Georgia State University
ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

Philosophy Theses | Department of Philosophy

11-16-2009

Can Consciousness be Taken Seriously When it Comes to Personal Identity?

Stephen Matthew Duncan
Georgia State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/philosophy_theses

Recommended Citation
Duncan, Stephen Matthew, "Can Consciousness be Taken Seriously When it Comes to Personal Identity?" (2009). *Philosophy Theses.* Paper 65.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Philosophy at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

CAN CONSCIOUSNESS BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY WHEN IT COMES TO PERSONAL IDENTITY?

by

STEPHEN MATTHEW DUNCAN

Under the Direction of George Graham

ABSTRACT

Certain contemporary philosophers (e.g. Dainton, 2008; Strawson, 1999; Foster, 2008) have thought that the first-person, qualitative aspect of conscious experience should be taken seriously when it comes to our thinking about personal identity through time. These philosophers have thus argued that *experiential continuity* is essential to a person's ability to persist identically through time. This is what I will call 'the phenomenological theory'. In this thesis I describe the phenomenological theory and then discuss three problems that have plagued the history of this theory: the bridge problem, the token problem, and the ontological problem. I will argue that a recent version of the phenomenological theory proposed by Barry Dainton and Timothy Bayne (2005) provides satisfactory answers to two of these problems, but not the third.

I will conclude this thesis by proposing a superior version of the phenomenological theory—one that can handle all three problems.

INDEX WORDS: Personal identity, Personal persistence, Consciousness, Phenomenology, Bridge problem, Ontological problem, Individuality, Independence, Substance, Essence, Phenomenological

CAN CONSCIOUSNESS BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY WHEN IT COMES TO PERSONAL IDENTITY?

by

STEPHEN MATTHEW DUNCAN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
In the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
2010

Copyright by
Stephen Matthew Duncan
2010

CAN CONSCIOUSNESS BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY WHEN IT COMES TO PERSONAL IDENTITY?

by

STEPHEN MATTHEW DUNCAN

Committee Chair: George Graham

Committee: Eddy Nahmias
Andrea Scarantino

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
May 2010

DEDICATION

To Megan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to my advisor, George Graham, for overseeing this endeavor and for providing insight, comments, and recommendations that were immensely helpful. Thanks are also due to the other members of my thesis committee, Andrea Scarantino and Eddy Nahmias, for their guidance and helpful comments. Thanks also to Rush Stewart, Trip Glazer, Ryan DeChant, Dylan Murray, Ryan Born, and Dave Vander Laan for all the conversations that helped set me right. Finally, thanks to my wife Megan for making consistent progress on this project possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

CHAPTER

1. TAKING CONSCIOUSNESS SERIOUSLY WHEN IT COMES TO PERSONAL IDENTITY 1

1.1 The Phenomenological Theory 2

1.2 Motivation 4

1.3 Three Problems 7

1.4 Dainton and Bayne's Solution 8

1.5 The Ontological Problem 16

1.6 The Ontological Problem(s) 19

2. TOWARD A NEW VERSION OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL THEORY 27

2.1 Substance 28

2.2 How CC_S solves the Ontological Problem(s) 29

2.3 Alternatives 34

2.4 The Qua Problem 37

2.5 Conclusion 41

REFERENCES 43

CHAPTER 1

TAKING CONSCIOUSNESS SERIOUSLY WHEN IT COMES TO PERSONAL IDENTITY

Recently, much has been made of *taking consciousness seriously*. In the philosophy of mind, taking consciousness seriously entails holding a view of consciousness that gives significant metaphysical credence to the first-person, qualitative aspect of consciousness—what has been called the 'phenomenological aspect' or 'what-it's-likeness' of consciousness (see Chalmers, 1996, p. xii). But there is another sense in which contemporary philosophers have been prone to take consciousness seriously. Certain contemporary philosophers (e.g. Barry Dainton, 2008; Galen Strawson, 1999; John Foster, 2008) have thought that the first-person, qualitative aspect of conscious experience should be taken seriously when it comes to our thinking about personal identity through time. In other words, these philosophers think that having conscious experiences is essential to who we are as persons, and thus, they have argued that *experiential continuity* is essential to a person's ability to persist identically through time. This is what I will call 'the phenomenological theory'.[1] In this thesis I will describe the phenomenological theory and then discuss three problems that have plagued the history of this theory: the bridge problem, the token problem, and the ontological problem. I will argue that a recent version of the phenomenological theory proposed by Barry Dainton and Timothy Bayne (2005) (see also Dainton, 2008) provides satisfactory answers to two of these problems, but not the third. I will conclude this thesis by proposing a superior version of the phenomenological theory—one that can handle all three problems.

[1] To make sense of how a person persists through time is to give the necessary and sufficient conditions (a criterion of diachronic identity) under which person A at a given time can be said to be the same person as B at some later time (Wiggins, 2001, p. 55). The phenomenological theory, which owes much to the work of John Locke, is an attempt to make sense of personal persistence.

1.1 The Phenomenological Theory

A theory of personal persistence (or theory of personal identity through time) proposes necessary and sufficient conditions under which a person can be said to persist identically through time. In other words, a theory of personal persistence describes what it takes for a person who exists at one time to be the same *numerically* as a person who exists at some later time (Wiggins, 2001, p. 55). Theories of personal persistence prominent within the philosophical literature can be roughly split into three categories: (i) *bodily continuity theories*, which claim that personal persistence is accounted for by there being a certain kind (and/or degree) of physical/bodily continuity between persons at different times (see van Inwagen, 1990; Olson, 2007), (ii) *psychological continuity theories*, which claim that personal persistence is accounted for by there being a certain kind (and/or degree) of mental continuity between persons at different times (see Shoemaker, 2003; Unger, 1990), and (iii) *anticriterialism*, which suggests that personal persistence is brute and non-analyzable (see Zimmerman, 1998; Chisholm, 1976).[2]

The phenomenological theory—the view that we should take consciousness seriously when it comes to personal persistence—is a type of psychological continuity theory, for it states that a person persists through time on account of his or her continuous possession of certain mental properties. However, the phenomenological theory is different from other psychological continuity theories, for while psychological continuity theories typically focus on continuity between successive *psychological/computational* states (e.g. memories, beliefs, attitudes), the phenomenological theory focuses on continuity between successive *phenomenal* states (Dainton and Bayne, 2005, p. 555). Thus, for the phenomenological theorist, there is a crucial distinction within the class of mental states/psychological states (broadly defined) between *phenomenal*

[2] This taxonomy was taken from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. The article was written by Eric Olsen and can be found at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal/#AccOurIdeThrTim.

mental states and *psychological* mental states (narrowly defined). Ned Block (1994) characterizes this distinction as a difference between phenomenal consciousness and what he calls 'access-consciousness', the latter of which is the aspect of consciousness that provides "availability for use in reasoning and rationally guiding speech and action" (p. 1). According to Block, prototypical phenomenal-conscious states are sensations like pains and smells, whereas prototypical access-conscious states are propositional attitudes like thoughts and beliefs (p. 11). This is not to say that thoughts and beliefs do not often have a phenomenal component to them (nor that sensations are never accompanied by thoughts and beliefs); rather, it is just to say that beliefs and desires are typically characterized in terms of their informational content, which is, according to Block, a feature of access consciousness (see also Chalmers, 1996, p. 11).

Phenomenological theorists such as Barry Dainton and Timothy Bayne (2005) argue that it is phenomenal consciousness, not access consciousness, that is the key to personal persistence.[3] According to this view, phenomenal continuity is *necessary* for personal persistence; that is, a person cannot survive discontinuity in his or her phenomenal consciousness.[4] Phenomenal continuity is also *sufficient* for personal persistence on this view; that is, a person can conceivably survive discontinuities in his or her access consciousness, physical body, or any other discontinuity, so long as phenomenal continuity is maintained. While in reality phenomenal consciousness is always (and importantly) accompanied by certain access conscious states, when it comes down to it, it is the continuity of experiential relations between successive phenomenal states that confers personal identity over time. Thus, the phenomenological theory:

---

[3] Because access consciousness does not play a role in the theory currently under consideration, I will henceforth use 'consciousness' interchangeably with 'phenomenal consciousness'.

[4] Here 'continuity' refers to an uninterrupted "streamlike" diachronic unity that characterizes phenomenal consciousness. See Dainton and Bayne, 2005, p. 553.

The phenomenological theory: A person x at time t1 is identical to a person y at time t2 if and only if the phenomenal consciousness of x is continuous with the phenomenal consciousness of y.

1.2 Motivation

Recent support for the phenomenological theory of personal identity through time has been derived almost solely from the use of thought experiments (see Dainton and Bayne, 2005; Dainton, 2008). In a 2005 paper entitled "Consciousness as a Guide to Personal Persistence", Barry Dainton and Tim Bayne refer, with some reverence, to the use of thought experimentation in answering questions of personal persistence as 'the Method'. According to Dainton and Bayne, thought experiments give us crucial information about our intuitions regarding personal persistence, thereby guiding us in the formulation of identity criteria for persons. Dainton and Bayne (2005) write, "By separating in thought features that cannot be parted in practice, we can reasonably hope to distinguish what is important from what is not, or what is essential from what is merely contingent … If it seems evident that the person in the scenario survives the treatment, then it can be argued that the element removed is not a necessary condition of personal persistence. The hope is that the repeated use of this method, with a wide variety of scenarios, will finally yield conditions for personal persistence which all will agree are not only necessary but sufficient" (p. 550). According to Dainton, Bayne, and others (e.g. Chalmers, 1996), thought experiments provide us with a certain kind of empirical data. Unlike many other kinds of empirical data, the data afforded to us by thought experimentation does not have as its subject the external, publicly observable world; rather, this data has as its subject our own philosophical

intuitions or inclinations—in this case, intuitions about what properties possessed by persons are essential for their persistence through time.

Consider the following set of thought experiments introduced by Dainton and Bayne:

> [Consider] a streamal diverter. This device can be used to divert the flow of consciousness from one brain to another, in an instant. Although it preserves phenomenal continuity it has no impact on psychological continuity; whether a subject's psychology accompanies their stream of consciousness into a new body and brain depends on whether a brain-state transfer device is used along with a streamal diverter. Again, quite what it would be like to have one's stream of consciousness shifted in this fashion will depend on the character of the new body, and whether or not one's original psychology accompanies one's consciousness. The transfer could well be an extremely disturbing and disorienting affair. But this is not a bar to phenomenal continuity being fully preserved: as most of us know, it is perfectly possible to experience extreme confusion and disorientation … Consider [further] the following scenario: (S4) Brain state transfer devices are used to transfer Smith's psychology to your brain, and your psychology to Smith's brain. Streamal diverters are not used; phenomenal continuity is unaffected; your stream of consciousness continues to be sustained by your original brain, and Smith's by his … Consider [further] (S5) Streamal diverters are used to transfer Smith's stream of consciousness to your brain, and your stream of consciousness to Smith's brain. Brain state transfer devices are not used; psychological continuity is unaffected; your original psychology continues to be sustained by your original brain, and Smith's by his (2005, p.

557, 558).[5]

Dainton and Bayne (2005) claim that "the upshot of both [S4 and S5] is identical: you stay with your stream of consciousness and Smith stays with his" (p. 558). According to Dainton and Bayne, it is clear that each person goes where his or her respective phenomenal stream goes regardless of where his or her brain or psychological states go. While you are certain to be highly confused, so long as your phenomenal continuity remains, you remain.

Whether or not the judgments of Dainton and Bayne are going to be seen as convincing or as any evidence whatsoever in favor of the phenomenological theory depends entirely upon the intuitive strength of their judgments. Because this has struck many philosophers as a rather flimsy foundation for a theory of personal persistence, the use of the Method is highly controversial.[6] However, for the purposes of this thesis, I will simply assume that the considerations involved in the application of the Method—namely judgments based upon philosophical intuitions—are legitimate considerations. Furthermore, I will assume that the above scenarios introduced by Dainton and Bayne do provide at least enough intuitive evidence in support of the phenomenological theory to warrant a closer look at the theory.

However, even if we accept the above evidence derived from use of the Method as evidence in favor of the phenomenological theory, this theory has other serious hurdles to overcome. The discussion of these hurdles is the heart of this thesis, and so it is to these hurdles that I now turn.

---

[5] These scenarios presuppose that streams of consciousness are independent sets of properties and not merely modes of experiencing subjects. Dainton and Bayne (2005) hold this view, and for the purposes of this thesis, I will assume that this is at least a viable position.

[6] For discussions of the use of intuitions in philosophy, see Williamson (2004), Williams (1970), Sosa (2006), Horgan & Potrc (2008), and, of course, Kripke (1996).

1.3 Three Problems

I will consider three serious problems with the phenomenological theory. I will argue that a version of the phenomenological theory recently put forth by Dainton and Bayne (2005) and Dainton (2008) ameliorates the first two problems, but not the third. In fact, I will argue that Dainton and Bayne's approach to the third problem actually compounds the problem. I will then propose a new version of the phenomenological theory that solves all three problems.

1. The Bridge Problem. Perhaps the most obvious problem for the phenomenological theory is called 'the bridge problem', which points out that a given person's stream of consciousness is regularly interrupted (e.g. during sleep) and thus, if it is the sameness of phenomenal stream that accounts for personal persistence, persons are very short-lived creatures. In other words, if phenomenal continuity is necessary for a person's persistence through time, then dreamless sleep, for example, results in the annihilation of that person. So if the phenomenological theory as it currently stands is true, then a person cannot survive dreamless sleep or other unconscious episodes. But it seems obvious that persons *do* survive unconscious episodes! Thus, it seems that the phenomenological theory as it currently stands must be false.

2. The Token Problem. Some philosophers have thought that it is deeply counterintuitive to hold that a person (or any other object) persists solely on the basis of the continuity of states—such as phenomenally conscious states—tokened in that person (see van Inwagen, 1990). This is what I will call 'the token problem'. The token problem implies that whether or not a person is the subject of any continuous state is a matter of *contingent* fact. That my body temperature is now 98-degrees or that I am currently awake and alert are contingent facts about my current and continuing states. While it is true that these states correspond to the way things are for me now and across some period of time, it could have been otherwise with me. But if it could have been

otherwise with me, then the continuity of these states over time is not *necessary* for my continued existence, and the phenomenological theory as it currently stands is false.

3. The Ontological Problem. A third and final problem to be addressed by the phenomenological theory involves the ontological nature of persisting persons. This problem is of a different kind than the first two, for it is not an objection *per se*, but rather, a series of important questions that are raised by the phenomenological theory: If I persist so long as I am phenomenally consciousness, what kind of thing could I be? Am I a certain kind of animal? Am I an immaterial soul? Am I a stream of consciousness? These ontological issues have become what I call 'the ontological problem' in relation to the phenomenological theory because recent (Dainton, 2008; Strawson, 1999) and historical (Locke, 1964; Hume, 1978) attempts by phenomenological theorists to provide answers to the above questions have proven problematic. And unless the metaphysical implications of the phenomenological theory can withstand rigorous scrutiny, this view should not be adopted.

1.4 Dainton and Bayne's Solution

The bridge problem, the token problem, and the ontological problem are three serious hurdles for phenomenological theorists to overcome. In "Consciousness as a Guide to Personal Persistence," Dainton and Bayne (2005) propose a version of the phenomenological theory that has bearing on each of these three problems. In this section I will consider the bearing Dainton and Bayne's view has on each of the first two problems.

In direct response to *the bridge problem*, Dainton and Bayne (2005) admit that conscious streams are, in fact, regularly interrupted throughout persons' lives, but hold on to the intuition that persons persist through periods of unconsciousness by insisting that persons persist so long

as their *ability* to produce conscious experience is continuous, even if consciousness itself is temporarily dampened or extinguished by sleep, coma, or exotic drug (see also Dainton, 2008; Unger, 1990).[7] Thus, on this view what matters for my personal identity through time is not that I am continuously conscious, but rather, that I am continuously *capable* of being conscious. While streams of phenomenal consciousness may themselves begin and end regularly, according to this version of the phenomenological theory, a person's enduring *capacity* or *capacities* for consciousness are essential to that person's persistence, where 'capacity for consciousness' refers to a person's total ability to have unified conscious experiences and 'capacities for consciousness' (also called 'experiential capacities') refers to a person's individual conscious abilities with respect to individual sensory modalities (e.g. sight, touch, hearing). The mechanics behind this view can be further understood in the following way:

> A typical human person possesses a vast range of experiential capacities, only a few of which are active at any one time. When a person becomes unconscious, none of their experiential capacities are active, but the capacities nonetheless remain in existence: the irretrievable loss of the capacity for consciousness is what differentiates being merely unconscious from being dead (Dainton and Bayne, 2005, p. 565).

This view, which is a version of the phenomenological theory, is what I will call the 'Capacity for Consciousness View' (CC).

[7] There are several possible solutions to *the bridge problem*. For example, some philosophers (e.g. Descartes, Leibniz, Husserl) have argued that, contrary to appearances, a person's phenomenal stream is never *truly* interrupted during sleep, coma, etc.

The Capacity for Consciousness View (CC): A person x at time t1 is identical to a person y at time t2 if and only if the capacity for consciousness of x is continuous with the capacity for consciousness of y.

According to CC, a person persists through time on account of that person's continuous possession of the capacity for consciousness. CC solves the bridge problem because dreamless sleep or coma does not threaten a person's survival on CC; that is, so long as that person's capacity for consciousness persists. But in order for CC to be plausible in the end, CC theorists like Dainton and Bayne need to provide at least two things: (i) an informative description of capacities for consciousness and (ii) a principled view of how sophisticated a person's capacity for consciousness must remain in order for that person to persist through time.

With regard to (i), Dainton and Bayne (2005) attempt to make sense of capacities for consciousness by introducing the notion of an *experience producer* (EP), which is "any object or system which is capable of generating experience, of one or more specified kinds, when appropriately stimulated, by virtue of the laws of nature" (p. 565). An EP is not itself a capacity for consciousness; rather, EPs *possess* the capacity for consciousness in the same way that a lens possesses the capacity for light refraction or a car possesses the capacity for motion. Thus, Dainton and Bayne understand the capacity for consciousness in the following way:

At time t, the capacity for consciousness is instantiated in (possessed by) an experience producer p if and only if: (a) if p is active, p *is* generating conscious experiences, and (b) if p is inactive, p *would* generate conscious experiences if appropriately stimulated (see Dainton and Bayne, 2005, p. 565).

Those who believe that consciousness is necessarily produced by or instantiated in the brain will claim that the brain is in fact the only possible EP or system of EPs (see Searle, 1995). However, Dainton and Bayne prefer to remain ontologically neutral as to what kind of thing could produce conscious experience. Those who, like Dainton and Bayne, believe that it is at least conceivable that something like a silicon computer chip (or immaterial soul) could produce conscious experiences will be happy to accept theory-neutral EPs. There seems to be no major theoretical problem with remaining neutral on this matter. One can simply say that as far as EPs go, the proof of the pudding is in the eating—anything capable of producing conscious experience counts as an EP. And when we talk about a person possessing the capacity for consciousness, we can explain this by saying that a person is partly (or wholly) composed of EPs that possess the capacity for consciousness. This is analogous to saying that a pair of glasses possesses the capacity to refract light on account of being partly composed of lenses that possess the capacity to refract light (see Dainton, 2008, p. 229).

With regard to (ii), there are a variety of strategies for solving what Dainton and Bayne (2005) call 'the depth problem' (p. 560). Peter Unger (1990), for example, argues that persons must maintain a certain level of phenomenal sophistication in order to remain persons. Dainton and Bayne (2005), on the other hand, argue that so long as a person possesses a single capacity for consciousness, that person persists through time. The apparent upshot of Dainton and Bayne's view is that I could persist identically through time while having a mental life no different than that of a toad.

The depth problem requires a principled answer, but because there are at least several such answers available to the advocate of CC, I will not adjudicate between them here. What is

important for the present purposes is that CC is a plausible solution to the bridge problem, and thus, staves off at least one major worry associated with the phenomenological theory.

CC provides an answer to the bridge problem, but what about *the token problem*? To reiterate the force behind the token problem, consider the following analogical argument introduced by Peter van Inwagen (2001):

> If materialism and the psychological continuity theory are both correct (and if there really are persons that strictly and literally persist through time), then it follows that there are cases of the following sort: x is a material object that exists at one time and y is a material object that exists at another time and whether x and y are identical is entirely a function of whether certain psychological states that are "tokened" in or realized in x are continuously connected with certain psychological states that are tokened in y. This seems to me to be a very strange thesis. It could be compared with the thesis that whether a computer that exists at one time and a computer that exists at another time are identical is entirely a function of whether the information processing that is going on in the former computer at the one time is causally continuous with the information processing that is going on inside the latter computer at the other time (p. 157).[8]

Van Inwagen suggests that it is deeply counterintuitive to think that the persistence conditions for a person could be constituted by facts pertaining to whether or not mental states are continuously tokened in that person. This is because mental states seem to be tokened in persons only contingently—not as a matter of necessity. At some time t, I could have been the subject of experience p or I could have been the subject of experience q, or I could have failed to

[8] Psychological continuity theories such as the phenomenological theory are not committed to the truth of materialism, but this assumption does not change the heart of what van Inwagen is arguing.

be the subject of any experience whatsoever. But if I persist if and only if I am continuously conscious, then it is not the case that I could have been unconscious at time t, for if I were unconscious, *I* would not have been *me*—I would have ceased to exist.

Like the bridge problem, the token problem raises doubts about it being the case that a person is (*de re*) necessarily the subject of continuous conscious states. However, the token problem is distinct from the bridge problem. While the bridge problem highlights the point that persons are not, *in fact*, the subjects of continuous conscious states, the token problem claims that, regardless of whether or not persons are in fact the subjects of continuous conscious states, being the subject of such states is inessential to being a person. The difference between the bridge problem and the token problem can be illustrated with an analogy. Consider the following claim: I persist through time if and only if I remain in California. There are arguably two distinct challenges to this claim. First, it can be pointed out that when I was seven, I visited Arizona and yet persisted through that episode. This point is akin to the point that the bridge problem is making—that I have evidence that seemingly contradicts the theory in question. Second, it can be argued that, whether or not I visited Arizona when I was seven, continuously remaining in California is not a good criterion of personal persistence, for being in some spatial location has nothing to do with being a person. This point is akin to the point that the token problem is making—that the theory of personal persistence in question fails to identify a plausible criterion of personal persistence.

As van Inwagen suggests, perhaps it *is* implausible or counterintuitive to suggest that a person p at time t1 is identical to a person q at time t2 if and only if the phenomenal stream tokened in p is continuous with the phenomenal stream tokened in q. Of course, for reasons already discussed, the idea that a person persists so long as a given phenomenal stream persists

has been abandoned in favor of the idea that a person persists so long as he or she possesses the continuous *capacity* for conscious experience (CC). This adjustment already ameliorates some of the intuitive worries expressed by van Inwagen. By analogy, while it may seem odd to suggest that a computer persists so long as its information processing is causally continuous, it does not seem so odd to suggest that a computer persists so long as it continuously possesses the capacity for processing information. After all, a computer is nothing other than an information processor.

However, it might be argued that CC merely relocates the token problem from mental state tokens to capacity tokens. Thus, the analogy might be pressed—it might be argued that for a computer r at time t1 to be identical to a computer s at time t2, a continuous capacity for information processing need not be tokened in r and s. Suppose a computer breaks down and requires serious repair. Suppose that in order to repair the computer, a technician disassembles the various information processing components of the computer so that it no longer possesses the capacity for information processing. Shortly after disassembling the computer and fixing the problem, the computer technician reassembles the computer and returns it to its owner. Surely the technician, owner, and any thinking being would say that the computer returned to the owner is the same computer that was handed over to the technician. Thus, it might be said that while it may at first seem less counterintuitive to say that a computer (and, by analogy, a person) persists so long as its capacity for information processing is continuous, in the end, demanding any continuity with regard to information processing for the persistence of a computer is counterintuitive.

There are at least three possible ways that a CC theorist could reply to this argument. First, the CC theorist could argue that while the computer in the above scenario persists in a

loose and popular sense (which is important for answering questions regarding ownership and such), the computer does not persist in a strict and philosophical sense. If we want to say that a computer just is an information processor, then surely we would not say that a computer possessing the capacity for information processing at time t1 is identical to the lump of plastic and wiring sitting in the technician's shop at time t1.5 that possesses no such capacity for information processing. That this is intuitive can be illustrated by supposing that the technician did not reassemble the computer, and instead left it in pieces in his office. In such circumstances, surely the owner, technician, and any thinking being would admit that the computer is no longer a computer. And if this computer is no longer a computer, it cannot possibly be identical to something that is a computer. But if we agree with this—that the computer at time t1 is non-identical to the hunk of plastic and wiring at time t1.5—then we do not really mean what we say if we claim that a computer can persist *through* being disassembled and reassembled, for the computer did not really persist through time until such time when it was reassembled.

A second possible reply to the computer analogy is to suggest that both persons and computers are capable of gappy existences. According to this view, a person could be disassembled, reassembled, or whatever—that is to say, a person could cease to exist—and yet, come back into existence at some later time. This is not a very attractive reply, for without temporal continuity, there seems to be no principled way to determine whether or not the same capacity/capacities for consciousness belong to the same individual person over time.

A third strategy for the CC theorist is to argue that the analogy between computers and persons breaks down at a certain point. While it may be plausible that a computer could have a gappy existence, it is not plausible that a person could have a gappy existence. While a single computer can be disassembled and reassembled, a single person must remain intact.

The lesson to be learned is this: regardless of the strategy chosen by the CC theorist, it seems that the counterintuitive implications created by van Inwagen's analogy can be understood in ways that are not, in fact, counterintuitive. Thus, the phenomenological theorist can overcome both the bridge problem and the token problem by accepting the CC version of the phenomenological theory. However, *the ontological problem* remains. In the next two sections I will argue that Dainton and Bayne's (2005) solution to the ontological problem is unsatisfactory.

1.5 The Ontological Problem

If I persist so long as I continuously possess the capacity for consciousness, what kind of thing could I be? Am I a certain kind of animal? Am I an immaterial soul? Am I a stream of consciousness? If we are to accept the CC version of the phenomenological theory, the ontological implications of CC must stand up to metaphysical scrutiny. Thus, the ontological problem is an issue that needs to be addressed for the phenomenological theory to be considered plausible.[9]

As far as the ontological problem is concerned, Dainton and Bayne (2005) take CC to imply a straightforward solution (see also Dainton, 2008). They ask, "So far as one's own personal survival is concerned, what matters most, the object that possesses the [experiential] capacities, or the [experiential] capacities by themselves (p. 567)?" To Dainton and Bayne, the answer is obvious: "Only the capacities matter" (ibid.). And if it is only the experiential capacities that matter, reason Dainton and Bayne, then it makes sense to say that a person *just is*

[9] For the present inquiry, I will assume that a person is an individual bearer of properties with determinate identity conditions—in a word, persons are objects (see Lowe, 2006; Quine, 1990, Dainton, 2008, p. 343). Though Dainton (2008) insists that persons are objects, his own perspective on what counts as an object is elusive. For this reason, I take a more or less neutral position on what counts as an object. However, my own opinion on the matter is that the three principles outlined in the next section in criticism of CC_M—individuality, independence, and property-bearing—are helpful guidelines for what counts as an object.

a collection of such capacities. This view, which I will call the '*Mere* Capacity for Consciousness View' (CC_M), suggests that a person is identical to a collection of experiential capacities.[10]

> **The *Mere* Capacity for Consciousness View (CC_M)**: A person x at time t1 is identical to a person y at time t2 if and only if (a) x and y are wholly composed of capacities for consciousness, and (b) the capacities for consciousness that compose x are continuous with the capacities for consciousness that compose y.

According to CC_M, a person is a collection of capacities for consciousness (c1, c2, c3 … cn) that persists identically through time so long as he or she is continuously composed of at least some capacities for consciousness. An individual person may gain and lose parts (experiential capacities) over time, but according to Dainton and Bayne (2005), so long as *one* experiential capacity remains, so too does a person (p. 560).

That is CC_M. The question is: Is it plausible that persons are the kind of thing described by CC_M? On a *purely intuitive level*, it might be argued that to talk of collections of capacities as objects (let alone persons) is to commit what Gilbert Ryle called a category mistake. A category mistake is made when an entity of one category is spoken of or described in terms that are only appropriately applied to entities of a completely different category (Ryle, 1949). For example, suppose a person who is completely unfamiliar with baseball is taken to a baseball game and asked to be the umpire. Suppose further that a member of one of the teams hits a homerun, but

[10] This view is proposed by Dainton and Bayne (2005), but defended in detail by Dainton (2008). This sort of view has a distinguished history: both David Hume (1978) and John Locke (1964) appeared to hold similar views whereby persons are identical to a collection of certain mental states.

after he rounds the bases and touches home plate, the novice umpire calls him out. Incredulous as to how he could be called out after hitting a homerun, the player asks the inept umpire why he was called out. If the rookie umpire were to respond by saying that the player is out at home because he is no longer *at* home, and 'being out' just means that one is out of one's dwelling place, then this umpire would be guilty of a category mistake. He is using the terminology of an entirely different category of things (residences rather than bases) from the one that is relevant given the context of baseball. The umpire might as well look at home plate and ask for directions to the kitchen! In the same way, to say that a person is a collection of experiential capacities seems on the face of it to be a category mistake. We do not normally think of capacities as entities of the same kind as plants, animals, or persons. Rather, 'capacities' usually refers to properties *possessed* by an object, not an object itself; that is, capacities are powers that can be exercised or possessed by an object.[11] Thus, to speak of persons as experiential capacities appears, on a *purely intuitive level*, to be guilty of using the terminology proper only to one category (properties) in order to describe things of a completely different category (objects).

So much for first impressions. However, while we might not normally think of capacities as objects, the plausibility of this notion ultimately rests on whether or not capacities or powers can, in fact, be the sole constituents of a certain kind of object—namely, a person. One might claim, as have some philosophers (e.g. Baruch Spinoza, Donald Davidson; see Heil, 2008), that contrary to appearances, the universe is nothing more than a collection of capacities or powers; that is, capacities constitute all of the objects in the universe. In a paper entitled, "Powerful Qualities", John Heil (2008) describes this view, called 'scientiphicalism', which is motivated in the following way:

[11] I will use 'capacity' and 'power' interchangeably.

> When we reflect on electrons' intrinsic nature, it seems obvious that once we have set out their propensities to do this or that in concert with other elementary things, we have said all there is to say about them. So it is with other particles, the forces, and the fields. We are left with a picture of the physical world as a colorless domain in which objects acting in ways that reflect their propensities combine to form more complex objects the nature of which is determined wholly by the propensities of their constituents … To the extent that we tolerate qualities in our thinking about the world, they appear to be, at best, epiphenomenal add-ons (p. 2).

If this view of capacities is correct, then it seems that Dainton and Bayne's view that persons are identical to a collection of experiential capacities (CC_M) can avoid the charge of being a category mistake. According to scientiphicalism, capacities are properties that are not defined solely in reference to what we normally think of as objects. In fact, quite the opposite: what we normally think of as objects are really the bi-products of capacities.

The truth of scientiphicalism would clearly be *sufficient* to vindicate Dainton and Bayne from the charge of committing a category mistake, but holding such a view is not *necessary* for such a vindication. What the adherent of CC_M must defend is only the notion that a person is the sort of object that can be wholly composed of powers or capacities (specifically, experiential capacities). In what follows I will develop three sets of problems for CC_M, thereby suggesting that this view is highly implausible. I will call these problems the *ontological individuality problem*, the *ontological dependence problem*, and the *ontological architecture problem*.

1.6 The Ontological Problem(s)

1. The Ontological *Individuality* Problem. I suggest that a person is a single object that, in principle, can be individuated or distinguished from other objects (including other persons). In other words, I suggest that persons are *individual* objects. I take it that this notion is essential to the project of providing persistence conditions for persons, for the idea that I persist identically through time presupposes that I am a single thing that is different from other things such as my chair, my dog, or my wife. If I am not a single persisting thing, then there is no sense in providing identity conditions for *me*, nor in saying that *I* persist through time (see, Lowe, 1998; van Inwagen, 1990; Wiggins, 2003; Dainton, 2008, p. 347). For this reason, we should only give up the notion that a person is an individual object as a last resort.

At first glance, CC_M appears to be in harmony with the above suggestion. According to CC_M, a person is a unified collection of experiential capacities, and thus, CC_M suggests that persons exhibit genuine singularity (Dainton, 2008, p. 343). Nonetheless, there are at least two reasons to doubt that a collection of experiential capacities could count as an individual object, and for this reason, CC_M is susceptible to what I will call the *ontological individuality problem*.

(i) If a person is an individual object and CC_M is true, then it must be true that an individual person could be wholly composed of experiential capacities. However, as Heil (2008) argues, there is reason to doubt that capacities or powers could be the sole constituents of any individual object (including a person), because it seems that powers can only be thought of as modes or properties of objects that also possess other substantial *qualities* (e.g. mass, shape, density, etc.). Heil (2008) writes, “Things do what they do because they are as they are, and ways things *are* are qualities” (p. 20). For Heil, powers or capacities are necessarily tied to the qualities that are instantiated in objects, and thus, it does not make sense to talk of powers or capacities as anything other than properties possessed by objects that also possess certain

qualities. Consider, for example, a billiard ball. We can only think of this billiard ball as having certain powers in virtue of the way it is qualitatively; that is, it only makes sense to talk of this billiard ball as having powers (e.g. the power to displace other billiard balls) relative to its size, shape, density, etc. If this billiard ball had a different size—say the size of a speck of dust—its powers would change markedly in virtue of the qualitative difference in that billiard ball. If the same holds true for other objects in the universe (e.g. persons), then it is reasonable to assume that powers or capacities are mere modes of objects, and that these powers or capacities ebb and flow with the various qualities that are also instantiated in those objects (see also Foster, 1982).

In various places, it appears as if Dainton and Bayne agree with the above contentions. Dainton (2008), for example, admits that "there is indeed a sense in which experiential capacities are mode-like" and, according to CC_M (what Dainton calls 'the C-theory'), persons are only "properties of their bodies" (p. 342, 228; see also p. 344). Thus, it seems that CC_M does *not* give us a view whereby capacities are the sole constituents of objects; rather, CC_M gives us a view whereby capacities are properties or modes *of* objects (i.e. EPs).

However, in numerous other places, Dainton (2008) maintains that persons-as-capacities *are* individual objects (p. 343, p. 347). Dainton substantiates this claim by suggesting that collections of experiential capacities exhibit a genuine unity that comes from being associated with a single, unified stream of conscious experience. For Dainton (2008), this unity is enough to qualify a collection of experiential capacities as an individual object (p. 347).

In the end, what it appears Dainton is suggesting is that a collection of experiential capacities is an object that is also a *proper part* of another object (i.e. a body)—much like my arm is both an object and a proper part of my body, and a lampshade is both an object and a

proper part of a lamp (see Dainton, 2008, p. 342). But this suggestion does not ameliorate the ontological individuality problem; rather, it merely pushes the problem back, for to qualify as an individual object, a collection of experiential capacities must be the sole constituents of that object, regardless of whether or not that object is a proper part of another object. And if, as it seems, experiential capacities are merely modes of objects—objects that also possess qualitative properties—then it is difficult to see how a collection of experiential capacities could be the sole constituents of *any* object.

(ii) Beyond the question of whether or not an individual object could be wholly composed of experiential capacities, there is a further worry with regard to CC_M and individuality. If we are to make sense of the notion of an individual person persisting through time, we need to be able to make sense of how a single person is distinct from other persons. But it is difficult to see how a certain collection of experiential capacities could be individuated as *yours* or *mine* without first appealing to an assumed-to-be individuated person. Presumably I have the same capacity for seeing red that you do, so what makes my capacity for seeing red different from yours? In response to this sort of question, Dainton and Bayne (2005) suggest that the capacities that constitute one person can be distinguished from the capacities that constitute another person on the basis of being associated, when active, with distinct streams of consciousness (p. 566). Unfortunately this reply begs the further question: What explains the fact that one capacity gives rise to one stream of consciousness and not another? We could imagine a spatially interwoven collection of EPs, some of which give rise to my conscious experience and some of which give rise to your conscious experience. In such a situation, how could we determine which EPs give rise to which person's experience? Furthermore, how could we individuate persons when each person's EPs are inactive? Imagine the following scenario: While

Fred and George are unconscious (sleeping, say), exactly half of Fred's EPs are switched with exactly half of George's EPs. Who, then, is Fred and who is George? According to CC_M, a person at one time is identical to a person at some later time if and only if the experiential capacities that compose the earlier person are continuous with the experiential capacities that compose the later person. But in the case of Fred and George, there does not seem to be any principled way to determine which person is which, and so it seems that there is no non-arbitrary way to individuate a single person through time. This is a problem for CC_M.

As I have argued, it seems that CC_M is a view according to which persons are *not* individual objects. Thus, the ontological individuality problem takes the form of a dilemma: either we must give up on the notion that persons are individual objects, or we must give up on CC_M. I propose that we give up on CC_M.

2. The Ontological *Dependence* Problem. I suggest that, in principle, individual persons can be picked out without reference to any distinct object or objects, and the existence of an individual person does not logically depend upon the existence of any distinct object or objects (and by 'distinct object', I mean any object that is not itself the person in question or a proper part of that person). In other words, I suggest that persons are *independent* objects. I take this notion to be essential to the project of providing persistence conditions for persons, for the idea that a person persists identically through time presupposes that, in principle, sense can be made of what a person is without reference or ontological appeal to distinct objects or things beyond the proper parts that compose that person (see van Inwagen, 1990, p.12). In other words, if we cannot make sense of what a person is without reference or appeal to distinct objects beyond the proper parts that compose that person, then it seems that we cannot be sure that the (diachronic) identity conditions that we apply to that person accurately describe *that* person's identity through

time and not (at least partly) the identity of some other object or objects. For this reason, we should only give up the notion that a person is an independent object as a last resort.

Once again, CC_M appears to be in harmony with the above suggestion, for CC_M states that a person is a discrete collection of experiential capacities (c1, c2, c3 … cn) (see Dainton, 2008, p. 345). However, there are at least two reasons to doubt that a collection of experiential capacities could count as an independent object, and for this reason, CC_M is susceptible to what I will call the *ontological dependence problem*.

(i) If a person is an independent object, then, *in principle*, we can pick out a person without reference to any other object. A clock is an independent object, and thus I can pick out a clock without referencing any other object. An individual cog within a clock is also an independent object, and so although the function of a cog is only intelligible in a certain context, I can nonetheless pick a cog out without reference to any other object. However, as John Heil (2008) argues, it is doubtful that we can likewise make sense of a collection of powers apart from or previous to the putative objects of which they are supposed to be powers.[12] Consider, for example, two billiards balls, each possessing the power to move the other billiard ball when the two are brought into contact. Now take away the mass, shape, and all other qualities of the billiard balls. Is it sensible to say that the power to move another billiard ball associated with each ball remains? If so, how many such powers remain? Two? One? In fact, it does not seem that any such powers remain. But anyone who thinks that we can make sense of powers apart from or previous to the putative objects they are suppose to be powers of must be able to say something about powers *sans* qualities.

[12] Heil (2008) writes, "Strip away the qualities [e.g. shape, mass, etc.], and it is no longer clear what we are talking about" (p. 11).

Dainton and Bayne (2005) (and Dainton, 2008) do not have an adequate response to this objection. In fact, the notion that capacities or powers cannot be made sense of apart from the objects that possess them seems to be in accord with the assumptions of Dainton and Bayne, who define experiential capacities purely in terms of the objects that possess those capacities (EPs). It is only after the mechanics of EPs are worked out that we are supposed to get a sense of how experiential capacities are instantiated. So if Dainton and Bayne wish to suggest that we can make sense of persons-as-capacities apart from the EPs with which they are associated, they must provide an explanation or description of experiential capacities that does not require appeal to EPs. Otherwise, we cannot make sense of persons as independent objects.

(ii) Furthermore, if a person is an independent object, it stands to reason that a person's existence does not logically depend upon the existence of some other, ontologically distinct entity. However, according to CC_M, the existence of a person *does* logically depend upon the existence of some other, ontologically distinct entity—namely, a system of EPs. The existence of some entity x is logically dependent upon the existence of some other entity y if and only if the annihilation of y logically entails the annihilation of x. In other words, x exists at some time *because* y exists at that time. The sort of thing I have in mind here is illustrated by the relationship between an object and its color. The existence of an instance of redness instantiated on a sofa logically depends upon the existence of the sofa itself. If the sofa goes out of existence, so too does the instance of redness instantiated on it. The redness only exists *because* the sofa exists. The redness is merely a property or mode of the sofa—a way the sofa is. Now, I simply suggest that a person is more like the sofa that possesses a color than the color that is possessed by a sofa. CC_M seems to suggest just the opposite. For those inclined to agree with me, CC_M is problematic.

As I have argued, CC_M does not seem to be a view according to which persons are independent objects. Thus, just like the ontological individuality problem, the ontological dependence problem can be stated as a dilemma: either we must give up on the notion that persons are independent objects, or we must give up on CC_M. Once again, I propose that we give up on CC_M.

3. The Ontological *Architecture* Problem. Finally, I suggest that a person is the bearer of properties, some of which are mental properties and some of which are experiential capacities. It would seem that I am the *subject* of my experiences and the *possessor* of my experiential capacities. Yet, it is difficult to see how we can make sense of the apparent subject-predicate relationship between a person and his or her mental states and capacities if a person is, in fact, identical to a collection of experiential capacities. Indeed, on CC_M, it is hard to see in what sense I could be a subject of experience. When capacities are exercised, the possessor of said capacities is normally said to be the subject or possessor of certain active powers. For example, when the capacity for motion is exercised in a car, that car is said to move; the capacities for motion inherent in cars are *not* said to move. When a lens' capacity for refracting light is exercised, we say that the lens is refracting light; we do not say that the capacity for refracting light in that lens is refracting light. Likewise, when a person's experiential capacities are exercised, that person is said to be in a phenomenally conscious state. But if persons *are* experiential capacities, then it seems as if it is the EPs or system of EPs with which persons are associated that are in phenomenally conscious states when experiential capacities are exercised. Thus, I suggest that I *have* experiential capacities; I am not identical to a collection of experiential capacities. If I were a collection of capacities, then I myself would not possess such capacities; that is, unless

capacities can themselves possess capacities. For those inclined to think that there is a subject-predicate relationship between persons and experiential capacities, CC_M is problematic.

For these reasons, the ontological problem is not adequately addressed by CC_M. Indeed, I take the ontological problem(s) to be the most significant remaining hurdle for any CC view. For the CC version of the phenomenological theory to be plausible, it needs to make better sense of what kind of entity a person is at a given time.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARD A NEW VERSION OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL THEORY

CC is useful for solving the bridge problem and the token problem, but in order to be useful for solving the ontological problem(s), we need a version of CC that can make better sense of the relationship between persons and capacities for consciousness.

In this chapter, I will sketch a version of CC (which, of course, is itself a version of the phenomenological theory) that puts the phenomenological theory on solid ground. In particular, I will argue that persons are *substances* that essentially possess the capacity for consciousness. The class of all substances is a subset of the class of all objects, and includes individual tables, plants, and animals, but does not include modes (ways things are), events, or ideas. The view that persons are substances is what I will call the '*Substantial* Capacity for Consciousness' version of the phenomenological theory (CC_S).

The *Substantial* Capacity for Consciousness View (CC_S): A person x at time t1 is identical to a person y at time t2 if and only if (a) x and y are substances of kind z, and

(b) the capacity for consciousness possessed by x is continuous with the capacity for consciousness possessed by y.[13]

Perhaps unlike CC_M, CC_S is by no means a complete theory of what a person is most fundamentally (as evidenced by the use of the variable 'z' in the formulation above—see section 2.3 for candidate referents of 'z'). Rather, it is a *kind* of theory about what a person is most fundamentally. Holding that persons are substances is a plausible launching point for CC and the phenomenological theory.

2.1 Substance

According to Aristotle (1991), an individual substance such as an animal or statue is a combination of matter and form. Matter (whether physical or non-physical) is the stuff of which a substance is made or composed. The form of a substance is how that substance's matter is shaped, organized, or put together. If a bronze statue is a substance, the bronze is its matter and certain properties related to its shape constitute its form. Aristotle's description of a substance as a combination of matter and form should not be taken to imply that a substance is a sort of *sum* of matter and form. A substance is not composed of matter and form in the same way that a book is composed of pages and a cover, or in the way that a car is composed of an engine, doors, wheels, etc. Rather, a substance's form is the *way* its matter is; it is a certain kind of organizing principle (Lowe, 1998, p. 196).

[13] CC_S should *not* be taken to suggest that the continuous possession of the capacity for consciousness is necessary *but not sufficient* for personal persistence on account of it also being necessary, according to CC_S, that a person is a substance of some kind z. To say that the capacity for consciousness is necessarily substantially instantiated is only to specify the conditions under which the persistence criteria stated by CC could obtain.

Another way to describe the form of a substance is as its *essence* or *essential core*. The essence of a substance involves (but is not identical to) a set of properties possessed by that substance *essentially*. If a substance possesses property F essentially, then that substance could not lose F and continue to exist (see Baker, 2000, p. 36).[14] If a bronze statue possesses a certain shape essentially, that statue could not change shape and continue to exist. Furthermore, so long as a substance continuously possesses all of its essential properties, that substance persists identically through time. So if we say that the essence of an organism is its individual life, then that organism persists through time so long as it lives.

Thus, we can see that the identity of a substance is connected to that substance's possession of certain (essential) properties, and we can further see that the possession of these properties is related only contingently to the *particular* matter of which that substance is composed. Consider, for example, an electronic calculator c. For the sake of simplicity, suppose that the only essential property possessed by c is its capacity for calculating a single mathematical sum s (say, 2+2=4). While c's capacity for calculating s is very much tied to the fact that this capacity is instantiated in c's physical parts, c's capacity for calculating s is not (*de re*) necessarily tied to the *particular* parts of which c is composed at any particular time, for the parts that compose c could be replaced over time while c retains the capacity for calculating s. Thus, a substance is composed of matter but is not identical to the sum of its material parts.

2.2 How CC_S Solves the Ontological Problem(s)

[14] Talk of substances and essences is associated with debates over the proper understanding of *natural kinds* within the philosophy of science. I, however, am presently concerned with ontological kinds. For a discussion of natural kinds, see Boyd (1991) and Samuels (forthcoming).

If CC_S is true—if persons are substances that possess the capacity for consciousness essentially—then the *ontological architecture problem* dissolves, for I am the ontological *subject* of various properties, including experiential capacities, and therefore, when my experiential capacities are exercised, I am the subject of conscious experiences.

CC_S is also equipped to deal with the *ontological individuality problem* and, in particular, CC_S is equipped to deal with the problem of individuation that plagues CC_M. If I am a substance, then my experiential capacities are properties instantiated in the matter that composes me.[15] Suppose, for example, that I am a physical system that possesses the capacity for consciousness essentially. If this is the case, then my experiential capacities are instantiated in certain physical structures (neurological structures, in particular) that are proper parts of me, or in the functional interaction of those physical structures that are proper parts of me. And if I am a physical system, composed of different physical matter than you, caught up in a different life than you, and the ontological subject of different physically-instantiated experiential capacities than you, then we can easily individuate me from you. My capacities for consciousness are instantiated in *this* physical system and your capacities for consciousness are instantiated in *that* physical system.

Of course, most CC theorists will want to countenance the possibility of a person's biological body being replaced by silicon computer chips, for example. Such CC theorists would claim that a person survives this replacement so long as his or her capacity for consciousness persists. If replacement is indeed possible, replacement is not a problem for CC_S. Suppose that my brain and body were replaced with silicon computer chips (I will assume that this replacement is gradual, for it seems to me that if the replacement happened all at once, it would not be a replacement, but rather, an annihilation occurring simultaneously with a creation). If

[15] The exact nature of this "matter" (whether it is essentially biological, only physical in a general sense, etc.) is something that requires further exploration—exploration informed by the empirical sciences.

persons are material substances, we could continue to properly individuate me from other persons because there would remain a single physical substance that gradually changed its composition but nonetheless continued to be a functionally unified system. Now, on the other hand, if persons are in fact immaterial substances—that is, if dualism is true—then there must be some other means of individuation for persons besides those forms of individuation available for physical objects (i.e. forms of individuation that rely on spatiality). This is a hurdle for dualism—one that I will not discuss here (see Kim, 2008; Lowe, 1996). Instead, I will simply mention that if persons are purely physical substances, CC_S is capable of handling the ontological individuality problem, even in the face of bodily replacement. And if persons are immaterial souls or minds, CC_S does not add in any way to the problems already associated with individuating immaterial substances.

In addition to providing solutions to the ontological architecture and ontological individuation problems, CC_S solves the *ontological dependence problem* because substances have logically independent existences (see Lowe, 1994; Descartes, 1984; Armstrong, 2001; Aristotle, 1991). This claim requires some fleshing out.

One popular and useful way to distinguish between substances and non-substances is to hold that substances have logically *independent* existences, while non-substances have logically *dependent* existences.[16] I have already introduced this notion in criticizing CC_M, but here I will give a more complete explanation. To say that an object has a logically dependent existence is just to say that, as a matter of logical necessity, that object depends upon some other object for its existence. If object p depends for its existence upon the existence of object q, then if q

[16] Descartes characterized a substance as "nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence" (1984, p. 210; see also Aristotle, 1991; Armstrong, 2001; Lowe, 1994).

suddenly ceases to exist, it is logically necessary that p also ceases to exist.[17] To illustrate the sense of 'dependent' in use here, consider two opposing examples. First, consider a plank of red wood. If the wood of which the plank is made were suddenly annihilated, then necessarily, the redness of the wood would also cease to exist. This is not to say that redness would cease to exist elsewhere in the universe, but just that the particular instantiation of redness on the particular plank in question would cease to exist. This instantiation of redness is ontologically dependent; it is not logically capable of independent existence. Compare this case with the case of Daphne, a dog living on earth. Suppose that all of the oxygen on earth suddenly ceased to exist. Soon thereafter, Daphne would die and perhaps cease to exist (unless, of course, all dogs go to heaven). Daphne cannot continue to exist unless there is oxygen in the air, for Daphne is a creature that requires breathable oxygen in order to live. So it might be said that Daphne depends for her existence upon the existence of oxygen. Thus, one might conclude that 'Daphne' does not refer to a substance (and indeed, few if any things would count as substances). But this would not be correct, for the sense of 'dependent' in the case of Daphne is different from the sense of 'dependent' at work in the case of the plank of red wood. In the case of the red wood, it is not logically possible for the redness instantiated in the wood to continue to exist if the wood goes out of existence. As soon as the wood is annihilated, so too is the redness. The redness only exists *because* the wood exists. In contrast, if all of the oxygen on earth were to be annihilated, Daphne would not immediately, by logical consequence, go out of existence. She might gasp for air for a few moments and then die, or we might simply imagine a logically possible world in which Daphne survived by quickly evolving respiratory organs that do not require oxygen.

---

[17] Lowe (1994) writes, "To say that an object depends logically for its existence upon—or 'owes' its existence to—the existence of certain other objects is to say that that object exists partly or wholly *because* those other objects exist (where the 'because' is to be understood in a logico-metaphysical rather than a contingent and causal sense)" (p. 534).

These two examples—that of the red plank and that of Daphne the dog—illustrate an important distinction between two different senses of 'dependent'. In the loose sense of 'dependent', the sense in play for Daphne, an entity contingently requires certain resources in order to continue to live. This dependence is not logical dependence, but rather, a kind of nomological or natural dependence. In the strict, logical sense of 'dependent', the sense in play for the red wood, an entity necessarily requires the existence of another entity in order to exist. Without the existence of the wood, the redness would necessarily cease to exist.

According to CC_M, a person's existence is logically *dependent*—and thus, on CC_M a person is *not* a substance because a person depends for his or her existence upon EPs. Thus, CC_M runs into the ontological dependence problem. CC_S avoids this problem.

However, it might be objected that the existence of *any* composite object logically depends upon the existence of other objects—namely, its component parts (see Dainton, 2008, p. 346). If all of Daphne's parts were annihilated, for example, it seems that she would necessarily cease to exist. If this is the case, no composite object qualifies as a substance. However, E. J. Lowe (1994) notes that it is central to the notion of composite substances that they "can persist identically through a change in their component parts as, for example, a clock may survive a replacement of one of its wheels or springs, or a horse the loss of one of its internal organs or bones" (p. 541). A composite substance is a substance that "has component parts of which it is 'made' … as a clock is made of such parts as wheels and springs, and a horse of such parts as bones and internal organs", but because a composite substance can survive the loss of certain of its parts while maintaining its *form* or *essence*, a composite substance does not logically depend for its existence upon its component parts (p. 541). This is the case precisely because a substance is not *merely* a collection of things or parts. Daphne, for example, is a living dog, and not merely

a collection of material bits. This is evidenced by the fact that Daphne can remain the same dog even though she regularly loses and gains hair, skins cells, etc. (see Wiggins, 2003).[18] Thus, CC_S does not run into the ontological dependence problem because, on this view, the existence of a person is logically independent of the existence of other objects.

Contrary to CC_M, I suggest that persons are substances (CC_S). According to CC_S, persons are substances that possess the capacity for consciousness essentially. Like other CC views, CC_S solves the bridge problem and the token problem. Thus, we can *take consciousness seriously* when it comes to personal identity while also holding that persons persist through periods of unconsciousness. But unlike other CC views, such as CC_M, CC_S puts the phenomenological theory of personal identity on solid ontological ground.

2.3 Alternatives

As I have already mentioned, CC_S is by no means a complete theory of personhood (a theory of what a person is most fundamentally). Rather, CC_S represents a *kind* of theory of personhood. Saying that persons are substances is roughly analogous to saying that a dog is a mammal—perhaps in response to someone who says that a dog is a reptile. Saying that a dog is a mammal is not fully informative as to what a dog really is, but saying that a dog is a mammal serves to correct the false notion that a dog is a reptile. In this section, I will outline a few ways to put a tail and whiskers on the dog: I will outline some alternative steps toward turning CC_S into a full-fledged theory of personhood.

A1. *The Biological Account*. A view currently in favor amongst philosophers (e.g. van Inwagen, 1990; Olson, 2007) is what I will call the 'biological account', according to which

[18] Mereological essentialists (e.g. Chisholm, 1976; Zimmerman, 1995) deny that there are any composite substances.

persons are identical to living organisms. On this view, material atoms compose a person just in case that person is alive, and a person persists so long as he or she is caught up in a single life. Philosophers who support the biological account deny Locke's famous distinction between persons and human animals (see Locke, 1974, p. 210), and instead claim that persons *just are* human animals—organisms that are capable of having conscious experiences. Persons are made up of physical material and their form is that of a living organism. One thing that is attractive about a biological account is that it is equipped with a principle of individuation—we can distinguish me from you because I am *this* biological system and you are *that* biological system.

However, while the biological account has drawn many adherents, its critical flaw as far as the present inquiry is concerned is that it fails to recognize the importance of consciousness for personhood. Many philosophers have recognized this flaw, including Lynne Baker (2000). Baker rightly notes that the mental characteristics of persons set them apart from the animal kingdom. She writes, "It seems obvious (to me, anyway) that anything capable of having a first-person perspective is basically different from anything incapable of having one" (p. 16). According to Baker, "*person* is an ontological kind … a first-person perspective makes an important ontological difference" (p. 11, 17; see also Tye, 1996). Thus, claims Baker, we should not give in to the temptation to treat persons as merely a kind of animal. What a person is does not map neatly onto a biological life. Given certain circumstances, we might say that you survived despite being disconnected from organic matter, and conversely, we might say that the persistence of a biological life was insufficient to bring about your persistence. If this is correct, then 'person' is not coextensive with 'human animal'.

A2. *The Psychological Account*. A second option, characterized by E. J. Lowe (1996) in *Subjects of Experience*, claims that a person is what Lowe calls a 'psychological substance',

which is "a substantial individual belonging to a natural kind which is the subject of distinctively psychological laws, and governed by persistence conditions which are likewise distinctively psychological in character" (p. 32). This dualist view claims that the essence of a person is psychological in nature—that we go where our consciousness goes, no matter what else may occur.

The principle worry with the psychological account is that it seems to force the adherent into an unattractive dilemma regarding the individuation of persons: either (i) a person is individuated by conscious experience alone, or (ii) a person is not individuated by conscious experience alone. If the psychological theorist accepts (i), they are forced to claim that an individual person is always conscious for the duration of his or her life, for conscious individuation is only possible when a person is actively conscious. This unattractive result may lead the psychological theorist to accept (ii). However, (ii) is also unattractive, for it is unclear what could individuate a purely psychological substance apart from conscious experience.

A3. *The Psycho-Biological Account*. A third option claims that a psychological continuity theory of personal identity is in some sense compatible with a biological account of personal identity. This view, what I will call the 'psycho-biological' account of personal identity, is a view that is arguably held by Peter Unger (1990) and David Wiggins (2003). Like the biological account, the psycho-biological account suggests that persons are material beings for whom being caught up in a biological life is essential. However, psycho-biological theorists also contend that something about a person's mental life is essential to personhood. One virtue of the psych-

biological account is that it provides a biological principle of individuation for persons who are asleep or otherwise temporarily unconscious.[19]

However, any psycho-biological theorist must hold that the separation of the mental from the biological is metaphysically impossible, for if it is metaphysically possible for one's consciousness to be separated from one's biological matter, and if we hold that one necessarily goes where one's consciousness goes, then even if it were naturally or nomologically impossible for one to be separated from one's body in *this* world, there is some world in which one goes somewhere that their body does not go. And if this is the case in some world, then, in any world, it is in virtue of phenomenal consciousness alone that a person goes where he or she goes. This result will be unattractive to those who do not advocate some kind of mental/physical identity theory.

The three options laid out above (the biological account, the psychological account, and the psycho-biological account) have all been described and defended in great detail elsewhere, and so I will not further adjudicate between these options here other than leaning away from the biological account for failing to recognize consciousness as essential to personhood. The latter two options show that CC_S can be fully developed into a plausible theory of personhood.

2.4 The Qua Problem

In this final section, I will consider one lingering objection to CC_S that suggests that objects do not have real essences. This objection states that how we determine the essential

[19] While the psycho-biological account of personal identity is an attractive substantivalist option, such a view may, in the end, simply boil down to a psychological account of personal identity (see Shoemaker, 1992). When it comes to substances, the form of a substance is defined by its species or what Lowe (1994) calls its "highest kind" (in this case, an entity possessing the capacity for consciousness), not by its genus or "sub-kind" (in this case, an animal) (p. 545). If a person is an essentially conscious animal, then its essence, its form, is that of being essentially conscious. See Lowe (1994).

properties of an object depends only upon how we wish to describe that object.[20] Purveyors of this objection claim that if I describe Fido as a pet, then being domesticated, owned, etc. are essential properties for Fido, while being a mammal, canine, etc., are not essential properties for Fido. If, however, I describe Fido as a dog, then being domesticated, owned, etc. are not essential properties for Fido, while being a mammal, canine etc., are essential properties for Fido. Thus, we might say that an object's essence is really only a nominal essence, which has nothing to do with a thing-in-itself, and everything to do with linguistic practice. But if this is true, there is nothing especially interesting about saying that a person possesses phenomenal consciousness essentially—this is just one way of sorting an object that could be sorted any number of other ways (e.g. qua animal, qua individual with certain legal and moral responsibilities).

In response to this objection, David Wiggins (1967) has pointed out that this notion—that the identity of an object is relative to our description of that object—is confronted with a logical difficulty. According to Leibniz's law, a=b if and only if there is nothing true of a that is not true of b, and there is nothing true of b that is not true of a. Presumably we would want to say that Fido qua pet really is the same *object* as Fido qua dog. It is not as if there actually exist two different objects, one a pet and the other a dog. But if Fido qua pet is identical to Fido qua dog, then nothing can be true of Fido qua pet that is not true of Fido qua dog, and vice versa. And yet, there are all sorts of things that are true of Fido qua pet that are not true of Fido qua dog; for example, Fido qua pet ceases to exist if Fido runs away and joins a pack of wild dogs. Thus, the notion that the identity of an object is relative to our descriptions of that object appears to violate Leibniz's law, which is a basic logical principle.

---

[20] This objection, inspired by what has often been referred to as 'The Qua Problem', introduces the idea that the identity conditions for an object are *relative* to our descriptions of that object. Thus, the thesis associated with this objection has been called 'the relativity of identity thesis'.

The objector might respond by pointing out that this logical difficulty is not unique to the idea that identity is relative. Suppose I reflect on the fact that although I am currently a Georgia State University student, I was once a student at Westmont College. Of course, I want to say that the person who is currently a student at GSU is one and the same person who was once a student at Westmont College. But then I am apparently confronted with a contradiction because I assert that I am identical with a person who is a Westmont College student despite the fact that it is not true of me that I am a student at Westmont College.

This response ignores the importance of tensing for the application of Leibniz's law. That I was once a student at Westmont College is perfectly consistent with the fact that I, being the same person as I once was, am not currently a student at Westmont College. Thus, the logical problem confronting the relativity of identity remains unique to the relativity of identity.

However, the proponent of the relativity of identity or an advocate of the Qua Problem might hold on to Leibniz's law and claim that Fido qua pet and Fido qua dog are non-identical, for there are things true of Fido qua pet that are not true of Fido qua dog, and vice versa. This route once again makes describing a person as an essentially conscious substance uninteresting, for we are not doing anything truly prohibitive in describing a person as a person qua conscious substance—there are, after all, infinitely many ways to describe a person.

If the proponent of the relativity of identity or an advocate of the Qua Problem utilizes this strategy, this person will have to live with the uncomfortable result that what seems to be one object (Fido), is actually infinitely many objects. If Fido qua pet, Fido qua dog, Fido qua mammal, etc. are all housed within the same putative object, what appears to be one is actually many. When I feed Fido I might therefore wonder which object I am feeding. Presumably I would be feeding infinitely many objects, for Fido qua pet needs to eat just as much as Fido qua

dog. One would be forced to admit that when they bought Fido, they had no idea of the financial burden they were taking on.[21]

Supposing then that an object must have a single essence, how are we supposed to determine which description or naming of an object refers to its real essence? There are innumerable options available to us, but how are we to decide which route to take?

Luckily, we can limit the options to a considerable degree by eliminating what are called 'phase sortals', which are sorting options that obtain only for certain phases of a substance's existence. For example, 'student at Westmont College', 'student at GSU', 'child' 'Mayor of Casterbridge' all refer to phase sortals because each corresponds to a status that only occupies a certain portion of an object's existence. It is natural to eliminate phase sortals as naming the essence of an object, because, by definition, an object can persist through changes with regard to these descriptions.

Now, what if a phase sortal happens to overlap with the entire duration of an object's existence? Suppose a person dies while still a child, so the phase sortal 'child' overlaps with the entire existence of that person. Would we then say that this person was essentially a child? Of course we would not say that this person is essentially a child for the obvious reason that this phase sortal happened to apply to this object throughout its existence purely by chance. We recognize that it could have easily been the case that this child survived into adulthood and therefore survived despite no longer being a child.[22]

The alternative to phase sortals is what David Wiggins (1967) calls 'substance sortals' which apply, in a non-arbitrary way, to an object at every moment in that object's existence. This

[21] This worry is related to the worry that has been called 'the problem of the many'. For a more detailed discussion of this problem see Unger (1980), Lewis (1993), and for a discussion of this problem as it relates to personal identity, see Olsen (2007).

[22] For work that seems to express the sentiment that 'person' refers to a social construction—what Wiggins would consider a phase sortal—see Hacking (1999).

move is also natural, for the very idea of an essence pertains to that which marks out the boundaries of an object's existence. It is for this reason that Wiggins (1967) states that substance sortals give us "the most fundamental kind of answer to the question 'what is x?'" (p. 7).

While using 'substance sortal' does little to help determine whether or not a person is essentially a biological substance or essentially a psychological substance, it does at least remind us what we are looking for. We are looking to characterize an object by the name or description that marks out the boundaries of an object's existence. Thus, we should not be worried so much that the identity of an object is relative to our descriptions of it, but rather, we should be worried about accurately describing or naming an object so as to convey its real essence. This is one way of characterizing the project of this thesis.

2.5 Conclusion

In this thesis I have considered the viability of the phenomenological theory, which is a view of personal persistence that attempts to *take consciousness seriously*. I have argued that the phenomenological theory faces at least three serious problems: the bridge problem, the token problem, and the ontological problem. A recent version of the phenomenological theory put forth by Dainton and Bayne (2005) and Dainton (2008) that I have called 'the Capacity for Consciousness View' (CC) admirably addresses the bridge and token problems. However, Dainton and Bayne's (2005) expansion of CC—what I have called 'the *Mere* Capacity for Consciousness View' (CC_M)—fails to adequately address the ontological problem. I have suggested an alternative: the *Substantial* Capacity for Consciousness View (CC_S). Like other versions of CC, CC_S adequately addresses the bridge and token problems, but unlike CC_M, CC_S answers questions regarding the ontological problem with much greater plausibility.

However, CC_S is not a complete theory of personhood, though it is a promising start. In order for a full CC_S theory to be developed, several issues must be addressed. First, in order to garner wider appeal, considerations beyond those provided by the use of thought experimentation must be provided in favor of the phenomenological theory.

Second, although I have attempted to address the most pressing objections to CC_S, other objections remain. For example, the possibility of fission, whereby a single phenomenal stream is split, needs to be addressed. Also, the depth problem—which raises the question of how sophisticated a person's capacity for consciousness must be in order for that person to persist—deserves further attention.

Third, and finally, because CC_S is a view that attempts to take consciousness seriously, further work in the philosophy of mind and in the empirical sciences on the "hard problem" of consciousness will surely be critical to the development of CC_S (Chalmers, 1996). But for now, it seems that consciousness *can* be taken seriously when it comes to personal identity.

REFERENCES

Aristotle (1991). *The Metaphysics*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.

Armstrong, David (1968). *A Materialist Theory of Mind*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Armstrong, David (2001). "Universals as Attributes." Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings. Michael J. Loux (ed.). London: Routledge. Pp. 65-91.

Baker, Lynne (2000). *Persons and Bodies: A Constitution View*. Cambridge University Press.

Black, Max (1954). "The Identity of Indiscernibles." *Problems of Analysis*. Ithica, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Pp. 83.

Block, Ned (1994). "On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness." Cambridge University Press.

Boyd, Richard (1991). "Realism, Antifoundationalism, and Enthusiasm about Natural Kinds." *Philosophical Studies*, 61, pp. 127-148.

Casullo, Albert (1988). "A Fourth Version of the Bundle Theory." *Philosophical Studies*, 54. Pp. 125-139.

Chalmers, David (1996). *The Conscious Mind*. Oxford University Press.

Chisholm, Roderick (1976). *Person and Object: A Philosophical Study*. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Company.

Dainton, Barry and Bayne, Timothy (2005). "Consciousness as a Guide to Personal Persistence." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 84, 4, pp. 549-571.

Dainton, Barry (2008). *The Phenomenal Self*. Oxford University Press.

Descartes, Renee (1984). *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 2 vols., trans. Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch. Cambridge University Press. Cited in Dainton (2008, p. 345).

Foster, John (1982). *The Case for Idealism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Foster, John (2008). *A World for Us: The Case for Phenomenalistic Idealism*. Oxford University Press.

Hacking, Ian (1999). *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Heil, John (2008). "Powerful Qualities." Presented as "Powers: Their Grounding and their Realization," Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, July 7-9.

Horgan, Terence, Tienson, John and Graham, George (2006). In U. Kriegel and K Williford (eds.), "Internal World Skepticism and the Self-Presentational Nature of Phenomenal Consciousness." *Self-Representational Approaches to Consciousness.* Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press. Pp. 41-62.

Hume, David (1978). *A Treatise of Human Nature*. P. H. Nidditch (ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Kim, Jaegwon (2008). "Mental Causation." *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*. B. P. McLaughlin, A. Beckerman, and S. Walter (eds.). Oxford. Clarendon Press, pp. 29-52.

Kripke, Saul (1996). *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Lewis, David (1993). "Many, but Almost One." In J. Bacon (ed.) *Ontology, Causality and Mind: Essays in Honour of D. M Armstrong*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-8.

Locke, John (1964). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. A. D. Woozley (ed.). New York: Meridian.

Lowe, E. J. (1994). "Primitive Substances." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 54, 3, pp. 531-552.

Lowe, E. J. (1996). *Subjects of Experience*. Cambridge University Press.

Lowe. E. J. (1998). *The Possibility of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lowe, E. J. (2006). *The Four-Category Ontology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

O'Leary-Hawthorne, John (1995). "The Bundle Theory of Substance and the Identity of Indiscernibles." *Analysis*, 55. Pp. 191-196.

Olson, Eric T. (2007). *What Are We?* Oxford University Press.

Quine, W. V. O. (1990). *Pursuit of Truth*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Ryle, Gilbert (1949). *The Concept of Mind*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Samuels, Richard (forthcoming). "Delusion as a Natural Kind." In M. Broome and L. Bortolotti (eds.), *Psychiatry as Cognitive Neuroscience: Philosophical Perspectives*. Oxford University Press.

Searle, John (1995). *The Rediscovery of the Mind*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Shoemaker, Sydney and Swinburne, Richard (1985). *Personal Identity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Shoemaker, Sydney (1992). "Unger's Psychological Continuity Theory." P*hilosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 52, 1, pp. 139-143.

Shoemaker, Sydney (2003). *Identity, Cause, and Mind: Philosophical Essays*. Oxford University Press.

Shoemaker, Sydney (2008). "Persons, Animals, and Identity." Synthese, 162, 3, pp. 313-324.

Sosa, David (2006). "Scepticism About Intuition." *Philosophy*, 81, pp. 633-647.

Strawson, Galen (1999). "The Self and the SESMET." Journal of Consciousness Studies, 6, 4, pp. 99-135.

Tye, Michael (1996). "The Function of Consciousness." *Nous*, 30, 3, pp. 287-305.

Unger, Peter (1980). "The Problem of the Many." Midwest Studies in Philosophy, 5, pp. 411-467.

Unger, Peter (1990). *Identity, Consciousness, and Value*. Oxford University Press.

Van Inwagen, Peter (1990). *Material Beings*. Ithica: Cornell University Press.

Van Inwagen, Peter (2001). "Ontology, Identity, and Modality."

Wiggins, David (2003). *Sameness and Substance Renewed*. Cambridge University Press.

Wilkes, Kathleen (1988). *Real People: Personal Identity Without Thought Experiments.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Williams, Bernard (1970). "The Self and the Future," *Philosophical Review*, 79, pp. 161-180.

Williamson, Timothy (2004). "Philosophical 'Intuitions' and Scepticism about Judgments." *Dialectica*, 58, 1, pp. 109-153.

Zimmerman, Dean (1995). "Theories of Masses and Problems of Constitution." *Philosophical Review,* 104, 1, pp. 53-110.

Zimmerman, Dean (1998). "Criteria of Identity and the 'Identity Mystics'," *Erkenntnis*, 48, pp. 281-301.

Zimmerman, Dean (2003). "Distinct Indiscernibles and the Bundle Theory." In P. van Inwagen and D. Zimmerman (eds.). *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*. Oxford: Blackwell. Pp. 58-65.