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If your memories were implanted into the body of another person’s body, which person would that body be? What is Locke’s answer to this question, and what are his reasons for giving this answer? Provide an argument for why you agree or disagree with Locke’s theory of personal identity.

Locke on Personal Identity

In Locke’s era, many philosophers believed in life after death and transfer of consciousness from one body to another. In these process consciousness is the key factor. According to Locke’s principal, consciousness is what defines a person as a person. Consciousness can be defined as a mental aspect as it correlates with body and soul. Memory was considered to be an integral part of a person’s ideology. He proposed an argument about how a person can be defined, which includes how much he can recall from his past actions or thoughts.

We grow every day and experience new things in life. The mind tends to erase some of our memories from the past to make room for new memories and it is necessary or there may be a severe health problem. So if we were to think that we are the same person we were 10 years ago, it can be true from a physical aspect but mentally we might not remember what happened at that point of time. By Locke's theory, we can't say that we are the same person we were in the past because of the disintegrated memory as it is purely based upon memory i.e. consciousness.

Locke's definition of a person contradicts its traditional definition to be a living body. His concept of a person was a thinking being who can reflect upon his ideas and he considers itself as itself and it is the same thinking thing at different time and place. According to him, personal identity is not about body and sensation but it is about the consciousness of mind which makes us a person. So this definition seems to be emphasizing more on thinking as he considered it to be the main aspect of his claims.

So if we take the famous example of the "Prince and Cobbler", their minds are interchanged and so by Locke's words, their consciousness is exchanged. Now it was found that the cobbler was guilty of some crime, so if the culprit has to be punished, who should suffer, the prince or the cobbler? According to Locke's theory, the prince had to suffer regardless of his body as consciousness is something on which the identity of a person depends. Consciousness is a sense which applies a person's knowledge or experience of something with the external world.

As memory coexists with consciousness, it cannot be neglected that it is important as well to define personal identity. If all the memories from a person are transferred to a new person, how can we know which person is the new individual is? If he is the same person he was before or he is the first person whose mind was exchanged. By Locke's argument, the new individual is the same person as the old individual as the mind and memories are what determines a person's identity.

Locke raised an argument about how the consciousness of mind can distinguish a person from others. In my opinion, I find these arguments to be believable. Defending my opinion, every person has a different perspective and how he experiences his life. Recalling thoughs memories, that individual sets apart from others. However, there are few things I disagree with like the concept of afterlife and transfer of consciousness from one body to another. By the perception of religion and philosophy, it is believed to be true but it still isn't convincing enough and there is no strong evidence to support their claim. But as Plato says – “You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.” Some things are not meant to be proved.

Works Cited

Namita Nimbalkar. *John Locke on Personal Identity, BRAIN, MIND AND CONSCIOUSNESS;* 2011, Issue 1, Vol 9, Page: 268 - 275.