

Personal identity and the soul



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The idea of personal identity is a concept we are consciously living but one we are never quite aware of. Our actions are determined by the anticipation of our future pleasures and future pains. This anticipation is shaped by instances in our past where a particular behavior or action on our part creates a result that we find desirable or undesirable. Our soul is that underlying thread that makes a connection between a situation we are faced with in our present lives to what we have lived through from the vast reservoir of our personal experience. Of the different types of personal identity; the Soul Theory, Memory Theory and Brain Theory, I think the soul theory offers the most complete explanation.

We are at any given time, the sum total of our collective life experience that includes the people we have met, the situations we have lived through and the stories we have heard of through the people we encounter about others and their life experiences. For there to exist a connection between an individual at one point in their lives and their selves in another point in their lives, these two versions would have to exhibit traits that cannot be acquired through any other means but personal life experience; i. e. actually living through it. Evidence for such traits is evident in the existence of idiosyncratic individual memories and the logic behind setting goals. If an individual were to lock themselves in a room with no windows, furniture or technology, and they were to write on the palm of their left hand the word 'red', a day later there is no way for anyone else to know what happened inside the room unless that individual were to divulge those details themselves. A day later then, this individual would be the only one to retain the memory of themselves inscribing 'red' onto their left palm, and this individual memory

and the inscribed characters prove beyond reasonable doubt that the individual inside that room a day earlier, and the individual who retains the memory the next day are one and the same person. The evidence for this connection is not physical, but a referenced memory. While the letters can be erased, the memory is not as easy to remove. Hence the continuity between these two versions is not physical, but mental. It cannot be quantified or measured physically, and neither can the soul, but its presence in our lives is overwhelming.

Our logic when we make decisions in every aspect of life is based on memories of situation's that we reference where we were able to obtain a result we find desirable or to avoid a situation at we find undesirable. Our soul, or our conscious self within our body, examines the experiences readily available in our mind at any given point of our lives and chooses a path that would help us attain what we want. Therefore the soul is the chief navigator for our actions and behaviors for the past, present and future. This notion gains even more prominence because the concept of the soul exists independently of religion. It is not dependent of the existence of God.

Those who argue against the soul theory may say that the individual traits that are displayed by an individual before and after in the room experiment, exist independently in the body and not the soul. This objection lacks credibility because it fails to account for those that are identical in their physical makeup but have diametrically opposite personality traits. If personality traits were dependent on our physical selves, that would allude to a scenario where people with identical bodies, if put through the exact same situations for long periods of time would develop similar personality

traits. Another version of this statement would argue that people with similar physical makeup's would react to stress and other highly emotionally demanding situations in similar ways. But there is no evidence for either of these last two statements to gain any credence. The existence of different and even diametrically opposite personality traits amongst survivors in holocaust camps in Nazi Germany disproves this objection to the soul theory. Many of these survivors suffered the same horrors and were worn down to similar body types, but the way their conscious selves dealt with those inhumane conditions differed tremendously. The existence of a wide variety of behaviors to combat those inhumane times proves that there was something within each of these bodies that differentiated them from one another. And this difference was the entity of the soul.

When thinking of personal identity, we must look at the body and soul as two pieces of the same whole. The sum total of our sensory organs helps us to see, touch, feel and smell every single life experience that we encounter. But without the soul, which is our conscious self, we have no way of classifying this incoming information and relate them to our lives. Such catharsis happens as a result of the soul, which defines our personal identity. Our soul shapes our perspective, and helps us identify what behaviors and actions we should implement when faced with any situation in our lives. We compare what we are experiencing or what we want with other similar situations from our past and look for some residual pattern that can justify an action or behavior that we deem suitable as a response to that individual situation or experience. The body serves as the vessel that aides the soul by providing it

a wealth of information, and the soul in turn helps the body navigate through the waters of life.

By providing a link between individual versions of each one of us at different times of our lives, the soul theory most completely offers an explanation for personal identity. Personal identity is the notion that each one of us displays certain idiosyncratic traits or identifiers that exist only within ourselves.

These identifiers differentiate us from those around us. Since the creation of these identifiers, which are in effect actions/behaviors and personality traits that we pick up through our life experience, is dependent on our conscious thinking during which we weigh the pros and cons of each action/behavior and trait in terms of their effectiveness to get us a desirable result in similar situations in the past, they cannot exist in the absence of a soul. Therefore, the soul theory is indispensable when thinking of personal identity.