

# Journal of Cognition and Neuroethics

## The Integrated Theory of Personal Identity: A Proposal

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### **Acknowledgments**

A version of this paper was presented at the Persons Conference hosted by the Center for Cognition and Neuroethics at the University of Michigan-Flint. Questions and comments from participants at the conference, especially Marya Schechtman and Simon Cushing, were greatly appreciated and I have attempted to incorporate them into this article. My deepest gratitude to comments made on earlier drafts by Ed Brandon, Michael Yee Shui, and JAI Bewaji.

### **Publication Details**

*Journal of Cognition and Neuroethics* (ISSN: 2166-5087). May, 2024. Volume 9, Issue 2.

### **Citation**

Burton, Roxanne. 2024. "The Integrated Theory of Personal Identity: A Proposal." *Journal of Cognition and Neuroethics* 9 (2): 143–160.

# The Integrated Theory of Personal Identity: A Proposal

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## Abstract

This article advances a theory – the Integrated Theory of Personal Identity (ITPI) – that meets the criteria for a robust theory of personal identity. I first outline these criteria, including the normative and social aspects of personal identity, and how they are interconnected with the metaphysical. I then outline two theories offering this interconnected view of persons as integrated biological, psychological, normative and social beings, namely the Akan view and the person life view. I highlight the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches before outlining the proposed theory. The ITPI is an account of personal identity that is inextricably linked to the social space and theories that two dimensions (experiential and evaluative) of the person become involved in a process of negotiation with the result being an amalgam of the stable features associated with the descriptive and normative aspects of the person, and a forward-looking orientation. I show how the theory meets the criteria for a robust theory of personal identity. I conclude by briefly assessing the feasibility of the theory by applying it to practical concerns that arise in discourses on personal identity, specifically where the personhood of an individual is questioned.

**Keywords:** The Integrated Theory of Personal Identity; The Person Life View; The Akan View of Personal Identity; Personal Identity

## 1 Introduction

A robust theory of personal identity should theorise about the identity of persons, which means that consideration ought to be given to both ‘person’ and identity’. It should be able to capture how the term ‘person’ is used, even with the variety of meanings or interpretations that can be attached to it. A robust theory should recognise both the descriptive and normative aspects of persons. Since the normative component necessarily develops in a social space, any theory of persons must consider the societal context. As Fanon argues, theories about humans need to include sociogeny, which is society and how it influences and is influenced by humans (1986, 13). To theorise about human persons while assuming the possibility of our separation from this social world is quite problematic. One can therefore argue that any conception of ‘person’ that is not underpinned by sociality will fail. The social context also influences how the descriptive and normative aspects of persons are understood, leading to differences across societies in terms of who is given the label of a ‘person’, depending on physical and/or psychological characteristics possessed (or thought to possess).

Likewise, 'identity' should be rigorously theorised, recognising that the identity of persons should not be treated akin to the identity of inanimate objects or see us purely as organisms such that understanding our biological makeup is enough. Instead, personal identity theories should value the variety of meanings associated with 'person' and treat identity accordingly. Included in this variety of meanings are subjective, objective, qualitative and quantitative aspects of personal identity (Ricoeur 1991, 74-75). Most of the major theories of personal identity in the philosophical canon deemphasise qualitative identity, and instead attempt to isolate and explicate a set of conditions that would guarantee numerical identity (Gallagher 2011, 16), usually a physical or psychological continuity criterion. But, as Ricoeur (1991) contends, discussions related to numerical identity are focused solely on the objective dimension, but what is needed is a way to reconcile both the quantitative and qualitative (including the subjective) so that the uninterrupted continuity of the person can be adequately explained.

Similarly, Schechtman (1996) argues that a personal identity theory should try to answer two questions. The first is the reidentification question, which refers to recognition of the same person over time. The second question is characterisation, referring to the characteristics that allow one to be identified as a specific person. Most theories of personal identity generally focus on the first question only, and sometimes in a narrow sense. A theory of personal identity needs to be able to explain the persistence conditions of persons and the unity of persons which are captured by numerical identity. But the theory should also be able to capture the wide range of meanings that attach to the identity of persons which would be covered by the qualitative identity, that is questions related to the character of the person; one's sense of self; the criteria used for classifying someone as a person; and what the life of person is like.<sup>1</sup> A robust theory of personal identity should

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1. These conditions that I identify are heavily influenced by Quante, who identifies four problems that are captured in discussions of personal identity and the main question associated with each:
    1. The Unity-of-Person-Problem – "What are the conditions that must hold so that it is the case that an entity A is exactly one person at one point in time?"
    2. The Persistence-of-Person-Problem – "What are the conditions that must hold so that it is the case that A at  $t_1$  is the same person as B at  $t_2$ ?"
    3. The Conditions-of-Personhood-Problem – "Which properties or capacities must an entity have in order to belong to the class of persons?"
    4. The Structure-of-Personality-Problem – "What is the basic structure of leading the life of a person?" (2007, 59-62)

The first question is related to questions of synchronic identity and the second to questions of diachronic identity, while both are concerned with explored issues related to numerical identity. These two questions have been labelled by Quante as being concerned with strict metaphysical identity (2007, 57n6). The third and fourth problems, on the other hand, are related to both qualitative and numerical identity, though questions that arise from these two problems, especially those related to the fourth problem, will be more focused on the former. These two questions are related to the practical aspects of personal identity (2007, 57n6). Quante notes that these distinctions in thinking about the identity of human persons is not always clear, leading to some degree of ambiguity and therefore confusion in talking about identity. He recognises that the questions are linked, but cautions that "in many places more than one solution of special problems

therefore, as Schechtman argues, offer a comprehensive answer to the various ways in which we talk about personal identity: “we need an account of identity that defines a single, unified entity which is the target of all of the many practical questions and concerns that are associated with personal identity” (2014, 5). If the theory cannot account for the various meanings attached to the term ‘personal identity’, then it would have failed. In the next section, I will examine two sets of views which I believe meet the criteria outlined: Marya Schechtman’s person life view (PLV), followed by Kwasi Wiredu’s and Kwame Gyekye’s discussion of the Akan conception of personal identity. While both are strong theories, I will nonetheless highlight weaknesses in both and then propose a theory that I believe captures the strengths of the PLV and Akan view of personal identity while avoiding their weaknesses.

## **2 The Person Life and Akan Views of Personal Identity**

Developed by Schechtman (2014), the person life view (PLV) argues that any conception of personal identity must be grounded in the understanding that we live in communities and are parts of cultures, while at the same time recognising that we are individuals and biological entities. Schechtman recognises that the term ‘person’ is used in a variety of ways in everyday language, but the person is a unified entity. The PLV takes the metaphysical question seriously while giving value to the practical concerns that would be covered by the normative question, seeing the two as being inherently connected, rather than accidentally so. Persons are “individual loci which serve as appropriate targets of various particular kinds of interests, concerns, and interactions” (9). The person life has three interconnected components: “individual capacities, typical activities and interactions, and social infrastructure” (115). The three elements of the person life are interrelated, so that the typical person, in living a person life, has all three of these components supporting and constraining each other. Schechtman notes that there is a “standard developmental trajectory” for the first and second components, so the person follows a particular path in the development of their physical and psychological capacities, as well as their social interactions. Individual capacities are developed through interactions with others in the context of the cultural and social infrastructure operating in the person-space that the person inhabits. At the same time, one could not become more actively involved in interpersonal interactions and everyday activities if one’s physical and psychological capacities were not developed.

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related to personal identity are open to us. In such cases we have to have a look at the overall picture and to make explicit which demands our overall theory has to fulfil. Without this, our answers will be arbitrary — or rather, they will be more arbitrary than they need be” (2007, 58).

The trajectory of development of the biological-psychological and interpersonal elements cannot be seen in isolation from the person-space, as this infrastructure shapes the norms and practices that allow for one to be a person and to develop those capacities that are associated with the typical enculturated human. Schechtman further argues that the infrastructure is also dependent on, or shaped by, the other elements, as the person-space could not exist as it does without the psychological and physical capacities of humans, as well as human sociality. Schechtman argues that the exploration of persons and their continuation should be based on the recognition of these three intertwined characteristics that define a person life. She adapts the term “homeostatic property clusters” to refer to the three dimensions of the person life and to capture the idea that the persistence conditions of persons cannot simply select one of these areas to delineate personal continuity.

The Akan view of persons and personal identity – as explicated by Wiredu (1996) and Gyekye (1995) – theorises that a person has inseparable metaphysical and normative dimensions, the former referring to an integrated physical and psychological entity, while the latter refers to the moral status of such beings. An example of the kind of conceptualisation of ‘person’ present in many African cultures’ philosophies, the Akan view argues that a person cannot reasonably be discussed outside of the context of the society or community, since the individual enters the world in a community.<sup>2</sup> While we may have some instinctive biological reactions, these impulses are shaped and understood within the context of a society or culture. The Akan view recognises the human person as a biological entity, but also a fundamentally social being (Wiredu 1996). ‘*Onipa*’, the Akan term for ‘person’ has two meanings: the first is descriptive, and is used to refer to the metaphysical nature of the human being, while the second is normative, relating to the moral status of such beings. Both of these meanings of *onipa* are intertwined, such that the metaphysical and normative dimensions need to be considered together.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Ikuenobe argues that though there are differences in how the many African cultures conceptualise persons, all African cultures have community as a “conceptual foundation on which most African ideas, beliefs, values, ontology, cosmology, and ways of life are grounded.” (2006, 53). Furthermore, as D.A. Masolo notes, even a capacity that we could label as purely biological, the use of our limbs, is something that requires the guidance and support of others (2010). Masolo argues that the most important of the abilities that we develop through our development in a social context is the ability to take and use the ideas of others (*ibid.*, 141-2). Those characteristics that are usually identified through the psychological understanding of persons – rationality, autonomy, etc. – can only therefore be realised in a community.
  3. At the metaphysical level, the *onipa* is comprised of three components: *okra*, *sunsum*, and *honam/ nipadua* (Gyekye 1995, 93-101; Wiredu 1996, 125-127). The *okra* is the life force, which allows one to be alive, and which gives all human beings intrinsic value. The *honam* or *nipadua* is the body, the physical component of the individual. The third element, the *sunsum*, is the individual’s personality or character. The normative dimension of the *onipa* is linked to the *sunsum*. The Akan view is that ‘person’ at the metaphysical level cannot be defined by either physical or psychological makeup. The *onipa* is an integrated being, and to attempt to remove or privilege one aspect distorts the person. The metaphysical and the normative dimensions also cannot be seen as separate, such that we can argue that the metaphysical dimension is anterior to the normative.

Like their view on persons, the Akan personal identity theory is grounded in the descriptive and normative dimensions of persons. Persons are individuated by the “spatio-temporal specifics” of their bodies (Wiredu 1996, 127), thus allowing for an evident basis for differentiating between two persons, as well as for numerical identity. Additionally, since the body is one organised, discrete organism, the unity of persons problem is also accounted for by the Akan. However, while the body is important in developing the Akan view of personal identity, individuation does not come solely from the possession of the body of a human being so personal identity cannot be based on the existence of a discrete continuing biological organism. As Wiredu notes, we must also take into account the “moral, psychological and social circumstances” which interact with a variety of factors to shape our lives (ibid.). Furthermore, the body itself is understood within the community. For the Akan, the individual’s personal identity is therefore shaped by the biological makeup of the individual, as well as one’s character, within a communal setting. The social space is vital because it is in the societal setting that one learns to communicate and so develop mentality and use one’s body effectively; learns the values and beliefs of the society; develops one’s sense of morality; and ultimately understands how all of these components work together to shape one’s character and behaviour, which ultimately affects how one perceives oneself and is perceived by others in society. Personal identity is therefore shaped by the biological makeup of the individual, as well as one’s character, within a communal setting.

The Akan view and PLV are similar in terms of their sensibility to theorising about persons in their full range of meaning, and using that conceptualisation as the starting point for theorising about personal identity. They both conceptualise persons as being embedded in their social and cultural space, with personal identity therefore also developing and being understood in a social context. Like the PLV, the person in the Akan view exists within a social space and develops a sense of self and continued identity based on interactions within the social space. They share the view that the cognitive capacities of individuals are developed through interactions with others in the social space, and emphasise how the social and cultural infrastructure influences and constrains our interactions with others and the development of our physical and psychological capacities. Finally, they both have aspects of the narrative theory embedded, showing the value that is given by the views to the characterisation question.<sup>4</sup>

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4. For the PLV, it is not surprising given that Schechtman developed a version of the narrative theory before proposing the PLV. Schechtman argues that the typical enculturated person who lies at the heart of the PLV is a self-narrator, as described in the narrative theory (2014, 112). This provides an important aspect of the unified locus that is the person in her theory of personal identity. Though not explicit, the Akan view also has a narrative dimension, with the emphasis that it places on the character dimension of personal identity and the way in which one chooses one’s path and acts based on the path that one has chosen. The Akan view has a strong affinity with the theory as explicated by MacIntyre (2007) and Taylor (1989), because of the emphasis that these two philosophers place on the ethical and social influences on the development of

While both theories generally meet the criteria posited for a robust theory of personal identity, there are some weaknesses in both. Both theories do not give enough value to how we and others project an individual into the future and the subsequent embrace of a set of characteristics that guide both our interactions in the present and interpretations of past events. I believe that this consideration of future goals and values is vital in shaping one's orientation in the social space (helping to guide present interactions, memories and interpretations of past events, use of our bodies, and more generally the recognition of oneself and others as unified loci that we label as persons). Any reasonable theory of personal identity should therefore give consideration to this aspect of the characterisation question. The PLV is weakened by not emphasising this aspect, but the Akan view is also weakened by not making it more explicit and examining its implications for personal identity.

Another weakness of both theories is that the PLV does not seem to give enough consideration to the specific social context while the Akan theory is too grounded in the specific social context in which it develops. The Akan view is grounded in a set of broader metaphysical claims linked to specific religious and cultural practices. Should these not be embraced, it may be problematic to use the theory. One could argue that one does not have to make a metaphysical commitment to accept the way in which the Akan discuss the normative and descriptive dimensions and the value of the social context. But this leads to a weakening of the theory itself. So a theory that is not so embedded in the Akan worldview while still maintaining the strengths of the theory would be a stronger theory of personal identity.

The PLV aims to be applicable to all social contexts, but even so, I contend that it overlooks certain important socio-cultural historical facts. In discussing persons who occupy an "anomalous social position", Schechtman recognises that some individuals and groups of humans have been (and continue to be) treated as "non-persons and [this] prevents them from living a person life" (2014, 125). Even when treated as non-persons, they are still persons, because, in practice, individuals in groups that were deemed as non-persons were actually given "a place in person-space, albeit a disenfranchised, unjust, and deeply undesirable place" (128).<sup>5</sup> Schechtman differentiates between treating someone as a per-

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personal narratives. Like MacIntyre's and Taylor's formulation of the narrative view, the Akan emphasise the ethical aspect of personal identity. Also emphasised by the Akan and these two philosophers is the importance of the community's culture and history in shaping our understanding of ourselves. Furthermore, accountability and the role of social interactions and social relationships in shaping personal identity are also built into the Akan view.

5. Using, as an example, the experience of the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved persons and the consequent institutionalised slavery that was practised in the Americas, she argues that the restrictions that were put in place for the behaviour of the enslaved was an implicit recognition on the part of those who put the social infrastructure in place and those who reinforced it that the enslaved have all the capacities that one typically associates with a person. It is those capacities that were being restricted by the rules and laws

son and treating someone well to argue that all humans are persons, even if they are not provided with the “proper support” (2014, 129).<sup>6</sup> In making her argument, she however presents a dichotomy; that people are either persons or non-persons, without considering that the reality may be different, a consideration explored by Mills(1997).

Mills does not use the term non-person in building his theory about how western philosophical and political thought is grounded in denying personhood to non-Europeans (the racial contract). Instead, he invokes the concept of subpersonhood to highlight the ways in which the social and political infrastructure only granted the status of ‘person’ – a term which he argues was vital in the development of the individual normative theory that has driven western thought since the period of modernity – to white males. By so doing, Mills argues, all other humans were classified as subpersons, who have a “different and inferior schedule of rights and liberties applying to them” (ibid., 56), such that “it is possible to get away with doing things to subpersons that one could not do to persons, because they do not have the same rights as persons” (ibid.). Further, Mills argues, “subpersons are deemed cognitively inferior” (1997, 59). If we examine the PLV from the framing of Mills’ discussion, some people are excluded from the full set of rights that would be accorded in the person-space by virtue of their physical and psychological capacities, which are assumed to be deficient simply because of their racial categorisation. To therefore argue, as the PLV does, that they are given a space in the person-space and so are persons is therefore problematic. Mills argues that some degree of personhood is accorded to those who do not fit the framework of the typical human being – the white male – but such human beings will not be treated in the person-space as full moral, social, and political persons. The person-space is therefore shaped by a distorted social contract – the racial contract – which has been at the heart of the development of modern western thought, and still shapes philosophical thought today – at the moral, epistemological, and

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that were put in place as a part of the social infrastructure in those places where slavery was practised. Furthermore, while the attempt to treat these individuals as non-persons was focused on the person-space dimension of the tripartite person framework (and not always successfully), the other dimensions were not addressed. The enslaved had social interactions with each other that were typical of person-to-person interactions. They communicated with each other, formed intimate relationships, created families and communities, and they planned with each other. Schechtman’s argument is therefore that the oppressors who aim to deny the members of particular groups legitimate entry into a person-space show that they have underlying assumptions that these individuals are persons, so it is reasonable to reject the view that there is any category of humans who could be non-persons. She supports her claim by arguing that the way that marginalised group members are treated – and their behaviour habitually monitored and sanctioned by the social infrastructure – is fundamentally different from the way in which a non-human animal such a dog or horse would be treated.

6. Schechtman recognises that oppression exists, and “is an assault on the personhood of the oppressed” (ibid.). She argues that, akin to an organism that is starved of the crucial components that will allow it to thrive not being as healthy as one that has those components in adequate amounts, persons who live in oppressive social spaces are no less persons, but are less likely to flourish due to the poor social infrastructure. She concludes that members of oppressed groups are therefore really still seen as persons.



political levels. Schechtman invokes what Mills calls an ideal theory, when she should be using a non-ideal theory which recognises that certain groups of people are treated as subpersons in the person-space.

The person life in the PLV is grounded in the “typical enculturated human”. But, as race and gender theorists have noted, the typical enculturated human in the west (and western-influenced societies) will have particular ideas about who should be seen as living a person-life. Certain messages will be sent about the type of body that one has, and the implications of having that body for the developmental capacities that relate to all three elements of the PLV. Physically and mentally able-bodied white male is the paradigm for the enculturated human. No one else, based on the existing social infrastructure, meets those criteria in the same way because of differences grounded in the body.

Therefore, ‘atypical bodies’ can be used to refer to not only persons who have atypical physical development such as the lack of use of one of the senses or limited natural mobility. It also refers to those who do not meet the criteria associated with who has been assumed to be typical in western philosophical literature. Non-white, non-male, non-European – possessing such characteristics have also been deemed atypical. So, as noted by Fanon, it is not possible to understand the human, even as a biological organism, without the social dimension (1986). The human body is always imbued with meaning; it is not seen in a purely biological or animalistic manner. While the PLV recognises this, it does not consider its implications for the way in which individuals with these ‘atypical’ bodies will be labelled and treated, and how those persons will be viewed on a continuum.

Given the weaknesses highlighted in the two theories that I believe meet the criteria for a robust theory of personal identity, I am proposing the integrated theory of personal identity (ITPI), which I will now outline.

### **3 The Integrated Theory of Personal Identity (ITPI): An Overview**

The ITPI is a view of personal identity that is inextricably linked to the social space while accounting for the metaphysical and normative dimensions of the person. The metaphysical dimension includes social identities that persons assume or are assigned to persons, as well as the stable characteristics that the person has. The normative dimension of the person takes practical concerns into account, which includes normative judgements and social recognition. The theory also emphasises the forward-looking aspect of personal identity in a way that is not done in either the Akan or the person life views. This theory of personal identity envisions a process of negotiation with the result being an amalgam of the stable

features associated with the descriptive and normative dimensions of the person, and a forward-looking orientation seen in desires, goals, projects, and choices. For ease of reference, the stable features are called the experiential dimension of personal identity while the forward-looking dimension is called the evaluative dimension of personal identity.

The experiential dimension includes the bodily identity of the person, and attendant social identities that are marked on or mediated through the body. The experiential dimension captures the body, characteristics, and the social identities that are assigned to the person as well as those assumed by the person. It is initially shaped in childhood by the set of experiences that one has, though the process begins even before birth, based on familial arrangements and the ecological conditions for the pregnancy. One's biological makeup, gender assignment, race, etc., are not chosen by the child, but these social identities form the backdrop for the development of the child's capacities and capabilities, and how they will perceive and use their body. Fundamental aspects of one's identity are therefore determined before, at, or shortly after birth and these imposed social identities affect the child's development. Consequently, the socio-cultural historical space is vital for the experiential dimension. Since it is shaped in the social sphere through the social identities that are themselves understood in a particular social context, the experiential dimension clearly has an intersubjective dimension. Further, it can be seen as having an objective ontological status which affects how one is perceived, treated, and how one considers oneself. It is for these reasons that questions can be raised about actions that are deemed to be "out of character" for the person, because others have developed a sense of what the person is like (even if that understanding is grounded in a stereotype).

Nonetheless, one may stop and ask "Should I choose another path?" Similarly, I could ask someone else "Is that really what you want to do?" These questions may not necessarily be explicitly asked, but the recognition that they are assumed in thinking about the next action that one is going to engage in, or assessing what someone else could possibly do, means that the paths that are available for action are not strictly laid out by a sedimentary experiential identity. By the very possibility of asking these questions, one can therefore infer that personal identity includes another dimension that takes into account hopes, desires, future projects, etc. This other dimension, the evaluative, therefore becomes a part of the framework for personal identity.

The evaluative dimension involves an examination of the future goals, project and images of the individual that are brought to bear when considering how we should act. This examination may be done by the individual or someone else (or a group of people), and may be an active process or a more passive one. The evaluative dimension, with respect to the subjective aspect, provides one with the opportunity of seeing oneself as not being restricted by expectations embedded within the experiential dimension. It focuses on what one aims for, how one conceives of oneself in the future and how one's present

behaviours can lead to the actualisation of these goals. The subjective aspect of this dimension of identity operates in several interrelated ways. These are: (1) identification of specific goals based on what one considers to be important for one's life; (2) assessing which social identities will be accepted or rejected, modified, and/or given primacy; and (3) assuming a social identity that was not included in the set of social identities currently assigned to the person. The first two processes are not always active, as one may not consciously decide, for example on the goals that one has and uses as a basis for acting. Similarly, one may not actively select, reject or give primacy to a specific social identity, but may be unconsciously influenced. However, the assumption of an identity is generally an active process, since the person aims to be identified with a particular group or category, or seeks to act to foster that identification.

In this respect, the evaluative process can be seen as empowering, aiming at change, and serving the function of allowing for persons to subvert some categories as a way of seeing oneself in a positive light that cannot be received from the current experiential identity. It creates the space and opportunity for persons to project themselves into the future and identify characteristics and projects and goals that they deem to be valuable, and to connect their social identities and the resulting experiential dimension to their desired projects and make a decision about which identities they will embrace, adjust or discard.

While it may seem that this evaluative process would be purely subjective, grounded in the individual's exercise of their freedom, there is also an intersubjective aspect. So when a baby is born, there are expectations that tend to be developed about what that child will be like; their potential capabilities and characteristics become part of the story that the parents and family members will consider, and then the baby will be treated by others on the basis of that narrative that has been created for the child. The process may be a conscious one, but it is often unconscious, influenced by the socio-cultural space, and is one that permeates the entire lives of persons. The evaluative dimension, like the experiential dimension, is shaped in a particular socio-cultural historical space. Therefore, the social space itself influences and places constraints on the forward-looking nature of the evaluative identity dimension. Through being immersed in the society's culture, one develops a good understanding of the expectations that the culture has of its members and those expectations are likely to influence the kinds of goals that an individual will develop for themselves.

The evaluative dimension is also restricted by another very important factor, the body. Each human being has a particular biological makeup which shapes how the person develops their physical, psychological and social, and normative characteristics. Surgery, skin bleaching, and other practices that are used to change the body are grounded in the evaluative dimension, but there are still limits to these transformations since the experiences

that one would have had in the untransformed body will influence present interactions and interpretations.

The ITPI views personal identity as an amalgam of the experiential and the evaluative dimensions. The result is a unified continuing entity who meets the definition of a person. Through appealing to the experiential and evaluative dimensions, one can argue that there is a continuing human being that is the “object of biological, anatomical and neurophysiological inquiry”; “subject of consciousness”; and locus of moral attributes and source of value (Wiggins 1987, 56). This amalgamated identity develops through a process of active or passive negotiation between the experiential and evaluative dimensions. Each individual will typically have a subjective personal identity alongside an objective one. At the subjective level, as subjects of consciousness and loci of moral attributes, we engage in activities that are subsequently utilised to actively develop a set of characteristics that we assign to ourselves. The way in which we perceive ourselves can be conceived of as being the amalgam of the negotiation between the experiential and evaluative dimensions.

The subjective personal identity starts to be shaped from a young age through the development of the experiential identity, and so it becomes a very powerful horizon from which we interpret the world. Given that our earliest understanding of ourselves is grounded in the experiential identity, which develops from our social position, and how others view us and treat us, it may sometimes be the case that persons may attempt to become ossified in the experiential identity. This phenomenon is realisable because we tend to act habitually, so the evaluative process only reinforces the experiential dimension. But even when acting habitually, the person is still engaged in passively evaluating which aspects of their experiential identity is salient. At the other extreme, one may attempt to reject the experiential dimension in its entirety, or some fundamental social identities that one deems to be restrictive and detrimental to the sense of self that one hopes to foster. But it is improbable that one can eliminate these social identities, given that one’s experiential identity is built on these social identities.

The objective aspect of personal identity is grounded in the recognition of the continuity of the body, personality, the moral agent and the locus of value in one individual. This aspect may initially be thought to be strongly grounded in the experiential dimension, especially in terms of bodily continuity. However, the body is not simply a material object, but a socio-cultural historical object that is pregnant with meaning. So the body is infused with a range of beliefs and expectations by others in the social space. These beliefs and expectations permeate how we interact with other persons, as well as how social institutions treat different kinds of bodies or members of social groups. The identity that is assigned to a person (starting with the descriptive aspect) is therefore an amalgam of the experiential and the evaluative dimensions, the latter being present because normative judgements become involved.

## 4 Is the ITPI a Robust Theory of Personal Identity?

I contend that the theory captures the criteria for a robust theory of personal identity discussed above. It captures both the reidentification and the characterisation questions. The characterisation question is answered throughout, from the breakdown of the two dimensions which have character in-built in both dimensions, as well as the amalgam that results from the negotiation of the two dimensions. The two questions are not exclusive, however, and in the discussion of reidentification that follows, it will be evident that characterisation works alongside reidentification in theorising about personal identity through the ITPI. When considering the ITPI specifically in relation to synchronic identity, one is asking questions about the unity of the person, specifically, whether the person that is being theorised in the ITPI is in fact a unified entity. Or alternatively, can there be a schism between the experiential and the evaluative dimensions? The ITPI is not one that is invoking actual substances associated with the person, but rather is highlighting how it is that a unified person that we experience for ourselves and is perceived by others, develops. This unity is grounded first and foremost in the body and the objective social location that grounds the person (that is family, country, etc. into which one is born and raised). The unity is also seen in the way in which the experiential and the evaluative dimensions support and constrain each other. It should be noted that this unity does not however mean that the person remains unchanged, since people develop new habits and characteristics, and their bodies undergo change. Nonetheless, there is a stable unified entity that undergoes these changes.

As it relates to diachronic identity, there is an objective dimension as well as a subjective component to thinking about this issue. At the objective level is the recognition of the person persisting over time by considering bodily identity, fundamental social identities marked on the body, and the character of the person, if there was awareness of the individual's character before. At the subjective level, these same considerations come into play, though more emphasis is likely to be placed on one's lived experiences and life as an agent. From both the subjective and objective points of view, there is certainly a continuity, starting once again from the person who inhabits a particular social position.

The forgoing discussion of the evaluative identity emphasised that the possibility of change is a necessary component of personal identity. A person constantly changes because they have new experiences which become a part of the experiential identity and new choices, goals, and projects which are incorporated into the evaluative identity. Furthermore, aspects of a person's identity may be emphasised or deemphasised depending on the context. The result is that a person's identity is always in flux. The question could therefore arise as to whether it is reasonable to talk about a unified entity that is a person.

But two points need to be borne in mind here: (1) 'person' has embedded in it a normative dimension, which has implications for how one is treated if deemed a person or not. This normative dimension assumes that there is in fact an entity that can be identified, given a name, have an education and employment history, and so on. Therefore, for practical and normative reasons, the unity of the person is crucial; and (2) the fact that there is change does not mean that there is no stability. A person does not simply appear in the social space as an adult, but has a history of actions, a family background, a particular language group and culture, a particular gender, and so on. These features of the person provide a stable base for the continuity of identity. Additionally, the continuity of the social space itself, with its infrastructure of meanings and relationships, helps to maintain some of the stability expected in talking about the continuity of personal identity. This includes social identities and the values, characteristics, etc. associated with these identities. They provide a somewhat stable background for the changes based on the evaluative identity dimension. So, for example, even though there may be perceived to be a dramatic change in terms of gender, the person still has the same language, basic cultural identity, race, family background, and so on.

In theorising personal identity as an amalgam of the negotiation between the experiential and evaluative dimensions, I am able to explain why there is a relatively stable person who can be identified based on their body and occupation of a specific social location (i.e., family, language, community, etc.) and also how the identity of the person changes over time. The body serves as an objective basis for talking about the continuity of the person, but since the body's capacities (including cognitive capacities) are realised in the social space, it is always infused with social meaning. One's sense of self and how others identify someone are therefore associated with a particular body, so the reidentification and characterisation questions become entwined. As the individual has new experiences, this will necessarily affect both the experiential and evaluative dimensions, and will lead to a negotiation. The negotiation may not be conscious, because the evaluation may have been passive, but the process still occurs, since the individual and others in the social space include or exclude some of the individual's experiences from that person's experiential dimension. In so doing, a decision has therefore been made about what is salient for the person, and this decision is at the heart of that negotiation.

Through incorporating the future-oriented evaluative dimension, the ITPI is also able to make sense of how we consciously or unconsciously project ourselves and others into the future, and decide on the projects or goals that become part of one's personal identity. While someone may question whether this process should be incorporated as a dimension of one's personal identity, I believe that it actually already has that role and I have simply explicitly discussed it as such. When one considers, for example, how stereotypes operate, the person using the stereotype is assuming that the person being stereotyped should act

in a particular manner, in so doing utilising the evaluative dimension in identifying the stereotyped person.

Because of the evaluative dimension of our identities, there are always gaps through which persons can exercise their freedom. This transversality, as Glissant (1989) labels it, means that each person's reaction in the same context to the same event will not be uniform. Similarly, the person also has a stable foundation, grounded in the experiential dimension of their identity. The theory therefore sees personal identity as necessarily ambiguous and fluid, because the experiential dimension of one's identity is always becoming because of the evaluative dimension. This ambiguity, while we may wish to avoid it, is reflective of how we actually experience the world, since we have no fixed identity until death when we can no longer act and project ourselves into the future.

## 5 Application of the ITPI

My interest in discussions of personal identity has been heavily influenced by the how personhood is invoked in social contexts to include or exclude individuals with respect to full moral status. This is connected to what Quante (2007, 59) refers to as the conditions-of-personhood-problem that is "Which properties or capacities must an entity have in order to belong to the class of persons?" The capacities or properties are not assessed in isolation, and the recognition of how the normative aspect of personal identity concerns is influenced by the socio-cultural-historical space is embedded in the theory. The individual may be able to, on a subjective level, develop a set of goals and desires (evaluative dimension), but the reality constraints of the experiential dimension will generally influence the extent to which the person is able to act on and realise those goals and desires, and even the goals and desires themselves are constrained by the social context. So the characterisation and reidentification components of personal identity are influenced by the possession of certain types of bodies and other social identities that become relevant in the social space, and these end up influencing the types of discriminatory practices that are evident. Like Mills' formulation, the ITPI recognises that not everyone will have the same level of forensic concern applied to them, or have the same level of rights, based on the specific socio-cultural context, with its attendant discriminatory beliefs and practices.

If the socio-cultural context is one which places people in a hierarchy based on race, gender, physical and/or mental capacity, etc., then individuals who possess the desired attributes will be seen as having more practical and normative concerns being applied to them, while those who do not possess those attributes will be judged by a different standard. In discussing how race affects non-white people, Mills argues that the values that are held in western society about, for example, reason, knowledge creation and acquisition,

and axiological values, have been associated with Europeans/whites, so that non-white persons are judged using a different and inferior standard (Mills 1997). One could attempt to reject the values of the society as an individual (through the evaluative dimension). Individuals have this opportunity for evaluation of society's norms and practices, and can exercise one's autonomy in choosing to accept, reject or amend these norms and practices on the basis of one's own interests and goals. An argument could then be made that persons who find themselves in anomalous social positions could reject the negative labels that could affect their thriving. However, one must recognise that the starting point for this reassessment is still that society's social and cultural infrastructure. Furthermore, what needs to change in such contexts is the way in which the social space labels and treats different types of bodies.

And what of those individuals who do not have the cognitive capacity to even engage in those processes? What of neonates, those born with severely limited cognitive capacities, or those with dementia? They are not able to engage in an attempted rejection of society's norms, so they generally become ossified at the level of the experiential dimension combined with what family members, loved ones, and the wider society deem significant for the evaluative dimension. This is once again where the way in which the social space recognises or does not recognise the extent to which practical and normative concerns apply to all would come to the fore.

I consider the ITPI, influenced by Mills, to be a non-ideal theory. I would want to assert that from the point of foetal development through to the death and even beyond, we ought to be treated as persons with the full range of normative and practical considerations being applied. This is because from the perspective of the individual and/or the wider community, each of these individuals is seen as having worth.<sup>7</sup> However, the non-ideal ITPI recognises that the social space in which personhood becomes assigned ranks people and the ITPI shows how that occurs. At the same time, the theory leaves space for change. I envision the evaluative dimension being able to work at the level of groups and the community with respect to projecting themselves into a future where such discriminatory practices do not stymie the equitable normative treatment of 'atypical' bodies, such that the criteria for what is atypical will itself change. These groups and communities can then actively incorporate that vision into the present by enacting policies and practices and practices that will lead to this change, such that the socio-cultural context acquires a changed character just as an individual's character can change.

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7. My use of the term 'worth' here is indebted to Anna Julia Cooper, who discussed the distinction between value and worth in her seminal essay "What Are We Worth?"



## 6 Conclusion

In the forgoing, I have posited that a reductive understanding of persons that focuses solely on either their biological or psychological characteristics, without giving consideration to the normative and social dimensions of the concept, is inherently flawed. I subsequently identified and examined two theories that clearly offer this interconnected view of persons as integrated biological, psychological, normative and social beings. I have highlighted weaknesses in both and offered a theory that I believe overcomes these weaknesses. In the ITPI, where personal identity is theorised as an amalgam of the evaluative and experiential dimensions, an amalgam which is created through a process of negotiation between the two components. Personal identity takes into account both past actions and social positions (with all that entails) as well as the forward-looking aspect of persons. I have demonstrated how the theory accounts for persons and the reidentification and characterisation questions of personal identity and shown how the practical and normative aspects of persons are incorporated into considering personal identity. How the ITPI would treat cases of persons who possess 'atypical' bodies, especially within the contemporary western context, has also been briefly examined. There is still work to be done in developing this theory. Some areas include an explication of how the ITPI has a narrative component. Furthermore, there is the need to examine in more depth the relationship between the evaluative dimension and the experiential dimension and action, taking into account issues of memory, planning, and imagination. I also need to assess how the ITPI would treat with some of the hard cases of personal identity such as split brain and dissociative personality disorder. Nonetheless, I believe that the ITPI does capture the key components of a robust theory of personal identity, and is able to be used to explore the major practical concerns that arise when we invoke personal identity.

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