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Experience of 'Self' and Free Will: A Study on the Emergence of Consciousness from Behaviourists' and Functionalists' Points of View

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Abstract

Consciousness is the labyrinth of one's everyday experience. One's experience becomes an authentic episode of verification because it falls in the framework of consciousness. One becomes aware that an experience becomes his/her experience due to the 'owning up of' and this leads to the feeling of 'self'. When a conscious individual experiences 'selfhood' one is able to exercise one's agency and this is primary for moral responsibility and ethics. This experience of 'selfhood' itself is interrelated to the notion of free will. The experience of 'Self' and free will is the assurance that one is conscious and a deeper study into these notions leads us to understand the emergence of consciousness in brighter light. This study attempts to explore the notions of self and free will from behaviourists' and functionalists' points of view and concludes that the emergence of consciousness is invariably interrelated to the feeling of 'selfhood' and 'free will' in a conscious agent.

Keywords: Experience; Self; Embodiment; Individuality; Consciousness

Experience always is dynamic in nature. Any experience in ordinary sense of the term refers to an episode in consciousness. The Sanskrit word, *anubhav*, which has the root words, *anu* and *bhav* (*anu* meaning after; *bhav* meaning to become) refers to what one becomes after one has this episode of consciousness. Experiences may be divided into simple or complex. Simple experiences are single acts of conscious beings like seeing a colour, holding an object, smelling a fragrance, etc. Complex experiences are combination of simple experiences. For example, emotions, making a decision in a given situation, recalling good past memories, imagining a non-existent object with some existent features, etc. In order to clarify, let us take an example of a tourist visiting a beach. It is a complex experience for him/her, as many simple experiences are getting accumulated by the tourist in the beach. Questions arise, can an experience whether simple or complex, exist bereft of an experiencer? Who is in tourist that experiences various events at the beach? Can an experience be merely treated as an experiencer's mental events? In this article, I am going to explore and argue that an experience is not just an outcome of an experiencer's mental events alone. There are other interconnected notions like free will (because free will is that which guides a person to use one's sense organs to obtain empirical data) which is caused by the experience of 'self' and this experience of 'self' is the source of one's consciousness.

What is Self?

According to Klein [1], Menon [2], Ramachandran [3], Choifer [4] and others any interpretation of the notion of 'self' is not free from criticisms. Centuries after centuries, philosophers, neuro scientists, cognitive biologists, computer

scientists and others have taken interest to explicate the nature of self. But it is so elusive that even today researchers are attempting to explain the notion of self in clear terms. Descartes, a rationalistic philosopher, states that the existence of self should never be doubted. If anything, that can be doubted is the nature and functions of a self (p. 17) [5]. Hume [6] denies the existence of 'self'. He states that when he turns his reflexion on himself, he can never perceive the 'self'. He argues, there are only perceptions, not selves. He concludes that a self is "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions" (A Treatise of Human Nature, Section-I, IV, vi, 165) [7].

It is true that a definition of 'self' is not free from doubts, but we, human beings refer to 'self' by using the following expressions in our linguistic conversations, such as self-esteem, self-image, self-perception, selfishness, selflessness, etc. Even though we might use all these terms, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Duchamp, Foucault, and Derrida (p. 5) [8] echoing the claim of Wegner [9] consider 'self' as an illusion. Even if we consider the notion of 'self' as an illusion, illusion itself is an experience that presupposes the existence of an experiencer [10]. So, a person cannot deny the existence of 'self' at least for himself/herself. If a 'self' exists, then what would be its nature? What are its features? Is 'self' a subjective or an objective phenomenon?

Self: Subjective Phenomenon versus Objective Phenomenon

Stern [11] and Klein [10] state that if we are not able to describe the notion of 'self' in clear terms, it is merely because of the fact that there is 'no single self'. Young [12] evokes that there are quasi-selves[1]. Hardcastle [13] proposes that there are 'multi-selves'. However, the notion of self can be interpreted from two perspectives; first-person perspective (subjectivity) and third-person perspective (objectivity) [10]. An example of the first-person perspective of self is an individual having the experience of own self. This experience cannot be known through perception or sense data [1,14] . This experience is only felt by an individual. This experience cannot be communicated in clear terms through linguistic expressions. In contrast to the first-person perspective of 'self', the third-person perspective of self is described through sense observation data. In this case, the notion of self may be related to one's personal memory, body image, emotions, etc. [10]. Klein [10], Klein and Gargi [15], Renoult, et al. [16], Martinelli, et al. [17] claim that the cognitive and neurological bases of self is known as third-person perspective of self.

Wittgenstein [18] explains the usage of the word self (I) in two different ways. For him, when one uses the word 'I', he/she uses it in two different senses; 'I' as the subject and 'I' as the object. When the word 'I' is used to refer to a person about whom a description is made, in that case, self (I) is used as an object. But when the word 'I' is used to express one's feeling and emotion that cannot be verified by another person, self (I) is used as the subject However, Wittgenstein [18] suggests that in case of self-awareness or self-knowledge, both subject-self and object-self are present. For example, when the tourist says, "I know that I have a sweet tooth". Here 'I know' refers to the subject-self and 'I have a sweet tooth' refers to the object-self as it is referable and verifiable.

Ganeri [19] and Klein [10] raised their concerns about the description of objective-self. For them, objectivity of self involves 'studying something' externally. If we attempt to study 'self' objectively, then perhaps, we would attempt to study the ontological self which is by definition not the real 'self'. Shoemaker [20] enunciates that 'I' as a subjective self cannot be equated with 'me' at a given time.

Kinds of Self

Bayne (2010) identifies that there are two kinds of self; bodily self and psychological self. William James [21] expresses that there are three types of self; material self, social self and narrative self. Neisser [22] proposes five types of self: the ecological, interpersonal, extended, private, and conceptual self (p. 35). Strawson [23] conveys that there could be nearly twenty-one types of self (p. 484). This number could vary according to different philosophers those attempt to study 'self' from various perspectives. There could be a physical self, social self, competent self, inner self/psychological self, spiritual self, etc. In the context of Indian Philosophy, especially in the Taittiriya Upanishad, the notion of 'self' is explained as conglomeration of *panca kosas* (five sheaths): *annamaya kosa* (physical layer), *pranamaya kosa* (life-force layer), *manomaya kosa* (the emotional layer), *vijnamaya kosa* (cognitive layer), and *anandamaya kosa* (bliss/eternal joy) [24]. Further, it is stated that 'self' is not just the conglomeration of the five *kosas*, rather it is above and beyond the conglomeration of these *kosas*[2].

Gallagher [25] calls a self is a narrative self.[3] The 'self'

1 *Quasi* literally means resemblance. The expression *quasi-selves* implies that there could be some selves which may not have similar characteristics of a self.

2 Upanishads in general would identify two types of self (atman); J*ivatman* (the individual self) and *Paramatman* (the eternal self). A jivatman is realized when one is conscious of his/her self and once he/she attains j*nana* (right knowledge) he/she loses his/her self and realizes the *Paramatman* within oneself even when one is alive on this earth (*Jiva mukti*). Here there is no individuality but only a universal consciousness.

3 For Gallagher, narrative self refers to a coherent self that is constituted in the past and a future in the various stories that we and others tell about ourselves (Gallagher, 2000, p. 15).

is not a thing, but it would be comprehended through interpretation of oneself. Jopling [26] puts it, "selfhood is best viewed as a kind of ongoing project that serves as a response to the question of how to be" (p. 83). Self is constructed by oneself all along his/her tenure of life as he/she narrates it through experiences. Henry [27] claims that the most basic form of selfhood is known through self-manifestation of experience. Only through experiences, the selfhood blooms and an individual realizes it. When an individual claims that he/she is conscious of himself/herself, it suggests that he/she is conscious of his/her own experience of existence. From the above literature, we can assert that understanding the nature of self is to understand one's experiences about self. Gallagher [25] calls this interpretation of self as minimal self[4]. He argues, 'self' is invariably related to how human beings are conscious of themselves and their experiences of worldly affairs. This suggests that one's upbringing and socio- environment has a role to play in one's understanding of 'self' along with one's inner grasp of self. Summing up of all these perspectives of self, Bayne proposes that there are three roles of self. Each role has its own component. There is ownership component of self because of which self is able to own experiences. There is referential component because of which self is able to identify itself as the object of the first-person reflection. There is also perspectival component because of which self is able to express its own perspective or point of view of the world.

Behaviourists and Functionalists' Views on 'Self'

The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy defines behaviourism as an attitude and a way of conceiving of empirical constraints on psychological state attribution. Sellars [28] notes that a person is a behaviourist if he/she attempts to confirm "hypotheses about psychological events in terms of behavioural criteria" (p. 22). For a behaviourist there will not be any identifiable difference between two mental states, say, desire and expectation, unless these two mental states exhibit different behaviours of a person. Skinner [29] claims that relating one's behaviour to his/her mental states (inner states) is not appropriate as it leads us to explanatorily circular or regressive. If we consider the external behaviours of an individual and not taking his/her mental states into our account, then explaining the notion of 'self' would remain partial, incomplete and inconclusive.

Gilbert Ryle [30] in his book *Concept of Mind* states that mind does not exist and therefore it can't be the seat of one self. Ryle argues that realization of a 'self' comes from one's behaviours, because human beings are nothing but a bundle of their behaviours caused by their physical bodies. Mental events, for Ryle are called as 'avowals'. Avowals are thoughts of one's behaviour. For example, a person is in pain is known to others when they see the person's behaviours of depicting or describing pain.

U. T. Place [31] considers self does not exist but consciousness arises due to one's brain processes. He holds the view that consciousness is a special type of behaviour or a disposition presented in a certain way. When a person is able to exhibit his/her behaviour then he/she is said to be conscious.

Daniel Wegner [9] in his *The Illusion of Conscious Will* writes, "the fact is, it seems to each of us that we have conscious will. It seems we have selves. It seems we have minds. It seems we are agents. It seems we cause what we do" (p. 342). But he asserts that these are all illusions produced by the brain to cause some meaning to our lives. Wegner opines, "people have at hand two radically different systems of explanation, one for minds, and one for everything else" (p. 21). We apply the mentalistic explanations (beliefs, intentions, desires, etc.) to our own and others' behaviours because of which we think we have minds. Wegner believes that such explanations are mistaken in the sense that "the real cause sequence underlying human behaviour involves a massively complicated set of mechanisms…[and] the mind can't ever know itself well enough to be able to say what the causes of its actions are" (pp. 27-28). Wegner does not abruptly deny the conscious thoughts and wills of a person. He claims that thoughts and intentions are experienced by a person just before the performance of an action. Wegner concludes that a person's brain gives rise to the experience (illusory) of conscious will.

Wittgenstein [32] suggests that mental events such as emotions are manifested through one's behaviours. They are not reducible to a person's behaviours as such because they are not metaphysically separate from them totally. He writes, "if one sees the behaviour of a living thing, one sees its soul" (§357).

Daniel Dennett [33] attempts to explain the notion of self as the center of narrative gravity. He compares 'self' with an analogy of center of gravity of an object. Center of gravity of an object is not an atom, or a subatomic particle, or any other physical item in the world. It has no mass, no colour, no physical properties at all, except for spatio-temporal location. Similarly, selves have a spatio-temporal location. What it is, if anyone attempts to know, it would be equal to a category mistake. For Dennett, one can discover multiple selves in a person.

4 For Gallagher, minimal self refers to the way one experiences a consciousness of oneself as one immediate subject of experience, unextended in time (Gallagher, 2000, p. 15).

Skinner [29], a behaviourist, states that there could be an 'inner determiner' which often labelled as 'self'. For him, there are plurality of 'self' existing in a person and they are conflicting with each other. Due to this internal conflict, we cannot conclude that 'there is a self' which is in control at a given time. This idea of 'self' creates a continuous anxiety. For Behaviourists, the 'self' remains only as an organized system of responses [34]. This implies that human beings may be composed of various types of self and depending upon the available reinforcements, a common mode of action is employed. Such an interpretation of 'self' equates all human beings are similar to each other with regard to these personality and character.

In Functionalists' view, 'self' is a substance that has certain properties. These properties could be mental as well as physical. Realization of a mental state plays a causal role with the existence of a physical state and the connection between mental state and a physical state. For example, human beings are in mental pain and it is realized due to brain's C-fibers firing. Shoemaker [35] makes a distinction between core realization and total realization of pain. Core realization of pain refers to realization of pain in a physical part of the body. Total realization of pain refers to the realization of mental state about the physical pain of a body.

Derek Parfit [36] says that 'self' as nothing more than 'republic of entities': bodies, brain, and memories intersecting and interacting with the world in various ways. What Parfit and other functionalists would claim or at least want to achieve is that whether these interactions and intersections can be created physically that could create mental states.

Thomas Metzinger [37] claims that nobody ever had or was a self. Selves are not part of a reality. There is nothing in the brain or outside in the world which we can call as 'self'. There is no metaphysical reality such as the self that could exist independently of the brain. He enunciates that first-person perspective of ownership of an action along with one's beliefs and attitudes can be discovered to be in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain.

John Searle [38] conveys that consciousness is the real subjective experience caused by the physical processes in the brain. When we talk about mind, there are aspects like intentionality, free will, mental causation, perception, intentional action, etc., along with consciousness. They all are naturalistic and therefore, mental phenomena are considered as just a part of nature. His philosophy of self or mind is known as biological naturalism.

Fodor [39] defended 'representational theory of mind' according to which thinking is a computational process that is nothing but mental representations. They are realized physically in the brain. He also proposed an influential hypothesis about mental structure. There could be two level systems in the brain, one being low-level mental structures which are *modular*, in the sense, they are informationally encapsulated from the higher-level *central* systems which are responsible for belief formation, decision-making, etc. His theory of nativism proposes that all lexical concepts[5] are innate. From Fodor's views, we can imply that all lexical concepts including 'self' and the feeling of agency are nothing but innate.

Putnam in his proposal on multiply realizability theory states that mental properties as higher-order properties are multiply realized due to the brain's structures. Self and the feeling of agency are experienced in a person due to the complex brain structures of humans [40]. He argues that human mind can have many correct descriptions of a reality, but none of these descriptions can be scientifically proven to be the 'absolute description' of a reality.

Noam Chomsky argues that principles underpinning the structure of language are biologically present in the human mind and hence genetically inherited. As against Skinner's radical behaviourism which suggests that language is learned, Chomsky argues that all humans share the same underlying linguistic structure irrespective of socio-cultural differences [41]. This implies even the experience of agency and self are something that are common to all human beings.

Having presented the behaviourists and functionalists' views on self and mind, it is found that none of these views on self and mind are free from doubt, exhaustive and adequate to explain the cause of a person's decision to perform an action in a given situation. Since the cause of human action is undetermined the consequences of the action would not be assigned to a person in the name of moral responsibility. However, moral responsibility of a person cannot be dissociated from his/her actions. In this context, let us explain the role of self and free will for a human action and thereby moral responsibility of consequences of that action.

The Role of Self and Free Will for Human Actions

Dennett [42] expresses that there is an inseparable relation existing between the notion of 'self' and the notion of free will. In his words:

> Some are tempted to conclude …that we don't really have free will, but this is a mistake. Free will in the

5 Lexical concepts refer to sematic units conventionally associated with linguistic forms and form an integral part of a language user's individual mental grammar. In this sense, meaning is a property specifically related to the language user's events.

> sense that matters, in the sense that makes you responsible for your actions and that gives meaning to both your strivings and your regrets, is determined by how your brain deals with the reasons it finds for acting. Philosophers have established that you can still have free will and moral responsibility when the decisions your brain arrives at are your decisions, based on your very own reasoning and experience, not on any brainwashing or manipulation by others. If your brain is normal, it enables you to consider and reconsider your options and values indefinitely, and to reflect on what kind of a person you want to be, and since these reflections can lead to decisions and the decisions can lead to actions, you can be the author of your deeds, and hence have free will in a very important sense. Some people have diminished free will and responsibility through no fault of their own: their brains malfunction or they have been kept ignorant of the facts and values that a normal person knows full well, but those who are fortunate enough to have had a normal upbringing arrive at adulthood with all the free will necessary to be held accountable for their actions (p. 256) [42].

When we refer to 'free will', what we actually mean is, whether human beings are free, in the sense, whether their actions are free from constraints both externally and internally. Human actions may be controlled or determined by the laws of nature externally. Their actions may also be determined by the laws of human nature itself internally. A question arises, is 'self' preconditioned by the laws of human nature that is innate when he/she is born? Dweck and Molden [43] suggest that the laws of human nature may have an interesting role to play for the interrelation of self and free will. They argue, if suppose we take human personality were fixed at birth or totally controlled by forces outside then there would be no free will [44]. And if we suppose, human personality was not only dynamic and malleable, but shaped in full or in part by the individual, then free will can be affirmed to exist [45]. To arrest this dilemma, we need to answer the question; is 'self' free? A subsequent question to this question is, can determinism and free will coexist?.

Compatibilists[6] like Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Mill, etc. insist that it is possible to act the way we want and lead the life we wish to lead in a determined world. Further they assert that people are able to lead a perfect life of choices in a physically determined world because of their ability to make strong commitments to higher order desires [46]. Watson [47] evokes that human beings are able to fulfill their desires with reasons that make them to be a free person in a determined world. Frankfurt [46] and Watson [47] affirm that abilities to decide and perform an action freely make human beings morally responsible for the consequences of their actions.

Libertarians[7] state that free will deciding a cause of a person's action is very rare [48]. This suggests that only a few individuals could perform an action freely. Even then, libertarians' views accept the existence of free will and defeats determinism. Event-causal libertarians argue that free will and ultimate responsibility rest on self-forming actions where human beings create and remain as originators of purposes [45]. Ekstorm claims that an agent is "constituted by a character together with the power to fashion and refashion that character" and that this faculty to shape and mold our beliefs and desires is the major constituent of self (p. 113).

Kane [48] cautions us not to be confused with constraints and causations. Freedom of will is undetermined by constraints, not by causes. Free actions are unconstrained, not uncaused. This implies that selves are free, free in the sense of freedom of will and freedom of actions to a certain extent. We may be able to predict the causes of our behaviours but that should not cause us to deny our sense of free will. What we are (as selves) is the conglomeration of choices, free choices. This sense of 'freedom' is that which gives the feel of agency and responsibility of actions.

Free Will, Self, and Agency

When we make choices of action, the voluntary actions, they don't happen to us simply but we feel that 'we' make those choices of actions and feel completely 'in charge'. The sense of agency refers to this feeling complete control of our voluntary actions. Thomas Reid [49] puts it, "the foundation of all rights and obligations, and of all accountableness" (p. 112) comes from personal identity. Personal identity gives one the feel of oneself that guides towards moral agency. Bandura [50] and Rorty [51] propose that the exercise of moral agency has dual aspects: inhibitive and proactive. The inhibitive form of moral agency manifests in the exercise of power to refrain from engaging in inhumane acts. The proactive form is expressed in the power to actively engage in some humane acts. This dual nature of moral agency guides an individual to refrain from harmful activities and to do morally praiseworthy acts even at times sacrificing self-interests. Haggard and Tsakiris [52] have shown that sense of agency plays a key role in guiding attributions of responsibility. Responsibility is closely related to the concept of free will. For most of the people it only makes sense to hold someone responsible for their actions if they are freely in

6 Compatibilists are those who believe that determinism does not rule out free will and that both can be compatible with each other.

7 Libertarians are those who believe that an action cannot be causally determined by external factors without an agent's free will.

control of them. For Frith [53], responsibility for one's own actions has a greater significance in the society.

Nichols [54] highlights an interesting observation regarding the interrelation of free will, agency and self. The free will problem arises because on the one hand we feel like we are conscious and that we are really rational agents. The feeling of sense of agency gives rise to this feeling of free and rational agency. But on other hand, we also know that we are not totally free. According to Nichols, understanding the neurocognitive origins of free will beliefs will not tell us if they are true or not, but will help us evaluate whether or not those beliefs are justified. And therefore, study on the interrelation of free will and agency that is connected to self is to be carried out further because of two reasons (there could be more). First, study on this interrelation of agency and free will has a bearing on the well-being and health of individuals. Langer and Rodin [55] and Rodin and Langer [56] have pointed out that reduction in the sense of agency is associated with poor health and a reduction in quality of life. Second, Berberian, et al. [57] have pointed out that study of the interrelation of agency and free will has a lot to reveal in the study of human-computer interface. When we study human-computer interface, it becomes evident that agency and free will belongs to a self that is conscious, not the machines. So ultimately, consciousness is the thread that binds agency and free will as manifestations of a 'self'.

Self and Consciousness

The notion of 'self' is manifested in the linguistic usage of the word 'I'. When a person uses the word 'I' in any statement, he/she has a sense of the self. As Gareth Evans [58] claims, "the essence of self-consciousness is self -reference" (p. 191). A person who suffers from prosopagnosia[8], would also report that he/she does not recognize his/her face on the mirror by stating that "I don't know him/her".

Is self-consciousness merely awareness of oneself? If it were, a dog wagging its tail can be said to be conscious because the dog might be aware that it is wagging its own tail. To be conscious in real sense, for Strawson, is not merely to have the capacity to be aware of oneself and one's features but to be notionally conscious [59]. To be notionally conscious is to figure oneself explicitly as 'oneself'. It implies that one is capable of thinking about oneself, having a grasp of the notion of 'oneself', being aware of one's states of mind and features of his/her own. It also means that one is conscious of one's own reflections, discourses, memories, life plans, etc. In total, to be conscious means phenomenally '*I* know what it is like to be *me*'.

8 Prosopagnosia is a neurological disorder which points out a person who is not able to recognize familiar faces including one's own.

Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* proves the presence of consciousness in 'self'. The 'I', as a thinking being, embodies in the act of thinking. Descartes states that "I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind" (p. 17) [5]. The 'I' has consciousness because all thoughts ultimately presuppose a thinker. Descartes says, "I know that I exist as a thinker". John Locke goes a step further to conclude that there is a diachronic unity of self.

> When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will anything, we know that we do so. Thus, it is always as to our present sensations and perceptions: and by this everyone is to himself that which he calls self: – it not being considered, in this case, whether the same self be continued in the same or diverse substances. For, since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes everyone to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being, and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done (p. 335) [60].

Locke sums up the relation between consciousness and self in the above quote and he concludes that consciousness makes up the self. Self is conscious about the fact that "I was the one who did this and I am the one who thinks about that". Thus, self-consciousness is essential to personhood. The persistence of self, for Locke is sustained in consciousness alone.

David Hume raises concerns about whether conscious moments help us to perceive the self. He says,

> All [our particular perceptions] are different, and distinguishable, and separable from each other, and may be separately considered, and may exist separately, and have no need of anything to support their existence. After what manner therefore do they belong to self, and how are they connected with it? For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception (p. 252) [6].

Our impressions are due to constant changes of our perceptions, sensations, passions, emotions towards living and non-living objects. For Hume, we don't have an impression of an everlasting self, persisting through all these

changing impressions. If we do not have an impression of the self, then we cannot be said to have a clear idea of the self. He uses an analogy of a theatre where in, "several perceptions successively make their appearances, pass, repass, glide away and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations" (p. 253) [6]. What we have is only of passing impressions and there is nothing beyond it. Thus, there is no permanent self. Shoemaker [20] points out the lacuna in Hume's understanding of the notion of self. He argues that the self 'I' cannot be equated with 'me' at the given time. But one cannot deny the fact that 'I' as a subject knows about 'me'.

Daniel Dennett [42] doubts the existence of a single self as the subject of consciousness. He refutes the cartesian theatre model of self and consciousness. The Cartesian theatre model projects a single self as the observer of one's flow of consciousness. It is the 'I' who is both the cartesian thinker and the one who engages in self-enquiry. Dennett [61] argues that "there is no single point in the brain where all information funnels in", and "there is no observer inside the brain" (p. 103). For Dennett, there are parallel information processing tracks in the brain producing constantly revised drafts that interpret and reinterpret our everyday experiences. So, there is no single self. There are multiple selves and different level of consciousness.

William James [21] writes,

> Consciousness…does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'train' or 'chain' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described… let us call it the stream of consciousness, or of subjective life (p. 1, 239) [21].

For James, only the spiritual self- the flow of one's consciousness- gives identity to an individual. This spiritual self is a bundle of successive stages of consciousness. The bundles are considered as 'thoughts'[9]. A present thought is intimately related to a recent past thought. The present thought is said to 'own' the past one. Every thought except the first and the last one in one's personal history is "born on owner, and dies owned transmitting whatever it realized as its self to its own later proprietor" (p. 322) [21]. The consciousness of the self is responsible for giving a feel to an individual about his/her 'individuality' and identity.

Consciousness of Individuality and Identity

Every human being feels and thinks that his/her own world is different from others. In the cognitive development of a human being, a child feels of his/her self and then in the later stage of development, a child starts thinking about himself/herself. In the words of Damasio [62], "there is an individual subject…that images of any given object that are now being processed are formed in our individual perspective that we are the owners of thought process" (p. 125). We cannot think of the 'self' as the owner of experience and actions without knowing some objects and concepts of the world.

When an individual begins to see the world as one's own only then the world becomes his/her place for survival. Thinking of one's individuality gives rise to the idea of personhood. Sorabji [63] argues that if this ownership or individuality feeling does not happen, then our conditions of survival will inevitably disappear. Realo, et al. [64] propose that there are three important notions connected with the individuality of a self, namely autonomy, mature self-responsibility, and uniqueness. Autonomy refers to self-realizing one's ability to possess independent thinking, judging, and surviving in a situation. The self of an individual perceives, aims, decides, and so on. Mature self-responsibility refers to the realization of the self that he/she is personally responsible for taking decision to perform an action. Uniqueness refers to the self being conscious that he/she is unique in every sense of his/her life endeavor. He/she is not similar to another human being. These three notions of individuality put together form the notion of identity in a person. The identity shapes the 'self' what it is to be in case of a person.

Individuality and identity explain the uniqueness of the 'self'. For Aristotle, individuality is based on the self's recognition of its individual nature when it animates a particular human body in a particular environment. Can any individual not know himself/herself? Aristotle thought that only mad people could be ignorant of one's individuality (p. 126) [65].

Leibniz [66] in *Discourse on Metaphysics* discusses the principle of individuality in the form of a mathematical law. He states that no two individuals exactly resemble each other, otherwise they would be 'indiscernibles' and both individuals would be one (p. 308). The individuality of an individual 'self' remains ineffable and unknowable because the notion of 'individuality' cannot be described through empirical sense-observation data. The notion of 'I' remains as an individual and singular because 'I' cannot be characterized by a complete enumeration of its nature. The 'I' remains limited by localization in space and time.

For Leibniz and Kant, identity and individuality are something bound by space and time and the 'self' understands itself at a given moment only. But then, how

9 For James, a thought is nothing but being the total way in which a person is conscious at a time.

come 'I' feel like the same person in my whole life even though I undergo many changes such as height, weight, skin complexion, occupation, residence, relationships, etc.? What makes me to feel the same person, the same 'I' from birth to death? I don't need anyone to tell me that I am the same self, the same person. Even though I play different roles like a student, friend, son, etc., having different qualities and having different characteristics, what enables me to have this feel of personhood and agenthood when I perform an action?

E.J. Lowe [67] points out that a person is one who is able to identify his/her 'self'. Self-reference is the basic characteristic of personhood. For Locke, a person is;

> … a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it: It being impossible for anyone to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive… (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, XXVII, 9) [60].

From the above quote we can discern what Lockean understanding of personhood suggests. A person is essentially something that acts and perceives and knows what it does. It is a perceiving, self-conscious agent. Such an understanding of a person leaves us with a conclusion that 'self' possesses the thoughts of a person (memories), which the philosophers have called as psychological criterion of personhood [67].

Strawson [59] finds Lockean definition of personhood as a functional kind (p. 60). He says, according to Locke, to be a person is to possess certain abilities. Strawson remarks that using such a psychological criterion of personhood could include not only human beings but also non-human beings like dolphins, martians, etc. Lockean account of personhood thus not satisfactory. Bernard Williams [68] proposes that the usage of bodily continuity as a criterion for personal identity. He argues that the memory criterion cannot be separated from the body criterion because the only condition under which x has a veridical memory of y's doing A is that x is similar to y. x and y to be the same person is to have the spatiotemporal continuity between their bodies.

In this regard, a question arises, do all human beings experience 'personhood'? Strawson [59] points out that experience of de-personhood is also not uncommon among most of us at one or the other time. Nagel [69] would call the experience of de-personhood as *objective self*. He writes, the objective self seems incapable of being anyone in particular (p. 60). Most of us, at some point of time, might experience a kind of bare locus of consciousness. In this state of consciousness, an individual remains detached, neutral, unengaged, and devoid of any feeling of personhood. Such an experience of de-personhood could arise due to extreme shock, exhaustion, solitude (fruit of deep meditation), boredom, etc. (p. 182) [59]. All these experiences of de-personhood may either exist for a short-term or long-term, which could be attributed to pathological and non-pathological causes. Long-term or sustained experience of de-personhood is called psychotic and it is experienced as true. But the experience of personhood is not immediately available to oneself even when he/she is conscious of something but only after reflection on one's own consciousness, one becomes aware of one's personhood in self-experience. What about other selves? Can a person be conscious about other selves?

Consciousness of Own-self and Other Selves

Lucy O'Brien [70] proposes that an individual gathers information about oneself from multiple sources some of which are publicly accessible. The self does not have to be a private entity known by the subject alone. One becomes conscious of oneself at the *gaze of others*. O'Brien calls this as *ordinary self-consciousness*, because it is a pervasive phenomenon in our daily life. It is a kind of self-consciousness that involves one's being "conscious of oneself as an object represented by others" (p. 101). One becomes conscious of oneself not only from others but also, he/she is conscious of the way one reacts to others. Using the *argument from analogy*,[10] we can very well affirm that as I become conscious of myself from others' gaze and my own consciousness of the way I react to them (my emotions and feelings, etc.), it could be the similar way others become conscious of themselves from my gaze and their consciousness of the way they react to me. Max Scheller (1973) has criticized this proposal of intersubjectivity to affirm the existence of others' minds and interpreting other selves as well. Scheller's criticism towards establishing the knowledge of the others' selves is based on argument from analogy. In this regard, Scheller's (1973) arguments can be traced back to Cassirer's [71] views on knowing other selves. Cassirer [71] argues, "life cannot apprehend itself by remaining absolutely within itself. It must give itself form; for it is precisely by this 'otherness' of form that it gains its visibility, if not its reality" (p. 39).

Of course, the problem of self remains as wide as ever with regard to first-person subjective view of self and third-person objective view of self. Does this mean, one cannot know the others' selves? It makes no sense to speak of

10 Argument from analogy is employed by the philosophers when they deal with the problem of intersubjectivity in the area of philosophy of mind. When I burn my finger, I feel pain and yell loudly at others. When I see someone else yelling at me shaking his/her finger out of pain, I can very well infer that he/she has the mind from body behaviours.

others' 'selves' unless the other's 'self' reveals itself in some way or the other due to which I become conscious and access the other's self. One may not know the other's 'self' as he/she knows of him/her self. In this context, Wittgenstein [72] writes, "my thoughts are not hidden from the other but are just open to the other in a different way than they are to me" (pp. 34-35). One can certainly know about the other's 'self' not exactly the same as of oneself, but in a different way. If one gains access to the other's 'self' in the same way one is aware of one's own self then the other's self would cease to be the other's 'self', and becomes part of one's self. Sartre [73] warns us if we attempt to bridge this gap between own-self and other's self by emphasizing their similarity, undifferentiatedness, and *a priori* interconnectedness it would lead to solipsism[11].

Levinas [74] argues that if a person attempts to experience the other's 'self' as he/she experiences his/her own self, then it leads to abolition of the difference between one's own self and the other's self. Merleau-Ponty [75] echoes that experiencing one's own self in some way contains a dimension of other's self. If it were not, then the intersubjective experience of a 'person' would not be possible. Heidegger in *Being and Time* [76] admits that "the understanding of others already lies in the understanding of being of *Dasein* because its being is being-with. This understanding, like all understanding, is not a knowledge derived from cognition, but primordially existential kind of being which first makes knowledge and cognition possible" (pp. 123-24). A 'self' knows itself and other selves as well primordially through its own existence. In this regard, Sartre [77] claims that existence precedes essence (p. 20).

Self and Embodiment

It is through embodied self, the 'self' relates with other selves and the world. David Hume [7] argues that perception is fundamental to relate to the world.

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception (p. 252) [7].

For Hume, as we noted in the above quote, self is nothing but bundle of perceptions. In other words, through multiple perceptions that are fleeting from one moment to the other, human beings may relate themselves to the world. Merleau-Ponty [78] affirms that 'self' as an embodied-being-in-the-world that perceives, relates, feels and experiences every other things and other beings. Kontos [79] advocates a conception of self that is embodied and it initiates a complex inter-relationship between primordial and social characteristics of the body (p. 837). The experience of embodied selfhood is enacted at a pre-reflective level (p. 841). She proposes that such a conception of 'selfhood' residing in the embodied body emanates from the body's power of natural expression, and manifests in the body's inherent ability to apprehend and convey meaning (p. 837) at the primordial level. She supposes that an embodied self is responsible for the socio-cultural interactions. This view confirms to the existence of one's selfhood. It lays emphasis on the socio-cultural aspect of the embodied self rather than the cognitive aspect of selfhood. Even at the level of one's own consciousness, one feels subjectivity and personhood because consciousness is the "bedrock of human reality: the locus or place of contact where self and world, interiority and exteriority meet and interpenetrate" (p. 606) [80]. In this sense, subjectivity is embodied and is there with or without cognition of itself. It is possible that other living beings also have such an experience of embodied self. Millett [81] mentions that embodiment of 'self' in human beings is understood through the combination of concepts of *umwelt*[12] and *bio-semiosis*[13]. Further, he states that the notion of embodied self is conceptualized not by anything that is external to self but by its very existence as embodied beings. In this context, it may be submitted that one's personhood is definitely over and above one's material body and is attributed to one's mental properties. Therefore, one's responsibility of his/her actions and interaction with his/her self, other selves and the worldly objects become a phenomenon for concern [82].

From the above arguments and analysis, I submit that it is due to one's consciousness, his/her free will associates with his/her 'self' and takes a conscious decision for a course of an action from multiple options available to him/her. Hence, consciousness is the pre-requisite to understand the role of self, and the interrelations of free will and responsibility of an agent's conscious actions.

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11 Solipsism, a form of monism claims that except the self, nothing is known to the self.

12 *Umwelt* is the term Edmund Husserl used to refer to a meaningful world created by every living creature through the interaction of sensory receptors and the physical world around them. Husserl later replaced *umwelt* with *Lebenswelt* which is translated as life-world.

13 Bio-semiosis refers to a sign process through which biological beings express their meanings.

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