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**Understanding gender and its relation to the  
philosophy of personal identity.**



**Keele  
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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to establish that there is no metaphysical account of personal identity that requires us to regard gender as essential to our identities. I shall begin by examining forms of essentialism as well as rejections of essentialism, relating these theories to the issue at hand. Secondly, I shall evaluate the social existence of gender and the impact it has upon individual lives and communities. I shall go on to evaluate psychological accounts of identity to determine how gender adheres with understandings of personal identity as a psychological continuity. I will then look to the antithesis of such views and examine physiological accounts of identity, again relating these to the issues of gender. Finally, I shall compare what each of these theories tells us about the existence of gender in our lives and conclude that gender is a social construct, and that since no legitimate metaphysical account of identity encourages belief in gender essentialism, harmful prevalent attitudes to gender within society are ultimately irrational.

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Gender is an omnipresent concept within our society, it influences politics, personal relations and even how we are perceived. My endeavour within this thesis is to understand how gender impacts upon personal identity. Is gender part of who we are? Would we be the same person if our gender changed? In other words, what I am attempting to establish, is whether or not gender is an essential part of our existence, our identity. A problem with the current discussions on gender essentialism is the lack of clarity about the position gender upholds in our lives. Therefore, my thesis is concerned with truly understanding whether, or not, gender is essential to our personal identity. I will begin to address this through the discussion of "Gender-essentialism"- I will be analysing Essentialist theories from philosophers such as Aristotle and John Locke and applying their theories to the concept of gender- in order to demonstrate that there is no version of "Gender-Essentialism" that does not have its own fatal complications. This claim will be supported by my discussion of psychological and sociological theories of gender and sex - like the works of Judith Butler and Simone De Beauvoir, for example)- which will begin to show that gender is not characteristic of our existence at all, but a reflection of the society we live in. I will then go on to look at Western theories of personal identity in order to understand the role that gender plays with in our personal construction- however this will also demonstrate how problematic it is to try and align theories of gender with theories of personal identity. Compiling all of these ideas will lead me to introduce the notion that gender cannot be satisfactorily explained through essentialism or within our personal identity because, in fact, gender exists as part of our social identity- an important element of our existence but, nonetheless fundamentally, different from our personal identities. The conclusion of my thesis will, ultimately, attempt to show that there is no theory of personal identity that requires us to think that gender is essential to our identities and that the existence of gender is perpetuated through social traditions and perceived obligations, rather than through its essential existence in our personal identities.

### **Arist-essentialism.**

Aristotle's "History of animals" discusses the idea of a biological gender difference, for example he states, "while within the womb, the female infant accomplishes the whole development of its parts more slowly than the male, and more frequently than the man- child takes ten months to come to perfection," (Aristotle, 350 BC/2008, p. 126). This suggests that one's development and composition is different, depending on one's sex. Aristotle goes on to also explain how women are "more likely to be moved to tears and be sensitive whereas men are most likely to be brave and strong" (Aristotle, 350 BC/2008, p.130) as well as describing various other ways that men and women differ in their temperament. This is where my query begins- if a man and a woman are formed differently in the womb and continue to develop differently when they are born, then

biological sex and composition must dictate our personality and behaviour. If this is to be accepted, then we are highlighting an integral difference between the sexes in a physical and psychological sense. Do these differences, which have affected us since the day we were born, construct part of “who we are”? Could our gender change and yet we still be classed as the same person? Whether or not we decide to agree with Aristotle’s differentiation of gender is a different debate, but what we need to take from this is the fact that, according to this theory, our biological sex is sculpting our development whilst we are in the womb. Therefore, if genders dictate our biology and psychology, then it seems logical to suggest that gender is also imperative to our being. If I, a woman, destined to be more sensitive and emotional, by some phenomenon became a man, then Aristotle suggests I would then, just by changing from a woman to a man, more than likely become more independent and brave- quite the opposite of the former. Eventually this would impact on my own thoughts and actions as well as other people’s opinions and acceptance of me. I would no longer menstruate, have the capacity to bear a child or lactate, I would be regarded differently in a work environment. Conclusively, this is suggesting that I would not be the same person as a man that I was as a woman. If this is so, then our gender is integral as part of us. This reflects the ideas of Aristotelian essentialism. Aristotle’s account of essences is distinct from that offered by Platonists (who do not give such a central role to causal explanation) Furthermore, whilst Aristotle’s essences are part of the fabric of reality, “they can be grasped only by those with certain definitional and explanatory practices,” (Charles, 2002, p. 7). Aristotelian Essentialism which was born around the question: “What is it?” expands into a question about the unity and organization of material parts into a new individual. Using the analogy of a house (Witt, 2011, p. 13) Aristotelian thinking teaches us to ask; Why do these basic materials constitute a house? The answer is that they realize the functional property that defines being a house, which is to shelter humans and animals. Being a shelter for humans and animals is what makes these materials a house rather than a collection of supplies or just a sum of parts. The house’s functional property explains why a new, unified individual exists at all. (Witt, 2011, p. 6). The example of the house shows that, For Aristotle, the essence is the cause of being of the individual whose essence it is (Witt, 2011, p. 14) so in other words that essence is the entity that binds all the raw materials together which allows those materials to function as a house, rather than remaining a pile of rubble.

When discussing essentialism in relation to humans, we would say that “for a man to be is for him to be characterized by those predicates which makes something a man” (Dahl, 1997, p. 233). If we say then, for example, that for a man to be a man he needs to have the male, biological sexual organs then if the person in question did not have these organs, they could not be a man. Furthermore, all substances fall under a substance kind, where the essence of that substance (what it is for that substance to be) at least includes the essence of its substance kind (what it is for something to be a thing of that kind) (Dahl, 1997, p. 234).

Norman O’Dahl discusses the query that if, A is said of a particular “A kath’ hauto (“with respect to itself” or essentially)” (Dahl, 1997, p. 234), then the essence of that particular A (what it is for that particular A to be) will at least include the essence of the kind A (what it is for something to be an A). The question we must raise now is whether Aristotle would maintain that the essence of A includes the essence of the kind A for every kind A; would he maintain this when A is said of a subject “kata sumbebewos (“with respect to an accident” or accidentally)” (Dahl, 1997, p. 234)? The example he illustrates for this point is, would Aristotle say that what it is for a pale man to be includes what it is to fall under the kind of pale man (Dahl, 1997, p. 234)?

At first glance, one would perhaps think that Aristotle would not, because, if a pale man is indeed a man who just happens to be pale (and if what it is to be of the kind “Pale man” includes what it is to



be pale) then it seems as though the essence of the Kind "Pale man" will not be part of what it is for a particular man to be pale. In more basic terms, a man who happens to be pale can exist without being pale, if the next morning he awoke with a red complexion he would not cease to exist nor exist as a different entity, he would just no longer be pale. Whereas to be part of the kind "Pale man" you cannot be part of said species without being pale so there is no possibility of the man existing as anything but pale. However, it has also been said that this is the wrong approach to this question. Gareth Matthews, for example, states that when Aristotle talks of a pale man, he isn't talking about a man who just happens to be pale. He instead refers to the accidental compound which consists of a man and an accident, i.e. his pallor. The accidental compound of a man and his pallor cannot exist without being characterized by what it is to be a compound of that sort (Dahl, 1997, p. 235).

The analogy of the pale man highlights an integral, essential difference which is key to my current endeavour; that is, that there is an opposition between what is essential to the kind/species to which an individual belongs and to the essence of the individual. According to this idea then, the essential qualities for the existence within a Biological kind may be required to be part or not part of a sex- i.e. the biological organs you have maybe essential when indicating to be either male or female, however, they are not essential to the self. Therefore, let's say for an example that Subject A is biologically male and to be male he essentially needs the biological form in order to be essentially "male-kind". Yet, it is not essential in Subject A's existence to have those sexual organs, he can continue to exist without those organs, his organs are just an accidental compound of a person and the flesh they were born with and so therefore Subject A can exist without being male meaning that biological sex is not essential to one's existence.

Aristotle, however, did not classify the genders separately, essence is relating to species and according to Aristotle, the sex you are born with will not affect the species you are (Matthews, 1990, p. 255), so as long as Subject A had the essential qualities of being human, it would not matter what biological sex they were assigned so long as they had the essential qualities needed to be a human being. Aristotle accepts that although human beings might differ in physical stature, personality, and temperament. He demonstrated that in light of the differences between the two genders it is unmistakable that they are still two parts of a whole- he calls it the "Complementarity Theory" (Matthews, p.18, 1990)- "Between man and wife friendship seems to exist by nature; for man is naturally inclined to form couples-even more than to form cities, inasmuch as the household is earlier and more necessary than the city . . . human beings live together not only for the sake of reproduction but also for the various purposes of life" (Matthews,p.19,1990). In this way, Aristotle is demonstrating how although there are remarkable differences between men and women, these differences are complementary with each other, which creates a kind of harmony.

Furthermore, Aristotelian considerations are also born around the concept of change. In Western philosophy, it has always been a philosophical focus to try and understand the idea of permanence amongst an ever-changing, ever-growing world. The key question, of this consideration, is how we can still be classifiable as the same person when since the day we were born we have done and experienced nothing but change both biologically and environmentally. We can be fairly certain that we look very different today as adults, then we did as infants, possibly unrecognisable. Aristotle's answer to this question was distinguishing between two types of change-

Type one- "alteration, locomotion, growth and diminution" which fundamentally means that the object remains the same substantially, or essentially, throughout changes in colour, location or environment, etc (Copi, 1954, p. 708)

Type two- “substantial change” is when the essential property disappears. For example, if a wooden table was to burn, then the ashes and gasses left are not variants of the table, but not a table at all.

The second version of change is when the object or entity ceases to exist by complete destruction or ceasing to exist because of the loss of its essence. If then, the object in some way changes, but essentially remains the same, it means that within every object some properties can change without directly impacting the existence of an entity. On the other hand, the fact that when other, necessary, properties of the same entity change it actually results in the ceasing of the existence of that entity- these properties are what are referred to as the essence. The essence is all the essential properties of a substance combined. This leads to the separation of two types, of property and attribute -so if it ceased to exist then it would cause the existence of the said object to cease too. An accident, on the other hand, is the attributes of an object that can change, it is the attributes that change but leave the original object identifiable and substantially the same (Copi, 1954, p. 708). Due to the nature of their being, we can state that knowledge of essence is more important than knowledge of accidents- “we think we know things most fully when what it is, e.g., what man is or what fire is rather than when we know it’s quality, it’s quantity or its place; since we know each of those predicates also only when we know what quality or quantity is” (Aristotle, 1999, p.22). This leads us to conclude that if some attributes of objects are epistemologically significant and others are not then the former must constitute the “real nature of things” and the rest must be relegated to some less ultimate category (Copi, 1954, p. 708).

## **Lockean Essentialism**

Aristotelian thinking is also omnipresent throughout John Locke’s investigation into essentialism as two different variations, real and nominal essences. A real essence, according to Locke, is a set of properties that determine all the other properties within an entity and since all properties depend on the real essence, only a change in this said essence could cause a change within the entity. This is one of the biggest differences between Aristotelian and Lockean thought, as Locke states that the essential properties of an object are not retained during change, as it takes the essence changing for the entity to change (Copi, 1954, p. 712). Seeing as Locke believed that real essences were actually unknowable (real essences are micro-properties: an internal entity of unobservable primary qualities), it meant that the rest of his work became about understanding what nominal essence is. “The nominal essence of a horse is the abstract idea that "horse" stands for,” (Barclay, 1967, p. 79). Locke describes, in other words that a nominal essence is the idea of a substance which, according to Locke, is a complex idea made up of simple ideas which go together constantly –“The mind being, as I have declared, furnished with a great number of the simple ideas, conveyed in by the senses as they are found in exterior things, or by reflection on its own operations, takes notice also that a certain number of these simple ideas go constantly together; which being presumed to belong to one thing” (Locke, 1690, p. 184). Both abstract and general ideas regarding the sort or species of particular entities are created from complex ideas of certain substances that resemble each other by dismissing what is unique about each individual thing whilst retaining what is common about each member of a species. So, to use the example of the horse, we are not concerned by the colour of an

individual animal, but instead focus on the fact that all horses have four legs and make a certain sound and eat an herbivorous diet. Such an abstract idea determines a sort or species, and is called a "nominal essence," for "everything contained in that idea is essential to that sort,"(Locke,1690, p.229).

Let us refer to how Aristotle compared between Essence and Accident when we review the way Locke considered his nominal essence. In the first instance, a substance of a certain species can change as long as the idea is not part of the nominal essence and the original entity will still be recognizable as the same original entity; so, if the horse's hair is dyed by its owner so it was originally a chestnut brown horse and now it is dyed white, this will not alter the horse in terms of the nominal essence as it still has the telling features of a horse. However, if something in relation to the nominal essence does in some way change then the entity itself will be regarded as quite different. So, if the horse grew hands and feet in place of its hooves, then this would be an alteration of properties determinative of the idea of what a horse is and so would be a contrast to what the nominal essence of a horse is. Secondly, the nominal essence (much like Aristotelian concepts of essence) is important to comprehend than any other property of the entity. To have knowledge is to know what sort of thing something is and to know the nominal essence is to know this. Furthermore, Locke states that the most identifiable quality is the most knowable and so the main ingredient in the nominal essence- "One must know the nominal essence if one is to ever know the truth about any single thing" (Copi, 1954, p. 714).

## **Quinean Essentialism**

The idea of essentialism is denied by many philosophers nowadays and most famously by W.V. Quine. In his article "The Two Dogmas of Empiricism" Quine rejects the existence of analyticity, which explains much about his hostility to essence, as we shall see. To begin, he divides analyticity into two terms: The first version is based on logical truths-Any statements that remain true regardless of how we interpret the statements non-logical particles (the logical operators). So, an expression like "No, Not-X is X" is so no matter how we interpret it – for example, "No, not- cat is a cat".

The second type is based around synonymous terms – if we use the expression "No bachelor is married", the meanings of the word bachelor and unmarried are synonymous. However, we can turn this expression into a logical truth by changing the word "bachelor" with its synonym "unmarried man". This would result in a new expression – No unmarried man is married, which of course, still means the same as the original statement. However, we need to be able to define and understand the term synonymy and due to the difficult nature of defining synonymy, this is the focus of the rest of Quine's essay.

Quine poses a different connection between language and experience which suggests that language doesn't consist of a collection of synthetic and analytic statements, he instead views language as a holistic system. Within this system, all statements are answerable to experiences so "our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a

corporate body' (Quine, p.42,1953). He sees no reason to derive observational consequences from individual sentences as there is always a sort of choice about which beliefs to adjust in light of experience. For example, "if I believe the Vixen has lost its tail, but then see it flick up, then I do not necessarily have to retract the original belief, since in the circumstances it may seem more likely that I am hallucinating," (Tartaglia, p.123, 2007). If we cannot get observational consequences from individual sentences, then we cannot determine which sentences are entirely lacking in observational consequences.

Within this system, Quine believes that we should reject analyticity in favour of the centrality to a belief system, in the sense of having the largest number of inferential connections to other beliefs in the overall system. To all the statements that were formerly classed as analytic, Quine states they are not actually immune to experience, but insulated from it, as they are the statements closest to the centre of the belief system and hence the least likely to be revised in light of experience, "given the knock-on effects such revisions would have on the system as a whole" (Tartaglia, p.121, 2007). So then, it can't be necessarily true that a man has a certain kind of body, just because of what the word 'man' means; or in other words to say that Jane is a woman is analytically true, as a result of our intention when we speak of Jane (for example, referring to a biological female born on a certain day.) If it's not analytically true that a man has a certain biological form, then it can't be necessary that he has to have that form, in order to be a man.

## **Kripkean essentialism**

Descriptivism is the view that the meaning or semantic content of a proper name is given by the descriptions associated with it by speakers, while their referents are determined to be the objects that satisfy these descriptions (Kripke,1972, p.26). So basically, for every name, there is a collection of descriptions associated with that name that constitutes the meaning of that name. Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege have both been associated with the descriptivist theory, which is sometimes called the Frege–Russell view (Kripke, 1972, p. 27). Frege's version of the theory was formulated in reaction to problems with his original theory of meaning or reference -which entailed that sentences with empty proper names cannot have a meaning. Yet a sentence containing the name 'Odysseus' is intelligible, and therefore has a sense, even though there is no individual object (its reference) to which the name corresponds. Also, the sense of different names is different, even when their reference is the same. Frege said that if an identity statement such as "Hesperus is Phosphorus" is to be informative, the proper names flanking the identity sign must have a different meaning or sense. But, if the statement is true, they must have the same reference.

Saul Kripke, on the other hand, criticises the Descriptivist theory in his famous work "Naming and Necessity" (Kripke, 1972, p. 91). He asks us to think of Gödel and states that the only description most people associate with him is the discovery of the incompleteness of arithmetic. He goes on to imagine that (unbeknown to everyone other than Gödel) it was actually Schmitt who made said discovery and that in fact, Gödel stole his work. So, if this were true, is an ordinary person actually referring to Schmitt or Gödel when he uses the name "Gödel"? According to the descriptivist viewpoint, Schmitt is the referent as he fits the description of the man who discovered the

incompleteness of arithmetic. Yet, Kripke thinks that in fact, it is, of course, Gödel, since it seems highly implausible that people could talk about Schmitt without having any idea that the man ever existed. For Kripke, the name 'Gödel' refers to Gödel in virtue of causal connections between individual uses of the name and the man himself). Putnam made a similar point when he referred to a 'division of linguistic labour', the idea again being that reference is determined by causal links within society, rather than based on the descriptions that individuals associate with terms (Putnam 1975).

Furthermore, Kripke offered up what has come to be known as "the modal argument" (or argument from rigidity) against descriptivism. Consider the name "Aristotle" and the descriptions "the greatest student of Plato", "the founder of logic" and "the teacher of Alexander." Aristotle satisfies all of the descriptions (and many of the others we commonly associate with him), but it is not a necessary truth that if Aristotle existed then Aristotle was anyone, or all, of these descriptions. Aristotle might well have existed without doing any single one of the things he is known for. He might have existed and not have become known to posterity at all or he might have died in infancy.

The second argument employed by Kripke has come to be called the "epistemic argument" or "the argument from unwanted necessity, (Sabbarton-Leary, 2010, p. 9)". This is simply the observation that if the meaning of "Angela Merkel" is "the Chancellor of Germany", then "Angela is the Chancellor of Germany" should seem to the average person to be a priori, analytic, and trivial, as if falling out of the meaning of "Angela Merkel" just as "unmarried male" falls out of the meaning of "bachelor." If this is correct, then the properties of Angela Merkel should be known a priori by the speaker (Sabbarton-Leary, 2010, p. 10). However, this is not true because we need experience to know who the Chancellor of Germany is.

Kripke then goes on to introduce the concept of a Rigid Designator- he describes this as a term with the same reference in all possible worlds - "Let's call something a rigid designator if in every possible world it designates the same object." (Kripke, 1972, p. 49) Kripke believes that names are Rigid Designators- "One of the intuitive theses I will maintain in these talks is that names are rigid designators. Certainly, they seem to satisfy the intuitive test mentioned above: although someone other than the U. S. President in 1970 might have been the U. S. President in 1970 . . . no one other than Nixon might have been Nixon." (Kripke, 1972, p. 48). To Kripke, identity is not the relation between an object and itself but is the relation that holds between two names when they designate the same object (Kripke, 1972, p. 108). So, when the identity statement between two names is true, it is necessarily true, even if we do not know it a-priori. However, as Kripke states, there is a confusion between what we can know a-priori and what is necessary.

Kripke's further example -using the Queen- explains that one would say that the Queen (as in the specific person) must be born of royal blood- however if in actuality the royal blood is a synthetic construction and she was born of different parents but later adopted by the royal family, then the anti-essentialists would have upper-hand as it would be a demonstration that it isn't truly essential for the Queen to be of royal blood. However, at some point it seems as though such a claim is rather extreme. The essentialist would state that we cannot imagine that the individual who we call the Queen not having the property of being human. If the anti-essentialist admits that it is logically inconceivable that the Queen could ever have had the property of being a bird, for example, then they would be admitting that she has at least one necessary and internal property. They could say that it's only a contingent fact that the Queen is human, but this is truly difficult to accept. Can we really consider it as conceivable that she may never have actually been human (Kripke, 1972, p. 108)?

Let's suppose that the Queen came from different parents- the sources of the biological sperm and egg, can we imagine a situation in which the Queen in fact, came from another, regular suburban couple? How could it be possible that a woman originating from an entirely different biological background could be the exact same person who rules England today? Kripke says that to him, anything coming from different origins is not the same object (Kripke, 1972, p. 114) so, if the Queen had come from any different parents, she would not be the same person.

If we consider a table, for example, we may not know where the wood for the table came from, yet could this table have been made entirely from a different block of wood or even water hardened into ice from the Thames (Kripke, 1972, p. 115)? We cannot imagine this table being made of anything else, but we can perhaps imagine a replica of the table in a different material but placed in the same location. So, although the replication of the table may look identical, it will remain irreversibly a replica rather than the same as the original table. So then, to return to my endeavour topic of Gender we could suggest that, seeing as our sex is a result of the biological construction, that it is a necessary part of our existence- thus then the point would be that the man who has a sex change is still a man, because being a man is part of his essential origin.

## **Possible Conclusions**

If we agree with Aristotle in saying that the essence of an entity lies within its functionality, then we are left with two options; either that gender contributes to our function or it is a separate fundament of our construction. Now, on one hand (as I discussed earlier) our gender is indicative of our behaviour, partly because our biological hormones affect our psychology but perhaps more importantly because society expects certain behaviours from certain genders. Aristotle's "Complementarity Theory" (Matthews, p.18, 1990) is evidence (if one chose to adhere to it) that the two sexes conform to certain gendered behaviours, in order to, create a harmonious equilibrium within society. Therefore, in other words, gender can be seen as functional as it allows us to contribute and exist within our society. On the other hand, in our more modern society, the definition between the genders has substantially blurred. When Aristotle established his Complementarity Theory, women filled more subservient, domestic roles and men had stronger dominant roles and there was very little- if any- deviance from this. Today, in a society that is endorsing and supporting the notion of being "gender binary", homosexual couples are raising children away from stereotypical paternal and maternal roles yet efficiently raising confident, successful children. Women are undertaking occupations that for years have been limited to men and vice versa which is surely evidential that we do not need to submit to prescribed gendered ideals to live successfully. In other words, gender may not necessarily contribute to our function and thus, according to Aristotle, not an essence. So, to refer back to my original endeavour, whether or not we would be the same person if we had a different gender, according to this gender seems to be what we would classify as a "type one" change- i.e. something that can change about an entity without altering its identity or existence.

Sociology has played a key part in our quest to understand gender thus far and it is ever- present when we review Lockean essentialism. Locke states that "everything contained in that idea (nominal essence) is essential to that sort,"(Locke,1690, p.229) therefore what we need to establish is

whether or not gender can be included within what we call the nominal essence. Feminists seem to favour Lockean essentialism over the Aristotelian perspective. Whereas Aristotle's essentialism is focused around species forms that are both essential to individuals and the basis for their kind membership (Witt, p.25,2011). The Lockean theory, on the other hand, suggests that the nominal essence, is in fact, an abstract, general idea, which is used to classify people. Of course, there are, numerous feasible classification methods, and our minds are actively engaged in forming the abstract general ideas that we use to categorize particulars (Witt, p.26,2011). Lockean theories of nominal essence are, instead, a theory of kind essentialism that does not posit any form or feature of the individual that is both essential to it and the basis for its kind membership. Therefore, unlike Aristotelian theories, people are not classified by their biological sexes nor their accompanying gender. Hence, Locke provides the theoretical framework for those feminists who are gender nominalists (Witt, p.26,2011). If we are to accept this then we are saying that if we alter the nominal essence then yes, the entity will change, however, gender is not part of said essence as Locke does not classify individuals for membership by specific traits. Without the traits of sexual organs or hormones, how could we even establish gender?

Since Quine rejects analytic truths, then our idea of gender is skewed. By rejecting analytic truths, Quine is suggesting that if it is not analytically true that a man has a certain physical form, then it cannot be necessary that he has to have a specific body. In this sense, gender must not be assigned to us by our biological form. This highlights further that gender is a behaviour rather than a biological construct. If gender is not necessary to our identity, then feasibly we could change gender without altering who we are. For Quine, we can be neither essentially male nor essentially female – because we are not essentially anything at all.

Kripke's origin essentialism actually raises a completely opposing point. As Kripke believed that if anything about an entity's origin changed then it would no longer be the same entity. If we do believe that gender is related to our biological construction then it is assigned at birth, so part of our origin is indeed our gender. Strictly speaking, Kripke is only committed to our sex being essential to us, but this would be a natural way to extend this view. So, in review of our position to the essentialist and anti-essentialist debate; if we are going to advocate the position of the essentialist then we can, on one hand, say that gender is an essential part of our makeup suggesting that, if our gender changed then we would be identifiable as a different person. Secondly, one might say that although there are indeed essential properties within our identities, however, our gender is not part of this. Thirdly, following a Lockean view, we might say that our nominal essence can change, so gender might have once been part of it even if it no longer is. On the other hand, an anti-essentialist might agree with that latter point that as there is no essence, Gender does not impact on our construction of identity, as nothing is essential. However, it is plausible for an anti-essentialist to believe that if our gender changes we are not the same person, not because gender is essential but because our specific gender is what impacts and influences social behaviours.

## The Heterosexual Matrix

If Gender is considered to be an influencing factor within our existence, then we need to establish in what way we are indeed affected by the existence of Gender. According to Judith Butler, “sexuality is what leads us to Gender and our Gender leads to our desires,” (Butler, 2007, p. 23). These relationships are created by the mechanism known as the “Heterosexual Matrix”. Butler argues that Gender affects the validity of our lives in the sense that to be recognised for having legitimacy and value or in other words to live a “liveable life”, individuals must not deviate from the norms created within the Heterosexual Matrix (Butler, 2007, p. 27). When someone deviates from these norms, they begin to be considered as unintelligible and in other words, not a viable subject. This is what reinforces the Heterosexual Matrix. Therefore, to be considered as an intelligible individual and furthermore accepted within society, we must adhere to the norms stipulated and created within the matrix (White, 2015, p. 318).

If we apply this mechanism to our discussion of the importance of Gender within our identity, we arrive at Butler’s conception of Gender Performativity. According to this, gender is the result of reiterated acting which consequently results in the production of normal or static Genders. The repeated behaviour associated with one gender is often the antithesis of the behaviour displayed by the other Gender. True Gender then becomes “a narrative sustained by the collective commitment to perform, sustain and produce polar and discrete genders as cultural fiction and then punishments for not adhering to said fictions” (White, 2015, p. 318). Therefore, if Gender is something we act as or perform as, then equally it is something we can also not act as. If this is true, then Gender is not essential to us in the sense that it is something we can both be and not be.

We are, of course, not talking about our biological sex, but instead about our Gender, the masculinities or femininities that we express in our actions and behaviours. Judith Butler argues that, however, there is no sex that isn’t gendered-all bodies are gendered at the beginning of their social existence... and there is no existence which isn’t social (Butler, 2007, p. 34). This then means there isn’t a natural body that exists before social inscription. Conclusively then, there is no “I”, no identity that exists separately or even before Gender performativity begins (Butler, 2007, p. 35). This brings us back to the idea of origin essentialism- Kripke says that to him, anything coming from different origins is not the same object (Kripke, 1980, p. 114). So, if from the moment we begin to exist we are ascribed a gender then the gender we act as, or are treated as, becomes part of our origins, and as Kripke says if something from our origins changed then we would not be the same- so in this sense our gender is essential.



## The concept of gender

“One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (Simone De Beauvoir 1949), in this quote the suggestion is that one is not born as a woman, but it is something one becomes through time and development. In addition, she is also suggesting that the possession of male or female biological parts, is what influences the way we are treated by others, which is what establishes the difference between what it is to be a woman, and what it is to be a man. If this is true, then we cannot say gender is essential, for as previously mentioned a property is not essential if it something that we could feasibly be, or not be. For, if a woman is something, we can become there must logically also be the possibility that we do not become a woman but instead develop into something else- a man perhaps? Beauvoir further claims that a ‘woman’ is a historical concept and not a natural fact, she clearly highlights the differentiation of the distinction between sex, as biological facticity, and then gender, as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity (Butler, 1988, p. 522). Reflecting upon the famous quotation about one’s development into womanhood, one must wonder whether or not this also applies to men-is a man something you also become or is it somehow different and is instead something you are born as? De Beauvoir refers to women as the “Second sex” referring to the fact that the man is regarded as the standard, whereas the woman is seen as a deviation from this standard. If there are only two sexes, men and women, does this mean that before becoming a woman, we are men?

Another interpretation of De Beauvoir’s famous quote could, in fact, reflect her idea that patriarchy was created to cause the progression of men which leads to the oppression of women- in other words, it is suggested that the very notion of the term “woman” was designed by men, for their own economic and social gain (Joseph, 2008). Stereotypically, women have been given the submissive, passive role throughout society’s development which has conditioned women to step back and allow men to be dominating and uphold all of the leadership roles. In relation to her idea that “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (Simone De Beauvoir 1949) De Beauvoir highlights the idea that being biologically female isn’t what causes the social “handicap”, it is instead that ideas attached to the notion of being a woman that causes the restriction and oppression: “the development of female sex organs, menstruation, pregnancy, menopause – have a meaning in themselves; but in a hostile or oppressive society they can come to take on the meaning of being a burden and disadvantage, as women come to accept the meanings a patriarchal society accords them,” (Joseph, 2008). In other words, the biological attributes of womanhood are not, in themselves oppressive, it is their perception that becomes this issue. This could go some way to explain why, and how, womanhood can be seen completely differently in different cultures across the globe. In this sense, we could also perceive De Beauvoir’s quote to be in reference to the sociological role of being a woman – so, an individual is made into a woman by experiencing oppression and subservience, rather than their status of “womanhood” being directly correlated to their biological construction at birth. Of course, if this is the case, and womanhood is something we are labelled as, rather than something we are born into, it means that it is not an essential part of our identity, but part of our social existence.

As Butler theorized, we are not born with a gender, but it is actually something that we develop over time. Here we can see the divide between Sex and Gender appear again, Sex is the correct term

when referring to our chromosomes, reproductive organs and hormones, for example, when a baby is born, we classify their sex by their genitals, whereas Gender is created and developed throughout life through our social interactions and life choices. If gender is something that develops throughout time and is not related to our biological construction, then does this mean that a person with a female's body could develop a masculine gender? Fundamentally, this is possible, our identification of the gender/sex distinction indicates that the only way in which gender develops is through behaviour, therefore, we could just act as a different gender, rather than as the one directly linked to our biological sex- i.e. woman and femininity. Yet, does this mean that our biological construction does not influence our gender?

It would be contrary to evidence to suggest that biology does not, in some ways, affect both the gender and the personality that we develop. For example, part of what it means to be a woman, or a man is to be recognized to have a certain kind of body that is linked to certain biological processes like reproduction (Witt, 2011, p. 35). Sex undoubtedly highlights a difference between men and women, Shaywitz et al used MRI Scans to examine the brain whilst women and men carried out language tasks; the results showed that on average, women used their right hemispheres whilst men used the left. Furthermore, the increased levels of testosterone in males cause the brain hemispheres to work more independently than in women's brains (Shaywitz, 1995, p. 608).

## **Functionalism**

It is important to understand how and why gender became culturally structured. There are many social theories about how gender was formed, but I intend to start with functionalism. Functionalism, also named "structural functionalism," is a macro-sociological theory that is based on the idea that society is constructed of interdependent parts, each of which contributes to the functioning of the whole society. Functionalists aim to recognise the fundamental elements to determine the functions that each part fulfils in meeting basic social needs in predictable ways. Functionalists question how any single element of the social structure contributes to overall social stability, balance, and equilibrium. Furthermore, they assert that in the face of disruptive social change, society can be restored to equilibrium as long as built-in mechanisms of social control operate effectively and efficiently. Social control and stability are enhanced when people share beliefs and values in common. Functionalist emphasis on this value consensus is a major component in virtually all of their interpretations related to social change. The central values surrounding gender roles, marriage, and the family are most important to functionalist theory regarding social equilibrium.

In relation to the concepts of gender, functionalists suggest that in pre-industrial societies the social equilibrium was maintained by assigning different tasks to men and women. The differences between genders became key in determining who became responsible for which tasks. It was functional for women—more limited by biological requirements such as pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing—to be assigned domestic roles closer to home as caretakers of children and households. So then, it fell on the shoulders of the men to hunt and collect supplies and such endeavours meant that the men would need to be away from home for extended periods of time. Children were

needed to help with agricultural and domestic activities. Girls would continue these more domesticated activities as they grew older whereas boys were allowed to hunt with the older males when they grew older; so, in this sense, from a very early age, children were divided by their biological sex which reinforces the differences between genders. Once this pattern became the norm, it was a structure that became replicated throughout cultures and inevitably throughout the world.

## **Gender temporality**

Although we can see that gender was formed through cultural needs, now we have moved into the digital age and there is no need for men to be away for weeks hunting for supplies, we now need to understand how these gender ideals match with new social needs. That gender is a social construct becomes especially apparent when one compares how men and women behave across various different cultures in this day and age, and how in some cultures and societies, other genders exist too. Today, in Western industrialized nations like the U.S, people tend to think of masculinity and femininity in dichotomous terms, viewing men and women as distinctly different. Other cultures, however, challenge this assumption and have less distinct views of masculinity and femininity. For example, historically there was a category of people in the Navajo culture called Berdaches, who were anatomically men but who were defined as a third gender considered to fall between male and female. Berdaches married other men (not Berdaches), although neither was considered homosexual, as they would be in today's Western culture.

Functionalist thinkers still feel that these gender roles, although with different foundations, are still omnipresent within the average family setup. Parson and Bales stated that family life is far more harmonious and successful when traditional gender roles are enforced and regarded. When the male undergoes the "Key role" (or what is known as the instrumental role), he is expected to uphold the physical integrity of the family by being the provider of food and shelter and linking the family to the outside world (Bales, 1998, p. 95). When the female adapts the "Expressive role", she is expected to maintain relationships and provide emotional support and nurture that ensures the whole household runs successfully. If we deviate too far from these more traditional roles, or where there is merging of the two roles, the family system is unbalanced and that can threaten the survival of the family unit. Advocates of functionalist assumptions argue, for instance, that gender role ambiguity regarding instrumental and expressive roles is a major factor in divorce. Once again, we conclude that gender roles are not innate to the individual, but expectations imposed upon individuals by the demands of a developing society. The functionalist theory highlights that in terms of gender being part of our identity, it is not about who we are intrinsically but what we are deemed as extrinsically. What is integral to us, is the part of us that must remain consistent throughout eternity. However, if we are to condone the functionalist perspective then we are admitting that our gender is dependent on the culture we inhabit. We then must question, if we inhabited a different

culture or lived in a different time, whether our gender would change? Well according to this theory then yes, it would indeed.

## **Essence and accident**

Hypermasculinity (for example) is the idea that men are permitted characteristics such as lust to present sexual prowess, rage to show off strength, and bravado to display courage in place of feminine behaviours such as emotion, compassion and weakness. The male role as the provider and protector of the family has become more and more obsolete, as the gender roles have started to equalize. To live in an ever changing and complex society, such as the post-modern world, means that men have difficulty finding their role and masculine identity (Hansen, 2012, p. 1). Sociological studies have shown that in the modern era, where men are no longer the sole-earners and jobs have become less physically demanding and have been replaced by “softer” office jobs (Hansen, 2012, p. 4). This has led to a large percentage of males over exaggerating stereotypical masculine behaviours in order to compensate for being unable to adhere to pre-existing social expectations. In this instance we can see how the gender of masculinity can be manipulated and changed depending on the needs of the culture. If this is true, then this is further evidence of how gender is a cultural construction, one that is either consciously or subconsciously performed by an individual to meet pre-perceived ideals. Furthermore, it demonstrates the functionalist perspective that gender has and will keep continuing to change throughout time, it is not a fixed or static entity.

Yet on the other hand, other psychological studies have shown that the increased levels of testosterone in men as opposed to women increase aggressive behaviours. Anecdotal and early correlational evidence suggests that higher levels of circulating testosterone in men are associated with increases in male stereotypical behaviours, such as physical aggression and anger, which would explain the gendered perception that men are more aggressive than women. We could, from this information, suggest that therefore gender is essential to us because the traits of the masculine gender are, in fact, birthed from the biological repercussions of being a man and our sex is our origin. However, if we look back at Aristotle’s distinction between essence and accidents it does give a new version to the query. The change and diversity of the behaviours by people can be, in one way, explained by the differentiation between hormones and biology or we could also think that such traits are, in fact, accidents to our existence rather than essential. It would be reduction of the facts to assign emotions to the root of a person’s identity. Behaviour and emotions are sporadic, they can be triggered by spontaneous events and result in spontaneous actions. In today’s society, people often attend therapy or counselling to try and change damaging or unhealthy behaviour to the conclusion of not changing one’s essence but changing one’s personality. In addition, people’s behaviour can change on a daily basis, with so many variables like diet, sleep, medication or even just general life experiences and it would be ludicrous to say that we change our essence every day would it not? So, this leads to the idea that behaviour is an accidental feature of our existence,

rather than an essential characteristic, and so if, as formerly discussed, we conclude that gender is a behaviour then gender too is an accident rather than essential.

## **Gender essentialism**

The idea of gender temporality, dependent on culture, time and experience is one that is also verified by Judith Butler's idea of gender. Butler opposes an essentialist view on gender and the sexed body, arguing that the appearance of an ontological status of gender is nothing but the outcome of a series of regulatory practices that, through their sedimentation, conceal their genesis. Gender is therefore socially constructed, and this construction makes the body socially visible, as it is only through the mediation of this series of social practices that the body becomes gendered at all (Arruzza, 2015, p. 34). Butler views gender as – “an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Furthermore, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self,”. In other words, gender as an identity is the conformity of the body and thus so is more similar to any biological, physiological process, or act, that every person does every day.

My first query is whether or not, if our gender changed, we could be seen as the same person. If gender is constantly fluctuating and changing anyway then really the question answers itself. Butler also goes on to specify how gender isn't able to be essential “Because there is neither an “essence” that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all”. Butler is specifying that as Gender is not actually a thing, or a fact, its existence relies on the acts that we class as gender specific, for without it there is no gender to exist (Arruzza, 2015, p. 32). As gendered roles and behaviours can change -and we can see in our history that this is true- and so cannot be essences, by definition. One might, also, suggest that gender is a process of social interaction and development and so, as a process, gender cannot be defined as a substance and it is only substances that could have an essence.

Furthermore, it is also integral to the construction of a person that not only is there a divide between sex and gender but also between psychological and social properties. Importantly, we must recognise that people are essentially those beings capable of self-consciousness or the first-person perspective. Such capacities are intrinsic, psychological properties of people. These traits are what is recognisable, or identifiable about a person. John Hick's position on the replica theory also reinforces this; he poses that if John Smith was currently in America, suddenly disappears, and a replica of him suddenly appears in India. His friends and colleagues, sceptically, carry out a series of tests from talking to this individual to gather whether or not this new John Smith is the same person who was originally in America. According to Hick the replica has “continuity of memory, complete similarity of bodily features including fingerprints, emotions and mental dispositions” ((Hick, 1990, p.

47). Hick's idea was that once all the similarity tests prove positive, Smith's friends would have no choice but to accept the replication as the actual John Smith, because there is technically, no difference between the two. However, there would indeed be a difference between the replica and the individual who appeared in India, perhaps not to the friends and family but to the original person there would be a great change, for regardless of the fact there is a new replica of himself in another country, the original Mr. Smith experienced what it was like to disappear! It needs to be said, however, that to see this you must adapt a subjective viewpoint, rather than objective.

It could be said that what is essential to us, is what is recognizable, or is the elements of us that makes us individuals. Our personalities and memories or even our likes and dislikes. Yet, couldn't it also be said that we are actually recognized by our physicality? Yes, of course we are somewhat identifiable by the memories we uphold, but if someone were to suffer from amnesia, we would not cease to recognise them without their memories, because we could still recognise them by their appearance. A large part of our social existence is our face and our physical form- our passports, driver's licenses and even social media profiles all display pictures of ourselves to allow us to be recognised by those trying to find or identify us. If a child goes missing, we issue a picture of their face because that is, truly, the fastest way of being identified by others. Although our identities may somewhat lie in our memories and beliefs, we would be much harder to identify with a different face and body. But as we have already understood, gender is a social position, and to have a gender is to occupy a social position; persons, by definition, are not the kind of individuals that could be essentially gendered (Witt, 2011, p. 65). In addition, as I have just outlined, the first-person perspective of self is incredibly important to our identity, as this is what forms the perceptions and actually experiences sensations that go on to form and influence our lives, however this individual perspective is understood and verified only by ourselves so, as a result, does not need to be gendered- your flow of consciousness does not have to contained essentially gendered thoughts, because you can change them. As gender is a behaviour, it is best understood as a social role and seeing as our perspective is individual and not social, then our perspective is not gendered. So regardless of whether or not you view identity from the first-person perspective- as Descartes did- or from the third person perspective- as Hicks did- it still cannot, essentially, be gendered.

## **Mega-social role**

If we are to say, then that gender is a behavioural pattern and not part of our biological makeup then one must consider where the desire for such behaviour is born from. This refers again to Aristotelian thinking. When Aristotle asked what human flourishing is, he considered lives that are based upon endless different types of activities and pursuits. For example, there is materialistic existence based around money or, there is a spiritual existence based around the teachings of a religion or cult. There could also be pursuing the life of virtuous activities. All of these different types of lives are aiming towards desirable goods, yet they have different aims and focus. If we are able to recognize multiple ways of living with their corresponding goods, how can we order our society? (Witt, 2011, p. 91) Just as being a doctor or being a mother is a way of living, and both of these ways of living are normatively interconnected. How are we definable if we occupy two different social

positions? For example, which are we responsive to or does it, in fact, mean we are evaluable under both social roles (Witt, 2011, p.89)? It is well known that Aristotle believed in the fulfilment of virtuous activity as the purpose of human and “so that our good, which is human flourishing, must lie in that activity” (Witt, 2011, p. 89). Now, Aristotle’s famous metaphor of the target might suggest that he thinks of human flourishing as a consequence of virtuous activity. However, Aristotle doesn’t think that virtuous activity directly results in happiness any more than happiness is a direct consequence of virtuous activity. Instead, Aristotle said that a life of virtuous activity is just a life of human flourishing; virtuous activity is the dominant element in a flourishing human life because it is both prior to, and prioritises, all of the other activities (Witt, 2011, p.90). It could be said that, in fact, virtuous activity is the principle of normative unity within Aristotelian ethics as it what organises the flourishing human life. The pursuit of pleasure and money making are “not excluded from a flourishing human life, but their part in it, and indeed, what counts as appropriate pleasure and money making, are both determined by the dominant element, which is virtuous activity” (Witt, 2011, p.90). So then, pleasures are part of a virtuous life if they are moderate and any methods of making money must be done in accordance with generosity and kindness. In this way, the mega social role is the dominant normative element in our current society — for it is what organises and influences all of our different social roles.

So, to identify the mega social role, we are looking for an element within everyone’s life that influences and effects our behaviours and decisions. For example, “An academic performs a series of tasks: lecturer, grader, advisor, collaborator, teacher, writer, and colleague. Each of these functions is normatively inflected by the overarching social role of being an academic” (Witt, 2011, p. 79). Now, for as much as our occupation is a vitally important influencing factor in our life, not everyone is employed for their whole lives, but these still must have an underlying, rooted reason to exist during their unemployment, meaning careers must not be the mega social role. A second characteristic of the mega social role is that it should plausibly inflect or define a broad range of other social roles. An individual might be a collector or a hunter without greatly altering his or her other social roles. Intuitively, we are not inclined to say that someone who gives up hunting is no longer the same social individual. Gender is an example of a social role that is capable of satisfying both of these characteristics. Gender usually lifelong social position. Members of the Transgender community can be seen as the antithesis to this claim, as they at some point in their lives change their gender, meaning they haven’t had a lifelong gender role. Considering this, how could gender still be a lifelong social role and also a candidate for the mega social role? (Witt, 2011, p. 80) From being responsive to one set of gendered social norms and expectations, appearance and posture the transgendered individual becomes answerable to an entirely new set of gendered social norms. Indeed, we can find in the experience of transgendered individuals a “moving articulation of the centrality of gender in our lives, and the ways in which it inflects our other social roles” (Boylan, 2003, p. 87). Also, it could be said that the Transgender community has a unique perspective upon the role of gender and that they way gender impacts and influences their lives is very different from the way gender impacts the lives of the non-transgender community.

Charlotte Witt’s suggestion is that gender does unify our actions and our social roles. Whatever gender you associate with, in any way, impacts on the decisions that are made by you and also for you, as Judith Butler’s “Heterosexual Matrix” demonstrates. Although, as a social role, gender is not an innate entity within us, it is also on a different spectrum than other social roles. As the decider and derivative of other social engagements and roles it is undoubtedly a dominating social position (Witt, 2011, p. 80). Furthermore, Gender as a mega social role prioritizes the other social roles associated with social positions that an individual occupies, in order to unify them into a coherent

whole (Witt, 2011, p. 81). So, our earlier example of an individual who is both a mother and also works as a doctor, does not need to decide which role she identifies with, because her role as a woman unifies all the roles she fulfils and the roles she will go on to uphold. One aspect of the prioritising done by the mega social role is definitional; the definitions of other social roles are determined or influenced by the mega social role (Witt, 2011, p.82). The specific gender of any individual also decides which other positions said individual may undertake, for example a man cannot be a mother as a mother cannot be a man- “Gender is both a synchronic and a diachronic principle of normative unity for social individuals” (Witt, 2011, p. 91). This suggests, that gender is a vitally important part of the lives every individual leads, influencing not only the decisions we make but also the way in which we lead our lives- as such an important role, gender is undoubtedly an influential factor but as a social role, gender is not an essential element of our personal identity but is, instead, an integral part of our social identity.

On one hand, society does have essential gender-specific roles which breed specified gendered behaviours. Being born as a daughter or a son are terms given to us in reflection of our biological sex (as opposed to our gender) but such terms denote behaviours. If the social world consisted only of gender specified social positions, then it would be relatively obvious to establish gender as a mega social role that provides a principle of normative unity for social individuals (Witt, 2011, p. 93). In this scenario, every social position that we uphold would have a gender-specific definition and gender-specific norms, and the way in which gender is interwoven throughout our lives and unifies our social existence would be apparent and uncontroversial (Witt, 2011, p.94).

Yet on the other hand, some societies have, or had, a fairly strict division of social positions between women and men, and for these societies it is uncontroversial that gender is a principle of normative unity for social individuals. Even in societies with less rigid gender divisions, many social positions are reserved for men and others for women, and their norms reflect this gender separation. In these societies, it is easy to agree that gender is a principle of normative unity even though some individuals might choose to deviate away from their societies’ norms, or might have a different, ungendered self-view. However, there are also societies like our own in which many social positions do not have gender-specific definitions. Yet, in societies such as ours, that are so heavily guided by gender related expectations and considering gender as a mega social role explains why many social positions have gendered norms, even if they are not specifically defined in relation to gender (Witt, 2011, p. 98).

## **Uniessential Gendering**

Witt’s theory of Uniessentialism is based upon an Aristotelian concept considering the unification of an entity’s functionalities (Witt,2011, p.15) so, in other words “Uniessentialism explains why an individual exists rather than a heap of materials” (Witt,2011, p.15). Witt illustrates the purpose of Uniessentialism by discussing the image of a collection of building materials and then asking us, what makes these raw materials a house? The answer, as I established earlier in this thesis, is its



functionality. Furthermore, for Aristotle, the essence of something is the cause of being of the individual whose essence it is. In relation to gender, a social individual undertakes and fulfils a vast amount of social positions diachronically – one man can be a son, a brother, an academic and a father all at the same time- and if we accept gender as the mega-social role then it is gender which unifies these positions so then gender is what is Uniessential to an individual.

According to Witt's theory of gender uniessentialism, the essential property of an individual is only essential in relation to the organisation of human societies, which is also contingent. Within the fact of the real structuring of societies the concept of being either a man or a woman is Uniessential, to social individuals. However, there may possibly be societies, maybe even our own, whereby the necessary social function of engendering is a task for robots, or by cloning rather than by uniessentially gendered social individuals (Witt, 2011, p. 104). This idea actually demonstrates both the contingent nature of our social construction and also the relational nature of uniessential properties. Gender is only uniessential in relation to the structure of society, or in other words the demand for gendered social behaviours- and of course the structure of our societies is a contingent creation, one that could and may likely change in the near future. The earlier discussion of hypermasculinity in my thesis is further evidence that needs and demands of uniessential genders can develop with society as we head into a more technologically dependent culture. The current division between female and male social behaviours blurs the requirements of each gender, demonstrating further that gender is not a stand-alone entity but a reflection of the cultural structure of society-which is contingent.

What is important to ask is whether or not relational properties can be deemed as essential? Well, it is undoubtable that what elements of an entity can class as essential is interchangeable and the context in which they are classed as essential is also dependent on the kind of individual. If we use the example of Artifacts, then they only have a relational essence, and such said relational properties are only essential within a social and historical context (Witt, 2011, p. 105), which is, of course, contingent. The discussion of Artifacts mirrors Aristotle's house concept: just as a house has a relational essence; the purpose of acting as a shelter is also its functional essence and that is, in fact, a relational property. The functional property is only essential when in the context of society, we do reside in houses now but one day we may not and it is not necessary that we in fact build houses as shelter when there are other alternatives, so a houses functional property is also a relational property. To conclude, the contingent element is that there indeed exists a social world that needs and uses houses as a shelter solution; but in relation to the actual entity of the "house" in the social world, the function of the house is uniessential to it. It could be said that the social world which uses the category of gender, is also contingent. Yet, in this world, individuals are actually unified by the classifications of their genders and, thus, uniessentially gendered. Maybe in a different social world engendering may be forgotten in favour of cloning and in that "cloning" world, social individuals would have a hugely different principle of normative unity (Witt, 2011, p. 106).

If we take a moment to actually consider the repercussions of Witt's "cloning" world, the results are interesting. Is the existence of social individuals with only necessary properties actually feasible? It is true that Social individuals cannot exist without some sort of principle of normative unity? Yet this does not highlight a specific principle of normative unity. This means then that although, as individuals, we do need a principle of normative unity it does not mean that each society has the same necessary normative principle. This is very reflective of the world we live in, as throughout the world, societies are structured differently depending on how the people live and what the people need to do to survive, meaning then that whatever principle unifies the people depends on the social context. If then, for example, this "cloning" world or indeed any other world, ceased to focus

its organisation around gender then gender would cease to be Unessential. According to Witt, we need a principle of normative unity to combine and unite the many social positions undertaken by one person, so in a scenario where gender doesn't exist, according to Witt, there would need to be another principle of normative unity that replaced it. So even in a cloning world there would need to be another construction to organise the social roles of people. Therefore, if gender is the normative unity of us, then if we changed genders there would be no impact upon our identity and even if we lost our gender completely, in some hypothetical scenario, then we would have to find something to replace it with in order to define our social roles, but it would not mean that we were no longer the same person.

Witt's theory of gender Unessentialism demonstrates that gender, as undoubtedly vital as it is, is only so vital in our specific society. Gender is an elective importance rather than an essential importance. In this way we cannot argue that gender is reason behind many of our decisions and behaviours, but it is not an innate, primitive drive- just a compound of social conformity and social necessity. If we had been born in another place at another time then gender may not have existed so cannot be essential to our personal identity, just essential to our current social existence, i.e. relatively essential, so ultimately contingent.

## **Locke's Psychological Continuity**

If we are to say, hypothetically, that if we suddenly changed genders, we would remain the same person then we would first need to establish what we mean by "person". So far, we have discussed the possibility of gender as a social expectation and as a repeated behaviour but what we haven't yet narrowed down is the relationship between the existence of gender (whatever form it takes) and the existence of one's own identity. This problem mirrors the philosophical dilemma of personal identity, so this is where I shall begin.

There is a plethora of responses to the solve the personal identity problem, which is that of specifying the criteria of identity for a person: what makes something count as the same person across time. I shall begin by discussing the approach of psychological continuity as discussed by John Locke. Locke's theory explains identity as being continued by the continuation of the individual consciousness rather than by explaining it in relation to an immaterial soul. Furthermore, John Locke states that in order to understand personal identity, we first need to understand what a person is (Mackie, 1976, p. 174) and Locke's answer is to conclude that "a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself, as its self, the same thinking in different times and places," (Locke, 1690/ 1996, p. 27). He is greatly concerned with the definition of the word 'person' which is used so frequently in colloquial conversation- is it used as a noun or is it used as some form of identity classification? Ultimately, he answers that consciousness is that which constitutes as personal identity, "that makes me, for example, the same me, the same person, through and despite the passage of time" (Mackie, 1976, p. 176). Already we can see that (according to Locke) to be classed as the same person even with a different gender, we need to have the same continued

consciousness. This seems a fairly logical and simple solution when we discuss changing genders, we do not conjure images of in some way having our consciousness reset just our gender altered.

As Descartes also suggested, Locke states that consciousness and thinking are inseparable. In other words, Locke is suggesting that when we plan, consider or think we have full awareness that we are doing so and so, using this consciousness we can each consider ourselves as ourselves or basically, as a thinking individual. This principle further explains the idea that any perceptions or sensations we may encounter, belong to the self. In addition, when Locke said that “as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person” (Locke, 1690/ 1996, p.27) he means that we remain the same person as last week, or 30 years ago in virtue of the fact that we still remember what we did at that time (Lowe, 1995, p. 105). So then, if we consider the hypothetical individual who had a spontaneous gender swap was previously of feminine gender who woke up tomorrow morning as a man, she would likely question (and probably, most importantly, be rather alarmed) by the sudden change in their form. The fact that their conscious thought would be so responsive to the change demonstrates that regardless of the physical vessel, the consciousness is a continued individual awareness of self that responds and reacts to stimulus. The very fact that our subject would be shocked by their physical transformation shows that there is no discontinuity in their consciousness throughout their transformation – our subject expected to awake with their familiar, feminine perceptions and instead wakes with a new, masculine influence and their self/consciousness reacts to this with surprise and most likely shock – two very normal reactions given the circumstances but if the consciousness was in some way altered or disturbed during the spontaneous gender change then the subject would not be alarmed as their conscious self would have an expectation of a changed masculine perception upon awakening, rather than the original feminine perspective. So then, if we adhere to the Lockean theory we are suggesting that gender does not impact upon personal identity as it is not an element of our consciousness which constitutes our identity.

Locke completely rejects the idea that personal identity could be constructed of our physical form. He states that there is undoubtedly difference between the construction of a person and of a man (meaning man in the biological sense) “ the same man consists...in nothing but participation in a continued life by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body” (Locke, 1690/1996, p. 29) therefore the difference between man and person is that the man exists through the continuation of life, and the person is continued through the prolonged existence of the consciousness. So, if we go back again to our subject who has a sudden gender transformation, we would say that this is the ceasing existence of a woman and the beginning of a new life for a man- rather than the death and beginning of another person. Furthermore, Locke goes on to deny that having the same, persistent and immaterial soul makes you the same person. For example, if Socrates’ soul entered my body somehow but I could not recall any of his thoughts or memories, then I am not Socrates. Equally, it might be passed from one body to another: should the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the Prince’s past life, enter and inform the body of a cobbler as soon as deserted by his own soul, everyone sees he would be the same person with the prince, accountable only for the prince’s actions (Locke,1690/1996, P.20). According to Locke, no one would suggest that this is the same man as the former prince. Therefore, if the person who wakes up in the body of an opposing gender and they as long as they can recall and remember their memories of childhood and family etc. then this is the same person, regardless of the very different physical form they now reside in.

## Criticism of Locke

However, this is, in my opinion, one of the greatest weaknesses of Locke's identity theory. There is nothing more fragile than one's memory. What you can remember from one day to the next can depend on something as trivial as a bad day at work or lack of sleep. Just because I don't remember a trip to the zoo when I was seven years old, doesn't mean that I am not the same person today who went on that trip all those years ago. Seemingly, the inconsistencies are too strong, especially when one considers the possibility that I may well not remember a holiday I went on at age nine, but I might remember a birthday party from when I was the same age. These two events both involved the same nine-year-old child however it doesn't seem logical that I am the child who had the party but not who went on the holiday – as the children at both events were the same person.

Thomas Reid raised a very similar point. He too believed that relying on memory made Locke's theory vulnerable to weakness, Reid introduced the "Officer paradox" to further highlight the flaws in Locke's theory of personal identity. He asks us to "Suppose that as he was stealing the enemy's standard ("standard" is their flag) a 40-year-old brave officer remembered stealing apples from a neighbour's orchard when he was 10 years old; and then suppose further that when he was 80 years old, a retired general, he remembered stealing the enemy's standard as a brave officer, but no longer remembered stealing the neighbour's apples. On Locke's account, the general would have to be both identical to the apple-stealer (because of the transitivity of the identity relation: he was identical to the brave officer, who himself was identical to the apple-stealer) and not identical to the apple-stealer (given that he had no direct memory of the boy's experiences) (Nimbalkar, 2011, p.271)". Therefore, Reid argues, that personal identity is more substantial, for as he says, "Identity ... is the foundation of all rights and obligations, and of accountableness, and the notion of it is fixed and precise" (T. Reid, 1785, p. 117).

However, we could approach such criticism with the Ancestral Animal argument which is the idea that if we are not (non-human) animals, then this must mean our parents were not animals and that their parents were not animals, and so on and so forth. In other words, by rejecting that we are animals, we reject that we ever descended from animals, which of course denies the ideas of evolution. Furthermore, by rejecting- as Reid suggested- that the boy who stole the apples is not the same person as the brave officer or the retired officer poses the same flawed thinking. The boy who stole the apple's lived a life of experiences and sensations that resulted in him becoming a brave officer that, as his career developed, led him to be the retired general. To deny this happened because of a lack of memory is as absurd as rejecting that we ever came from animals because we no longer resemble them. The linear contingency of our ancestors exists regardless of our knowledge and to deny a stage in our ancestral history would lead to a gap in our history and our development, just as denying the general is the apple-stealer leads to us questioning how the general ever became a soldier in the first place, or who the soldier was before he became a soldier. The consciousness of the boy is still connected to the consciousness of the general, regardless of awareness and memory, just as we are related to our ancestors despite never knowing who they were or even what they were. There must be an ancestral connection within our identities, to explain how an unthinking foetus could become an apple stealing child who could later fight in a war as a soldier.

Moreover, as we have already discussed, gender is a very influential element of our lives. It has the potential to influence our entire lives, the way we are perceived and the opportunities we can experience. However, what needs to be understood, is that if gender is such a strong influencing factor in our lives, then what is the effect of changing genders on the individual's consciousness? If we refer back to our subject if she remembers what it was like to be a woman and growing up as a little girl, developing through her life until getting her first job as a woman...but now, she has new memories and experiences of being a man and that is changing her consciousness. According to Locke, as the consciousness has continued- it doesn't matter that the experiences and lifestyle of the individual will change so drastically- so the person remains the same. However, one could say that even without a change to the subject's gender, her experiences and consciousness would have been very different as she grew up and developed – she would have gone from an innocent child playing with toys, to a woman with a job and a mortgage and maybe even children of her own. Yet, even though her sensations, and perceptions would have changed astronomically between being a little girl and becoming a woman, we rather logically still say that the subject remains the same person. What if the subject moved away to a foreign land where everything was the antithesis of how she had lived before so again her sensations, experiences and perceptions would have all been drastically different; but would we say she is a different person because of these changes? The answer would, in fact, be no- as just because her experiences have changed, they are still continuous with the old ones. She would still be the same person who played with specific toys as a child and got her first job etc.... so it would seem illogical to suggest she now had a completely different identity because she now had a kaleidoscope of new knowledge and experience. Is it incomprehensible to suggest they are not a different person now, just because they're experiencing things as a man rather than as a woman? According to Locke, as long as they are retaining their memories and experiences then yes, regardless of the substantial changes, the subject's identity would remain the same. What happens to our subject if shortly after the gender transformation they are in an accident and are left with partial amnesia: they can remember all of their masculine experiences but, not being a little girl or any of their memories as a woman. If we adhered to Locke's theory, we would have to say that their identity was no longer the same as they would not be able to recall memories of their past or their empirical experiences from being a woman-but intuitively that is still the same person who played with dolls twenty years ago, they just now look very different and have a different life now. No one remembers every moment of their infancy and everyone certainly changes considerably as they develop, but would we really consider ourselves different people from the babies we were born as? These vast inconsistencies lead me to suggest that maybe there is something that ties these experiences together but something stronger than memory.

### **Revisions to Locke's theory**

Marya Schechtman suggests that there can be three simple revisions to the memory theory of psychological continuity. The first one (based on the original comment made by Joseph Butler (Butler, 1736 /1842) aims to tackle the objection that the memory theory is circular. This objection states that in order to have any kind of validity the theory must distinguish between the genuine

memories and the pseudo-memories –the difference is that a memory is a recollection of an experience the individual had whereas, a pseudo-memory is a memory an individual has of an event that, in fact, didn't happen (Schechtman, 2014, p. 20). Since the memory criterion needs to define identity according to real memories, and real memories are defined in terms of identity, then basically the memory criterion defines identity in terms of itself.

As a response to this objection, there comes a new concept of memories developed by Sydney Shoemaker and this is the concept of Quasi-memories. These are memory-like experiences of a belief about an experience that seems like a first-hand memory or memory belief which results from an experience that some person, but not necessarily the same person, did have. Our ordinary, orthodox memories are versions of these quasi-memories- however, nothing about the definition of quasi-memory presupposes the existence of personal identity (Schechtman, 2014, p. 22). The difference between the delusional and the non-delusional memory type experiences is, instead, defined by the cause of the apparent memory rather than the identity of the subject who had the memory. To defend identity in terms of quasi-memory over actual memory, we must provide a criterion that captures what seems relevant to the constitution of identity within actual memory, whilst not being circular.

The second modification is in response to the objection I earlier mentioned from Thomas Reid who talked of the absurdity within the intransitivity of memory. Reid's objection is answered by replacing the necessity of memory connections with the requirement of an ancestral memory. If we combine this with the modification of quasi-memory, then this means that in order for a past experience to be mine, I do not need to directly quasi-remember but be able to "quasi-remember a time at which I could quasi-remember a time at which I could quasi-remember a time at which could quasiremember the experience" (Schechtman, 2014, p. 23). In other words, one needs to be connected to an experience by an overlapping, inter-linked chain of quasi-memories. The third alteration would be the addition of connections (besides just autobiographical memory) to the developing criterion of personal identity. It is not necessary to believe that memory is the only relation that contributes to personal identity. According to Schechtman, psychological continuists argue that connections between intentions and the actions that carry them out (Schechtman, 2014, p.24), and between the different temporal portions of persisting beliefs, values, desires, and traits, should be counted (Schechtman, 2014, p. 24). So then, to be classified as the same person, one needs a vast amount of significant connections between them and one's self – but these do not all need to be memories. This addresses the concern that memories are fragile and cannot be relied upon. According to my earlier example, if I cannot remember a holiday from when I was nine but not a birthday party from the same year, then this does not question the continuity of my personal identity if we bear in mind other factors of my existence, like my religion, or who my parents are, for example.

## **Derek Parfit**

If we bear in mind the three modifications we have discussed about Lockean memory criterion, we are now left with the view that a person at time T1 is the same person at T2 just in the case that

person as T2 is the same as the person in T1 because of an overlapping chain of quasi-psychological connections (Schechtman, 2014, p.24). When this view is completely developed it is similar to that of Derek Parfit's famous criterion. Parfit explains that psychological connectedness is the possession of particular psychological connections- "Strong psychological connectedness is the holding of at least half of the number of connections that are present in the life of nearly all human adult," (Schechtman, 2014, p.24) and thus, then psychological continuity is the overlapping chains of the strong connectedness.

There are two views concerning how psychological connectedness can exist. One view is that psychological connections are maintained because of something psychological that is persistent within the person but it is simpler to understand this by referring to dualism; this is to say that the continued, persistent part of someone is their soul (or in another term, their "Cartesian Ego") and this soul is the consistent subject of all our experiences and sensations and furthermore the element that links them all together" (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 366). Instead, Parfit suggests that even if we do not adhere to dualism, we may still advocate the idea of a consistent psychological element- or a "deep further fact" about a person (Korsgaard, 1989, p. 106). Parfit calls these views "Non-Reductionist" since the persisting subject of experiences is regarded as an irreducible entity" (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 366). A Non - Reductionist viewpoint would be that the person is the psychological subject of experiences the holding of Relation-R results from identity, rather than being constitutive of it. However, a physicalist would most likely suggest that psychological connectedness is very simply explainable through physical continuity. This is because there is no need for a persisting psychological entity to explain connectedness and this view, is labelled as "Reductionist" by Parfit , as the existence of a person can be reduced to "the existence of a brain and body, and the occurrence of a series of interrelated physical and mental;" (Parfit, 1987, p. 211). When this concept is viewed alongside the idea that Relation-R is more important to personal identity than physical continuity, Relation-R becomes constitutive of personal identity (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 366).

Psychological continuity is so important because it is the normal cause of psychological connectedness. Yet, Parfit argues that nothing important depends on the cause being normal (Korsgaard, 1989, p. 107). Even if we say that physicalism is true, the physical basis of our psychological attributes will lie in what we may call "the "formal" rather than the "material" properties of the nervous system" (Korsgaard, 1989, p.108) which in other words means that the causes of psychological connectedness can, in fact, vary. Let us now imagine (as Korsgaard suggests) that you are about to lose your memory due to the failure of part of your brain. However, a surgeon gives you the option for him to make a copy of this part of your brain which includes all of your memories. For you, there would be no alteration of the memories or capacity to recollect. Your body is constantly replacing old cells or skin for new ones, so is this really any different? The continuity appropriate to a living being is this "formal continuity" and Parfit says that identity is simply formal continuity plus uniqueness- that is, being the only formal continuer of a past self (Korsgaard,1989,108).

However, overall, it is actually the continuity which is more important than the uniqueness- "If the essential element of a person is formal or copiable, then in principle it seems that we could make two equally good copies of a whole person" (Korsgaard,1989, p.109). Both of these halves would still be formally continuous with the original person; both would feel as if they were the original person and both would have the same memories, characteristics, ideas, and preferences. In this situation, understanding which of the halves were, in fact, the original, would be an empty question (Korsgaard,1989, p.109). It may not truly matter, so then how can personal identity be important? This is a very controversial view. According to Parfit it is actually Relation-R is what matters; this

Relation-R, unlike identity, is a relation we can bear to more than one person (Korsgaard,1989, p.110). If this is true, then what is important in the survival of a person is not whether or not the person survives, but whether or not someone who is adequately R-related to said person survives.

Nonetheless, there is an objection that Relation-R does not carry the necessary significance, and this is based upon the finding that all Relation-R offers is a “formal relation between different moments of consciousness that amount to roughly a requirement of similarity of psychological makeup” (Schechtman, 2014, p. 35). In addition to this, David Lewis says- “I find what I mostly want in wanting survival is that my mental life should flow on. My present experiences, thoughts, beliefs, desires, and traits of character should have appropriate future successors ... these successive states should be interconnected in two ways. First, by bonds of similarity. Second, by bonds of lawful causal dependence” (Lewis, 1983, p. 17). In other words, there is a kind of stability in the contents of the consciousness together with a mechanism of transition from one moment to the next. In fact, the moments themselves remain independent and what is actually described is of “a Humean bundle” rather than true unity (Schechtman, 2014, p. 37). Critics of the psychological explanation of identity who provide the drastic idea that formal relations between distinct moments of consciousness cannot provide the correct type of connection to make sense of our forensic practices (Schechtman, 2014, p. 36). According to this idea, the relationship between my current self and my future self is based upon two people with incredibly similar psychology. If you had a twin who was inexplicably psychologically linked to you, and they committed a crime, would your psychological likeness mean you would be responsible? If I had said super- psychological twin it would be wrong to say I was responsible for her actions- just because we share a similar psychological structure does not mean I am responsible for how she behaves. Naturally, one would be inclined to agree, but by the same logic if you are not responsible for the actions of the psychologically linked twin, then neither are you are responsible for the actions of your past self. In other words, psychological connectedness and continuity are not legitimate to bestow responsibility for the actions of your past self, if all that links you to them is said continuity and connectedness (Schechtman, 2014, p.37).This is clearly a difficult concern for if we cannot be responsible for our past actions or behaviours then it causes great concern for our justice system for how could you be held responsible for a crime you committed seven months ago and, more importantly, then how can you be punished for it?

### **“The Branch Line Case”**

However, Parfit acknowledges this dilemma and continues to try and solve it by using what he refers to as: “The Branch Line Case” (Parfit, 1987, p.200). In this scenario an individual walk into a Teletransporter in order to travel to Mars yet it seems as if nothing happens. The individual is then informed that this is a new machine that has actually created a replica of the subject on Mars but failed to eradicate the original person. It also becomes clear that as of, yet the machine is not flawless and as a result, the original body has been mortally damaged meaning that this individual is



left with only a few days to live. The person can communicate with their new replica on Mars and is furthermore assured there is an overwhelming amount of psychological connections between them and their replica in space. As there is psychological connectedness between the two, there is also psychological continuity between the original and the replica. Preliminarily, Parfit agrees that it seems as if it is not going to seem like survival to the person on earth (Parfit, 1987, p. 201). In other words, it seems to suggest, that there is an extremely strong connection between the person who entered the Teletransporter and the dying individual that does not exist between the original and the replica on Mars. Without such connection there seems to be no basis for the person on earth to feel any egoistic concern for the future of the replica, nor for the replica to concern themselves with the original (Parfit, 1987, p. 202). One may suggest that what is lacking between the two is physical continuity –in particular, the sameness of the brain- and so this scenario shows that psychological continuity theories do, in fact, require that the psychological continuity is caused by the extended functioning of the same brain, if it is to be viable (Schechtman, 2014, p. 37). If this is ultimately true, then this adds further support to my question as to whether or not identity would survive a transition of gender. If a continuation of the actual, physical brain is key to successful survival of identity then in the scenario of the subject waking up in the body of the opposite gender, then seeing as the person has the same memories/personality and also the same brain- then it appears then this would be a successful survival regardless of a difference in gender or physical body.

In relation to my original query, as to how the identity of an individual would survive changing genders, Parfit's theory would suggest that as gender is non-physical and does not impede on the psychological consistency or connectedness- and the same brain would be present in the individual before and after the gender change- then yes, the individual's identity would survive the gender change. However, what seems inconsistent is that gender is in no way affiliated with the brain, as already established, it is most definitely, not a physical entity. So how can it be, that the continued existence of a physical construction is responsible for the survival of a person after a change in a non-physical entity. A change in consciousness or psychological connectedness would also cease the survival of the identity but gender is also responsible for changes and continuations in personality, temperament and life experiences. So how can this be? Our gender is ascribed to us at birth in accordance with our sex, and is with us longer than our consciousness, as it is affiliated with us before we can think for ourselves or form our own memories. Even after someone has passed away, identification is still based upon physical form and when the dead are remembered and talked of, they are talked of with their gendered pronouns of "he" or "she", meaning that our gender actually transcends death. Of course, when an individual is deceased, they no longer have an active social existence or the capacity to behave or speak. So, if gender is a social construction, how can it continue to exist after the social identity has become inactive? Is just sameness of brain and psychological continuity enough to understand our identity, when our genders and identities outlive the function of the brain itself? Our gender is one of the leading factors in what influences our lives and the experiences we have, does it really seem feasible that if something so powerful and influential changed, there would be no impact upon our identities at all?

## Physicalism

For hundreds of years now, scientists all over the world have been able to theorize about the existence of the human mind but they have never been able to observe the mind without the presence of a physical brain. So, if we deny the entirely psychological approach to understanding the mind then what are we left with? Well, of course, the opposite of the immaterial, is material. Philosophy has always been concerned with the idea of how as humans, we fit in with the rest of the world. From as far back as the ancient Greeks, we have had physical theories such as Atomism. As humans, of course, we are made of atoms, and according to the theory, when we die the atoms drain out of us and that is that. There is no persistent or eternal part of us, nothing immaterial. In other words, according to this theory, nothing exists but said empty space and atoms- so, in terms of our construction we are not fundamentally different from any other living organism. As we have discussed, gender is not a physical construction so, then, should not be included in our understanding of what people are, as people then are entirely physical. However, on the other hand, the idea of humans being essentially physical beings is an idea that can be difficult to comprehend; the idea that our memories, feelings, and experiences that have shaped our lives, are futile to our essential essence.

Physicalism today has become more focused on understanding how the facts of mental life are reconciled with the fact that we seem to live in an essentially physical world (Kirk, 2003, p. 49) because how can thoughts and feelings exist so prominently in a world made entirely from physical entities? The evidence for physicalism is, in part, found within the world we live in but Quine summarised it by saying “nothing happens in the world, not the flutter of an eyelid, not the flicker of a thought, without some redistribution of microphysical states” (Quine, 1981, p. 98). However, Quine’s idea cannot be seen as an actual statement of physicalism because it is still consistent with dualism. Dualists who accept the causal closure of the physical have to concede that the laws of nature ensure that nothing happens without something physical happening (Kirk, 2003, p. 49). It seems the most natural version of physicalism would be the Identity Theory.

According to one of the leading philosophers for the Identity theory, J.J.C Smart, “sensations are nothing over and above brain processes” (Smart, 1959, p. 163). With advances in science, neurologists can now offer their suggestions about what happens to the brain when we experience pain and the identity theorists assert that pain is only the occurrence of these brain processes. The example used is that the relevant brain process for pain is known as the firing of the C-fibres, in other words, the psycho-physical identity thesis tells us that “pain is identical with C-Fibre firing” (Kirk, 2003, p. 50). This claim is revised into “having pain is identical with having one’s c-fibres firing” in light of the objection that pain has different properties than brain states. The Identity Theory has been seen as contingent and Kripke argued that if it is contingent, then it can’t really be identity. It seemed a question of empirical fact of whether the neural processes, supposedly identical with the person having pain, was the firing of C-fibres or something else entirely (Kirk, 2003, p. 51). How could pain necessarily be identical with that particular kind of brain process? Kripke, for example, said it could not.

Richard Rorty, on the other hand, believed that Smart's theory was unsatisfactory. He argued that if we adopted this belief then eventually the language we currently use to explain and describe mental states could potentially become obsolete but, in reality, it probably never would. To highlight the difficulty this would cause I shall illustrate with an example: it would be more accurate to suggest that what people referred to as "demonic possession", is in fact, a form of hallucinatory psychosis rather than saying that demonic possession is hallucinatory psychosis. In other words, it is better to say that we call 'sensations' are identical with brain processes, rather than saying sensations are identical with certain brain processes (Rorty, 1965, p. 29). This difficulty is so relevant because we cannot expect consistencies to uphold between the entities mentioned and used within modern or future science with those referred to by the more superstitious belief systems or outdated science- "Insisting on retaining the old terminology simply opens up awkward objections: a witch doctor could justifiably object that the facts about demons (that they come from hell, have forked tongues, etc.) have not been preserved, just as a dualist could object that the facts about sensations have not been preserved," (Tartaglia, 2007, p. 76)

## **Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature**

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty expresses the idea that the mind/body problem is a result of a combination of social-historical events and so, if our history and experiences had of been different, so would our view or even the existence of the mind/body problem. He discusses the concept that our problems-the mind/body debate, as a prime example- are "historical products" and so are contingently based on the past we came from. If we think about the fact that this problem is based so heavily on events that could, or could have not, happened, Rorty queries whether or not it is actually worth considering at all and furthermore, considering how many historical mishaps the mind/body problem trails behind it, he believes it to be unworthy of such heavy consideration.

To reflect the futility of the problem, Rorty introduces us to a whole new race of beings from a whole new planet, these beings are named the Antipodeans- so-called based upon a group of nearforgotten materialists from Australia who attempted many revolts against Cartesian philosophy in the past century (Rorty, 1979, p. 83). These beings reflect humans in many ways, within technology, they are physically similar and even live comparable lives. However, the one monumental difference is the fact that the Antipodeans have no concept of "mind" but instead just talk about brain states. In Rorty's tale of the Antipodeans, he discusses the "Terrans" (people of earth) who go to investigate the planet and its inhabitants, amongst these are two distinct groups of philosophers: the "softminded" and the "tough-minded".

The Antipodeans also differ from humans in terms of their knowledge- The Antipodeans had their "enlightenment" based on Neurology and biochemistry, meaning that when the Terran's land on their planet, the Antipodeans already know far more about the brain than ourselves. The similarities between the Terrans and the Antipodean's extend to the fact that the Antipodeans' use the

person/non-person distinction the same way the Terrans do- in other words, they include their own species whilst excluding other organisms, animals and machines. The key difference between the Terrans and the Antipodeans is, as I previously mentioned, the lack of the concept of mind within Antipodean existence. According to Rorty, this is because whilst Terran philosophers felt the need to explore and explain the existence of personhood in terms of reason, the Antipodeans had no such inclination nor did they experience any similar social pressure- "Terran 17th Century philosophers inherited the concept of the mind-as reason- and reconceived it in support of the newly emerging physics, but the Antipodean equivalents had nothing similar to inherit" (Tartaglia, 2007, p. 73). The tough-minded Terran Philosophers decide to centre their investigations on the subject on understanding whether or not the Antipodean's have sensations- this divided these philosophers into two further categories, those who believe they do and those who believe they don't. They question the Antipodeans to establish whether or not the Antipodeans talk of their brain states in the same way as the Terrans discuss their sensations.

Returning, for a moment, to Rorty's understanding of the mind/body problem, I will discuss what is known as "Privileged Access", which in other words means the internal capacity one has to understand their own thoughts and beliefs about their mental states, Our Privileged Access is what makes us more secure about what we know and believe than about the world around us or the beliefs of others. This concept is provided by the Cartesian concept of phenomenal states as subjective appearances (Tartaglia, 2007, p. 77). The main implication of having Privileged Access is that one cannot be false about a sensation you are having – i.e. you cannot be mistaken about a sensation you experience. So then, it cannot seem like you are in pain, when you aren't (Tartaglia, 2007, p. 78).

If we continue with the example of pain, then if both a Terran and an Antipodean stub their toe in the exact same situations, then both individuals would have stimulated C-fibres however, the Terran would say that they felt pain, whereas the Antipodean would say that their "C-fibres had been stimulated". Now, we know that the Terrans have Privileged Access meaning that they cannot be wrong, however, do the Antipodeans have this same skill of Privileged Access, or could they be wrong? When asked, the Antipodeans say that they can be wrong about the stimulation of their c-fibres, "but that they cannot imagine it to be the case" (Rorty, 1979, p. 86). Rorty explains that an extra capability possessed the Antipodeans is that they can detect the brain state correlated with any significant sentence in their language (Tartaglia, 2007, p. 79); so, when they state their c-fibres have been stimulated, they say they have brain state "T-435". However, the Antipodeans can actually get this brain state without the c-fibres being stimulated if, for example, they were tricked into believing their C-fibres were about to have these fibres stimulated.

So, although the Antipodeans cannot imagine being mistaken about the C-fibres being stimulated, it is clearly feasible that they, in fact, can be mistaken as they could seem to have brain state T-435 without actually having it or "Cases in which Antipodeans had T-435 but no stimulation of C-fibres included those in which, for example, they were strapped to what they were falsely informed was a torture machine, a switch was theatrically turned on, but nothing else was done," (Rorty, 1979, p. 86). The question that arrives is, what is the brain state for seeming to have T-435? What Rorty is attempting to establish here is that "the idea of a sensation as a phenomenal appearance (as something that you cannot be wrong about by principle) is a dispensable fiction (Tartaglia, 2007, p. 79). Rorty believed that we could never truly be able to tell whether or not the Antipodeans really have sensations or not. We could never properly persuade the Antipodeans that we do have

sensations any more than we can be convinced that we do not. However, to Rorty, the existence of the Antipodeans proves that there is a way of saying everything we do now but without enveloping ourselves with unsolvable, metaphysical questions and so we should be accepting and adopting their non-metaphysical appearance/reality distinction (Tartaglia, 2007, p. 79). This is the distinction between getting things right and getting things wrong (Rorty, 1979, p. 84) and that the only notion of how things are that is necessary is the Antipodean notion of what they are inclined to say.

Moreover, the successful survival of the Antipodeans is proof for Rorty that there is a way of living a successful, fulfilled life without the existence of the mind/body problem. Rorty says that “nothing predictive or explanatory or descriptive would be lost if we had spoken Antipodean all of our lives” (Rorty, 1979, p. 120), which suggests that it would be inconsequential to lose the mind-body problem. Antipodeans are proof that Rorty is, indeed, correct to say that it is possible to continue existing without talking about sensations but furthermore that topic neutral translations of sensation-talk present physicalism with an unnecessary burden, as Antipodeans never talked of their sensations, to begin with.

On this topic, I cannot help but make the comparisons between the sensations, that Rorty discusses, and the existence of gender. Like the mind/body problem, gender exists as a historical, social construction that in potentiality we could, technically, live without. Imagine for a moment that the Antipodeans also live as a genderless race, a race that lived the same as us in every other capacity other than the fact they did not gender behaviours or each other. In our world, gender served throughout history to dictate roles and behaviours in order to promote survival, i.e. that men gathered the food because the women had to stay home with the children; but perhaps this new version of the Antipodeans didn't have such a need in their culture (in a similar way to the fact the Antipodeans and thus such roles didn't form, would this really impair their existence? Would their lives be less fruitful or less successful because they didn't categorise each other by gendered behaviours? Would it somehow halt or limit their quality of life or chance of survival? From what we have already said about gender, in today's day and age, it doesn't really contribute enough to our lives- other than prejudice and stereotype- for it to be missed or for it to really limit the lives of those who don't have it. Perhaps it is more Rortyan to say that, even with the lengthiest research and discussion, we will never be fully able to confirm or deny whether gender is truly part of our identity so is there any point continuing the discussion? As a people, we are not benefitting by discussing gender, but on an individual level if you do want to ascribe to a gender (or you do not) and this decision impacts your life then this decision should be yours. Perhaps gender is a left-over side effect from the evolution of a society that is now surplus to requirements, but its existence is perpetuated, not by metaphysical necessity – or even social need- but by our very discussion of it.

## **Kripkean philosophy**

On the other hand, the theories of Saul Kripke, by using his approach of naming and reference, by which certain expressions pick out their referents by necessity (Kirk, 2003, p.

51) which means that the term refers to the same thing in every possible world. He uses the example of the name "Aristotle" which refers to the exact same person in all the possible worlds. In our world, Aristotle was one of the fathers of western philosophy, who for a time tutored Alexander the Great, yet there may be a world where Aristotle never even met Alexander the Great because the name applies to the same individual person, regardless of contingent facts. Being that particular individual is possible without taking up a particular occupation. These terms which have the same referents in every world, re what Kripke named as "Rigid Designators"- "Let's call something a rigid designator if in every possible world it designates the same object, a non-rigid or accidental designator if that is not the case. Of course, we don't require that the objects exist in all possible worlds... When we think of a property as essential to an object, we usually mean that it is true of that object in any case where it would have existed. A rigid designator of a necessary existent can be called strongly rigid." (Kripke, 1980, p. 48). Kripke also included terms like pain (psychological states) and "C-fibres firing" (brain processing terms). If both the terms "pain" and "C-fibres firing" are rigid designators applying to the exact same things in every possible world; he concluded that the psycho-physical identity thesis should be regarded as necessary, rather than just contingent. If both terms of "pain" and "C-fibres" are in fact rigid designators applying to the exact same things in all and every possible worlds- if this is true then in the actual world we live in now, pain is identical to C-fibres firing, there is no possible world where this is not true- and if it is true in every possible world then it must be necessary (Kirk, 2003, p. 51).

Kripke believes that, however, it could be feasible that there could be the firing of C-fibres without pain. He suggests that the essence of pain is to actually be aware of certain feelings and sensations, not to have a certain physical construction. To conclude, Kripke is saying that if the psycho-physical identity statements are true then "pain" and "C-fibres firing" refer to the same thing then these statements are necessary. Yet, these statements cannot actually be necessary because we can fathom the mental states in question being present without the physical processes. In other words, those identity statements are not actually necessary (Kirk, 2003, p. 52) ... so given the earlier conclusion, they are not true either so, in other words, the identity theory is false. There continues to be controversy over Kripke's ideas, especially over his claim that pain is a rigid designator (Kirk, 2003, p. 53).

Regardless of Kripke's conclusions about the Identity theory, the idea of the rigid designators is one that relates to identity. If Aristotle can be Aristotle in every world without actually being the teacher of Alexander the Great or without being the father of western philosophy then can our names refer to us as the same person, if we had different jobs or even different gendered? Surely if there is a world where it is fathomable for Aristotle to not be a teacher then surely it is fathomable for a version of us to exist in the opposite gender? As an origin essentialist, Kripke believed then, that if Aristotle had been born from a different egg, he would not have ever been Aristotle. So, in that sense, Aristotle being a male (in the physical sense) is essential to him. So, in other words, it is essential for Aristotle to be a man, but his occupation, experiences, and personality are not necessarily essential. This raises a question about the different nature of the qualities of each person-for if it is essential for a person to have certain biological components but not for them to have certain, important experiences then this leads us to question which parts of our construction

are more important, in terms of essentialism. This can raise an interesting point if one regards the fact that, as I have already discussed, in many elements of society the sex or gender we ascribe to, effects the lives we lead. For example, if Emily Wilding Davidson had not been born a woman and thus spent her life being treated with prejudice – would she have ever campaigned so greatly for suffrage? Furthermore, without the endeavour to gain suffrage, she may not have met her untimely and tragic death and would possibly have gone on to lead a long mundane life or done something else striking that changed the world. Basically, in many ways our origins do go on to shape and change the lives we develop whereas experiences themselves are contingent upon many other elements like culture, psychology and social background, and many of these things are determinable by our origins. So, perhaps it is logical to agree that our origins are essential to us, however, is our gender part of our origins?

Judith Butler's idea was that from the moment we are born we are gendered from the physical form we have, and we continue to live our lives classifying ourselves -and being classified by others- as this certain gender. However, our biological origins -i.e. the egg we came from or the parents we are born from –are not questionable or deniable. It isn't decided by anyone or anything -other than the natural laws of biology- whereas gender, on the other hand, can be a subjective element. Some parents, for example, have a biological daughter but choose to raise their child with a masculine gender or even as gender-neutral and this child will then be raised as this chosen gender. As a result, this child would either be treated as that gender by others or shunned by others because their gender does not match their biological sex, or they may experience prejudice because their chosen gender is seen as weaker or somehow inferior within their culture. Now, for the child, this gender has been with them for their whole lives, from before they were capable of making memories so it could be said that this gender classification is part of their identity. However, to me, this is a troubling rationale. Our biological sex is determined by process and function; it will not be different depending on what religion you are born in to or the kind of parents you are born of. So how can the two be both part of our essential origins? However, if we view this from a Rortyan perspective, one could say that if we just say, 'what we call "gender"', rather than thinking we have to account for gender itself, the problem is lessened, arguably goes away. We cannot deny that our parental upbringing or our culture does significantly impact upon the lives we go on to lead, but these things are all contingent; whereas the biological egg we came from, the defects or illnesses that we are born with are very often the faults of no-one but the unfortunate mishap of the biological machine. It does not seem logical to say that both gender and biological circumstances can both be essential, in terms of origins. Gender is a social status, that may one day be obsolete, that has different levels of significance in different cultures and different perceptions whereas people will for the rest of time, as they have since the beginning of time, be born with either male or female genitalia and irreversibly come from a specific, individual egg. Although people may choose to have surgery to change their sex or in situations where babies are born from test-tubes- a child being born will still require, in one way or another, being born from an egg, which will form either a male or female baby and this is that individual's origins. Our biological origins are indeterminable and exist before we do- our current existence depends on the certain egg and sperm that were created for fertilization- whereas our gender is decided for us, whilst we already exist. With biological origins there is no decision nor contemplation, the reproductive system creates the foetus and the combination of genes and DNA makes a baby with specific coloured eyes or specific health conditions or specific blood-types.

Regardless of its effect on our lives, gender is, somewhat decision and as a decision, it is one that could just as easily stop existing, or change, whereas our biological origins cannot and will not

change. Although gender is more often than not decided upon or ascribed due to the biology of the infant-i.e. gender is usually based on the sexual organs of the person- technically, one could raise their child as the opposite gender than is associated with their biology- for example, if you gave birth to a biologically male child but chose to raise them to have the female aspects of gender and then they, although their biology would be male, the child would basically have a female gender. However, if one had a biologically male baby but you then told everyone they were, in fact, a biologically female baby, and dressed them and named them according to the supposed female gender, the child would still be biologically male, regardless of society's misconception of their biology. Perhaps this is why Kripkean philosophy of identity works as it does, it is illogical to imagine ourselves coming from a different egg, or even from different parentage, and still be the same person... but is it wrong to imagine ourselves as the opposite gender?

If this is to be accepted, then one would be suggesting that our physical bodies are essentially more important to our identity than mental constructs such as gender. This can be corroborated by the ideology of physicalism as it expresses the idea that human existence is essentially physical. However, an immaterialist could have a similar point of view in the fact that the soul doesn't necessarily have to have a gender (it doesn't even have a biological sex). As we have already discussed, gender has no physical destination, it is not part of our brain or threaded in our DNA, so it would appear that if we, do in fact, adhere to physicalism then gender becomes obsolete. Of course, gender is a mental construct, but does that mean it does not have physical causation or physical effects? For example, if we refer to Aristotle's criteria for men and women, it is a list of purely nonmaterial qualities, such as compassion, emotional strength and irrationality, to name but a few. Yet isn't it entirely rational to expect men, and women to be different, considering the great biological differences between the two? The stereotypically renowned qualities that women are said to have -being nurturing, emotional, etc.- all match up with the fact that women are the ones capable of having children. With this in mind, women and men will inevitably have different social roles because regardless of any beliefs about gender or inequality, men are not the ones able to have babies so of course, this leads to a different attitude towards the two sexes. Women have the babies so there is this expectation of them being "maternal"- which explains why the feminine gender is also correlated with maternal qualities- and so, if the woman is the one having children and thus raising them, then it comes to the men to be responsible for gathering food, providing shelter etc. This is not to say that women are incapable of providing, but biologically, their role has been established by the ability to carry children.

We have also discussed the fact that our own brain shape and hormones differ depend on our physical sex. Does this mean there is a biological cause of the non-material qualities of gender? In other words, does the differing shapes of the brain or the different combinations of hormones produce the personality traits and qualities that each gender is seen to possess? This would explain why it is typically women possessing the feminine gender and men possessing the masculine. In the early 1900's it was discussed that the fact that women had a larger Corpus Callosum could explain why women seemed more intuitive-hence the term of "women's intuition"- in other words, explaining that women were more emotive beings due to the increased size of the Corpus Callosum (Rivers, 2013, p. 26). This began a flux of ideas suggesting that this brain difference between the two sexes could provide a solid answer as to why the sexes are seen to act so differently. This would, of course, provide a physical account of gender – not only would we then be suggesting that gendered stereotypes are consequences from biological construction. Furthermore, this could also fall in line with Smart's idea that although gender appears to be some sort of immaterial, social sensation, it is ,in fact, a brain process and that the two cannot be separated; you cannot explain gender without



using brain construction and the construction of the brain births gender. In 1997 however, it was published in the Neuroscience and Behaviour review that evidence from recent MRI studies, shows there is no significant statistical difference between the Corpus Callosum in either of the sexes (Rivers, 2013, p. 28). So once again, we have lost the biological root of gender. Although we still have the effect of hormones upon the body, there are so many exceptions and conditions that affect hormones that it would be impossible to make any sort of fair or logical assertion as to the true effect of hormones upon the existence of gendered behaviour. So, although physicalism may be seen to some as a more logical explanation to identity and human existence, in terms of gender, it seems to fall short because there seems to be a weak connection between the mental properties of gender and any physical processes. On a non-physicalist perspective, however, there is still the capacity to say the same thing but with little need to consider the latest scientific revelation for their theories.

However, although we can say that our gender is a choice, and our biology is not, there is some doubt as to whether this is accurate. It is logical to suggest that our biological make-up is, in fact indeterminate, but what we mean by this is that our biological construction is indeterminate by the human free will not by the laws of nature. It is quite often assumed that our biological construction determines the gender we are ascribed, so in that sense, our gender is as predetermined as our biological makeup. Therefore, if physicalism is to be seen as true, one can suggest that the existence of gender in the first place, although it has mainly social consequences, has a metaphysically determined existence. Furthermore, from a determinism perspective, hard determinists do not advocate the concepts of free-will so if we are to say that our biological construction is determined, then it seems illogical to suggest that then gender is based upon a decision of free will.

## **Animalism**

One other argument expressing the concept of physicality is the idea of animalism. This is a widely unpopular view in philosophy, with further rejections from famous philosophers such as Plato, Spinoza, and Locke, to name but a few. Yet, I will discuss the theory as expressed by Eric Olson. Olson's theory begins by underlying and restructuring the common misconceptions that currently exist around the theory of animalism, he expresses the point that animalism- as he perceives it to be- is currently very misunderstood, given the fact that currently philosophers and other thinkers, mislabel animalism as a theory that states: "that each of us is a non-animal that relates in some intimate way to an animal. They put it by saying that we are animals because that sounds more plausible," (Olson, 2003, p. 320) which is suggesting that within other variations of animalism, the

theorists are saying that humans are animals but not reinforcing it with their actual theories, yet, he is earnest to point out that these ideas are not true “animalist” ideas.

Olson’s explanation of animalism relies on the pre-assumed concept that each concrete particular belongs to one and only one kind (Schetman, 2014, p. 214). In other words, the “kind” that each entity belongs to defines the individual’s essential properties without which, the entity would no longer be the same and thus cease to exist as that entity. For example, although a baby changes and develops into a grown adult, which looks and sounds and behaves very differently from its original baby form, it doesn’t stop existing as a human. This explains, why throughout one’s life although we may appear very different or change the way we look, or even lose limbs, we remain essentially the same type- a human. Olson’s theory relies on two further distinctions: the distinction between a phase sortal and a substance concept. A substance concept is what Olson refers to as the term that names essential kinds (Olson, 2003, p. 320), whereas a phase sortal, on the other hand, is properties of an entity that exist throughout its lifetime, but that it could exist without ceasing to exist. These two distinct categories can of course be likened to Aristotle’s concept of essence and accident, i.e. the differentiation between properties that are essential to our existence and those which just so happen to be a part of us. The two responses to personal identity are, of course, fundamentally, the psychological approach and the biological approach and according to Olson, the difference between the two rests on whether or not the term “person” is a substance concept or a phase sortal.

For those that adhere to the idea of psychological explanations, then yes, the term person is a substance concept. Olson uses John Locke’s definition of a human and so, by that definition, if an individual fell into a vegetative state- for example-, then they would no longer be a person (Schetman, 2014, p. 16). If “person” is, in fact, our substance concept then we could not continue to exist as nonpersons, so in other words, those who sadly fall into a vegetative state, cease to exist. On the other hand, if “human” was our substance concept then if someone did fall into a vegetative state they would continue to exist, they would just no longer be a person (Schetman, 2014, p. 16).

However, as I already stated an entity can only have one substance concept. If both “human-animal” and “person” are substance concepts and we are essentially “persons” then we cannot be human animals. This raises what is known as “The Foetus Problem” which is the fact that if we are essentially persons, then in fact, we could not actually have been a foetus. This is because a Foetus lacks all the qualities needed to be a person- as John Locke describes- just as an individual in a vegetative state could not be a person. Furthermore, what then happens to the foetus when it develops into a thinking human which does fit in with the psychological criteria required to be a person. Does that Foetus just cease to exist, and a new entity begins? Or, are there two distinct, but completely coincidental, entities (i.e. the person and the animal) that then coexist (Schetman, 2014, p. 17)? Having these two entities in coexistence brings about its own problems which are known as “The Thinking Animal Argument”. This is the concern about the fact that- remembering that the two entities coincide exactly- how can it be that the person is thinking but that the animal is not?

So then, if an individual does indeed fall into a vegetative state, does that person just cease to exist and then just leave an animal in their place- that looks identically the same, but is in actuality, a completely distinct entity? Also, Olson asks: is the animal that is left behind the same entity as the Foetus which existed before the being developed into a person? In other words, “the fact that each human animal starts out as an unthinking embryo and may end up as an unthinking vegetable, shows that no mental continuity is necessary for a human- animal to persist,” (Olson, 2003, p. 324). Olson believes that although these questions are very difficult to answer, they are actually eradicated if we say that the term “person” is a phase sortal. This would explain why throughout an

individual's life; they continue to exist as the same entity but do not always exist as a person – i.e. when they are a foetus or if they did happen to fall into a comatose or vegetative state.

Olson's argument for animalism then rests on the fact that, in light of the given complications, it makes far more sense to say that "human-animal" is our substance concept and that "person" is a phase sortal, rather than the other way around. Furthermore, for Olson, the typical question of identity ("what makes a person at time T1 and a person at time T2 the same person?" (Schetman, 2014, p. 17)) confuses the matter with the implication that in order for a person to survive then they must survive as a person, whereas in actuality there is at least one time in everyone's life to not be a person, and the potentiality to not be a person throughout your existence. It is only true that we must exist as "persons" for our whole lives if "person" is our substance concept. In light of this, it is Olson's idea that in fact, we should replace the question of identity with "what makes a person at one time identical to anything at a later time?" (Schetman, 2014, p. 17).

If we apply the concept of substance concepts and phase sortals to the topic of gender then there is a very simple and conclusive answer- if individuals can only have one substance concept, which for us is "human-animal" (according to Olson) then this would mean that gender is a phase sortal, meaning it is something that we can have but do not need and something that can be fluid throughout our lives, without impacting our actual existence. In other words, if a person awoke in the morning identifying as the opposite gender then this would not actually impact their existence, it may affect their behaviours, their psychological patterns and possibly their social experiences, but as all of these are not substance concepts, there would be no impact upon the individuals actual identity- meaning in other words that although someone's gender may change or fluctuate they (according to this theory of Animalism) will remain the same person.

## **Problems with animalism**

There are two main ways in which philosophers could respond to this theory of animalism. The first option maintains the fact that the biological approach isn't, in fact, immune to the difficulties that have been raised against the psychological view. In response to Olson's "Vegetable problem" is what known as "the corpse problem" – this is the question as to where a corpse comes from? When an animal dies, there is a corpse left that is materially coincident and spatiotemporally continuous with the animal that just died (Schetman, 2014, p. 18). Where does this corpse come from; does it fall into existence at the exact moment that the living animal dies?

In response, Olson's "Foetus problem" is what is known as the "zygote problem". The problem is that the Zygote cannot be identical with any human because, of course, as of yet, it is not human. So, what happens to the Zygote when it develops further into a foetus? Does it just cease to exist, by gaining complexity (Schetman, 2014, p. 18)? Lastly, in response to the "Thinking Animal Problem," we have what is known as "The Thinking parts" problem- the entails the idea that every animal has many parts, parts large and complex enough to think. So, then when every animal thinks "I am an animal" (Schetman, 2014, p. 19) there is also the brain (or another thinker) and yet another thinker, which is considered to be the top half of the animal, simultaneously thinking the same thought.

The second response is what is known as the “Constitution theory” which can be described as an account between the relationship between persons and animals but that also manages to avoid the difficulties that Olson raises about other theories. According to the Constitution theory, human persons are not identical to human animals but are constituted by them. In this sense, constitution can be defined as the relation that an entity has to the substance it is made from – i.e. a flag could be said to be constituted by cloth, or a table to be constituted by wood. The strongest form of the constitution theory is documented by Lynne Rudder Baker- “Lynne Rudder Baker and many others think that paradigmatic instances of one object constituting another — a piece of marble constituting a statue, or an aggregate of particles constituting a living body — involve two distinct (i.e., not numerically identical) objects in the same place at the same time” (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 295).

Baker defines “persons” in terms of being in possession of what is known as a strong “first- person perspective”- which is known as a “form of reflective self-consciousness that allows, for instance, to articulate concerns about our own continued existence and about our relations to others in the world”. In other words, our first-person perspective is the fact that we can ponder our existence and our position in the world, which is what makes us a person and thus distinct from other animals. If a human-animal develops this perspective then this gives way to the existence of a new entity-or in other words, a “person”-. A person then, for example, is constituted by the human-animal but is still only one being in existence, in other words, there is no distinction between the person and the human-animal once the first-person perspective has been developed. The human-animal begins its existence as a foetus and, so if this animal develops into a being with this first-person perspective then the original animal does not cease to exist but at the same time loses its independent existence. This theory then can answer the queries raised by animalism, regarding the relationship between persons and human beings. If we think back to the thought experiment used by Olson and consider the situation of an individual who falls into a vegetative state and then loses their firstperson perspective. In this situation, the person would cease to exist, and the animal would regain its independent existence. In this situation, the original “foetus” and “vegetable” problem are no longer problems because the human-animal and the person are not two entities but one- so there is just one thinker of each thought.

Although the constitution theory helps to eradicate certain problems of animalism, the theory isn’t without its own difficulties. The primary difficulty is that it isn’t actually clear how we could tell if we have the same first-person perspective from one moment, to another which makes the theory vulnerable to the same issues faced by other identity theories that use the soul to explain personal identity. Furthermore, animalists argue that the addition of psychological capacities makes a new entity (Schetman, 2014, p. 20). The debate between the constitution theory and animalism comes down to the differences in metaphysical presuppositions and disagreement about whether value and relational properties can be part of what constitutes the metaphysical identity of an object (Schetman, 2014, p. 20). The existence of debate between the biological and psychological theories are unlikely to cease. The increasing presence of the biological theory acts as an undeniably strong opponent to psychological views. This has created an extra important dimension to the more modern understanding of personal identity, raising fruitful questions that have been largely neglected in recent years (Schetman, 2014, p. 20).

Another argument in defence of the Animalism theory is called the Animal Ancestor Argument which states that if one denies that an individual is not an animal then this would mean that their parents were not animals and that their parents were not animals and then of course that their parents weren’t animals and so on. One repercussion of this theory is the fact that it undermines the

premise of the evolutionary theory, and as one of the most prevalent and important theories, the rejection of evolution may be a too greater cost for many people. On the other hand, it could be argued that we may originate from animals but in fact, we are no longer animals. It could be said that that we are related to animals but that in fact, our closer and more modern relatives are actually human. Furthermore, Sydney Shoemaker believed there is an ambiguity in the term “animal”. The first distinction is “biological” or otherwise defined as a creature whose persistence conditions are purely biological (Blatti, 2012, p. 688)- they have the necessary condition of “continued living”. The second distinction refers to creatures that are subject to mental properties that are non-identically constituted by biological animals (Blatti, p.688,2012). Shoemaker makes this distinction based upon “what determines the nature of any sort of persisting thing” (Shoemaker, 2011, p. 353). The distinction between the two terms shows that, in fact, it may be too extreme to say that claims of evolution only focus on the biological distinction. So, when animalism advocates the claim that every one of us is identical with an animal, in fact, the statement refers to the second type within the distinction rather than just, referring to biological referents. By creating the distinction, Shoemaker allows for the animalist concept that everyone is identical with an animal and that this follows from evolutionary theory. So, this maintains that the animal ancestor argument overstates its position by concluding that the truth behind animalism follows on from the evolutionary theory (Schetman, 2014, p. 21).

Although animalism may have its flaws as a theory, the concept of phase sortals still seems to work successfully to explain why one person can be so many different things without changing or losing their identity. Yet, if gender is a phase sortal (which this theory would suggest it is) then technically one should be able to change gender without losing their identity, however, this seems a little too straight forward. Of course, as the theory states, technically gender is a part of our lives like age, that can change and alter as we develop, without losing what it is to be “us”, however, our identity (in part) depends on the experiences we have as the gender we associate with. For example, girls who experience prejudice may grow up to be political or a feminist in light of being over-looked or excluded, yet if that same human had been born with a masculine gender, they may still have grown up to be believers in equal rights, but they probably wouldn’t have grown to be a feminist as they didn’t have the pivotal experiences that led them to such a career choice. In other words, on a fundamental human level, one could change genders without losing their identity, however, the social repercussions would dramatically alter one’s life experiences. When one changes any of their social roles, there is an expectation that your behaviour will alter accordingly and similarly, changing genders will alter what is expected of you and what you will experience. Animalism, although logically possible, lacks the emphasis on two of the biggest things in a person’s life: experience and psychology.

## Then why does gender continue to exist?

As we have already discussed, Gender is not part of our physical construction, so according to the ideology of physicalism, gender becomes fundamentally irrelevant- if the human construction is purely physical, then gender is not essential, as it is either psychological, or social. However, I am not convinced it is that straightforward. Gender may not have a strong presence in our physical bodies, but to understand the identity of a human, it seems clear to me that you have to search deeper than just our biology.

From a political perspective, perhaps it is more obvious why gender continues to exist. As we discussed earlier, Simone De Beauvoir firmly believed that the patriarchy's main aim is to encourage the social progression of men, whilst subsequently repressing the progression of women. In other words, the notion of gender exists to define and separate those who will live a life of subservience and those who will go on to achieve power. This isn't an elective process by women- women do not choose repression or to think negatively about their existence, it is forced upon them by society: "The interwovenness of body and mind helps explain women's oppression. Women do not choose to think about their bodies and bodily processes negatively; rather they are forced to do so as a result of being embedded in a hostile patriarchal society," (Joseph, 2008). For as long as gender continues to exist, the division between men and women will remain. Furthermore, for as long as this division remains the patriarchy will be sustained, subsequently meaning that stereotypical male-dominance will be continually perpetuated.

Hypothetically, to undo the social distinction between men and women we would need to remove the cause of the unbalance- the gender divide. For this, there is two options – the first would be removing the distinctions of gender completely- to stop people being oppressed by their sex and physical characteristics. The second option, however, refers to those who wish to maintain the gender distinctions in order to defend the rights and protect the lives of women who have been penalized by the patriarchy in some way. This second distinction is most obvious in the recent MeToo and TimesUp movements, which are both trying to raise awareness of the men who have abused their power over women- or, in other words, "an astounding upwelling of emboldened and infuriated women saying time's up to sexual harassment and assault" (Rinhart, 2019). This second option refers not to equalizing the rights of people in general without the distinction of gender, but in fact removing the patriarchy in the first place. To stop women from being oppressed for being women. Although women are finally starting to uphold powerful political and economic roles, the idea of a powerful woman is still a somewhat "novel" concept (Rinhart, 2019). This second distinction is about making women visible as a powerful group of people, rather than as Simone De Beauvoir suggested, merely a secondary sex. In other words, this second distinction is about dismantling the patriarchy by gaining the attribution and acknowledgement of women's power instead of removing the existence of gender altogether.

On a more personal level, the gender we ascribe to can have a huge impact on some people's perceptions of themselves, and their place in the world. For example, the term "Transgender" is defined as "a very broad term to include all sorts of trans people. It includes cross dressers, people

with a dual or no gender identity, and transsexual people. It is also used to define a political and social community that is inclusive of transsexual people, transgender people, cross-dressers (transvestites), and other groups of “gender-variant” people” (Whittle et al, p. 85, 2007). If gender is not part of our identity then it seems inconceivable that members of the transgender community, would feel as if they were assigned the “wrong” gender and that they would live their lives behaving and dressing as something other than that what they biologically are. If gender does not impact our identity, then would it matter how we dressed, the makeup we wore or the name we gave ourselves? Due to the fact that gender does impact upon our identities, Transgender individuals, unlike transsexual people, do not try to change their biological forms but instead live their lives as the gender they feel they should be. It has already been established that part of our identity is how we portray ourselves, so clearly, for these individuals, gender is a huge and unignorable part of theirs. Transgender individuals are sometimes innocent victims of acts of horrific and degrading hate crime and yet they go through all of this to act and portray themselves as the gender they believe themselves to be. If they didn’t believe gender to be an integral and vital element of their identities then why put themselves through the stigma, abuse and social ostracization of showing themselves as a transgender person? However, does this really mean that they are right to believe that their gender is integral? Perhaps being born or developing the understanding that they have the wrong gender alters their perception of the matter. Maybe the clash between those who believe in the importance of gender and those who do not is what causes prejudice towards transgender people in the first place. Yet, if gender isn’t important to people’s existence, how does it become so drastically important to the transgender community? Other than a difference of perception about gender, the transgender community is no different from the rest of society, they are still physically and biologically the same as any other person so how can we explain such a difference? There may be some environmental or psychological reason for this opposing opinion, however, if people are purely physical constructions then there is very little emphasis to place on whatever reason there is for this difference, so it remains difficult to comprehend. Furthermore, let us entertain the fact that, instead of the emphasis upon gender being a difference of perception, perhaps it is just a falsehood. The human psyche is vulnerable to mistakes – hallucinations, false memories and loss of empirical senses are just a few ways that the human mind can be deceived or incorrect, is it so inconceivable to assume that some people may also be wrong about the importance of their gender?

On paper, it is easy to eradicate gender from the construction of our personal identity, easy to approach the subject from a purely logical, impersonal perspective. Yet for some, their gender is the reason for family estrangement, abuse and even, tragically, suicide. In this way, to truly understand the influence of gender on real people we need to examine the effect it has on the lives of those same people. It seems important here to acknowledge why we shouldn’t underestimate social constructs. For a plethora of members of many cultures and societies, their lives -both personal and professional- are dominated by one of the most important social constructs of all – money. We spend hours upon hours in offices or conducting manual labour or training to gain, what is effectively printed paper that has been given a financial value by people. People dedicate the majority of their lives, to be handed an envelope full of paper at the end of every month, or even more absurdly in this day and age, to see the number in your account rise when you look at the small screen of your phone. Today, with wages being transferred electronically, you are actually being handed nothing for your labours. We pay for things using contactless technology, spending money that we cannot see, that we have never seen and that the person behind the counter will never see either. If this doesn’t highlight the extent and power a social construct can have over a population, then I don’t believe anything can. Money demonstrates how people will dedicate their lives to earn something intangible. This is similar to gender, our lives are classified or ruled by an

invisible, category placed upon us, because of the way our biological bodies were formed in the womb. If anything, it may be more accurate to say that social constructs-although contingent upon social history and culture- is one of the strongest, most dominating forces we experience as people. It may be relatively easy to dismiss gender as the leftovers of the traditional man/woman stereotypes, but in reality, as a social construct, gender is virtually unbeatable, because those who deny gender norms are far more likely to have negative repercussions. It was Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" theory (Maslow, 1943) that first proposed the idea that humans have stages of needs and requirements to fulfil before they can reach self-actualisation, in other words before we can become our best selves. If we combine this theory with Judith Butler's theory of the Heterosexual Matrix (as I discussed earlier) then I think we are more able to understand the role and position that gender plays in our lives, as a social construct, and how it has become so influential upon our existence.

## **The Hierarchy of Needs**

Butler's Heterosexual matrix poses the idea that "there is a grid of naturalized bodies, gender, and desires, meaning that a viewer looking at a person knows that person's sex, gender, and sexuality. The problem with the heterosexual matrix is that it only allows for a certain number of identities and all others are outside of it and are erased or ignored," (Comstock, 2017)- in other words, according to the matrix there are a set of attributes a person can have which is "normal" and "natural" and anything that deviates from that is then, unnatural and alien. On the other hand, Maslow's theory explains how human needs are structured in a hierarchy - needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs higher up. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are- physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization (McLeod, 2018).

The first basis of the hierarchy is based around physiological needs such as food and water which is, of course, necessary for all humans. But as the hierarchy develops it becomes more obvious as to where the Heterosexual matrix could align with this. For example, the second tier of the hierarchy is for our safety and security needs, and as I mentioned earlier, transgender individuals are often faced with physical and emotional abuse and violent experiences so there is an incredibly strong possibility for them to experience danger. In other words, according to the Matrix, individuals who are not part of the transgender population do not have the same increased danger risk. The heterosexual matrix explains that in our society, it is really the heterosexual, strictly gendered, white individuals who fit in with the social norms. Although these people may have individual reasons for being afraid or fearing for their lives, for their group as a whole they do not have the same experiences with insecurity and fear as those who are transgender or deviate from their gender norms. Besides, transgender people are often excluded and ostracized from society by simple things such as gendered greetings, gendered jobs, gendered signs, and gendered clothes- to name but a few.

The third tier on the hierarchy explains the need for us to have a feeling of belonging and love, in other words, "The need for interpersonal relationships motivates behaviour" (McLeod, 2018). So, there is, according to the heterosexual matrix, two set genders, and within these genders there is a



sense of belonging, so, for those who deviate from traditional gender norms, they are excluded from these populations. Furthermore, relating to the second tier, rather than feeling warmth and love from the rest of the world, transgender people often feel ostracization and coldness through exclusion and prejudice. This is not to say that of course transgender people never feel love or are unable to maintain relationships, however, if we are able to look at society as a whole, they are very often excluded. The third tier, in part, is being included in a group and feeling a sense of belonging. By being excluded and isolated from the rest of society it is incredibly unlikely that transgender people feel like they belong within their society, alongside the individuals that do not feel isolation due to their position in the heterosexual matrix.

The fourth tier explains how people need to have certain esteem needs to be satiated- which Maslow classified into two categories: “esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence) and also the desire for reputation or respect from others (e.g., status, prestige). Maslow indicated that the need for respect or reputation is most important for children and adolescents and precedes real self-esteem or dignity,” (McLeod, 2018). So, in other words, Maslow is highlighting that approval from society is actually more important to young people than their own self-respect or self-worth. So, if a transgender adolescent is shunned by society as a result of their gender then it is far more damaging for them to have this experience than it is for them to question themselves. For me, personally, this draws attention to the difficulty that is facing society, concerning the gender problem. As gender is rooted in society, rather than within the psyche, it should have less of a personal impact upon each individual, but in fact, as Maslow’s theory demonstrated, societies’ opinions about us are more important than our own opinions, and for as long as this is the case, our social identity has become more important to us than our own, personal identity. This means that the existence of gender as part of our social identity will repeatedly give gender unequivocal importance. In terms of self-esteem, “Due to social stigma, isolation, mental anguish, physical discomfort, or infertility, many transgender individuals never seek help. They have increased chances of Mental health problems, physical health problems, High risk for drug and alcohol abuse, suicide or attempt suicide, etc. Today so many transgender people are not expressing their identity as transgender due to the attitude of the society” (Suresh, 2017). By not being accepted by society and very often by their own families, it can cause transgender people to have perpetually low self-esteem and an increased risk of mental health problems and even, tragically, suicidal tendencies (Suresh, 2017).

Finally, the last tier of Maslow’s theory is called the tier of “Self-actualisation”, which in other words is known as fulfilling one’s ultimate potential- no one can be at this stage without fulfilling the rest of the tiers before that and as I have indicated, it is even more difficult for the transgender community to fulfil any of these tiers meaning it is even less likely for these individuals to reach their full potential. Once again, if we look at the Heterosexual matrix then this reinforces what the hierarchy of needs reflects-in other words that for those individuals who differ from what is considered “socially normal” will find it more difficult to progress within themselves and society.

I have already asked the question of why something that seems to have no actual part in our composition has such an oppressing, prominent effect in our lives. By comparing Maslow’s theory to the Heterosexual matrix (as posed by Butler) it seems clear that although identity is not an integral part of us, it affects something that is an integral part of us -our psychology. We have already established that the theory of animalism doesn’t explain the relationship between our identity and the existence of our gender, because it doesn’t account for our psychology. The way we think about ourselves and others creates our personal identity and affirms the identity of others. Maslow’s theory demonstrates how undeniable our psychological wellbeing is to our identity, as our lives are

undeniably shaped by our psychological state. For example, if we refer to Maslow's hierarchy, for transgender individuals, or those who deviate from social norms, these people would struggle with lack of acceptance, a limited sense of belonging or security which causes negative experiences and emotions, which ultimately affects the construction of their consciousness. In other words, regardless of our beliefs as to what gender is or where it comes from, it has the potential to shape the life and identity of almost every individual, in one way or another.

This is what I consider to be most important about gender, even though its existence is socially contingent, the impact it has upon us is immense and unyielding. If we use Rortyan thinking to remind ourselves that if our social history had been different, gender would never have existed, then it could, on the one hand, weaken the concept of gender for how could something be so pivotal in our society that, in slightly different circumstances, may never have even existed? However, in reality, regardless of whether or not gender is essential and regardless of whether it is the consequence of social structure, gender in some way or another, influences the psychology and the behaviour of every single person and this makes it one of the most powerful constructs in human existence. If we are to understand Maslow's theory as accurate, then the perception of gender alone can restrict the optimal potential of all people, in every culture. For example, as I have previously stated, our experiences are what form our consciousness and our consciousness is what constructs our identity, so in other words: by being part of the transgender community, people experience prejudice, loneliness, ostracization and lack of acceptance which has affected not only their position in society, but in turn affected their psychological well-being. Ultimately, in regard to the transgender community, we can see why gender could be seen as part of our identity.

However, should this be the case? Should the somewhat outdated restrictions of gender have such life-altering impact on our existence? Although I can understand why gender has, historically, had such an impact upon us, and I can understand why -to an extent- people have continued to live their lives under the restrictions gender enforces. Where I become perplexed, is when I try to understand why Gender is continuing to exist and continuing to restrict us. Thankfully, our society has made important advancements towards not labelling people, or behaviour, due to race, religion or sexuality which is what makes the enforcement of gender, so incomprehensible. We no longer live in a society that requires men and women to be different, or to be treated differently- we have made wonderful progressions towards equality, meaning that there is now the capacity for men and women to live equally, professionally and personally. The one thing that prevents this being entirely successful is the misguided notion that men and women have a different capacity, just because of their gender. It may be that brain shape or hormones affect the way that those of either sex perform, however, this is no more the individual's fault than a disability or impediment would be. Yet, in actual fact, traditional metaphysical thinking on this matter does not support treating gender as essential to us. We limit people's opportunities and possibilities as a result of it. If we treated, judged and interacted with people as we found them to be, then gender would quickly be diminished, for it is the expectation we hold of others that causes us to pass unnecessary judgements of other people and be judged the same way ourselves. If we very briefly review the theories we have already discussed, we can see that Aristotle said that gender could only be a Typeone change meaning it could not affect the essence of an individual; Lockean theories suggest gender is not part of our essence as Locke does not classify individuals for membership by specific traits and Quine believed that gender could not be an essential property, because we are not essentially anything to begin with. Furthermore, as an origin essentialist, it seems unlikely that Kripke could see gender as our essence as it is not part of our origins. The Rortyan perspective, ultimately teaches us that as a contingent element of a contingent society, it is unlikely we could

ever truly understand gender and that, much like the mind/body problem, gender exists because we allow it too through our discussions and interactions, rather than its existing independently. Animalism shows that gender is most likely a phase sortal and as a phase sortal, it could not be part of our essence. None of these theories require us to see gender as essential, so for which ever theory you decide to adhere to, there would be no need to consider gender as part of our essence.

Gender has been a part of society for as long as it can be remembered and regardless of whether we can successfully align its existence with personal identity theories, the concept of gender continues to influence the lives of every, single person. Even when we attempt to view the construction of people from a physical perspective, we cannot escape the effects that gender has on the way we behave and the way we are treated. Maybe it is that gender has become almost like the memes Richard Dawkins theorised about. According to Dawkins, a meme is a replicator that allows the human culture to continue and to be passed on through generations and countries? He thinks that human culture is “a new kind of replicator that has recently emerged on this very planet. It is staring us in the face It is still in its infancy, still drifting clumsily about in its primeval soup, but already it is achieving evolutionary change at a rate that leaves the old gene panting far behind” (Dawkins, 2006, p. 211). In other words, like genes pass biological elements and traits down through generations and cultures, memes do the same thing for culture, causing the spread of tunes, stories, language, religion, etc. Dawkins further calls these memes “mind viruses” (Dawkins, 2006, p. 229) in the sense that the existence and effects of these memes can actually be damaging to the human mind. If gender has no specific place within humanity’s existence, then maybe we can explain its perpetual existence through memes. Perhaps gender has been passed down through cultures and genders for thousands of years to the extent that we cannot imagine life without being gendered.

Yet, even with the existence of memes, things that have been existing for generations, kept alive by memes, can be forgotten. Or maybe, as philosophers such as John Gray have suggested Dawkin’s theory is missing the idea of what a human is, maybe our cultures and constructions are deeper and more complex than just traditions. In fact, Gray actually suggested that memes are nothing like genes in the sense that they are not a physical construction and nor is there any evidence of the mechanism by which they could be passed down, Memes are unable to replicate themselves and only exist through the communication of people, whereas genes exist no matter what the environment or situation, as they are an inherited and intrinsic part of us. Gray continues by saying “no mechanism can be identified whereby memes replicate themselves and be transmitted with in or across cultures. Lacking any unit or mechanism of selection, the theory of memes is barely a theory at all” (Gray,2018, p. 21). In other words, if memes do exist, they have no physical destination or construction, they just explain what evolution can’t- they explain why we have traditions, folklore, and beliefs that are not physical or biological that stretch all over the world and throughout time.

## **Gender as a Meme**

Gender is perhaps a key example here, we struggle to find a strong, concrete physical basis for gender, yet it exists independently, globally and throughout our history. If we are entirely physical beings, then how and why would such a meme exist? Although Dawkins originally compared memes to genes because of the way they pass on information through generations, it seems that that would be the only possible comparison between the two. Genes transmit purely factual, biological information whereas memes are responsible for the passing on of concepts like religion and gender yet, unlike genes, we cannot be entirely sure how they work. If memes pass on traditions and socially constructed concepts throughout humanity, then why is there such vast differences between cultural norms and traditions? For example, why does the concept of gender exist in every culture, but in such vastly different ways? Religion is said (by Dawkins) to be a meme, yet each religion has its own rules and traditions, regardless of which country you reside in. Is this because religions have empirical, physical texts and artifacts that influence the rules and practices it entails? If gender is somehow part of the human identity, then why does its form depend on what culture you are born in? Today, more and more people are becoming aware of the idea of “gender neutrality” and the number of genders one can assign to has raised drastically from the original two genders, to a sensational fifty-eight different gender categorisations (Goldman, 2014). Could it be possible that with the rising awareness of gender equality and gender neutrality, we are inevitably looking toward a future which will forget about gender? Will Gender eventually just cease to be transferred between generations? As Gray said, there is no visible way of understanding how memes are passed down or transferred, or really if they even exist at all. Is it too illogical to assert that as gender options grow and become more inclusive, there will be less need to label people?

## **George Mead**

When I began this thesis, my aim was focused around understanding the place of gender, within the complex structure of personal identity. As my research progressed, my aim digressed into actually understanding whether or not gender exists as anything other than as a classification. My discovery was fascinating; although gender is undeniably omnipresent within our society, as a concept, it is virtually impossible to unequivocally associate with any personal identity theory. How does gender perpetually exist without any concrete, individual purpose? More importantly, as the previous chapters in this thesis have explained, if there is no successful way of explaining the existence of gender physically, or mentally... then how is it constructed within a person? Thus far, my research establishes that on all the main theories, Gender is not essential; yet, it is currently undeniably essential to the experiences we encounter as individuals, because the gender we ascribe to-and whether we chose to adhere to the social norms of said gender- impacts the way we are treated by others and the opportunities we receive.

Theories such as Judith Butler's "Heterosexual Matrix" (Butler, 1990) indicates that those who adhere to social norms will have very different (and usually more positive) experiences than those who deviate from social norms. In this way, gender is not necessarily essential to personal identity but to the experiences that help us form our personal identity. Furthermore, if we approach the problem of gender in a similar way to the personal identity problem, then we have two methods of understanding its existence- psychologically or physically. The psychological understanding of gender seems to be a flawed position- although it makes sense to say that if our personal identities are sculpted by our consciousness and our experiences, then as something which dictates experience, gender can be explained psychologically. On the other hand, the Lockean concept of psychological continuity is a somewhat unreliable explanation- for example, it does not account of the fragility of the human memory. Also, there remains to be inescapable biological differences between men and women, and as gender is typically derivative of sex, it seems illogical to discount the vast differences -such as childbirth, hormonal variation and, even brain shape- that potentially may explain where the concept of men and women behaving in specific ways arose from. Nonetheless, the physical account of gender is also insufficient, for it does not explain how gender is replicated or passed down through generations, nor why the existence and concepts of gender deviate so vastly depending on culture. The prominent existence of the transgender and transsexual community demonstrates that, for many, gender isn't forgettable in light of purely physical theories. So, if gender can neither be effectively explained psychologically or physically, then how can we explain its prominent, omnipresent existence? It seems that the only feasible answer is that the existence of gender can be explained through social theories.

George Mead's theory of the mind, for example, begins by expressing the idea that in fact, the mind and body are not separate entities, as many philosophers have previously (and continuously) stated. He believed that the human organism develops a mind through interaction with the social environment. Thus then, the contingency of the mind is dependent upon the interaction between the human organism and its social environment (Mead, 1934, p. 191). So, in other words, without interaction between the human being and the environment in which they reside, the "mind" itself doesn't develop. This means, therefore, without interaction with one's environment we would not develop or be able to engage with experiences that form one's "personal identity"- meaning that without one's social existence there is little opportunity to experience what is needed to successfully develop one's personal identity.

This concept can be reinforced by elements of psychology too. There is a famous case study of a young girl named Genie whose parents kept her secluded from society in a basement and throughout her life, she never met or saw another person and her own parents didn't ever speak to her due to an intolerance for noise (Fromkin, 1974, p. 84). According to the scans and investigations carried out on the child- once she was saved from her confinement- there was no evidence of her being born with any impairments (mental or physical) or disabilities: "she had a normal birth; she wasn't born with any mental or learning difficulties" (Fromkin, 1974, p. 85). However, when Genie was saved from her cruel confinement, she wasn't capable of speaking. The language areas of the brain are actually divided between "Wernicke's area and Broca's area (among other important language facilitating areas). Wernicke's area sits on the left side of the head (just above the ear) in the temporal lobe, whereas the Broca area is located at the beginning of the frontal part of the brain (a bit further front). Wernicke's area is responsible for understanding speech and other communicative signals, whereas Broca's area is mainly in charge of producing grammatical sentences (alongside the motor area, which is needed to express what you want to say verbally— using lip movement and gestures, for instance)" (Brogaard, 2017).

This situation shows, psychologically, that there is a set time period to be able to develop language skills- this period is known as “the Critical Period”. In other words, this means without socialising and interacting with our environment we don’t actually develop the ability to communicate.

Communication is vitally important for the construction of the human world we understand now, through communication we learn not only traditions, ideas, language and, development but it is also how we learn to understand our own identity and to identify those around us (Connell, 1985, p. 240). Therefore, without existing in some sort of social circumstance, we are unable to communicate and without communication how are we to develop experiences that would shape our consciousness?

Undeniably, it would be incredibly difficult to establish the existence of our own identity without any interaction with others. As John Locke described, our personal identity is a reflection of our consciousness, which is created through experiences, and without any kind of social interaction, our experiences would be immensely limited, meaning ultimately, that the development of our personality, preferences, interests and thoughts would be limited. This leads me to think that perhaps Mead’s theory is relevant here - as I discussed earlier in this thesis, if we tried to imagine a child bought up entirely away from society it seemed unlikely that they would comprehend what gender actually was-because they would have no experience of it so no way of understanding its existence- and this is reinforced by Mead’s theory. So then, like the mind, gender exists contingently to the society in which the people reside and without people talking about it or enacting it, it would actually cease to exist. So, then I have to ask, why does gender continue to exist?

## **The Sex-Role theory**

The “Sex-role” theory suggests-as discussed by Mead and Parsons- that gender, is in, fact a social script which people learn and enact (Connell, 1985, p. 261). This theory explains the existence and perpetual use of normalised stereotypes. It connects the social structure with the formation of social personalities(identities) through the concept of “Role Making” through role learning and the process of internalisation (Connell, 1985, p. 262)- for example, women become feminine by learning the “female role” and of course men become masculine by learning the “male role”. It also leads to the identification of the “agencies of socialisation” that are responsible for the learning and continuation of these roles. These agencies are very prominent in our society; people such as teachers, parents, screenwriters, play-writes, advertisers and media and so this theory explains how the roles are perpetuated.

However, although this theory explains and allows us to understand the continuation and existence of gender rules, the problem is that this theory is based upon the assumption that for those who deviate from these social expectations and stereotypes, there is punishment and reward for conforming. This idea, of course, is comparable with what Judith Butler said about the Heterosexual Matrix, the idea that there is a set of characteristics deemed normal by society and for anyone lacking those characteristics are seen as abnormal. In terms of the Sex-Role theory, according to Connell, “In role jargon, the occupants of counter- positions sanction role-performance” (Connell, 1985, p. 263)- in other words, an example would be that boys are praised for aggression but then

ridiculed for feminine behaviours like compassion or just general “girlishness”. However, why do second parties apply these sanctions? This theory can, on the one hand, explain why the roles are the way that they are but not why these “secondary parties” apply these sanctions nor why there is an infinite regression within them. So, the only real way of explaining it would be about individual will- “ironically, the social dimension of the sex-role theory dissolves into voluntarism and into a generalized assumption that people chose to maintain customs,” (Connell, 1985, p. 263). This leads us to the second main critique of the sex-role theory, this criticism comes from the idea that the theory is static due to its lack of grasp on any structural constraint (Connell, 1985, p. 264).

This doesn't mean that advocates of this theory ignore change- for example, since the rise of feminism, focus has been set on changing the definitions of the “female sex” (Lipman- Bluman, 2003) and similar considerations are made for the understanding of the existence of the male role (Pleck, 1981). In fact, the problem is, the “theory doesn't allow the comprehension of social change as history, that is, as transformation generated in the inter-play of social practice and social structure” (Connell, 1985, p. 264). Change impinges on sex roles; it affects them rather than being incorporated by them. For example, I earlier mentioned the idea of Hypermasculinity which is the over-exaggeration of typically male characteristics to over-compensate for the lack of requirement of these characteristics in the workplace, with the development of office work replacing physically laborious jobs which have thus replaced the ability to express strength and comradeship within the workplace. The fact that hypermasculinity exists shows that gender-roles haven't caught up with the nature of the more modern society, as it is a response to the lack of need for traditional stereotypes. This means that one's gender isn't dependent on the classifications of society. So, if behaviour develops and then the expectation of gender has to catch up, this then means that rather than identity being based upon gender, in fact, behaviour births the expectations of the gender. For example, since the economy now relies upon office or “softer” jobs, it is no longer the common occupation for men to spend long, dark shifts in a mine or be working dusk till dawn on the land meaning the qualities needed to be successful to this kind of occupation are also being diminished. Instead, these qualities are being replaced by the I.T and communication skills needed to work in the average office setting – even the work clothes have been changed from dirty overalls or dungarees to suits and crisp white shirts. Therefore, the change in behaviour displayed by the average man has of course, almost completely transformed, however through the existence of things like Hypermasculinity, we can see that the gender classification hasn't in fact caught up with the change in typical “male” behaviours. The same idea ,of course, applies for females; the well-known stereotypical female role revolves around, mainly, domesticated ideas- being maternal, house-work, etc- whereas of course, today, women are undertaking more and more corporate positions yet it is still deemed as relatively abnormal for a woman to lack domestic skills, or to lack compassion or empathy of some kind.

Therefore, gender is not part of our personal identity because our behaviours and experiences dictate the construction of gender itself, rather than the other way around. Although gender is socially constructed, gender is constructed from, and by, us. Without our behaviours, our opinions and stereotypes, gender does not exist- it is brought alive by our consciousness. Within the “Sex-role theory”, change is an impingement. It comes from the outside and alters the construction of the roles themselves. Furthermore, change comes from “inside” – i.e. the “real-self protesting artificial restriction and constraining roles” (Connell, 1985, p. 263). This is further evidence that gender is contingent on the nature and construction of the mind, rather than existing as some sort of separate entity.

So, if gender is a construction of the mind, does this mean it is a construction of us? If gender is a behaviour and response to social circumstance, then as a baby we are unable to behave as anything more than with fundamental human activities- breathing, eating, etc... and thus cannot behave as a gender. Therefore, if babies are not capable of acting as a gender, and as we've already discussed gender is neither mentally nor physically constructed, then where does the babies' gender come from? Of course, the obvious answer, is the parents, the guardians or the families the babies are born in to. The babies' gender is established from the toys they are given, the clothes they are dressed in and the behaviours they are taught. When a woman tells the world she is pregnant, one of the first questions people ask is "are you having a boy or a girl?" or "what are you expecting?" (Hill, 2018). Asking whether or not a new-born is a "little boy or girl" is not only a question of the baby' gender but is also affiliated with the way the baby is raised and treated- for example, it is common practice for little girls to wear pink clothes, or have dolls or have a room decorated with pink or princesses. For a parent or family to decide the gender of their baby before it is even born or even able to form its own opinions or perspective on their identity, it is like deciding whether this baby will be heterosexual or not- or whether or not it will like Classical music. Not only does the decision of gender impact the infant's life experiences, but also the way the child dresses, what toys they play with and the environment they are exposed to. All of these questions, especially regarding gender, is indeterminable before the child has actually experienced the world and developed enough to make their independent judgements. Rather than dictating the infant's gender, before it is even a viable human being, by calling them a "little girl" or a "little boy", it would make more sense to call this child a little person- allowing them the chance to decide their own gender (or whether or not to ascribe to one in the first place) (Hill, 2018). By assigning a gender to a new-born baby, we dictate the way their lives will unfold-down to the smallest details of what clothes they will be dressed in- and this then goes on to ascertain how many elements of their social existence will be constructed. If we treated babies as "little people", removing the stereotypical and gendered traditions of specific colours and toys, etc then there wouldn't be development into more serious elements, such as careers and temperaments. Without gendering babies or children and removing furthermore removing stereotypical gendered behaviours, people wouldn't have to choose to live inside or outside the social norms. Biological males could have softer, nurturing traits or wear dresses or makeup without being treated, or feeling, like a social outcast.

So, if gender is affixed to our existence before we even learn to breathe independently, then can we say it is part of our identity? As all the research I have explored so far suggests, personal identity reflects our consciousness, which to many people, is a further reflection of one's experiences in life- so how can something be part of our identity which we, in fact, never actually had any experience of before it became part of us? Like any other classification, gender is something that is given to us by the opinions of others which then continues to influence our lives, decisions and, opinions. I discussed earlier the idea that the conformation toward a gender allows people to reach the optimum potential (Maslow, 1943, p. 389)- but this is only whilst gender is reinforced by society. If, hypothetically, of course, gender slipped from existence within society then would people stop being able to reach self-actualisation? Of course, it wouldn't. Gender only promotes self- actualisation through approval and a sense of belonging whilst it exists as a "social-norm", for whilst these social norms exist there is a sense of deviation and conformation which dissipates entirely with the removal of the social-norm itself. This is what makes gender such a difficult concept to understand entirely; its roots lie in the perception of others but perpetuate through the mind of the individual and its existence relies upon people either choosing to deny or accept the social standards it entails.



The existence of gender throughout history is far more understandable than the reasons for its current existence. In past society, within the existence of a dominating patriarchy it seems rather obvious as to why there would be a distinction between the two genders; without this distinction, there would be no domination of either gender- "More than all men's individual actions, patriarchy is simultaneously the process, structure, and ideology of women's subordination. While different aspects of women's subordination are teased out and dissected, the connections among the parts are left to 'patriarchy'" (Lorber, 1994, p. 3). This reminds me of Rorty's explanation for philosophy- if we had come from a different historical, social background we may never have reached a point where gender exists within our lives. Much like Rorty's understanding of philosophy, gender has no clear cut explanation, barely any empirical standing and can often be outweighed by logical explanations( for example, although science and psychology shows that the differences between males and females are not that expansive, the perpetuation of gender continues to cause an increasingly large distance between the two (Lorber, 1994, p. 4)). Seemingly then, as Rorty said about Philosophy, if we were to come from different social circumstances then we wouldn't have the problem of gender; without the history of primary industry that relied on the strength and laborious work of men because of the necessity for the females to reproduce and nurture, then the divide between the two sexes may never have led to the divided existence of gender roles. This point was also reiterated by the conclusion of Charlotte Witt's theory of Uniessentialism, in other words, as an entity of our existence that may have not been and as a construction that is specific to our current social situation, it could also mean that gender is not essential to our social identity either. How are we supposed to ever truly understand gender when its existence is contingent on something as fragile as a social construction- it is highly feasible that society could change in future years meaning gender would become surplus, and if this is the case, then why should we make such an issue of it now? If gender is so complex and there is the potentiality that it may become obsolete in the future, then why do we place such emphasis on its construction and the effect it has upon our lives? If this last question leaves us in any doubt, perhaps one should consider the differentiation between gender roles between countries, religions and - in some cases- families; Judith Butler suggested that there being only one classification for every "woman" and every "man" was illogical given the breadth and depth of qualities that members of both genders have that are individual to them (Lorber, 1994, p. 6).

So, then gender is constructed by mankind the same way as money, language religion and technology (Lorber, 1994, p. 7) which is to serve a purpose – language enables communication, religion encourages moralistic behaviour, technology allows economic development and of course money not only enables trade but establishes a hierarchy ; so gender is a manmade construction born to explain the differences between the two sexes- rooted in the division between these sexes through the state of the economy and types occupation available, as well as biological differences such as childbirth. Although in many cases, my thesis has shown the conceptualization of gender to be too extreme -and often old-fashioned- its prominence within our social identities is undeniable.

## **Conclusion**

Conclusively, it seems to me that gender is not cohesive with the ideas we currently have of personal identity, not because it is not part of our construction but because it is part of a whole new part of our identification- it is part of our social existence. From my research, it is apparent to me that gender exists through the needs and concepts of the society (hence why gender can change so vastly in different cultures) and therefore its existence is entirely sociological. No traditional or contemporary theory of the metaphysics of personal identity provides any good reason to think that gender is essential to what we are, even if essentialism is true. On the one hand, it is understandable how certain, stereotypical gender norms have been formed-based on biological capacity and construction-. It is understandable why women have been portrayed and expected to be soft and nurturing, alongside the stoic strength of the working male. However, as cultures and societies have adapted and developed, our concept of gender has become somewhat outdated. I posed a question in an earlier chapter about whether the child who had been raised entirely independent from any society; would they have a concept of their own gender ... or even what gender was at all? The answer is that they most likely would not. Without living in a set society, there would be no expectation to behave in a certain way because of their sex organs or ascribed gender- the child's temperament and personality would develop independently of any expectations or cultural responsibilities. The child, let's say born a biological man, may still develop the stereotypical male characteristics, or may be the complete antithesis but there would still be no prejudice or social constraint to prevent or change this. This is because, as we have already seen, gender is not biologically inside us, nor is it part of our DNA and neither are we instantaneously born with a gender. Gender cannot and will not, exist without socialisation or interaction- meaning that gender itself is not essentially part of our, individual personal identity which explains why we cannot understand it through essentialism, physicalism or through psychological explanations.

However, as modern individuals we are also inevitably bound into social engagement – our livelihoods, family relationships and even essential things such as buying food may mean speaking to cashiers or supermarket staff. In this day and age, our whole lives revolve in a circle of socialisation, gone are the days where a man could spend days without speaking to another soul, fetching and foraging for his own food. Even, in this day and age, with the development of social media and instant communications, we are embarked on the potential for twenty-four-hour communication and interaction. So, if this social interaction, does indeed contingently but non-essentially develop our personal identity, then living in societies such as ours, means that the development of our personal identity is inevitable and as a result, so is gender- for if personal identity is inevitable due to social interaction and gender is created by the social identity that results in said interaction, then, at this point in time, it would be virtually impossible to have one construct without the other.

Furthermore, case studies such as the Genie case I referred to earlier, show that for people who have had no, or very little, social interaction, there is critical and often irreversible stunting of their development- it has been shown that without adequate social interaction, a person's intelligence will be lower, they will be more likely to suffer psychological and physiological distress and will permanently struggle to communicate and comprehend (Martin, 2009). This reinforces George Mead's theory, suggesting that without social interaction and social presence, we will be unable to progress and achieve and thus our life experience would be immensely limited. If our lives are so restricted and unfulfilled, if we could not communicate or understand, then this would severely impact the development of our personal identities. Regardless of one's opinions of how personal identity is constructed, one cannot argue with the fact that with all these impediments, we would have a remarkably different identity because of the different, more expansive experiences we would

have. Without social interaction, we would live an incredibly different life, which would make us entirely different people. Therefore, we cannot deny that the experiences of social interaction shape our identity, which in turn shapes our gender which affects the way our entire lives progress.

To approach my original question of whether or not gender is part of our personal identity, my answer has been altered by my research. I now further understand that on an individual, human level -gender has a complex role upon our identity. My earlier question was what would happen if someone awoke tomorrow morning in the opposite gendered body, would this person be different or just the same person they always were? My original research into essentialism, psychical theories and psychological continuity theories suggested that the person would be in fact the same person as they always were, just with a new potential for different experiences and expectations. To take a new path which might ultimately lead a change in their personal identity- but not an instantaneous change, and not an essential one either. However, when we add the existence of one's social identity and each of our places within the society we live, the answer does change slightly. At this moment in time, gender affects the way we dress, the way we behave and the way we are treated by others, so gender is more of an external classification, rather than internal. Therefore, when awaking in a different gendered body, it is rational to assume that to other people, you would start to look different, be classified differently and so in other words, you'd be socially different. As already established, our social existence has an undeniably strong presence throughout our lives, so if we are socially different, we inevitably will become different. Social structures are contingent, however.

We are recognised by the way we appear and the way we present ourselves to the world; facial recognition technology, passports and even situations such as recognising each other in the street, relies on the way we look, or, at the very least, the way we present ourselves. Imagine seeing someone walking down the street who is physically unfamiliar to you but this person halts you and greets you the way that your oldest friend would- this person can relay the same stories, has the same opinions and has the same characteristics as the friend you have always known, but physically they are a stranger to you. Although, of course, after interacting with your friend you may start to recognise them from the things that they say and the memories they hold, it would still be a difficult recognition without any physical similarity between the person you originally knew and the person who is greeting you in the street. From the friend's perspective, they have upheld their own life experiences, their own memories and their consciousness has continued in the same way it did before any physical change. However, to those around them, this person is unrecognisable without interaction. This reinforces my earlier suggestion that certain elements of one's identity exist through interaction, rather than independently. This concept also demonstrates the fact that although our own personal identity is the key, necessary part of our own construction, and that for the most part our physical appearance is not part of said personal identity, yet we still require elements of physical identity to be recognisable as ourselves and without being recognisable as ourselves do we really have a strong sense of identity, to begin with?

As an element of our lives that affects the way we are treated and the way we are recognised, at this current moment, gender is one of the most important elements in our social existence. Furthermore, as a classification of social behaviour and status, gender affects the way we are treated which then effects the way we think and thus ultimately the way we behave. My summation of gender is to say that at current, gender is not essential to our personal identity, but it is essential to our social identity, which is hugely influential upon our personal identity. Gender is an outdated

classification of society, at this point in our existence, gender serves no purpose but to limit and restrict the way people live their lives. It is the leftovers of a formerly constrained society, who needed laborious strength and careful nurturing to coexist. Yet, now we live in a community where the major population of adults spends their lives behind a desk, men and women side by side completing the same tasks in the same environment but in that same world, we act prejudiced against male being too emotive or treat him like an outcast for wanting to wear a skirt. We treat women as a sperate race for dressing in overtly masculine attire, or for not wanting to reproduce. However, this is not to say that I think gender will continue to be as important for our identity as it is right now; within our current society we have seen the emergence of the acceptance of the idea of gender neutrality and if we explored the idea of gender in other countries, religions, and continents we are met with a plethora of different and sometimes opposing ideas that are susceptible to change and evolution. It suggests that as a non-concrete element of social existence that is, over time, becoming less strict with its classifications, gender may one day become obsolete both to our personal identities and our social existence but, for now, gender remains one of the most important contingent aspects of our identity.

I have shown that no serious metaphysical account of personal identity requires us to think that gender is essential to our identities. Some may be more conducive to this view than others, but none is remotely committed to it. Whether you think our identity is determined by an immaterial soul, our physical bodies, our physical (or even non-physical) historical origins, or a stream of continuous conscious experiences, there is still no compelling reason to hold that gender is essential to what we are. In addition, of course, if you reject essentialism, like Quine and Rorty, then this is immediately out of the question. And yet we live in a society in which people act as if gender is essential. That is why it has become so important to people and can have a seriously harmful effect on some people's lives. However, the attitude is not backed up by rational philosophical reflection.

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