Abstract and Keywords

Personal identity cannot be analysed either in terms of a continuity of mental life, or in terms of continuity of bodily matter. Continuing personal identity in the short term is a datum of experience, not merely known by inference from other experiences. To express this fact within an integrated system of thought, we must think of human persons as substances that consist of two parts – soul (the essential part) and body (non-essential). Part 2 of this book (Chs. 8–10) develops this view more fully. The argument of this chapter is put in precise logical form in New Appendix C. New Appendix D claims that souls have thisness; that is, the indiscernibility of identicals does not apply to souls.

Keywords: body, Descartes, Hume, indiscernibility of identicals, Leibniz, Parfit, personal identity, soul, thisness, Bernard Williams

SO far in this book I have been analysing the structure of man's mental life. I have been arguing that there are mental events of various kinds—sensations, thoughts, purposings,
desires, and beliefs—and that these interact with brain-events, which are physical events. I now come to the crucial question of the nature of that substance, the man (or human being) of which the mental events are states. Is a man just his body, an organized system of molecules, or does a man consist of two parts—body and soul?

This second part of the book is a defence of substance dualism. As stated in Chapter 1, I understand by substance dualism the view that those persons which are human beings (or men) living on Earth, have two parts linked together, body and soul. A man's body is that to which his physical properties belong. If a man weighs ten stone then his body weighs ten stone. A man's soul is that to which the (pure) mental properties of a man belong. If a man imagines a cat, then, the dualist will say, his soul imagines a cat. Talk of a man's body and its properties is of course perfectly natural ordinary-language talk; talk of a man's soul less so. The dualist would, however, claim that souls do feel and believe, even if we do not naturally talk in that way. (In ordinary talk perhaps minds, rather than souls, are, however, often given mental predicates—to be said to imagine things or feel weary, for instance.) On the dualist account the whole man has the properties he does because his constituent parts have the properties they do. I weigh ten stone because my body does; I imagine a cat because my soul does. Mixed mental properties, as I defined them in Chapter 1 are those mental properties which can be analysed in terms partly of a physical component. Writing a letter is a mixed property because it involves purposing to write a letter (mental property) being followed by the hand so moving that a letter is written (physical property). The instantiation of the mental property is followed by (and, I argued in Chapter 5, causes) the instantiation of the physical property. On the dualist view the mixed property belongs to the man, because its pure mental-property component belongs to his soul, and its physical-property component belongs to his body. I write a letter because my body makes certain movements and my soul prompted that it should.

A person has a body if there is a chunk of matter through which he makes a difference to the material world, and through which he acquires true beliefs about that world. Those persons who are men have bodies because stimuli landing on their eyes or ears give them true beliefs about the world, which they would not otherwise have; and they make differences to the world by moving arms and legs, lips and fingers. Our bodies are the vehicles of our knowledge and operation. The 'linking' of body and soul consists in there being a body which is related to the soul in this way.

Some dualists, such as Descartes, seem sometimes to be saying that the soul is the person; any living body temporarily linked to the soul is no part of the person. That, however, seems just false. Given that what we are trying to do is to analyse the nature of those entities, such as men, which we normally call 'persons', we must say that arms and legs and all other parts of the living body of a man are parts of the person. My arms and my legs are parts of me. The crucial point that Descartes and others were presumably trying to make is not that (in the case of men) the living body is not part of the person, but that it is not essentially, only contingently, part of the person. The body is separable from the person and the person can continue even if the body is destroyed. Just as I continue
to exist wholly and completely if you cut off my hair, so, the dualist holds, it is possible that I continue to exist if you destroy my body. The soul, by contrast, is the necessary core which must continue if I am to continue; it is the part of the person which is necessary for his continuing existence. The person is the soul together with whatever, if any, body is linked temporarily to it.

By saying that the person ‘can’ continue if the body is destroyed I mean only that this is logically possible, that there is no contradiction in supposing the soul to continue to exist without its present body or indeed any body at all (although such a soul would not then, on the understanding which I have given to ‘man’—see (p.147) pp. 4 f.—be a man or part of a man, although it would have been part of a man). Whether this normally happens, is another question; and one to which I shall come later. My concern in this chapter is to show that a man has a part, his soul, as well as his body—whether or not in the natural course of things that part continues to exist without the body.

So much for what dualism is. Now for its general defence. My initial argument in its support has two stages. I argue first that knowledge of what happens to bodies and their parts, and knowledge of the mental events which occur in connection with them will not suffice to give you knowledge of what happens to those persons who are (currently) men. Talk about persons is not analysable in terms of talk about bodies and their connected mental life. And more generally, it is logically possible that persons continue to exist when their bodies are destroyed. Secondly, I argue that the most natural way of making sense of this fact is talking of persons as consisting of two parts, body and soul—the soul being the essential part, whose continuing alone makes for the continuing of the person.

So then for the first stage of the argument. It is, I suggest, a factual matter whether a person survives an operation or not. There is a truth here that some later person is or is not the same as some pre-operation person, but it is, I shall suggest, a truth of which we can be ignorant however much we know about human bodies and the fate of their organs.

How much of my body must remain if I am to survive an operation? Plausibly, with respect to all parts of my body other than the brain, if you remove them I survive. Cut off my arm or leg, replace my heart or liver, and I continue to exist; there is the same person before as after the operation. Remove my brain, on the other hand, and put it in the skull of another body, and replace it by a different brain, and intuitively the rest of the body that was mine is no longer. I go where my brain goes. We treat the brain as the core of the body which determines whose body it is. That is because with the brain goes the characteristic pattern of mental life which is expressed in behaviour. The brain gives rise to a man's mental states—his beliefs, including his apparent memories, and his desires, their expression in public behaviour, and his characteristic pattern of unintended response to circumstance. The brain gives rise to memory and character which we see as more intimately connected with personal identity than the digestive processes. But what if only some of my brain is removed? Do I survive or not?

The brain, as is well known, has two very similar hemispheres—a left and a right
hemisphere. The left hemisphere plays a major role in the control of limbs and of processing sensory information from the right side of the body (and from the right sides of the two eyes); and the right hemisphere plays a major role in the control of limbs of and processing of sensory information from the left side of the body (and from the left sides of the two eyes). The left hemisphere normally plays the major role in the control of speech. Although the hemispheres have different roles in adults, they interact with each other; and if parts of a hemisphere are removed, at any rate early in life, the roles of those parts are often taken over by parts of the other hemisphere. Brain operations are not infrequent, which remove substantial parts of the brain. It might be possible one day to remove a whole hemisphere, without killing the person, and to transplant it into the skull of a living body from which the brain has just been removed, so that the transplant takes. There would then appear to be two separate living persons. Since both are controlled by hemispheres originating from the original person p, and since apparent memory and character and their manifestation in behaviour are dependent on factors present in both hemispheres, we would expect each publicly to affirm such apparent memories and to behave as if he had p's character. It is possible that appearances might be misleading here—that one of the apparent persons was simply a robot, with no life of conscious experience at all, but caused to behave as if it had. But, if we suppose that appearances are not misleading here, the transplant will have created two persons, both with p's apparent memories and character. But they cannot both be p. For if they were, they would both be the same person as each other, and clearly they are not—they have now distinct mental lives. The operation would therefore create at least one new person—we may have our views about which (if either) resultant person p is, but we could be wrong. And that is my basic point—however much we knew in such a situation about what happens to the parts of a person's body, we would not know for certain what happens to the person.

I can bring the uncertainty out strongly by adapting Bernard Williams's famous mad surgeon story. Suppose that a mad surgeon captures you and announces that he is going to transplant your left cerebral hemisphere into one body, and your right one into another. He is going to torture one of the resulting persons and free the other with a gift of a million pounds. You can choose which person is to be tortured and which to be rewarded, and the surgeon promises to do as you choose. You believe his promise. But how are you to choose? You wish to choose that you are rewarded, but you do not know which resultant person will be you. You may have studied neurophysiology deeply and think that you have detected some all-important difference between the hemispheres which indicates which is the vehicle of personal identity; but, all too obviously, you could be mistaken. Whichever way you choose, the choice would, in Williams's telling word about his similar story, be a ‘risk’—which shows that there is something other to the continuity of the person, than any continuity of parts of brain or body.

It is a fashionable criticism of an argument of this kind that it assumes that personal identity is indivisible. We do not make this kind of assumption with respect to inanimate things, such as cars and countries. These survive in part. If half the bits of my old car are used together with bits of another old car in the construction of a new car, my car has
survived in part. And if the other bits of my old car are used in construction of another new car, then my old car has survived in part as one car and in part as another car. If we succeed in dividing humans, why should not human survival be like that? If half my brain is put into one body, and half into another body, do I not survive partly as one person and partly as another?

However, persons such as men are very different from inanimate beings such as cars. They have hopes, fears, and memories which make it very difficult to give sense to the idea of their partial survival. Consider again the victim in the mad surgeon story. If he survives to the extent to which his brain survives, his choice of who is to suffer will make no difference; however he chooses one person who is partly he will suffer, and one person who is partly will be rewarded. In that case he has reason both for joyous expectation and for terrified anticipation. But how can such an attitude of part joyous expectation and part terrified anticipation be justified, since no future person is going to suffer a mixed fate? It is hard to give any sense to the notion of there being a half-way between one having certain future experiences which some person has, and one not having them, and so to the notion of a person being divisible.

But even if this notion of partial survival does make sense, it will in no way remove the difficulty, which remains this. Although it may be the case that if my two brain hemispheres are transplanted into different bodies, I survive partly as the person whose body is controlled by one and partly as the person whose body is controlled by the other, it may not be like that at all. Maybe I go just where the left hemisphere goes. As we have seen, the fate of some parts of my body, such as my arms and legs, is quite irrelevant to the fate of me. And plausibly the fate of some parts of my brain is irrelevant — can I not survive completely a minor brain operation which removes a very small tumour? But then maybe it is the same with some larger parts of the brain too. We just don’t know. If the mad surgeon’s victim took the attitude that it didn’t matter which way he chose, we would, I suggest, regard him as taking an unjustifyably dogmatic attitude. For the fact that a resultant person has qualitatively the same memory and character is certainly no guarantee that he is me—in whole or in part. For while I continue to exist quite untouched by any change of brain or character or memory, some other person with my character could, through a long process of hypnosis, be given ‘my’ apparent memories in the sense of being led to believe that he had the same past experiences as I did. But that would not make me any less than fully me; and if I remain fully me, there is no room for to be me, even in small part.

My argument has been that knowledge of what has happened to a person’s body and its parts will not necessarily give you knowledge of what has happened to the person, and so, that persons are not the same as their bodies. I have illustrated my argument by considerations which, alas, are far from being mere thought-experiments. Brain transplants may well happen in a few decades, and we need to be armed with the philosophical apparatus to cope with them. But it suffices to make my point to point out that the mere logical possibility of a person surviving with only half his brain (the mere fact that this is not a self-contradictory supposition) is enough to show that talk
about persons is not analysable as talk about bodies and their parts.

My arguments so far, however, show only that some brain continuity (or other bodily continuity) is not sufficient for personal identity; which is something over and above that. They do not rule out the possibility that some bodily matter needs to continue as well, if personal identity is to continue. Thought-experiments of more extravagant kinds rule out this latter possibility. Consider life after death. It seems logically possible that any present person who is currently a man, having the mental properties which we know men to have and which I have described in previous chapters, could continue to be with loss of his present body. We understand what is being claimed in fairy stories or in serious religious affirmations which affirm life after death. It seems self-consistent to affirm with respect to any person who is the subject of mental properties that he continue to have them, while his body is annihilated. This shows that the very notions of sensation, purposing, etc. involve the concepts of a subject of sensation and purposing of whom it makes sense to suppose that he continues while his body does not.

This suggestion of a man acquiring a new body may be made more plausible, to someone who has difficulty in grasping it, by supposing the event to occur gradually. Suppose that one morning a man wakes up to find himself unable to control the right side of his body, including his right arm and leg. When he tries to move the right-side parts of his body, he finds that the corresponding left-side parts of his body move; and when he tries to move the left-side parts, the corresponding parts of his wife's body move. His knowledge of the world comes to depend on stimuli to his left side and to his wife's right side (e.g. light rays stimulating his left eye and his wife's right eye). The bodies fuse to some extent physiologically as with Siamese twins, while the man's wife loses control of her left side. The focus of the man's control of and knowledge of the world is shifting. One may suppose the process completed as the man's control is shifted to the wife's body, while his wife loses control of it. At that stage he becomes able to move parts of what was his wife's body as a basic action, not merely by doing some other action.

(p.152) Equally coherent, I suggest, is the supposition that a person who is a man might become disembodied. A person has a body if there is one particular chunk of matter through which he has to operate on and learn about the world. But suppose that a person who has been a man now finds himself no longer able to operate on the world, nor to acquire true beliefs about it; yet still to have a full mental life, some of it subject to his voluntary control. He would be disembodied. Or suppose, alternatively, that he finds himself able to operate on and learn about the world within some small finite region, without having to use one particular chunk of matter for this purpose. He might find himself with knowledge of the position of objects in a room (perhaps by having visual sensations, perhaps not), and able to move such objects just like that, in the ways in which we know about the positions of our limbs and can move them. But the room would not be, as it were, the person's body; for we may suppose that simply by choosing to do so he can gradually shift the focus of his knowledge and control, e.g. to the next room. The person would be in no way limited to operating and learning through one particular chunk of matter. Hence he would have no body. The supposition that a person who is currently
a man might become disembodied in one or other of these ways seems coherent.

Not merely is it not logically necessary that a person have a body or brain made of certain matter, if he is to be the person which he is; it is not even necessitated by laws of nature. For let us assume what I shall later call into question, the most that is claimed for natural laws, that they dictate the course of evolution, the emergence of consciousness, and the behaviour and mental life of men in a totally deterministic way. In 4000m BC the Earth was a cooling globe of inanimate atoms. Natural laws then, we assume, dictated how this globe would evolve, and so which arrangements of matter would be the bodies of conscious men, and so, also, just how those men would behave and what mental life they would have. My point now is that what natural laws still in no way determine is which animate body is yours and which is mine. Just the same arrangement of matter and just the same laws could have given to me the body (and so the behaviour and mental life) which are now yours, and to you the body (and so the behaviour and mental life) which are now mine. It needs either God or chance to allocate bodies to persons; the most that natural laws could determine is that bodies of a certain construction are the bodies of some person or other who in consequence of this construction behave in certain ways and have a certain mental life. Since the body which is presently yours could have been mine (logic and even natural laws allow), that shows that none of the matter of which my body is presently made is essential to my being the person that I am.

And so I come to the second stage of my argument. How are we to bring out within an integrated system of thought, this fact which the first stage of my argument has, I hope, shown conclusively—that continuing matter is not (logically) essential for the continuing existence of persons. For persons are substances, and for substances of all other kinds continuing matter is necessary for the continuing existence of the substance. If a substance \( S_2 \) at a time \( t_2 \) is to be the same substance as a substance \( S_1 \) at an earlier time \( t_1 \) it must (of logical necessity) be made of the same matter as \( S_1 \), or at least of matter obtained from \( S_1 \) by gradual replacement. If my desk today is to be the same desk as my desk last year it must be made largely of the same wood; a drawer or two may have been replaced. But the desk would not be the same desk if all the wood had been replaced. In the case of living organisms such as plants, we do allow for total replacement of matter—so long as it is gradual. The full-grown oak tree possesses few if any of the molecules which formed the sapling, but so long as molecules were replaced only gradually over a period while most other molecules continued to form part of the organized tree, the tree continues to exist. That continuing matter was necessary for the continued existence of a substance, was a central element in Aristotle’s account of substances. But now we have seen that persons can survive (it is logically possible) without their bodily matter continuing to be part of them. In this situation we have a choice. Either we can say simply that persons are different—in their case continuing matter is not necessary for the continued existence of the substance. Or we can try to make sense of this fact by liberalizing Aristotle’s account a little. We can say that the continuing existence of some of the stuff of which a substance is made is necessary for the continued existence of the substance. Normally the stuff of which substances are made is merely matter, but some substances (viz. (p.154) persons) are made in part of
immaterial stuff, soul-stuff. Given, as I suggested earlier, that persons are indivisible, it follows that soul-stuff comes in indivisible chunks, which we may call souls.

This liberalized Aristotelian assumption I will call the quasi-Aristotelian assumption: that a substance \( S_2 \) at \( t_2 \) is the same substance as an earlier substance \( S_1 \) at \( t_1 \) only if \( S_2 \) is made of some of the same stuff as \( S_1 \) (or stuff obtained therefrom by gradual replacement).

Given the quasi-Aristotelian assumption, and given, that for any present person who is currently conscious, there is no logical impossibility, whatever else may be true now of that person, that that person continue to exist without his body, it follows that that person must now actually have a part other than a bodily part which can continue, and which we may call his soul—and so that his possession of it is entailed by his being a conscious being. For there is not even a logical possibility that if I now consist of nothing but matter and the matter is destroyed, that I should nevertheless continue to exist. From the mere logical possibility of my continued existence there follows the actual fact that there is now more to me than my body; and that more is the essential part of myself. A person's being conscious is thus to be analysed as an immaterial core of himself, his soul being conscious.\(^5\)

If we are prepared to say that substances can be the same, even though none of the stuff (in a wide sense) of which they are made is the same, the conclusion does not follow. The quasi-Aristotelian assumption provides rather a partial definition of 'stuff' than a factual truth. To say that a person has an immaterial soul is not to say that if you examine him closely enough under an acute enough microscope you will find some very rarified constituent which has eluded the power of ordinary microscopes. It is just a way of expressing the point within a traditional framework of thought that persons can—it is logically possible—continue, when their bodies do not. It does, however, seem a very natural way of expressing the point—especially once we allow that persons can become disembodied. Unless we adopt the more liberal quasi-Aristotelian assumption, we shall have to say that there can be substances which are not made of anything, and which are the same substances as other substances which are made of matter.

There is therefore abundant reason for saying that a man (p.155) consists of body plus soul. A man's physical properties (e.g. having such-and-such a shape and mass) clearly belong to his body and to the person in virtue of belonging to his body. If the man dies and ceases to exist (i.e. his soul ceases to exist), there need (logically) be no change in the way those properties characterize his body. A man's pure mental properties, however, belong to his soul and to the man in virtue of belonging to his soul; for it is logically possible that those properties continue to characterize the person who is that man, when his body is destroyed. Hence mixed properties belong to the person in virtue of their physical-component properties belonging to his body and their pure mental-component properties belonging to his soul.

Note that on the dualist view which I am expounding, although the identity of persons at different times is constituted by the identity of their souls (and these are not publicly
observable things), it remains the case that all claims about personal identity are verifiable, in the sense that there can be evidence of observation for or against them. For although continuity of brain and of apparent memory (i.e., a man's apparent memory of who he was and what he did) do not constitute personal identity, they are evidence of it, and so evidence of sameness of soul. Why they are evidence of personal identity is an issue to which I shall come in the next chapter.

And not merely are all claims about personal identity verifiable via observations of other things, but over a short period personal identity is itself experienceable by the subject, as directly as anything can be experienced, in the continuity of his perceptions and other mental events. Human perception is perception of change. The perceptual beliefs to which our senses give rise are not just beliefs that at one time things were arranged thus, and at another time in a different way, and at a third in yet a third way. For as a result of perception we come to know not merely what happened, but in what order things happened—that first things were arranged like this, and subsequently like that, and yet subsequently like that. Sometimes, of course, we infer from our perceptions and our general knowledge of how things happen in the world, the order in which those perceptions and so the events perceived must have occurred. Knowing that, in general, cigarettes (p.156) are first lit and then smoked and in the process get smaller, I may infer that my seeing the cigarette lit occurred before my seeing the cigarette half-smoked. But not all knowledge of the order of our perceptions can derive from inference. For first, we have much knowledge of the actual order of perceptions, when as far as our general knowledge of the world goes, the events perceived could as easily occur in one order as in the other—such as a ball moving on a particular occasion from left to right rather than from right to left. And secondly, in order to infer the order of our perceptions, we need that general knowledge of the order in which events of the kind perceived occur. Yet our beliefs about the latter (e.g., our knowledge that in general lit cigarettes get smaller) would be without justification (and so would not amount to the knowledge which we surely rightly believe them to be) unless they were grounded in many perceptions made by ourselves or others of actual such successions.

So the perceptual beliefs to which our senses give rise include (and must include if we are to have knowledge, grounded in experience) beliefs about the order in which things happen. That is, we perceive things happening in a certain order. The most primitive things which an observer sees include not just the train being here, but also the train moving from here to there, from there to the third place. When a train moves along a railway line, the observer S on the bank has the following successive perceptions: S sees (train T at place p followed by T at place q); S sees (T at q followed by T at r); S sees (T at r followed by T at u), and so on. He acquires the belief that things were as perceived. But then that is not quite a full description of the beliefs which he acquires through perception. For if those were all his data, he would have no grounds for believing that the second event which I have described succeeded the first event (rather than being one which occurred on an entirely different occasion). Why he does have such grounds is because he also acquires, through having the succession of perceptions, the further perceptual beliefs that the first perception is succeeded by the second perception, and
that the second perception is succeeded by the third perception. He acquires, through experience, knowledge of temporal succession. And, more particularly, the further perceptual beliefs which he acquires are that his first perception is succeeded by his second perception, and so on. The content of his further perceptual (p.157) beliefs is that there has been a succession of perceptions had by a common subject, viz. himself. Using the word ‘experience’ for a brief moment in a wide sense, we may say that the succession of perceptions is itself a datum of experience; S experiences his experiences as overlapping in a stream of awareness. As John Foster, to whom I owe this argument, puts it, ‘It is this double overlap which provides the sensible continuity of sense experience and unifies presentations [i.e. perceptions] into a stream of awareness . . . It is in the unity of a stream that we primarily discern the identity of a subject’.7 That is, one of a subject’s basic data is of the continuity of experience, which means the continuity of the mental events of a common subject, the person.

In a famous passage Hume wrote: ‘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 catch myself at any time without a perception’.8 It may well be that Hume never catches himself without a ‘perception’ (i.e. a conscious episode) but his bare datum is not just ‘perceptions’, but successions of overlapping ‘perceptions’ experienced by a common subject. If it were not so, we would have no grounded knowledge of succession. Hume says that he fails to find the common subject. One wonders what he supposed that the common subject would look like, and what he considered would count as its discovery. Was he looking for a common element in all his visual fields, or a background noise which never ceased? Is that the sort of thing he failed to find?9 Yet the self which he ought to have found in all his mental events is supposed to be the subject, not the object of perception. And finding it consists in being aware of different mental events as had by the same subject.

Further, among the data of experience are not merely that certain mental events are the successive mental events of a (p.158) common subject, but also that certain simultaneous mental events are states of a common subject. At a single moment of time you feel cramp in your leg, hear the noise of my voice, and see the movement of my arms. It is among the data of your experience (i.e. among basic data, not inferable from anything closer to experience) that these are all your mental events.

Yet that mental events are states of the same subject is something that knowledge of brains and their states and knowledge of which mental events were occurring would be insufficient to tell you. As I noted earlier, some sensory nervous impulses (including those from the right-side limbs and right sides of the two eyes) go in the first instance to the left brain hemisphere, and some (including those from the left-side limbs and the left sides of the two eyes) go to the right brain hemisphere; and the two hemispheres control different parts of the body (the left hemisphere controlling speech, as well as the right arm and leg). However, in the normal brain the signals to one hemisphere are immediately transmitted to the other, and the ‘instructions’ given by one are correlated with events in the other. But if the brain operation of cerebral commissurotomy (cutting
the main tract between the two hemispheres) is performed, the hemispheres act in a much more independent way, and it is a crucial issue whether by the operation we have created two persons. Experimenters seek to discover by the responses in speech, writing or other means whether one subject is co-experiencing the different visual, auditory, olfactory, etc. sensations caused through the sense organs or whether there are two subjects which have different sensations. The subject (or subjects) is aware of one or more kinds of sensation and the experimenter seeks to elicit information about his (or their) sensations from him (or them). That is not quite as easy as it sounds. If the mouth confesses to seeing a green object but not to hearing a loud noise; while the left hand denies seeing a green object, but claims instead to hear a loud noise; that is not enough in itself to show that no subject co-experienced a loud noise and saw a green object. For, first, mouth and hand may sometimes, as may any limb, give a reflex response to a question rather than a considered judgement (the reflex may be out of a subject’s control without being in the control of some other subject), and the reflexes available to different limbs may relate to information of different kinds (the left hand may be able by pointing to give the (p.159) answers to questions about objects presented to the left side of the visual field only without the subject being aware of the objects presented and/or the responses of the hand); and secondly, there may be kinds of belief (about his mental events) which the split-brain subject can convey only by one means rather than another. The effect of cerebral commissurotomy is not immediately evident, and various complex experiments are needed before any one hypothesis about what has happened can gain significant support.

That hypothesis about how many subjects of experience and action, i.e. persons, there are, will be best supported the better it can be filled out as a detailed claim about which beliefs, desires, and other mental events the one or more different subjects have, which explains in a simple way many observed data. For example a hypothesis that there are two persons becomes more plausible if we can in certain circumstances attribute to each not merely distinct sensations and beliefs about them, but distinct beliefs and desires of a general character, i.e. different views about what is good and bad in the world, and different inclinations to bring about long-term states of affairs, and these different beliefs and desires are continuing beliefs which explain whole patterns of limb movements—e.g. the left hand and the mouth express different complex moral claims. For then the patterns of response of the different sets of limbs would be more analogous to the conscious responses of men by which they manifest beliefs of which they are conscious, than to patterns of mere unconscious reflex. And it would be simpler to suppose that similar patterns of response (of all limbs in normal persons, and of one set of limbs in split-brain persons) have similar explanations (viz, in distinct sets of beliefs and desires) than to suppose that the unity of response in the latter case does not arise from the unity of a person with a continuing mental life.10

What is clear in these cases is that what the investigator is trying to discover is something other than and beyond the pattern of the subject’s responses, as it is also something other than and beyond (p.160) the extent of the connections between the two hemispheres. That something is whether there are one or two subjects of experience and
action, i.e. persons. Whether one person is having both sensations is something of which he will be immediately aware, but which others have to infer (fallibly) from the complex public data. In considering simultaneous experience as in considering experience over time, we see that which persons are the same as other persons are facts additional to publicly observable facts. Dualism can make sense of why there is sometimes (i.e. in cases of cerebral commissurotomy) a difficult problem of discovering how many persons there are. Dualism, in claiming that a person is body plus soul, explains the problem as the problem of discovering the number of souls connected to a given brain. Since the outsider can only discover this by fallible inference from bodily behaviour and brain-states, discovering the answer can be difficult and we can always go wrong. However, co-experience is no artificial construct; it is as primitive a datum of experience for the subject as anything could be. The subject's awareness is an awareness of himself as the common subject of various sensations (and other mental events).

My conclusion—that truths about persons are other than truths about their bodies and parts thereof—is, I suggest, forced upon anyone who reflects seriously on the fact of the unity of consciousness over time and at a time. A framework of thought which makes sense of this fact is provided if we think of a person as body plus soul, such that the continuing of the soul alone guarantees the continuing of the person.11

Notes:

(1) There are passages in Descartes which can be interpreted as saying that the body is no part of the person and other passages which can be interpreted as saying that the body is a part, but not an essential part, of the person. For examples and commentary, see pp. 63–6 of B. Smart, ‘How can Persons be ascribed M-Predicates’, *Mind*, 1977, 86, 49–66.

(2) For a simple readable account of the current state of psychological research of the different roles of the two hemispheres, see S. P. Springer and G. Deutsch, *Left Brain, Right Brain*, W. H. Freeman, San Francisco, 1981.


(5) See New Appendix C.

(6) We learn through perceptions of the effects which we ourselves bring about that, in general, spatially near events are perceived at approximately the instant of their occurrence. See my *Space and Time*, Macmillan, London, second edition, 1981, p. 145.

(8) *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1. 4. 6.

(9) Because our awareness of ourselves is different in kind from our awareness of objects of experience, Berkeley chose to say that we have a ‘notion’ of the former but an ‘idea’ of the latter. ‘To expect that by any multiplication or enlargement of our faculties we may be enabled to know a spirit as we do a triangle, seems as absurd as if we should hope to see a sound’—G. Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, 1710, § 142.


(11) See New Appendix D.