated that current philosophical debates, specifically in terms of both the analytic and continental lines of questioning, are unable to adequately capture the richness of the concept of personal identity. Proponents of the analytic tradition are unable to speak about the lived experience of having a personal identity, whereas proponents of the continental tradition are unable to effectively speak to the persistence question of personal identity. We can now begin to consider how a holistic view of personal identity could be constructed through a combination of the questions asked in the separate lines of inquiry.

By looking at the arguments of both Taylor and Lötter this dissertation has illustrated the value of viewing the concept of personal identity holistically. Through Lötter's argument specifically, we have seen that he includes far more components/elements of the lived experience and persistence of a concept of personal identity than the philosophers who work solely in one tradition, focusing on a single question with regards to the concept of personal identity. Lötter includes components such as body image, sexual identity, talents, values, age

groups, and several others to demonstrate how complex the concept of personal identity becomes when both social lived experience and persistence are considered. He thus includes the psychological, biological, and social aspects of personal identity into a single, more holistic view of the concept of personal identity.

The following chapter further investigates the potential richness of the concept of personal identity by examining how gender identity can be viewed as an aspect of personal identity and how it relates to the biological, social, and psychological elements of one's lived experience – building on the continental tradition's line of questioning and the role of recognition in personal identity formation – as a person with identity. The chapter thereafter will move toward the argument that the concept of personal identity resembles a complex system; one composed of social, psychological, and physical elements, but, in itself, being more than just the sum of these elements.

CHAPTER 2: GENDER AS AN ASPECT OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

“Questions about the nature of persons have also been central to debates about gender, race, and sexuality” (Shrage, 2009:14).

The following chapter reflects on the concept of gender identity in terms of its relevance to the concept of personal identity. The preceding discussion of the concept of personal identity highlighted the importance of a holistic approach in terms of how we ask questions about personal identity. Lötter, de Beauvoir, Butler, as well as Taylor, all view the concept of gender identity, in some form or fashion, as a fundamental aspect of how we experience ourselves in society.

By looking at how analytic lines of argument relating to the concept of personal identity neglect the impact of a person’s lived experience on their identity, and how much more complex the concept of personal identity becomes in light of lived experience, this dissertation now aims to isolate the concept of gender identity to see how it relates to the concept of personal identity. This aspect of personal identity is one among many others contributing to the complexity of the concept, such as the ones referred to by Lötter. This dissertation will examine gender identity in terms of its biological, psychological, and social elements for these purposes, and not pretending to give a full analysis and critical evaluation of the concept of gender identity itself. These elements have been selected in that they appear to be present in arguments pertaining to both the concept of gender identity and the concept of personal identity. Again, this chapter is not intended to give a full discussion and critique of any of the work introduced. Rather, the chapter serves to point to interfaces between gender and personal identity in terms of the structure of the two concepts, and mostly in continental work, as the analytical literature on gender typically does not focus on gender identity as a lived experience. This chapter will refer to the arguments presented by Judith Butler, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Candice West and Don H. Zimmerman.

Gender identity is made up of several different elements, namely concepts related to anatomical sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and gender role behaviors. Gender identity is generally defined by theorists such as Shrage, de Beauvoir, and Fausto-Sterling, as a person’s subjective experience of their own gender. Sexual orientation is not the same thing as gender identity, as the former refers only to one’s erotic interests in males, females, both, or neither. Gender role behaviors are characteristics that generally differ between males and

females. These distinctions are often drawn in the beginning of works relating to intersex or transgender subjects as anatomical sex is not taken as a given in these discussions, unlike feminist papers that generally tend toward only drawing a distinction between sexual orientation and gender identity as they often take anatomical sex to be a given²⁰.

Gender identity theorists approach the notion of gender development in several ways. Supporters of the so-called “scientific view”, such as the biologist Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and the physician James Young Simpson, focus on the biological, chemical, and reproductive features of the body in order to classify gender as an empirical fact or feature of the body. Supporters of the so-called “psychological view”, such as Sigmund Freud and Karl Jung, view gender as a primarily psychological aspect of the body. Gender development is thus, in terms of the latter view, portrayed as a primarily psychological process accompanying physical changes of the body.

Both the abovementioned views are reductive when it comes to gender in that they reduce gender to an aspect of either the body or the mind. This reductive tendency is evident in the limited approaches to the concept of personal identity as well. Reductive theories tend toward a dualistic conception of gender in the sense of lending precedence to only one of either the body or the mind. Reductive approaches to the concept of gender identity are problematic in that they once again neglect the lived experience of a person, which, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, consists of a unified experience in which a person is always at once embodied, and a being in the world. It is for this reason that this chapter will focus on what it refers to as the “social approach” to gender identity.

The *social approach* to the concept of gender identity seems to be the most encompassing approach in terms of relating the concept of gender identity to personal identity formation in contemporary debates and literature. Proponents of *social approaches* to the concept of gender identity commonly display an awareness of the full richness of the lived experience of a person’s gender- and personal identity in the sense that psychological, biological, political, social, moral, and several other aspects of identity are taken into consideration. The concepts of both the gender- and personal identity of subjects are advanced as complex constructs within social approaches, whereas the strictly biological and

²⁰ For example, de Beauvoir clearly takes anatomical sex as a given in *The Second Sex* (1949) in her biological discussion of gender – This is briefly mentioned in the previous chapter when I discuss de Beauvoir in terms of her view on recognition (§ 1.2.2).

psychological approaches tend to be reductive in the sense that the complex construction of identity is often disregarded in favour of a simplistic classificatory view.

The social approach to the concept of gender identity portrays persons as being embedded in the world with other people as complex beings with social, biological, as well as psychological aspects that cannot be separated from one another. This chapter will focus on the abovementioned theorists in that they argue that the concept of gender identity is formed through being in and interacting with the world. Other approaches to the concept of gender identity will only be mentioned briefly in order to demonstrate the varying natures of these views. The changing nature of gender- and personal identity will also be alluded to during this chapter in order to demonstrate that identity is not always fixed, but rather constantly developing.

This chapter will begin by highlighting the external approach to social gender identity according to Judith Butler's gender *performativity* theory. It will then move toward a description of internal and external social gender identity as described by West and Zimmerman with their concept of "doing" gender. It will also provide an overview of Fausto-Sterling's notion of social gender identity as viewed from a biological perspective as well as her appeal to complex systems theory. Finally an overview and assessment of the three approaches will be done in order to consider which view offers a more holistic approach to the concept of gender identity in the context of personal identity.

1. External Social Gender Identity

Judith Butler is a notable philosopher and gender theorist. She writes predominantly in the fields of feminism, queer theory politics, and ethics. Throughout her work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Butler makes the argument that gender is constructed purely *performatively*, and through this argument she aims to decentre normative constructs such as compulsory heterosexuality²¹ and phallogentrism²². One of the primary arguments running throughout Butler's work is that once we recognise how synthetic and arbitrary gender distinctions are and we stop thinking of them as representing some form of

²¹ Compulsory heterosexuality is the notion that a person must conform to the normative sexual orientation (heterosexuality). This notion is enforced and/or reinforced through a variety of social, cultural, religious, and political institutions.

²² Phallogentric: "related to men, male power, or the phallus as a symbol of male power" (Hey, L. Holloway, S 2015:1114).

“natural” reality, we can see that there is no compelling reason why only two gender categories, *i.e.* female and male, should exist as opposed to multiple other possibilities.

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one (Butler, 1990:6).

Although Butler highlights the artificial nature of the heterosexual binary, she does not argue that we are free to restructure our gender as we choose. According to Butler (2015:4), the body is always already embedded within culture and historical discourses and therefore meaning is imposed upon it through pre-existing social, political, and historical structures.

There is no self that is prior to the convergence or who maintains ‘integrity’ prior to its entrance into this conflicted cultural field. There is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very ‘taking up’ is enabled by the tool lying there (Butler, 1990:145).

As opposed to the manner in which the hard sciences (and bodily persistence arguments) view the body as purely anatomical, Butler argues that the body cannot be truly understood outside of the life it is living. Her view of the body is thus one of a body living in relation with other bodies. As argued above, persons are dependent on others for recognition which imbues them with meaning – in this sense persons are not ontologically distinct; however, this does not mean to say that all bodies form one undifferentiated social body. Butler’s view of the body relates to how the body is understood by philosophers such as Hegel, Sartre, and, de Beauvoir – with regards to the *self* in that the concept of the *self* (personal identity) also develops within a social context, as a body living in relation to other bodies – dependent on the concept of recognition which imbues them with meaning.

Butler (1990:10) argues against the humanist feminist position,²³ which she states: “might understand gender as an attribute of a person who is characterised essentially as a pre-gendered substance or ‘core’, called the person²⁴, denoting a universal capacity for moral

²³ Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan are examples of two theorists that hold the humanist feminist position.

²⁴ This pre-gendered ‘core’ or person also relates to soul/dualism arguments in that there is an, *a priori* self which can know itself, as itself outside of lived experience. The pre-gendered core presents the same problem to arguments around the concept of gender identity as the dualism arguments present to the concept of personal identity in that there is no manner in which we can know anything about this ‘core’ that exists before experience.

deliberation or reason". She does however not believe this "core" exists in that human beings are formed by society (as previously pointed out). Thus persons are never without preconceptions of what is considered "right" or "wrong" within gendered norms. For Butler, bodies do not have a signifiable existence prior to the gender that is imposed on them through societal norms:

It would be wrong to think that a discussion of 'identity' ought to proceed prior to a discussion of gender identity for the simple reason that 'persons' only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognisable standards of gender intelligibility (1990:16).

The above quote implies some form of circular reasoning present within Butler's work in that intelligibility implies identity and if identity is not formed prior to gender identity, where do these standards of intelligibility arise from? It is necessary to avoid this circularity in any argument which relates the concepts of gender- and personal identity by forming a clear relation between the two and describing how the two kinds of identity interact. Establishing how and where these two concepts relate is one of the aims towards which this dissertation is working.

Let us first return to Butler's arguments. She mentions several problematic associations (within philosophical and feminist theory) with male and female sexuality that reinforce the compulsory heterosexual binary. These include, but are not limited to: the association between men as cultured and woman as natural, men as associated with the mind and women as more commonly associated with the body, and finally, the commonly held view of men as subjects (identities), and women as objects awaiting signification, or indeed as objects of exchange.

Butler also highlights the inability of "feminists" to agree on a singular conception of what a female is or ought to be without adding constraints to the notion of femininity itself. She argues (1990:33) that one's concept of gender is always developing and changing, thus: "Woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing itself that cannot be rightfully said to originate or to end" (Butler, 1990:33). This argument can be applied to all genders in that a person's gender identity is always in some way being constructed as an integral element of their concept of personal identity.

Butler argues (1990:20) that persons are expected by existing societal and political structures to identify with, embody, and perform in terms of a single gender, usually within an existent binary framework of heterosexuality by virtue of already being embedded within

a society and culture. She argues therefore that, according to societal norms, persons have define their gender within a socially acceptable and constructed heterosexual binary - “one is one’s gender to the extent that one is not the other gender, a formulation that presupposes and enforces the restriction of gender within a binary pair” (Butler, 1990:22). The reproduction of gender is thus always a negotiation with this existing binary of thinking about gender. However, Butler adds that “[t]here is no gender without the reproduction of norms that risk undoing or redoing the gender norm in unexpected ways opening up the possibility of a remaking of gender reality along new lines” (Butler, 2015:8). This ‘re-making of gender’ is only in part possible by changing the way in which we carry out gender *performances*, *i.e.* when we speak/act in a gendered manner. In *Gender Trouble* (1990) Butler suggests that making fun of these *performances* in a parodic fashion or through subversive acts, we can undo the existing gender norms a little. Although Butler does not envisage a great change in the overall hierarchy, this affords the individual a little more freedom within the existing structure.

One of the primary problems that Butler has with constructing gender within the pre-existing social binaries (as mentioned above) is that recognition is only given to those who are capable of being recognised within this existing normative structure. She elaborates on the aforementioned concept throughout the entirety of *Undoing Gender* (2004). Butler develops this argument from a predominantly feminist point of view in response to female and homosexual marginalisation in order to propose a more encapsulating view of gender identities in general and specifically in terms of “transgender, transsexuality, intersex, and their complex relations to feminist and queer theory” (Butler, 2004:1). If a person does not conform to the heterosexual binary or is not intelligible within the pre-existing sociocultural framework, that person fails to be recognised as a (gendered) subject. And, Butler points out (2015:10) that “Failure to be recognised as a subject threatens the very possibility of persisting”.

This argument relates to the discussion in Section 2 of Chapter 1,²⁵ where it was argued there that a person forms a concept of personal identity within pre-existing societal structures, and a person is also recognisable within society in terms of how a person’s concept of personal identity is made intelligible/recognisable to others. If a person’s concept of gender identity (which assists in rendering a subject recognisable) is indeed closely related

²⁵ The notion that misrecognition or unrecognizability threatens our very nature as subjects is briefly explained in Chapter 1 (§ 2.2) with reference to the arguments of Hegel, Young, de Beauvoir, and Sartre.

to a person's concept of personal identity, the unrecognisability of a person's concept of gender identity could then ultimately lead to a person's concept of personal identity being misrecognised, or indeed to it being entirely unrecognisable.

The importance of the concept of gender identity as a social construct and the impact it has on a person's concept of personal identity as a recognisable social subject, is made evident through Butler's *performativity* theory. Butler does not prescribe a correct or incorrect gender *performativity*. This theory of *performativity* is not intended to deny the existence of gender altogether, but rather to ease up the hold on gendered life from the mandatory conformity to an existing heterosexual binary. "It becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (Butler, 1990:3). Butler is not arguing that the body is nothing but a construction, rather that bodies only become significant by virtue of the context in which they are understood or recognised.

Thus when speaking about a sexed body Butler states that: "Its matter is defined by what matters about it" (Butler, 2015:3). In the context of this dissertation, the argument is that the body only becomes relevant to the formation of the concepts of gender identity and personal identity when it functions in relation to psychological and social elements. A person forms a concept of gender (and personal) identity in context, interacting with others and with the world, being recognised, and recognising others in turn – in order to do these things a person must first be embodied and have the capacity for thought.

Martha Nussbaum is a highly distinguished philosopher in the fields of both feminist- and political philosophy. Nussbaum critiques Butler in her paper *The Professor of Parody* (1999). Nussbaum faults Butler's work for being difficult to comprehend due to her dense writing and her reliance on, and overuse, of certain authors. "Mystification as well as hierarchy are the tools of her practice, a mystification that eludes criticism because it makes few definite claims" (Nussbaum, 1999:3). Nussbaum points out (1999:4) that although Butler's theory is dense, she is widely read, and mentions several authors in the field, however the actual arguments she makes are simplistic and often not as well substantiated as they should be to be convincing.

Nussbaum (1999:6) argues that Butler's theories are reductive and exclusionary in that Butler does not justify why she argues against biological/natural sexual differences in favour of a social construction of gender, and thus, Butler disregards in this manner pre-societal bodily needs *i.e.* eating, procreation, and defecation. *Gender Trouble* (1990) and

Bodies that Matter (1993) “contain no detailed argument against biological claims of ‘natural’ difference, no account of mechanisms of gender replication, and no account of the legal shaping of the family; nor do they contain any detailed focus on possibilities for legal change” (Nussbaum, 1999:6).

Although Nussbaum points out several other problematic elements to Butler’s work, the final criticism of hers that will be mentioned here is that: “Butler cannot explain in any purely structural or procedural way why the subversion of gender norms is a social good while the subversion of justice norms is a social bad” (Nussbaum, 1999:9). Butler does defend her theory against such claims by arguing (2015:8) that gender performativity is intended as an amoral theory due to the fact that it does not prescribe “which performances would be more subversive than other performances and it never said which gender performances were wrong and reactionary”. Butler aims to avoid any allocation of correct or incorrect gendered behaviours or acts in order to widen the possibilities for *performativity*.

Although I concur with Nussbaum on almost all of her criticism of Beauvoir’s work, the emphasis that Butler places on the social nature of personal identity remains valuable to this dissertation in that she points out how we depend on societal recognition and participation for gender – and personal – identity formulation. She also succeeds in illustrating how interrelated gender- and personal identity are in that one never lives life outside of a gendered experience. Although this dissertation does not offer a critical assessment of her *performative* theory of gender, the merit of viewing gender- and personal identity as (at least partially) socially constructed is acknowledged here. This chapter will now move toward considering internal and external approaches to social identity in order to further explore the concepts of personal- and gender identity as socially constructed, beyond Butler’s *performativity* theory.

2. *Internal and External Social Identity*

Another example of a social approach to the concept of gender identity – published before Butler’s performativity theory – is that of West and Zimmerman in *Doing Gender* (1987). West and Zimmerman are both prominent theorists in the field of sociology and they differ most notably from Butler when it comes to her notion of gender as a performative act. West and Zimmerman (1987:125) argue that gender is “embedded in everyday interaction”, but they view *gender* as something that is accomplished or constructed through social interaction.

For them, gender is an achievement and not an inherent property, as opposed to *sex* which is a biological fact composed of anatomical, hormonal, and physiological features:

Rather than as a property of individuals, we conceive of gender as an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society (West & Zimmerman, 1987:126).

Their view of gender as an achievement is similar to Hegel's view of *self-consciousness* (personal identity) as an achievement, or a construction that emerges from being in the world with others, giving, and receiving recognition.²⁶

West and Zimmerman, similarly to Freud and Butler, reject biological determinism²⁷, although they maintain that there are “sex-linked behaviours and traits as essential properties of individuals” (West & Zimmerman, 1987:128). They also argue against *gender role* theories in that “roles are *situated* identities – assumed and relinquished as the situation demands – rather than *master identities* (Hughes, 1945), such as sex category, that cut across situations” (West & Zimmerman, 1987:128). They reject *performativity* arguments in favour of a more unified theory of gender that encapsulates both the natural characteristic of enacting gender as well as the social manner in which gender is produced.

West and Zimmerman argue (1987:132) that the everyday identification of males and females does not have a lot to do with anatomical sex in that people are for the most part fully dressed. It is by the way people dress and behave that we assume the anatomy corresponds; *i.e.* a man is wearing a suit and tie therefore we deduce that he must have male genitalia, a woman is wearing a dress therefore she must have female genitalia. “We take it for granted that sex and sex category are congruent” (West & Zimmerman, 1987:132), although there is no particular reason why they should be, this is merely a superficial categorisation that occurs in everyday life.

West and Zimmerman also argue (1987:136) that: “virtually any activity can be assessed as to its womanly or manly nature. And note (1987:136) that, “to “do” gender²⁸ is

²⁶ As per the discussion of recognition in Chapter 1 we can see that Hegel views personal identity as a mediation between the *self* and the *other* which results from social interaction.

²⁷ Biological determinism refers to a cultural perspective held in Western societies which view the differences between men and woman as a basis for the division of labour as well as a division between cultural roles. These differences are determined through the reproductive functions of individuals.

²⁸ West and Zimmerman's theory of *doing gender* differs from Butler's performativity theory, I will elaborate on this difference later in this section.

not always to live up to normative conceptions of femininity or masculinity; it is to engage in behaviour “at the risk of gender assessment”. *Doing* gender is unavoidable in the sense that persons are categorised according to how they look and act. Persons are also held accountable for their actions as well as subjected to evaluation by virtue of said categorisation. Persons are never separate from their gender. Within society gender is constructed through the creation and reinforcement of the gender binary (against which Butler argues). This difference is established by assigning different roles and activities to different genders. These created differences are not inherent within nature or biology; however, once constructed, they are utilised to reinforce the gender binary:

If we do gender appropriately, we simultaneously sustain, reproduce, and render legitimate the institutional arrangements that are based on sex category. If we fail to do gender appropriately, we as individuals - not the institutional arrangements - may be called to account (for our character, motives, and predispositions) (West & Zimmerman, 1987:146).

In everyday life there are roles that are perceived generally as male or female roles. Female roles are often associated with child rearing, homemaking or care taking. Being a nurse or a flight attendant is predominantly considered a female profession whereas being a physician or a pilot is predominantly considered a male profession. These normative perceptions are so prevalent that often when a person is of the opposite sex of what is considered the general sex of the profession, an identifier will be added to the description such as “male nurse” or “female physician”. These professions that seemingly contradict the normative role assignment open up the possibility of role conflicts. An example of these role conflicts include e.g. when a man is seen as being “unmanly” for being a nurse/caretaker and a woman is seen as neglecting her duties as a wife/mother/caretaker due to her pursuing a professional career. Role conflict is an aspect of the current binary between the sexes.

West and Zimmerman use examples (1987:137-140) of role conflicts to demonstrate that unlike other roles that can be picked up and dropped when necessary, gender happens in all occasions, in their words, gender is “omnirelevant” - “We have claimed that a person's gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but, more fundamentally, it is something that one *does*, and does recurrently, in interaction with others” (West & Zimmerman, 1987:140). Thus, similar to Butler, West and Zimmerman also argue that gender identity is something a person does, however, their view argues that gender is something a person possesses

internally and exercises externally; whereas Butler argues that gender identity is purely an external exercise of a socially constructed identity.

The concept of gender identity is considered malleable and changeable by Butler, Fausto-Sterling²⁹, West, and Zimmerman. For West and Zimmerman gender is something that a person has, it is something internal to a person that is reinforced or challenged within social interaction. Gender performances are not only carried out in exclusive or subversive situations, they are part of the everyday routine of a person, as mentioned above, in what a person wears, how they act, how they carry themselves, and so forth. It is through this “doing” of gender that persons communicate their concept of their own gender identity, or what they want to be perceived as their gender identity to others. In a similar manner that this dissertation suggests persons also communicate their concept of personal identity to others. What a person wears, how they act, and what they say also says something about who they think they are, not just as gendered beings, but also as persons. A person’s concept of gender identity cannot be separated from their concept of personal identity, these two concepts are interwoven into one another for instance: who I am as a woman relates to who I am as a philosophy student, as a daughter, as embodied, as a thinking person, and so forth.

West and Zimmerman do not reconcile the internal and social aspects of gender to illustrate which aspects they deem to be internal and in which way they correspond or contradict external gender identity. In terms of the concept of personal identity Butler, on the other hand, does not acknowledge a “core” or inner gender identity beyond society: “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; [...] identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler, 1990:25). Since this argument is made alongside the notion that all acts and aspects of oneself are gendered, this leads one to conclude from her theory that, for her, there is no concept of personal identity beyond the *performance* of identity.

West and Zimmerman make a more holistic argument than Butler with regard to the concept of gender identity as a social construct, seeing as they do not disregard the biological and psychological dimensions of the concept of personal identity. They also make a more coherent argument that establishes a connection between society and the internal dimension of the concept of personal identity, (although they do not discuss these connections in a detailed manner) which is what makes their argument more inclusive of the psychological, and biological elements than Butler’s theory, which only includes a social element.

²⁹ Anne Fausto-Sterling’s argument is discussed in the next section, following West and Zimmerman.

Through examining the concept of personal identity in light of the social approach to the concept of gender identity and by including all its composing elements, this chapter has demonstrated the potential of understanding the concept of personal identity holistically as opposed to reductively. To further this holistic picture of personal identity this dissertation will now look at social gender identity as viewed from a biological perspective. Fausto-Sterling adds a biological perspective to historical and sociological perspectives, thus she also approaches the concept of personal identity in a more holistic manner than many of the above-mentioned theorists.

3. Social gender identity viewed from a biological perspective

Anne Fausto-Sterling is an influential theorist in the fields of biology, gender studies, sexology, and gender identity. In *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (2000), she questions how human sexuality develops as well as how social concepts influence biological understandings of sexuality. She, in a similar manner to de Beauvoir and Butler, also argues that the heterosexual binary is a social construct, however she approaches this argument from a historical, sociological as well as a biological perspective.

Fausto-Sterling begins by challenging common dualisms such as the mind/body, male/female, sex/gender, as well as the biology/society distinction. One of her main arguments in *Sexing the Body* is that “labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender — not science — can define our sex” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000:3). She makes this argument by demonstrating through chromosomal research methods that gender identity is never a case of either/or, rather it is a decision made through a social interpretation of the evidence presented.

She illuminates the fact that science has contributed toward solidifying the gender binary through over-classification. Fausto-Sterling uses the example of intersexed persons (previously known as hermaphrodites) that were prominently depicted in art and literature from ancient Greece until the advancement of medical science. “Hermaphrodites started to disappear due to medical science putting a stricter classification on ‘true’ hermaphrodites – Establishing ‘true’ sex in pseudo-hermaphrodites became more common” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000:38). This differentiation made it far more difficult to find a “true” hermaphrodite and

therefore led scientists to conclude that intersexed individuals were either “truly” male or female and not intersexed.

This also led to the rise of corrective surgical procedures to rectify “nature’s mistakes”. In the 19th century “[p]eople of mixed sex all but disappeared, not because they had become rarer, but because scientific methods classified them out of existence” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000:39). This demonstrates how science and society both influence one another in establishing the gender binary as well as normative standards for gender.

Fausto-Sterling’s example of intersexed persons also extends to her illustration of how physicians use surgery as a tool to appropriate people into what is considered a normatively sexed body. She (2000:8) discusses how surgeries are often performed on intersex infants and adults so that they may fit the mould of what is considered a “normal” male or female body. “Since intersexuals quite literally embody both sexes, they weaken claims about sexual difference” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000:8).

Following from Butler’s argument, claims about sexual difference entail the normative heterosexual binary along which gender identities are socially allowed to form and how they may be recognised. By weakening heteronormative claims about sexual difference, the possibility of recognition for a greater spectrum of gender identities becomes possible and questions regarding the existing binaries arise:

Our bodies are too complex to provide clear-cut answers about sexual difference. The more we look for a simple physical basis for ‘sex’, the more it becomes clear that ‘sex’ is not a pure physical category. What bodily signals and functions we define as male or female come already entangled in our ideas about gender (Fausto-Sterling, 2000:4).

Fausto-Sterling (2000:31) further elaborates on the corrective surgery performed on intersexed infants in that: “Modern surgical techniques help maintain a two sex system” due to the fact that pre-natal treatments, infantile, and adult surgeries are performed in order to make bodies conform to normative gender standards. Normative society only finds two genders acceptable and scientific inquiry into the subjects has provided society with acceptable lengths, weights, as well as orientations for both.

Most intersexual males are infertile, so what counts especially is how the penis functions in social interactions—whether it “looks right” to other boys, whether it can “perform satisfactorily” in intercourse. It is not what the sex organ does for the body to which it is attached that defines the body as male. It is what it does Vis-a-Vis other bodies (Fausto-Sterling, 2000:58).

The above paragraph demonstrates that how a person acts within society as an engendered being, as well as how a person psychologically forms their own conception of their gender identity plays an important role in gender identity formation, above that of merely having the biological features of some gender. This section can now consider another example that demonstrates that physical change alone does not necessarily translate into a direct change in gender- or personal identity.

John William Money, a key figure in the fields of psychology and sexology, made a case for the *nature vs. nurture* argument in favour of nurture with regards to gender identity. Gathering from the research of 105 studies on intersex patients at John Hopkins, Money “concluded that [...] children were born psychosexually undifferentiated” (Colapinto, 1997:1), or in fact gender neutral. The *John/Joan* case was used as support for this argument.

A male child, John³⁰ had his penis ablated during a circumcision accident at the age of eight months. Thereafter his parents were advised by Money to raise the child as a girl and to have the appropriate surgical alterations done to suit the new life as a female. The child seemed to adjust well to this change due to the mother’s positive reports of Joan displaying distinctly female behaviour by the age of seven “[one] thing that really amazes me is that she is so feminine,” Linda is quoted as saying. “I’ve never seen a little girl so neat and tidy as she can be when she wants to be” (Colapinto, 1997:1). *John/Joan* also had a twin brother that functioned well as a control to monitor *John/Joan*’s development. By the age of thirteen, however, *John/Joan* started to display a number of male characteristics and was not well adjusted psychologically or socially

She walked like a boy, felt that boys had better lives, wanted to be a mechanic, and peed standing up. The psychiatrists then caring for the child thought she was ‘having considerable difficulty in adjusting as a female’ and suspected she would not succeed in remaining one (Fausto-Sterling, 2000:69-70).

John/Joan at the age of fourteen had begun undergoing treatment to reverse the sex change, ultimately being unable to adjust to living life as a woman.

This is an unusual case in that it is not a case of a person that was naturally intersexed, however through this example we can see that it is not merely one factor which determines a

³⁰ John/Joan were the pseudonyms given to Bruce/David (chosen name after his reconstructive surgery) Reimer by Keith Sigmundson and Milton Diamond in their journal article *Sex and Gender – Core study* (1997) describing his ordeal.

person's concept of their gender identity, but rather an array of factors that interact with one another, *i.e.* John/Joan did not manage to change his gender identity psychologically due to the physical alteration. When one thinks of social conditioning one often tends toward ideas of being told how to act or be and then following that example, however if a person's identity is incompatible with societal norms due to physical, psychological, or even social differences themselves, a person can also become aware of what/who they are *not*.

Many recipients of infantile corrective surgeries have suffered from lifelong psychological struggles with their concept of gender identity and by extension their concept of personal identity. As discussed above, multiple surgeries are performed on infants to further a normative standard that leads to countless complications and often amounts to abuse; e.g. "the medical 'cure' for intersexuality frequently does more damage than good" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000:80). Fausto-Sterling argues (2000:80-83) that medicine's focus on creating gender normative individuals violates the Hippocratic oath to "first do no harm" in that these surgeries would not be necessary if people broadened their view of what gender is and ought to be. She further supports her argument by illustrating pre-conceived and popular notions of neurological and hormonal differences between males and females which are much more unclear than they seem to be, however, for the purposes of this discussion, these topics will not be further elaborated upon.

Throughout *Sexing the Body* (2000) Fausto-Sterling also makes an argument for a systems approach toward sexuality and gender. Instead of attempting to attribute gender and sexuality to one specific aspect of personal identity (*i.e.* biological, social, or psychological elements), she argues that gender, anatomical sex, and sexuality should be viewed as parts of a complex system, each changing, and developing, while still remaining a part of the greater system of gender identity. She uses an analogy of *nesting dolls* to illustrate this point:

Using Russian nesting dolls as a framework suggests that history, culture, relationships, psyche, organism, and cell are each appropriate locations from which to study the formation and meanings of sexuality and gender. Developmental systems theory, whether applied to the assembled doll or to its subunits, provides the scaffolding for thought and experiment. Assembling the smaller dolls into a single large one requires the integration of knowledge derived from very different levels of biological and social organization. The cell, the individual, groups of individuals organized in families, peer groups, cultures, and nations and their histories all provide sources of knowledge about human sexuality. We cannot understand it well unless we consider all of these components (Fausto-Sterling, 2000:254-255).

Fausto-Sterling (2000:255) demonstrates through the aforementioned *Russian nesting doll* analogy that the complexity of the assembled dolls metaphor is what makes analyses of concepts such as sexuality and gender rich and interesting. This is where complex systems theory can assist in bringing the relationship between the varied elements into full view.

This dissertation picks up on this view and suggests in the next chapter that by analysing the concept of personal identity as resembling a complex system we have a much better chance at understanding the intricacies of how human beings function, interact, and develop their concepts of gender and personal identity by themselves and among others. An approach to the concept of personal identity in terms of complex systems theory is thus the holistic approach toward which this dissertation has been working.

Fausto-Sterling extends her *Russian nesting doll* analogy even further to illustrate that “history, culture, relationships, psyche, organism, and cell are each appropriate locations from which to study the formation and meanings of sexuality and gender” (2000:254). Finally, she advocates an interdisciplinary approach to the study of gender and sexuality in that she (2000:255) argues that theorists cannot merely study one aspect of gender and attempt to understand its complexities; “debates about the body’s biology are always simultaneously moral, ethical, and political debates about social and political equality and the possibilities for change” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000:255).

I agree with this interdisciplinary approach not just in terms of the concepts of gender and sexuality, but also in terms of the concept of personal identity in that this dissertation has demonstrated through several of the above-mentioned theories that human beings are too complex to justify approaching only one aspect of the concept of personal identity at a time. When the concept of personal identity is investigated from only one aspect or within a single line of questioning it is impossible to construct a holistic view of how personal identity is formed and indeed how it functions. Theories that approach the concept of personal identity in this manner inevitably end up being reductive in that they have to exclude certain features of human experience in favour of a specific focus.

Having examined the arguments of Butler, Fausto-Sterling, West, Zimmerman, and de Beauvoir³¹, this chapter has highlighted that gender identity is not a simple construct, it has several elements linked to its formation. This chapter has made mention of social, biological, and psychological elements, which all relate to the concept of gender identity as they relate to the concept of personal identity. In returning to the quote at the beginning of this chapter:

³¹ De Beauvoir’s argument with regards to gender and recognition is discussed in Chapter 1 (§ 2.2).

“Questions about the nature of persons have also been central to debates about gender, race, and sexuality” (Shrage, 2009:14), it is now evident that the inverse holds true as well. The gender identity of persons can also be discerned when the concept of personal identity is approached within a context, as being in, and interacting, with the world.

As suggested in Chapter 1 and demonstrated in Chapter 2, the concept of personal identity has (at least) three primary elements worth considering, namely: biological, psychological, and social elements. These primary elements are also worth considering in discussions regarding the concept of gender identity. Recognition can be viewed as a secondary element that falls under the primary element of the social, because interactions that facilitate recognition occur as a result of social interaction. Although the concept of recognition is not the only secondary element that falls under the primary social element, it has been selected to illustrate the importance of the social element for the formation of a concept of personal identity. Following Fausto-Sterling, I agree that we cannot look at any one of these elements in isolation as the basis for a concept of personal identity, but rather that personal identity emerges³² from the interaction of these varied elements. This dissertation will therefore introduce a complex systems theory based approach to the concept of personal identity in the following chapter.

4. Conclusion

By considering social theories of gender- and personal identity, the relation between the various elements that structure gender- and personal identity become apparent in this chapter. Take the biological element – the body – as an example. Persons cannot interact with others or the world without it, however, as pointed out by Lötter, it can change significantly though a lifetime without significantly influencing a person’s identity. Bodies change through aging and injury, yet having a biological component (body) is necessary to forming a concept of personal identity. The body is what enables having an anatomical sex, interpersonal relations, memory, interaction with the world, and so forth. The body is thus only one element of personal identity, which is in constant interaction with the other elements.

³² Emergence: occurs when “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” or in other words when there is more to the system than what it is composed of. Complex systems allow for new elements or properties to emerge due to the complex manner in which they function.

The psychological element of personal identity, as this dissertation has demonstrated through the arguments of Locke, Perry, and Shoemaker (see Chapter 1) is another component that assists in the construction of the concept of personal identity in that it enables a unified and continuous view of a person's life. Psychological elements such as continuity help with the re-identification of persons which is necessary for a number of reasons, such as personal relations, keeping promises, legal punishment, fulfilling obligations, and so forth. Persons form memories by interacting with other persons and the world, and it is through these memories that their relation to the world grows. De Beauvoir in her analysis of gender identity and the *self*, also mentions an internal psychological dimension to gender identity through which persons relate to the world via social interaction. Once again, the psychological element is not the only composing factor of a concept of personal identity; it is only one element in the greater whole from which the concept of personal identity emerges.

Finally, there is also a large social element linked to formatting a concept of personal identity that has been discussed at length in Chapter 2. Through a discussion of the existential arguments of Hegel, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Taylor, and Lötter, this dissertation has demonstrated that a person is always a being in the world, interacting with the world, and with others, giving and receiving recognition. The social sphere influences how a person acts; how they perceive and change their bodies, their characters, their memories, and so forth. There is no element of the concept of personal identity that is not in some way influenced by society. Through approaching the concept of personal identity in terms of the social element this dissertation has begun to illustrate how all of these primary compositional elements interact.

Now, when we come to the content of this chapter, the concept of gender can be shown to be interwoven with the concept of personal identity in the sense that it also incorporates all of the above elements. This dissertation has thus far established that embodiment is necessary for personal identity formation, however persons are never ungendered within this embodiment. Through the arguments of Butler, de Beauvoir, Fausto-Sterling, West and Zimmerman this dissertation has demonstrated that people are treated differently, recognised differently, they act differently and their characters change, due to this gender based assessment and/or treatment.

Although the concepts of gender- and personal identity are interrelated, gender identity is not personal identity. This dissertation does not aim to collapse them into a single version of identity. Rather this dissertation aims to demonstrate – in the following chapter –

that they both function as interrelated emergent systems, with similar structures and relations, both emerging from primary (social, psychological, biological) elements. A more holistic view of the concept of personal identity cannot be presented without the inclusion of the concept of gender identity, in that we cannot avoid being gendered within lived experience.

In order to demonstrate a potential line of argument that can be pursued only if the concepts of personal identity and gender identity are considered holistically, this dissertation now refers back to the discussion of the analytical and continental approaches to the concept of personal identity in Chapter 1 in light of this chapter's discussion of the concept of gender identity. If we reconsider Locke's analytic definition of 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"³³, then, in light of Butler's continental argument for *performativity* of gender identity, we can see that Locke and Butler's theories on the concept of identity seem oppositional from a certain perspective.

I am juxtaposing these two theories – although I am aware that Locke's focus is on the metaphysical aspect of persistence of personal identity and Butler's focus is on a social approach to gender identity – with the aim of highlighting the difference of emphasis between arguing from an internal locus of identity as Locke does, and arguing from an externally focussed notion of identity as Butler does. This difference becomes evident when for instance the failure of recognition by society threatens one's very identity as a whole in Butler's terms, while within Locke's view one can recognise oneself as oneself, therefore societal recognition plays a secondary role in identity formation and is not inherently necessary for identity formation. This seems quite reductive when we consider the lived experience of human beings. One cannot speak of human beings as isolated from the world, pure *self-sustaining* identities.

Butler's focus is not on the biological aspect, but rather the social aspect of gender identity in the same manner that Locke's focus is on persistence of personal identity through psychological continuity, rather than the biological aspect of personal identity. Butler separates *performative* gender identity from physical/biological gender identity in the same manner that Locke separates the concept of personal identity from physical/biological identity, thus both arguments fall prey to the same challenges. Considering the *prince and cobbler* thought experiment in light of Butler's performative theory may perhaps nevertheless

³³ Locke's argument for the continuity of consciousness or indeed his memory argument is explained at length in Chapter 1 (§ 1.3).

assist in highlighting the need for some discussion of the impact of lived experience on gender- and personal identity formation. The *prince and the cobbler* thought experiment (see § 1.1.3) in which two people switch bodies overnight, already has several inherent implications with regards to psychological continuity, that were discussed in Chapter 1. Now suppose *A* is female and *B* is male, and the swap then occurs, does *A-body-person* now have a male gender identity and *B-body person* a female gender identity? Following from Butler's argument, the answer would be yes in that there is no gender outside of the performance of gender. As long as either body adapts their normative performance to the new biological structure all may not be lost. It does however, contra Butler, seem that one would feel like a person trapped in a body of the opposite sex.

Why would this seem counter-intuitive if gender is purely performative and not somehow linked to both a person's psychological and biological continuity? This is due to the fact that there is not simply one element related to the formulation of a concept of gender- and personal identity, there are several as argued above, and they are in constant interaction with one another. A person is at once a biological, social, and psychological being. These elements cannot be simply separated from one another as the *prince and the cobbler* thought experiment attempts to do. If we think of the concept of personal identity purely in terms of the continuity of consciousness, this experiment seems like something a person can overcome, however by introducing the concept of gender identity to the experiment, the potentially large impact of a *body swap* on one's social and psychological life becomes apparent.

The following chapter argues that by viewing all the above mentioned elements as interrelated, in such a way that they allow a complex concept of personal identity to emerge, the holistic approach to the concept of personal identity toward which this dissertation has been working can finally be constructed. Thus, following from this discussion, this dissertation will now move towards proposing a complex system based analysis of the concept of personal identity in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: PERSONAL IDENTITY AS RESEMBLING A COMPLEX SYSTEM

“... science without philosophy is blind, and philosophy without science is paralysed”
(Cilliers 1998:13)

It has been established thus far that the concept of personal identity is not a simple, one-dimensional topic. There are several different approaches to analysing the concept, and various questions that can, and have been, asked in the different investigations of it. Moreover, the different lines of questioning within the analytic and continental approaches result in a conceptual gap, as they focus on different concepts of personal identity, rather than focusing on, or acknowledging, the complex nature of the concept of personal identity. Most of the contemporary personal identity debates thus end up to be somewhat reductionist due to their focus.

This dissertation has been working towards an argument for a more holistic approach to the concept of personal identity that rests partly on combining the lines of questioning within both the analytic and continental traditions. It also rests on incorporating the concept of gender identity into the greater discussion of the concept of personal identity as the construction of these two kinds of identity – among others – has mutual impact on each other throughout one’s life.³⁴ There has been mention of the primary social, psychological, biological elements of personal- and gender identity throughout this dissertation. This chapter will incorporate these primary social, biological, psychological elements (see Section 2, 3,4 and 6) as well as secondary elements such as recognition, skills, abilities, etc. (see Section 3, 4, and 6), and meta-properties including persistence, development (see Section 5) of the concept of personal identity into a more holistic approach to the concept of personal identity, in such a manner that all of these properties and elements can begin to speak to each another by means of an application of complex systems theory.

³⁴ Note that there are other ‘kinds’ of identity that also impact on the concept of personal identity, such as one’s moral identity, or political identity, but for reasons of scope, all of these could not be discussed here. I chose to focus on gender identity, as it is an integral part of and a necessary condition for personal identity, as mentioned in Chapter 2.

1. *What is a Complex System?*

Complex systems theory is a subset of systems theory³⁵. Complex systems are a distinct class of systems that consist of many distributed elements without centralised control. The organisation of a complex system arises from local interactions between the elements through a process of self-organisation. As characterised by Bar-Yam (1997:1) “to understand the behaviour of a complex system we must understand not only the behaviour of the parts but how they act together to form the behaviour of the whole”. A complex system cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts in that both the interconnectedness and the interdependent nature of the elements in such a system give rise to emergent stages of organisation. “A complex system cannot be reduced to a collection of its basic constituents, not because the system is not constituted by them, but because too much of the relational information gets lost in the process” (Cilliers, 1998:10). There is thus through either synergy or entropy between the elements, an output generated which amounts to more than the sum of the individual elements in the system.

Complex systems often have feedback loops in which a small input can have a large effect on the greater system. This is also commonly referred to as the *butterfly effect*³⁶ where one small element is introduced and continues to effect larger and larger sections of the system, allowing for the rapid growth or decay of a system. “The effect of any activity can feed back onto itself, sometimes directly, sometimes after a number of intervening stages” (Cilliers, 1998:4). With its aim of analysing the concept of personal identity in terms of complex systems theory, this dissertation however will not focus on the *butterfly effect* or indeed *chaos theory* in favour of a focus on the interactions between the elements of a complex system, as opposed to the systemic effect of a single element or input. The nature and level of interconnectivity between different elements in a system is what constitutes the system rather than the individual components as indicated above. Thus “What is connected to what?” and “How are things connected?” become the central questions when evaluating any

³⁵ Systems theory explores how systems behave and interact. The study of systems has applicability in a large variety of disciplines. Sociologists have been applying systems theory in their discipline for years to study social networks. Economists do the same with economic systems. There are many examples of how systems theory has helped people understand the systematic structures of concepts or objects within their respective fields. Another example is contemporary biology.

³⁶ Although chaos theory does help in understanding how certain elements of complex systems function, I agree with Cilliers (1998:ix) that “chaos theory, and especially the notions of deterministic chaos and universality, does not really help us to understand the dynamics of complex systems” in that systems do not arise out of chaos, although there can be some interactions between elements which operate on similar principles as the *butterfly effect*.

complex system, and consequently these will also be central questions within the following discussion of personal identity as a complex system.

Now, the true geometry of a complex system is reflected by complex systems turning into networks³⁷ in that the functioning of networks is based on the manner in which self-organising elements give rise to emergent properties. Emergence occurs when properties, systems, or substances emerge from fundamental or base elements, yet remain irreducible to them, thus making the whole greater than the sum of its parts. Emergence in terms of complex systems theory refers to the system which arises from a set of base elements; *e.g.* personal identity arising from social, psychological, and psychological elements – however from the point at which the system emerges it is considered greater than the sum of the base elements from which it arises and is therefore no longer reducible to them. An emergent property in a similar sense is also greater than the sum of its parts. In the philosophy of mind (mind/brain theory) for instance, mental properties are considered emergent properties in the sense of emerging from the physiological properties of the brain, while having more to them than simply the physical or physiological parts from which they emerge.

Another feature of the elements within complex systems is that they are self-organising. When self-organising elements create a network they create the potential for exponential growth by virtue of their degree of connectivity. Examples of this kind of exponential growth include: The Internet, the brain, global air transportation systems, social systems, and financial systems. These systems demonstrate how a small number of elements can be interconnected in thousands of different ways creating a network capable of a high degree of emergence.

Another primary characteristic of complex systems is their high degree of adaptability and autonomy. There is no centralized mechanism that coordinates the entire system: "... internal structure can evolve without the intervention of an external designer or the presence of some centralised form of internal control" (Cilliers, 1998:89). The fact that there is no centralised coordination leads to high levels of differentiation and integration in complex open systems. Elements in a complex system have a high level of autonomy and this is largely due to the fact that they can adapt to their own sets of instructions giving rise to

³⁷ Complexity theorists often describe networks in terms of neural networks, both Bar-Yam and Cilliers focus on neural networks in the context of complexity: "A neural network consists of a large number of units joined together in a pattern of connections. Units in a net are usually segregated into three classes: input units, which receive information to be processed, output units where the results of the processing are found, and units in between called hidden units" (Garson 2018:1).

emergent patterns of organisation from the bottom up. These patterns emerge from the bottom up in that elements can synchronise their states or cooperate with one another allowing for a series of different responses to any given phenomenon. Complex systems are often heterogeneous with high levels of diversity, for instance in the case of multicultural societies and ecosystems. A simple example that Cilliers uses (1998:89) to demonstrate self-organisation (autonomy) is a school of fish. The health of a school of fish depends on several conditions *i.e.* light, food availability, water temperature, and so forth. The school automatically adjusts its size and behaviour according to these conditions although each individual fish is merely looking after itself; the entire school adapts to its environmental conditions. “The organisation of the school emerges as a result of the interaction between the various constituents of the system and its environment” (Cilliers, 1998:90).

This dissertation argues for an analysis of the concept of personal identity as resembling a complex system. It has been made evident through the above arguments for personal identity that there is a multitude of factors that need to be taken into consideration when speaking about the concept of personal identity. These are factors that include the psychological, biological, as well as social elements of persons. There are also other concepts such as recognition and gender identity that enrich the notion of personal identity, and many more, such as moral character, which could not be covered here. The sum of all these elements, *i.e.*, the concept of personal identity itself, seems to be something over and above, but generated by, all these elements (and perhaps others not mentioned here). Therefore, this dissertation suggests that the concept of personal identity itself operates along the lines of, or similar to, a complex system. Consider now Cilliers’ point that:

[T]he study of complex dynamic systems has uncovered a fundamental flaw in the analytic method. A complex system is not constituted merely by the sum of its components, but also by the intricate relationships between these components. In “cutting up” a system, the analytical method destroys what it seeks to understand (Cilliers, 1998:2).

Complex systems theory offers a way in which the concept of personal identity can be studied holistically in that there is no central controlling mechanism in this theory, as “the whole notion of central control becomes suspect” (Cilliers, 1998:12). By investigating several arguments on personal identity we have seen how the notion of a single controlling element such as the *cogito*, the soul, or memory becomes problematic. In light of a holistic approach this dissertation has also demonstrated that viewing a single one of the primary elements *i.e.*

the biological, the psychological, or the social element as the controlling mechanism for the concept of personal identity is reductive. It is only when all three (and perhaps more) elements are taken into account that it becomes clear how their interaction allows for the concept of personal identity to emerge. It is through the interaction between social, biological, and psychological elements, as well as of concepts such as recognition and gender identity, that the concept of personal identity becomes more than just an assembly of different elements; it becomes a concept of personal identity in a more holistic sense of the word.

Every person is exposed to these three primary elements in a different manner, due to their genetic, psychological, and social situations. Each person's concept of personal identity will therefore develop differently from the very same initial elements. The individualised composition of these elements and the individualised interactions between them is what accounts for who a person is. It is by virtue of the fact that a person has a concept of personal identity that they can be said to persist as the same person (analytic tradition), with the same developing set of elements interacting with one another (continental focus). There is no single element that can control the development of the concept of personal identity.

In order to elaborate on the abovementioned characteristics and refine the above argument concerning the concept of personal identity using the conceptual apparatus of complex systems theory, the next section illustrates the potential of modelling the concept of personal identity along the lines of Cilliers' characteristics of a complex system. This will demonstrate more clearly that the concept of personal identity resembles a complex system in that it displays similar structures and behaviours.

2. Elements in Complex Systems Theory Related to the Concept of Personal Identity

The South African philosopher Friedrich Paul Cilliers is internationally renowned for his contribution in the field of complexity. He received a number of prestigious awards for his research in the field, one of which was the Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship Award in 2006. He was also elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa. He wrote and co-wrote several publications in the fields of philosophy and complexity, however this dissertation focuses predominantly on his book *Complexity and Postmodernism* (1998) because it concisely outlines the characteristics of complex systems. It also draws from the article *The Complex "I": The Formulation of Identity in Complex Systems* in *Complexity, Difference,*

and Identity (2010) by Cilliers and de Villiers in that they relate the concepts of the *self* and complex systems theory in order to establish the ethical subject.

The first characteristic of complex systems as described by Cilliers (1998:3) is that “complex systems consist of a large number of elements” (1998:3). As this dissertation has already established, the concept of personal identity consists of a large number of elements. The primary elements include the social, psychological, and biological. Another conclusion that has been drawn from the above chapters is that, if the focus of an enquiry into the concept of personal identity is only on a single element, the resultant theory tends to be reductive.

In the vocabulary of complex systems theory, soul identity, bodily identity, and continuity of consciousness theories are all examples of approaches to the concept of personal identity in terms of simple systems³⁸. Such approaches to personal identity are unable to properly speak to the richness of the concept of personal identity. By reducing analysis of the concept of personal identity to a simple system it seems that some or many elements are disregarded in favour of a simplistic, self-contained explanation. However, the concept of personal identity more closely resembles a dynamic, complex system with a large number of interacting elements than a simple self-contained system. By re-examining the above arguments holistically, we can distinguish a large amount of elements that have been included in discussions pertaining to the concept of personal identity.

The soul identity theorists discussed in Chapter 1, such as Plato, Descartes, and Swinburne work with a dualistic view of persons that includes biological and psychological (mental) components (and by extension that enables the existence of the soul, in soul theories of personal identity). Bodily identity theorists such as Aristotle, Smart, and Place, also include the body as a necessary and sufficient condition for the persistence of personal identity. The body is thus considered by both body and soul theorists as a necessary element of the concept of personal identity. By the same logic, the psychological continuity theorists, such as Locke, Perry, Reid, and Shoemaker, view the mind as a necessary element for the concept of personal identity. Many psychological continuity theorists also include the body – in the sense of discussions of the brain versus the mind – in their arguments, albeit to a lesser degree.

³⁸ Simple systems are self-contained and predictable. They do not allow for emergence. Cilliers uses (1998:2) the internal combustion engine as an example of a simple system.

Hegel, de Beauvoir, Sartre, and Butler, all writing in the continental tradition (discussed in Chapter 1, Section 2), focus on the social lived experience of people. In such an approach the mind and the body are often included to illustrate the effects of these elements on social interaction and *vice versa*. This approach is also prevalent in gender identity discussions as there are psychological, social, and biological elements involved in the formation of a concept of gender identity. Through social theories of identity, we can also see how recognition functions as a possible interface between persons, and thus between one concept of personal identity and another, however this dissertation will only elaborate on this social interaction later in this chapter.

In the discussions of Taylor and Lötter, who both offer more holistic approaches to the problem of personal identity, a multitude of elements to the concept of personal identity is discussed. Taylor identifies an individualised identity as arising inwardly and being effected by social relations through recognition. Lötter identifies the concept of personal identity as a configuration of several components including, but not limited to a person's body, abilities, skills, ethnic origin, age, and moral values. De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers (2010:33) also comment on the large number of elements with regards to the *self* as a complex system:

What is more, all the innumerable traces in the textual field (the world and ourselves) contribute towards identity. The traces that make up our view of ourselves and the world include everything that we are exposed to in the world: other people, conversations, books, our education, our material circumstances, state of bodily health, our childhood memories and future prospects, everything. These things do not contribute to the self in a deterministic way, they interact and merge. We cannot identify all these components, and then fit them into a coherent whole in order to provide an exact description of our "self".

Thus, the concept of personal identity clearly consists of a multitude of elements that interact with one another in a number of different ways. It is only through studying the interactions among these elements however, that we can see how the concept of personal identity is constructed and thus it is through these interactions that we can understand the concept of personal identity to function akin to the functioning of a complex system.

3. Interactions within the Concept of Personal Identity

Another characteristic of a complex system, as defined by Cilliers, is that "[a] large number of elements are necessary, but not sufficient [...] the elements have to interact, and this

interaction must be dynamic” (Cilliers, 1998:3). For a system to be complex it needs enough elements to make it complex, but a large number of elements is not sufficient for it to be a complex system, rather it is how these elements interact with one another and what develops from these interactions, that makes a system truly complex. Complicated systems³⁹ also often have a large number of elements, however they are not complex, merely complicated and the interaction between the elements do not display self-organising principles and the way in which the system functions remains structured.

It is clear from the above that the concept of personal identity resembles a complex, rather than a complicated, system. The mind constitutes a part of mental and physical life and there seems to be a constant interaction between impressions, perceptions, memories in our minds, and our actions and views of ourselves according to the lines of argument made by identity theorists (see Chapter 1). There is also a constant interaction between memory and daily, lived experience. There are psychological, physical, and social elements that interact to facilitate gender identity and personal identity development (see Chapter 1 and 2). Neither personal- nor gender identity can develop on the grounds of only one of these aspects in that we are constantly moderating ourselves according to social factors, internalising new information and making decisions on which information to keep and what to discard. The physical and chemical changes our bodies go through in varying life stages effect who/what we are physically in that it changes the way in which we are perceived and how we perceive ourselves. Social, biological, and psychological elements are in constant interaction with one another, so much so that we cannot always trace exactly where the one element begins and the other ends.

The next characteristic of a complex system Cilliers identifies is that “[t]he interaction is fairly rich, *i.e.* any element in the system influences, and is influenced by, quite a few other ones” (Cilliers, 1998:3). As we have seen, the social, psychological, and biological elements that structure the concept of personal identity all play a role in furthering the development and change of the others. When a person has any sort of experience within the world, they experience it through the body enabling access to the social world, as well as through subjective experience⁴⁰, which is a mental process. Take for example the process of

³⁹ Complicated systems remain predictable in a similar fashion to simple systems. “Some systems have a very large number of components and perform very sophisticated tasks, but in a way they can be analysed (in the full sense of the word) accurately” (Cilliers 1998:3). Examples of a complicated system include a snowflake, rockets, and, CD-players.

⁴⁰ While there is of course debate on whether such a thing as subjective experience really exists and whether it isn’t perhaps just part of our folk psychology (e.g. Rorty 1970), the fact that the jury is still out on this –

recognition that is described by various theorists in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, most notably by Hegel, de Beauvoir, and Sartre.

In order to be recognised one must have a body *i.e.* an object/body in the world that another person can first and foremost perceive, and then one interprets this act of recognition in terms of what it means for oneself. Above and beyond this one must have the physical and psychological capacity to interact with the *other*. Persons are already in a social context when this interaction occurs. When persons respond either positively or negatively to each other, this has a psychological effect, it could entail physical responses which strengthen or weaken said psychological effect, or it could lead to misrecognition that forcibly excludes them from this social interaction. This mixture of different interactions and effects could influence a number of other factors linked to one's concept of personal identity. Through interaction with others persons could feel excluded, revered, rejected, accepted, and so forth. These reactions in turn influence a person's concept of himself or herself and could lead to other physical, psychological, or indeed psychological changes. Thus, again, here is evidence of rich and consistent interaction among the elements that make up the concept of personal identity.

The next characteristic of a complex system that Cilliers describes (1998:4) is that "each element in the system is ignorant of the behaviour of the system as a whole, it responds only to information that is available to it locally". What this means in terms of the discussion of the concept of personal identity, is that the primary elements of this concept, *i.e.* social, biological, and psychological elements, do not act/interact the way they do with knowledge of the whole system of personal identity. Recall the emphasis on the interaction among elements of a complex system pointed out before:

When we look at the behaviour of a complex system as a whole, our focus shifts from the individual element in the system to the complex structure of the system. The complexity emerges as a result of the patterns of interaction between the elements (Cilliers, 1998:5).

This characteristic also applies within the system of personal identity:

No person can be aware of her whole self. You are not aware of all the desires, needs, communications, fears and expectations making demands on you at the moment. Nor are you consciously aware of your complete history as a series of distinct events that chronologically make up your personal narrative. We are only

illustrated for instance by the ongoing debate centered on Frank Jackson's (2003, 2004) so-called 'knowledge argument' against physicalist views of the mind – is enough grounds for my mentioning it here.

conscious of parts of the self at any given moment. Much of what makes us what we are is not available to consciousness at all (De Villiers & Cilliers 2010:35).

Following Cilliers, it is thus the way in which the primary elements interact – and how the countless sub-elements that fall under each of them interact – that causes the concept of personal identity to be *more* than the sum of its parts. We have a concept of personal identity that arises from the interactions between the three primary elements, which we experience as something more than simply being a biological human being with psychological and social capacity; in fact, we experience this interaction as personhood, our personal identity. Each person has a body, a history, a consciousness, a social situatedness, and countless other elements which interact and allow for a complex system theory account of the concept of personal identity to emerge.

The interactions between the elements of a complex system have several important characteristics. An important characteristic of interactions is that they are non-linear. “A large system of linear elements can usually be collapsed into an equivalent system that is very much smaller. Non-linearity also guarantees that small causes have large results, and vice versa” (Cilliers, 1998:4). And, if we consider the case for the concept of personal identity as resembling a complex system, it is evident that the interactions of the elements making up the concept of personal identity can also have a small or large impact, in their turn.

Take for example a small cause such as breaking a leg. This, in many instances, would not have an effect on the greater concept of personal identity as the leg would heal and only produce a small walking impairment. If, however a ballet dancer were to suffer this injury it would have a large-scale effect on the greater concept of their personal identity in that it could render the dancer unable to continue dancing. As argued by Lötter (1998:4), many people define themselves by their talents and internalise this definition, which then forms part of their concept of personal identity, in this instance “I am a ballerina”, and this would no longer be true as a result of a minor cause such as a broken leg. Not being able to do something that a person defines themselves by produces a psychological effect on a person, and also often a social effect in that one has to pursue other interests/directions, and of course there is still the biological impact of the broken leg itself. Non-linearity within the concept of personal identity often functions in such a manner that there are no examples that will produce exactly the same effect when applied to another person’s concept of their identity. What would produce a dramatic change in one person’s concept of personal identity

would not necessarily do the same to another, due to the complexity inherent in the concept of personal identity.

Besides being non-linear, the interactions between the elements within a complex system also characteristically loop:

There are loops in the interactions. The effect of any activity can feed back onto itself, sometimes directly, sometimes after a number of intervening stages. This feedback can be positive (enhancing, stimulating) or negative (detracting, inhibiting). Both kinds are necessary. The technical term for this aspect of a complex system is *recurrency* (Cilliers, 1998:4).

When we examine the concept of *recurrency* in terms of the concept of personal identity we can see how small physical, chemical, natural, surgical, or social changes can produce feedback loops within the concept of personal identity. An example of this is education received during the formative years that can lead to changes in values and behaviours during later years. If a person invests in their education and puts in a lot of effort with educational tasks, their activity as an agent may eventually reflect back on itself in that the person will receive good grades and reinforcement (positive feedback) or a person might not receive good grades (negative feedback) which will influence how they approach and value education in later life stages. This notion of the interaction with the world feeding back on the *self* is described by de Villiers-Botha and Cilliers (2010:34) as follows:

When we ascribe meaning to the world we interact with it. The world we are born into is not determined. Against our spatiotemporal background, education, and economic means, we are able to choose at least some of the texts that we are exposed to. Our choice of literature or friends for example will be constrained by our view of the world and ourselves, and will also feedback upon this view. The way that we perceive things to be might be confirmed or called into question by texts we encounter. The world is not merely the origin of meaning – we participate in our world, and change it.

As we have seen in Chapter 2 and above, people often define themselves by their accomplishments and talents. So, for instance, whether a person receives positive or negative feedback on an education as an academic would have an influence on their concept of personal identity. This is only one example of how the activity of an agent in the world can reflect back on itself through feedback loops, however one can apply this concept to almost any interaction with the world or *others*. The interaction in which recognition either occurs or does not is also a good example of a social interaction where there can be either positive or

negative feedback loops which can influence how a person views himself or herself and interacts with *others*.

4. *Personal Identity as resembling an Open System*

Yet another characteristic of a complex system, as defined by Cilliers (1998:4), is that “[C]omplex systems are usually open systems, i.e. they interact with their environment. As a matter of fact, it is often difficult to define the border of a complex system”. It is not possible to distinguish how much of our concept of personal identity is formed by social, biological, worldly, or psychological (or other) elements. There is a constant flow of information through one’s concept of personal identity when a person interacts with others and with the world. Our interpretation of our concept of personal identity constantly acts upon and is acted upon by the world and other systems, thus it constantly changes due to this flow of information. “It is impossible to point to some precise boundary where ‘we’ stop and where the world begins. To confine the self to the prison of the skull is a gross oversimplification” (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers 2010:34).

When we look at a character trait such as honesty for example, we cannot determine specifically how it developed. We can link back memories of parents and teachers promoting being honest. We can consider social interactions where we have either opted to be honest or dishonest, either reinforcing or weakening the character trait, however we cannot say that it is exclusively psychological, social, or biological, or anything else we can only say that it is a trait which developed as a result of social, psychological, and biological and other interactions with the world over an extended period of time. We develop most of our personality traits in this fashion, through numerous interactions with the world, engaging all of the elements of the concept of personal identity at different times or simultaneously.

If we consider the commonly known *nature vs. nurture* argument⁴¹ with regard to raising children for instance, it is quite evident that the concept of personal identity resembles an open system in that these arguments often cannot determine how much of a person’s personality is biologically or socially determined. We cannot say accurately, meaning in any

⁴¹ Contemporary accounts of this argument contrast the concepts of innateness and heritability primarily in the fields of biology and psychology. “The distinction played an important role in the history of philosophy as the locus of the dispute between Rationalism and Empiricism” (Griffiths 2017:1) Examples of contemporary theorists who write on the subject include: Stephen Stich in his work *Innate Ideas* (1975), as well as Bateson and Martin in their work *Design for a Life: How Behaviour and Personality Develop* (1999).

final sense of the word, that a person's personality derives purely from hereditary traits or whether they have traits that are conditioned into them socially, and if they have both biological and social influences, we cannot say with absolute certainty how these influences interact within the concept of personal identity. We can only say that a person is exposed to these influences and they have an effect on their concept of personal identity.

By interacting with the world and others the concept of personal identity is constantly receiving new inputs, forming new connections, and allowing other connections to decay. Personal identity is not a concept that develops in isolation; it resembles a rich, open system that develops through interaction with other systems in the world.

5. The Persistence of Personal Identity

Another characteristic of a complex system is that it can never reach a stable equilibrium; it is always in flux. There is a ceaseless and constant flow of information through the system. It only fluctuates between periods of high development and low development. "There has to be a constant flow of energy to maintain the organisation of a system and ensure its survival. Equilibrium is another word for death" (Cilliers, 1998: 4). In the context of the persistence of personal identity arguments discussed in Chapter 1, it is evident that there are several problems when we consider a person as the exact *same* person as they were in a previous life stage. At most we can say that they are similar. Some memories fade, some characteristics change, we age, physical appearance or ability can change dramatically, or steadily over time – as with the *ship of Theseus* example.

A complex system never reaches a stable equilibrium. "The self is never in a state of equilibrium; our interaction with the world is dynamic. As our environment changes, we adapt. We are constantly reflecting and acting" (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers 2010:35). A concept of personal identity which remains exactly the same would be that of a person with some kind of disorder, such as severe short term memory loss which would imply the person can never integrate new social, psychological, or biological experiences into their concept of their personal identity again. They would psychologically and socially stagnate due to the fact that they cannot process new information. Their body would still age and they would re-discover this incongruence with the physical self they still think they are, thereby re-discovering themselves as a person with memory loss every day, but their concept of personal identity would stagnate due to the fact that this process is the furthest it can progress.

Therefore, the changes and interaction which occur among the elements which make up the concept of personal identity are necessary for it to continue; if these changes do not continue, paradoxically in a sense, a person's identity cannot be said to persist through time⁴². Thus, the integration of new information into the concept of personal identity is a necessary and sufficient condition for P₁ to be the same person at t₁ and t₂ in that it allows for the continued development of the concept.

The concept of identity is also inherent in all complex systems themselves, in that all complex systems can be said to have identities. They all function in a particular manner with their own elements that allow for their delineation from other systems. The interactions in a system also result from its internal network. No two complex systems will act and develop in exactly the same manner, thus they all have a specific identity. On the identity of systems Cilliers (2010:14) argues that:

The fixing of relationships within a system, and the closing down of its borders, will introduce a rigidity which leads to senescence or pathology. At the same time, this does not mean that the identity of a system should change indiscriminately. Even if identity is dynamic, there should be an appropriate tempo of change.

The precise tempo of change however cannot be determined in blanket fashion for all systems in that all systems have a different rate of change due to their individual structure and nature. The one thing that Cilliers (2010:14) does mention about this rate of change is that: "In order to maintain any identity whatsoever, and not to merely reflect its environment, a system must change at a slower rate than its environment". This ability to retain identity applies to the concept of personal identity as well in that persons change at a slower rate than their environment, maintaining a rich amount of diversity by slowly integrating new information while retaining older information and allowing unnecessary connections to decay as the new connections form.

The final characteristic of a complex system that will be addressed here is that "[c]omplex systems have a history" (Cilliers, 1998: 4). This is highly evident in the view of personal identity as persisting through time – in that memory, bodily continuity, and psychological continuity appears to be a meta-property of the concept of personal identity.

⁴² This is the reason for the argument for persistence of identity being a meta property of identity – what persists is the fact that persons have an identity, not the nature or content of the identity itself, nor necessarily the identity as the result of one particular element persisting.

The analytic philosophers discussed in Chapter 1 all demonstrate the relevance of persistence as a quality of personal identity, so much so that many of them make persistence the necessary and sufficient condition for personal identity, i.e. their concept of personal identity becomes this logical property of identity. As we have established through the argument in Chapter 1, this view is reductive due to the fact that it does not include all the elements linked to personal identity formation, however persons rely on the notion of persistence for punishment, promises, social relations, and many other worldly interactions. “The history and context of a person co-determines her identity. No two people have histories or contexts that are identical. Even if two people had very similar backgrounds, a host of other factors would contribute towards their view of themselves and the world” (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers 2010:35).

By drawing on memory and interacting in the world we reinforce and strengthen our social relationships and our own individual concept of personal identity. We rely on the fact that we will be the same person through time, and this reliance demonstrates that psychological, biological, and social continuity is at least a meta-property of the concept of personal identity. The content of a person’s concept of their own personal identity develops and changes throughout their lives in that the system is constantly interacting, building, and discarding connections and as long as this developmental process continues the system can be said to continue. The content of a person’s concept of personal identity is thus not always exactly the same – I cannot say that I am the same person that I was when I was five, however the experiences that I had, and the basic elements which I had when I was five have led my concept of personal identity to develop the way in which it did, having an influence on who I am now. The degree of influence my formative years had on me will also not be proportional to another person’s in that some people may retain more or less memories than I do, or they may have encountered a biological or psychological change that I did not.

However, this does not change the fact that the notion of one’s identity develops throughout life, breaking old connections, but also leading to new connections. The history of a person is the history of their concept of their personal identity. A person cannot be who they are now without first having been who they were. Who they are now was enabled by the systematic development from who they were.

6. *Personal Identity, Gender Identity, and Complex Systems Theory*

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the concept of gender identity is intricately woven into a person's concept of their personal identity. It is also effected by almost, if not all, the other elements connected in the complexity of the concept of personal identity. The arguments for the concept of personal identity being analysed as functioning akin to a complex system hold for the concept of gender identity along the same lines of argument. The concept of gender identity can be theoretically isolated from the concept of personal identity and investigated as a separate concept with its own complexity, however when the concept of personal identity is viewed more holistically it is evident that gender identity is deeply integrated into the concept of personal identity, in the sense that there is continuous mutual impact or interfacing between these concepts as they emerge from their primary biological, psychological and social elements.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a person's gender identity consists of several elements *i.e.* anatomical sex, sexual orientation, and gender role behaviours. Persons do not live ungendered lives, when persons develop socially they are treated and behave according to their gender and sexuality. Persons are recognised, in frameworks where recognition is made possible, not merely as persons, but as engendered subjects with a preferred sexuality. As argued by Butler (2004:2), if persons cannot be recognised in the existing categories of what is understood by gender and sexuality, their ability to be recognised as persons is challenged.

When persons form memories, many of these memories have connotations to their sexuality and gender. A person's psychologically continuous identity is formed alongside hormonal changes, sexual and otherwise. When persons act in the world their gender identity influences the way in which they act. A person's gender identity does not form the entirety of their personal identity, however with most elements of personal identity there is a relational gender identity element. Gender identity adds a large number of elements into the greater concept of personal identity, interacting with all of the other elements that assist in constructing a concept of personal identity.

The concept of gender identity has a similar compositional structure to that of personal identity. Both concepts emerge from social, biological, and psychological elements. The concept of gender identity, as in the case of the concept of personal identity, is also highly variable and fluid, and also resembles an open system. It also greatly influences how a person sees him/herself and the world and is influenced in turn by how a person is recognised

by the world. The fact that a person has a gender identity that persists through time also holds due to the fact that the concept of gender identity emerges from the three primary elements, *i.e.* as long as there are interaction and change among the elements from which the concept of gender identity emerges, the content of a person's gender identity will adapt and change and thus, at a meta-level there is persistence of gender identity in the same way as in the case of the concept of personal identity. Every person has a gender identity throughout their lives, it is simply the content that is fluid and continuously adapts according to the interactions among the elements from which it emerges.

7. *Developments in Complexity*

There is currently no developed model for the concept of personal identity as resembling a complex system from a meta-level perspective, it is also a question whether a model that embodies the full complexity of the concept of personal identity can easily be created in that there are so many variables and elements involved that we might not be able to fully capture the complexity of these concepts properly. However even if a complete model cannot be constructed we are still able to learn a lot about how the concept of personal identity develops and persists by approaching the concept from a complexity perspective as shown in the above sections.

In terms of the impact of complex systems theory in general, in *Complexity, Difference and Identity* Preiser and Cilliers (2010: v) question the difficulties related to complexity theory as well as the distinctions that arise within the fields that address problems from a complexity perspective:

A persistent one is the distinction between “hard” and “soft” complexity. “Hard” refers to work done in the natural sciences: mathematical and computational models like cellular automata, genetic algorithms and Boolean nets, and the attempts to apply these models to specific problems. ‘Soft’ refers to the work done in the social sciences, mainly in sociology, anthropology and organisational science – philosophy remained curiously aloof for a long time. The label “soft” was later replaced with the label “metaphorical”.

This demonstrates that a complexity approach is not a final solution to the problem of interdisciplinary studies or indeed distinctions or oppositions within disciplines themselves. Moreover, Preiser and Cilliers point out that complexity approaches seems “to be stuck in a

pre-revolutionary phase”. (Preiser & Cilliers 2010: v). While perhaps complex systems theory has not yet had a revolutionary impact on the social sciences, a lot of work has been done. Cilliers’ work is one prime example of rigorous work in terms of complex systems theory done in philosophy for instance.

Another example comes from education. In *Complexity and the Self* (2011) Sarah Mercer makes an argument for a complexity approach to the concept of the *self* from an educational standpoint. In light of secondary language teaching Mercer (2011:57) argues that students should be viewed as complex systems in order to incorporate all their individual needs and differences into the learning process. Mercer (2011:57) also argues that current approaches to the *self* tend to be reductive:

“I think, therefore I am” has long been recognised as representing a very restricted view of the self. Consider the briefest selection of other verbs and their potential implications for understandings of the self: I fell (bodily and emotionally), I see, I hear, I experience, I relate to, I want, I hop, I fear, I remember, I change – therefore I am (Mercer 2011:57).

To counter the reductive approaches to the student’s sense of *self*, Mercer (2011:65) proposes that the concept of the *self* should be approached as a complex dynamic system in that “the self displays many of the characteristics typical of complex dynamic systems”. This approach in Mercers’ work allows for a more well-rounded concept of students in terms of their motivations, beliefs, social situations, cultural identities, etc. which ultimately assists in structuring better educational programs that view students holistically and cater to their differences. She also mentions (2011:61) in a similar vein as has been done in this dissertation that a complexity approach does not reject previous understandings of the theories within her field of study but rather attempts to “incorporate all of the insights collectively”.

There are also developments in terms of investigations into the *self* as a complex system, although they are few. In *Complexity, Difference, and Identity* (2010) the *self* as a complex system is approached in terms of framing the ethical subject in order to evaluate business ethics in a complexity framework. Mercer, as mentioned above investigates the student as a complex system in the field of sociology and education to improve educational practices.

Complex systems theory thus allows for many new avenues of thought, questioning, interdisciplinary studies, and interpretation. “[I]t is a position that compels us to accept the

limits of our knowledge claims, to frame meaning as provisional, and to challenge and to transform our models and practices in a bid to engage responsibly with the complexities of our world" (Woermann 2016:3), and therefore it is important that its potential to enrich social science perspectives on what it means to be human does not go undeveloped.

Despite the fact that a model of the concept of personal identity as resembling a complex system might not capture the concept in its full complexity, or indeed completely eliminate reductionism, it remains a potentially fruitful endeavour into new understandings of the concept that has been neglected up to now. The scope of this dissertation does not allow for a full modelling of the concept of personal identity as a complex 'system' and has thus only illustrated the benefits of a more holistic approach to the concept of personal identity. Modelling the concept of personal identity as a complex system would be a promising avenue of future research.

8. Conclusion

By investigating how the concept of personal identity can be characterised by making use of complex system theory mechanisms this chapter has demonstrated that a complex systems approach assists in creating a more holistic approach to investigations into the concept of personal identity. Chapter 3 has shown that the concept of personal identity emerges from three primary elements *i.e.* social, biological, and psychological. It has also been made clear that the concept of personal identity emerges from these elements in that it cannot exist without them, however, due to the way in which the elements within the concept of personal identity interact, it cannot be reduced to these elements. It is therefore more than the sum of its parts. The persistence of personal identity can also be accounted for by the continuation of the concept itself in the sense of it resembling a complex system.

Furthermore, a complex systems theory based approach to the concept of personal identity allows for an interdisciplinary investigation of the concept of gender identity as argued by Fausto-Sterling⁴³ in that it brings together separate lines of questioning that are commonly pursued in different fields. Also, the concept of gender identity can be analysed in terms of emerging from biological, social, and psychological elements, and interfacing with the concept of personal identity. Rather than looking at individual elements of human beings

⁴³ Fausto-Sterling's argument for an interdisciplinary approach is explained in detail in Chapter 2 (§ 3) of this dissertation through her Russian nesting doll example.

which allow for the concept of personal identity to function, interact, or persist, we are looking at how it functions in its entirety, akin to a system.

Thus the benefit of a complex systems based approach to the concept of personal identity is clear. By taking the constitutive elements of the concept of personal identity into account as well as the way in which they interact we can account for the persistence, the formulation, as well as the development of the concept of personal identity without our discussion falling prey to the limitations of a reductive approach. Examples of developments in the field have also been briefly discussed as well as the future research potential of the subject. In the Conclusion that follows, I will provide an overview of this dissertation as well as suggest further aspects of study opening up from a complex system model of personal identity.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This dissertation examined the concept of personal identity as resembling a complex system to establish whether the questions of the Western continental and analytic traditions regarding the problem of personal identity are able to speak properly to the richness of the concept. The argument put forward throughout this dissertation highlights the reductive nature of single lines of questioning regarding the problem of personal identity and suggests that more holistic approaches be considered when tackling this problem in order to do justice to the complex and rich nature of the concept. To this end, I considered the interfaces between the concepts of gender and personal identity and integrated these into a holistic, complex systems based approach to the concept of personal identity, which speaks more to the richness of the concept than reductive approaches do. Despite its many advantages however, a complex systems based approach is not necessarily the only approach with which to view the concept of personal identity holistically. In what follows, I first provide an overview of the argument as it was made throughout this dissertation. I will then discuss some of the main advantages of a complex system approach to the concept of personal identity. Thereafter I will conclude with further research possibilities.

Chapter 1 provided a brief overview of prior research conducted in the Western analytic and continental traditions on the concept of personal identity. The chapter interrogated these traditions as to whether they could speak to the richness of the concept of personal identity by looking at in how researchers in each tradition analysed the concept. The respective traditions were also discussed and critiqued in terms of the questions that frame them. In addition, the chapter briefly introduced the notion that the concept of personal identity relates to three primary elements (social, psychological, biological) and, also briefly, introduced the concept of gender identity in the context of personal identity debates. Overall, the chapter aimed to familiarise the reader with the common line of thinking in terms of the concept of personal identity in the traditions discussed and indicate how it might be approached differently.

Section 1 of Chapter 1 focused on the metaphysical question of the concept of personal identity as persistence though time, in order to provide a critical analysis of the analytic approach to personal identity. It highlighted the relevance of personal identity as a concept in metaphysics and then moved toward a discussion of the approach of analytic personal identity theorists. This section concluded with the argument that the continuity at

issue in terms of identity persisting through time is actually a meta-property of the concept of personal identity and not a necessary and sufficient internal condition for it, seeing that the concept of personal identity is formed prior to it persisting. Several approaches were discussed over the course of this section, with soul and bodily persistence arguments given only a brief mention as the focus was on contemporary views of personal identity. The soul view of personal identity was demonstrated through the arguments of Plato, Aquinas, Descartes, and Swinburne. Aristotle, Smart, and Place were selected to demonstrate the bodily view of personal identity. The personal identity theorists selected to describe and analyse personal identity as consciousness included Locke, Reid, Hume, and contemporary writers such as Williams, Shoemaker, and Perry. Finally, a discussion of the works of Hume and Parfit was included to explore critiques against metaphysical views of personal identity.

Section 2 of Chapter 1 unpacked and critiqued the problem of the *self* in the continental tradition. This section established that a social approach to the concept of personal identity does not speak adequately to the richness of the concept despite including more elements of lived experience than persistence of personal identity arguments do. It also established that the concept of recognition is related to that of personal identity, because of its relation to the primary social element of the concept of personal identity. I concluded this section with the argument that the concept of the *self* is always read against the background of, among others, issues relating to recognition as a core element of the social. The discussion included the work of Kant, Hegel, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Young, and Butler, all of whom demonstrated continental lines of questioning. Taylor and Lötter were also included to demonstrate the advantages of more holistic approaches that do not necessarily follow a single line of questioning. The concept of recognition was highlighted in this section because it is an ever-present concept in discussions of the *self*.

The first two sections of this chapter facilitated the critique of the lines of questioning within the traditions of Western analytic and continental philosophy, with a specific focus on the phrasing of questions pertaining to personal identity that are respective of each. A summary and critique of these two approaches to the concept of personal identity was finalised in Section 3, which concluded that both the lines of questioning within the separate traditions, on their own, are unable to speak to the richness of the concept of personal identity. Proponents of the analytic tradition are unable to speak about the lived experience of having a personal identity, whereas proponents of the continental tradition are unable to

effectively speak to the persistence question of personal identity. Both views are thus reductive in their focus.

Chapter 2 offered a brief overview of the concept of gender identity as a social construct in order to work toward a holistic approach to the concept of personal identity, set out in Chapter 3. Chapter 2 discussed the social, biological, and psychological elements of identity formation in more depth, with the emphasis on being in the world and interacting with others in the world. It also illustrated how both the concepts of gender identity and personal identity contain and develop from these elements, as well as how the concept of gender identity relates to that of personal identity. The concept of recognition was re-introduced due to its relation to the primary social element connected to the formulation of a person's concept of gender identity.

This chapter used arguments drawn from Chapter 1 to illustrate that a holistic approach to the concepts of personal- and gender identity does more justice to these concepts than a reductive approach does in that it addresses both lines of questioning in a single theory of personal identity. It also related back to a point made in the conclusion of Chapter 1 which argues that persistence is a meta-property of personal identity and extended this conclusion to the persistence of gender identity. Finally, given the depiction of the matrix of elements feeding into both the concepts of gender and personal identity in this chapter, the conclusion of the chapter briefly introduced a complex systems theory analysis of the concept of personal identity as enabling a potential holistic account of the concept. The theorists who were selected for discussion included: Zimmerman, Fausto-Sterling, West, and Butler. The chapter then moved toward a discussion of the necessity of gender identity in personal identity formation. Gender theorists such as Hale, Zack, Shrage, and Salomon were selected to illustrate how integral the notion of gender identity is to reflection on and framing of the concept of personal identity and indeed how people are always in some form or another 'engendered beings'.

While Chapter 1 and 2 made the case for a richer, more holistic approach to the concept of personal identity, Chapter 3 served to establish a basic model of the concept of personal identity as resembling a complex system, in order to view the different lines of questioning within the continental and analytic approaches in terms of a single, more holistic approach. This chapter also offered an argument for the claim that both the concepts of personal- and gender identity emerge from (at least) three primary elements (biological, social, and psychological) and it was demonstrated how these concepts interact with one

another. The changes in the concepts of both gender and personal identity were accounted for through feedback loops. The different elements that could be isolated in Chapters 1 and 2 were discussed as well as the ways in which they interact with one another. The chapter then argued that the concept of personal identity resembles a complex system in that the elements from which it emerges cannot be separated from one another without effecting the entire system, and also that the concept cannot be broken down to any one of them. Therefore, the over-all aim in this chapter was to argue for an analysis of the concept of personal identity along the lines of an integrated complex system that comes into being through a multitude of constant internal and external interactions. A complex systems theory approach to the concept of personal identity is not entirely holistic in that several factors are still necessarily excluded when we isolate a complex system in order to study it, however it is far less reductive than either the analytic– or continental approaches to the concept.

When we pretend that we can understand or model a complex system in its full complexity, such pretence is not only hubristic, it is also a violation of that which is being modelled, especially when we are dealing with human or social systems. Trying to understand complex systems involves a certain modesty” (Cilliers 2010:8)

In light of a more holistic approach to the concept of personal identity several new avenues of research can be pursued. Besides looking at the individual aspects of the concept of personal identity, we can begin to explore the connections within personal identity as resembling a system or network, which can account for previous inconsistencies or dead ends in previous research. We can examine the emergent levels of organisation as well as the emergent properties of the concept of personal identity in more depth which could provide more insight into what it means to be a person. We can draw together moral/ethical concerns and how they relate to the very concept of personal identity, thereby enabling a deeper understanding of the concept of personal identity in debates of agency and action. Complex systems theory opens up several new lines of questioning that appear only when the interaction of elements of the concept of personal identity are viewed as resembling interactions within a system, as opposed to being lone-standing. All of the above-mentioned concepts and more can be explored by modelling the concept of personal identity akin to modelling a complex system.

There are many examples of how complex systems theory can enrich our understanding of the concept of personal identity. I mention only two in conclusion. An exciting new manner in which the concept of personal identity as resembling a complex

system can be further researched is by exploring the impact of social robotics on the concept of personal identity in the broader field of artificial intelligence. Secondly, closer to home, a deeply interesting possibility for future research of this topic is to bring together the concept of personal identity as approached by African philosophers with a complex systems based approach.

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