

## JONATHAN O. CHIMAKONAM'S CONCEPT OF PERSONAL IDENTITY: A CRITICAL REFLECTION

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### Abstract

What is it that constitutes personal identity, is a question that has engaged the minds of scholars for eons of years. This question has become more complex in recent times with the emergence of biomedical technologies like allotransplantation, xenotransplantation and other forms of genetic engineering, which have tended to obliterate the uniqueness that hitherto existed in individuals. With organs and tissues being transplanted at will from one human to another, it becomes difficult to define what constitutes personal identity of person A who received an allotransplant from person B. Is he person B or Person A or both? This question would be a hard nut to crack for the adherent to a bodily theory of personal identity like Chimakonam. To assume that personal identity resides in the continuation of the same body will amount to a conclusion that Mrs. B who had a face and breast transplant is not Mrs. B but somebody else. The society Chimakonam holds as a judge of personal identity, would actually see her as not Mrs. A. But is she really not Mrs. A? This work concludes that she is Mrs. A because it is the individual that is the judge of personal identity and not the society. Personal identity resides in the consciousness. This is because it is consciousness that marks human from animals. This is not to say that the body is not a criterion of personal identity, personal identity resides more in consciousness than in the body. The body could only serve as a criterion, where the consciousness is lost, but when consciousness is regained, the body ceases to be the criterion. The body could at best be said to be a temporary criterion of identity, and would give way when consciousness returns.

**KEY WORDS:** person, personal identity, society, individual, consciousness

### Introduction

The problem of personal identity has been a perennial one. It has perplexed the minds of philosophers for eons of years. What makes a person a person? Is it right to attribute the same identity to an object that has undergone radical change? Is Peter at two the same person with Peter at seventy two years? Is somebody who has lost his/her consciousness the same person? Are Siamese twins one or two persons? What constitutes personal identity? At what point does a person stop to exist? These and many more are questions that surround the issue of personal identity. Different theories have been raised in attempt to

answer these questions. These theories are often characterized into those that favour: bodily continuity, mental continuity and continuity of consciousness.

Jonathan Okeke Chimakonam (hereafter referred to simply as Chimakonam) peculiar conception of it actually stirred me into intellectual consciousness. Is it true that my identity ends at death as Chimakonam's theory seems to suggest? For if the physical body is the sole criterion of personal identity, it means that, after losing this body at death I would cease to exist. This is precisely because without identity, I am void.

I am of the view that, the problem of personal identity revolves round the concept of "person". If there is an agreement on what a person is, then the problem of identity would be resolved. Chimakonam seemed to have based his theory on the traditional African conception of a person. In traditional Africa, a person is considered a person if others say so (MENKITI 1984, 172). Thus, if they say you are nothing, then you are nothing, and if they say that you are, then you are. Menkiti presents this view thus: "in communal Africa, it is the community that defines a person as a person, not the static quality of rationality, will and memory" (1984, 172). Olatunji supports this assertion when he avers that, "the state of being of the community determines what the lot of individuals becomes, irrespective of the values cherished by the individual" (2006, 102). In traditional Africa therefore, the community not only defines a person as a person as Menkiti asserts, it also has "the right of appropriation over the rights or obligations of its members ... it is the community that mostly determines who should live and who should not have life" (ASOUZU 2007a, 351). Understanding the background of Jonathan Chimakonam's conception of personal identity, would make it vivid why he is insistent that "the identity of a person is not what he thinks (what the person himself thinks), but what others see" (CHIMAKONAM 2011, 200 emphasis mine). This belief informs why he holds so strongly to the bodily theory of identity and defends it with such vigour. I will show in this work that African conception of personhood is not sound and thus is not a good base to erect a theory of personal identity. But before we go into that, we will explicate the meaning of some key terms that would be helpful to our understanding of the problem at stake.

### **What is Identity**

Both Locke and Hume treated the problem of the origin of the idea of identity at length and were in considerable agreement in their analyses. In book 2 of [An Essay Concerning Human Understanding] Locke suggests that the idea of identity originates from human tendency to compare the "very being" of a thing observed to exist at a determined time and place, with the same thing existing at another time and place. He asserts:

Another occasion the mind often takes of comparing is the very being of things. When considering anything as existing at any determined time and place, we compare it with itself existing at another time, and thereupon form the idea of identity and diversity. (1952, 218)

Identity for Locke therefore, arises from a comparison of a thing with itself through a period of time. In [A Treatise of Human Nature], Hume proposed a similar but more subtle analysis of the origin of the idea of identity. He argued that the perception of a single object gives rise to the idea of unity, and not of identity, whereas the perception of a number of objects conveys the idea of multiplicity. Since they can be “no medium betwixt unity and number”, he argues that the idea of identity can arise neither from the perception of a single object nor from a multiplicity of objects seen simultaneously or in a single moment of time. The solution to the dilemma according to Hume is to be found in the notion of time, or duration. The notion of identity he believes arises from a propensity of the mind to attribute invariableness to an object while tracing it, without a break in the span of attention, through a variation in time. He states:

Though we are led after this manner, by the natural propensity of the imagination, to ascribe a continued existence to those sensible objects or perception, which we find to resemble each other in their interrupted appearance, yet a very little reflection and philosophy is sufficient to make us perceive the fallacy of the opinion (2002, 22)

This act of ascribing identity to our impressions according to Hume is a fictitious one; the mind is “seduced into such an opinion only by means of the resemblance of certain perceptions” (HUME 2002, 22).

Almost all the writers from the period between Descartes and Kant took the term identity to mean that an object is the same with itself (NNORUKA 1995, 112). This formulation was expressed by the logical principle regarded as one of the basic laws of reasoning ( $X=X$ ). Everything is what it is or that if something is true, it is true. Identity therefore, is the attribute of being a single thing or a single kind. For David Hume, identity statements state that an object existing at one time is the same as itself existing at another time. For instance this chair is the same as the one that was here yesterday. It therefore, means that an idea of identity is “that of an object which persists throughout a length of time without change or interruption” (HUME 2002, 192). There are different kinds of identity: floral, which is identity of plants or the persistence of plants through a period of time without change or interruption. Faunal is identity of animals and fluminal is identity of inanimate things and personal identity which is our main focus in this work is identity of human beings.

### Personal Identity

According to Reid, “personal identity is the continued existence of the indivisible thing I call myself” (1969, 40). This definition is shared by many philosophers including Locke and Hume, but their point of diversion is in their opinion of what the nature of the self is. For Locke “the identity of the same man consists; via, in nothing but a participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized body” (1952, 220). David Hume in his Treatise explains that, “the principium individuation or principle of identity consists of nothing but the invariableness and interestedness of any object, through a supposed variation of time” (2002, 22). For Hume therefore, personal identity consists in the invariableness of a self through time. But the nature of this self he says, he knows nothing about, he only stumbles on different perceptions and have not been able to get the impression of this self; “for my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perceptions or another ... I never can catch myself at anything without a perceptions” (HUME 2002, 235).

As can be noticed from our discussion so far, all the problems of personal identity can be said to revolve round the notion of “person”. If there were to be considerable agreement on the nature of the self, then the problem of identity would not exist. Reid though, conceding that the notion of the self is not clear to him, asserts that he is certain that “the self is something, which thinks and deliberates and resolves, and acts, and suffers” (REID 1959, 41). He goes further:

I know that I am neither thought nor action nor feeling. I am rather a being that thinks and suffers. My thoughts can change, my feelings can change, their existence is not continuous, and it is rather successive. On the other hand, the self or I to which the thoughts, actions and feelings belong does not change; is permanent and has the same relation to all the succeeding thought, actions and feelings, which I call, mine (1959, 41)

The self for Reid therefore, is the permanent thing that owns all the feelings, actions, thinking et cetera of an individual. It is evident that for Reid, person is separate from the body. The body does not constitute personhood. It is the self or person that owns the body and as such, even if a person is disembodied, he still remains the same person and loses nothing of his personhood, except that he has not a body any longer. Christian Wolf disagreed with Reid, arguing that “we can’t be sure, there is such a thing as self, which has a claim to all the thoughts, actions, and feelings, which I call mine” (1968, 924).

### **Philosophical Explication of the Concept**

From Boethius through Locke to the all contemporary times, self-awareness and especially rationality have factored in most philosophical discussion of personhood. According to Kant, “that which is conscious of the numerical identity of itself at different times is insofar a person” (1943, 142).

Leibniz characterized person as that which conserves “the conscious or reflective inward feeling of what it is, thus it is rendered liable to reward and punishment” (1938, 89). His follower Christian Wolf explained the fact that animals are not persons and that human beings are simply persons on the grounds that the latter have as the former do not “a consciousness of having been the same thing previously in this or that state” (1968, 926).

For Descartes, the body is not an essential part of a person, “thus simply by knowing that I exist and seeing at the same time that absolutely nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except, that I am a thinking thing. I can infer correctly that my essence consists solely in the fact, I am a thinking thing (1969, 54). Descartes believes his body is not logically necessary for his existence; it is not an essential part of himself. He can go on thinking, being conscious and thus continues to exist. The fact that he exists means, he is more to himself than his body, and “more” is the essential part of himself. Returning to our problem of identity, if we admit that the body is an accidental part of a person and not an essential part, it therefore means that change or sameness of the body adds or subtracts nothing from personhood. Even total disembodiment will not change the identity of the person.

For Locke, person is “a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection and consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places, which it does by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and seems to me essential to it” (2002, 222). “I know”, Locke continued “that in the ordinary way of speaking, the same person and the same man stand for one and the same thing” (2002, 222). He however, believes that these two expressions stand for quite distinct ideas, man having to do simply with a certain physical shape. A rational parrot he argued would not be called a man, nor would a non-rational human be called anything but man. The former however, might be a person, while the latter failing in rationality might not be a person at all (2002, 222). It is obvious that for Locke, the concept of a person is not tied to a certain bodily shape. It is the rationality that makes a person, in such a way that a rational parrot could be considered a person and a human being who has failed in rationality (e.g. mad man), can be nothing but a man, and not a person.

It follows from Locke’s discourse that, I would logically remain the same person even though I am altogether disembodied. Thomas Reid even regards the idea of a person losing a part of himself as impossible, for persons he contends

are indivisible. One of his arguments is that, if an amputated member of the body were part of a person, “it would be liable for parts of his engagements” (1969, 41). For Reid therefore and Locke as well as Leibniz and Wolf, persons are essentially covert, non-corporeal simple entities. Hume seemingly takes the position of Locke, for in the specific comments that he made about identity of persons, he was clearly working, as was Locke in the restricted framework in which persons means minds. Only thus can we read his statement that people are nothing but a bundle of perceptions.

Person as used by Locke and others, make it difficult to distinguish persons, from concepts like metaphysical selves, transcendental egos, pure acts, spirits, mental substances, souls and other such terms. Because of this, a lot of people tend to see the bodily identity criterion as more plausible.

Aristotle is often given the credit for a comprehensive account of the bodily theory of personal identity because of the elaborate way he treated substances and accidents in his metaphysics. He asserts that “substance is that of which everything else is predicated, while it is itself not predicated of anything else (1941, 785). This means that substance is that by which accidents adhere to. For instance, I may be described as being fair, tall, intelligent, slim et cetera, but all these qualities or properties are owned by something called Peter. This thing called Peter is what Aristotle calls substance.

Aristotle distinguishes between essential properties or accidents —“those which constitute its forms” and the accidental properties—“that which attaches to something and can be truly asserted but neither of necessity nor usually” (1941, 177). Thus, accidental properties are “all that attaches to each thing in virtue of itself but is not in its essence” (1941, 777). For example, it is an essential property of a palm tree that, it has under normal circumstances a certain general shape and appearance, a certain life cycle of producing fruits at a certain period of the year and not at another. But, its exact height, its position, and the distribution of leaves are accidental properties. If the matter of the palm tree is reduced to a heap of firewood, the palm tree ceases to exist because it lacks essential properties.

This account of the identity of a palm tree can also be applied to persons. It follows therefore, from above, that a person ceases to be a person when his essential properties, which may be classified as shape, matter, colour etc., are destroyed. The identity of a person therefore, is maintained by the fact that, while continuing to possess the essential properties, which constitute its form, its matter is the same or obtained by the matter of the former substance by gradual replacement. Thus, if Aristotle’s account is applied, it would follow that “for a person to be the same person as the earlier person, say the person I met yesterday, he has to have the same matter (or matter obtained from that earlier person by gradual replacement) organized into the form of a person (NNORUKA

1995, 21). It therefore implies that, for a person to be said to be identical with another, the essential properties of the person, say matter, shape, colour etc., must be the same, though the accidental properties, which may include the height, fatness, skill etc., may change.

Sylvanus Nnoruka agrees with Aristotle, he avers: “for a person to be the same person as the earlier person, say the person I met yesterday, he has to have the same matter (or matter obtained from earlier person by gradual replacement) organized into the form of a person” (1995, 21). This implies that what constitute a person is the essential bodily qualities like matter, shape, colour, etc.

John Perry is also a proponent of the bodily theory of identity. According to him, ascription of identity to an immaterial soul is absurd. He argues; if identity of persons is attributed to an immaterial soul, then we can be sure that the judgment of personal identity we make daily, like when we greet a friend or when we avoid an enemy, are really judgment about such souls. This kind of judgment, he argues further, is baseless, for nobody has a direct observation of souls to decide if the souls of the person we just greeted is the same as the soul of our supposed friend. He added, since the judgments we make daily are not baseless and stupid, then they cannot be about souls but the body. He concludes that the bodily theory of identity is more plausible than the soul theory (1993, 338-342).

Strawson theory is closer to daily usage of the concept than others. For Strawson, persons are distinct from material bodies, but they are not immaterial bodies or incorporeal non-bodies. A “person has states of consciousness as well as physical attributes and is not merely to be identified with one” (1959, 87). Persons are irreducible to parts of themselves and are thus primitive in just the same way in which material bodies are. This means that our ability to identify and re-identify material bodies is insufficient for identification and re-identification of persons. For persons are not just material bodies but consist also of immaterial parts, and these must also be considered when identifying or re-identifying persons.

Michael Polanyi, a scientist was much satisfied with Strawson’s concept of person, because of its closeness to the ordinary usage of the term. He went ahead to summarize his theory by saying, “a person is the body, is the appearance, is the self-conscious and rational individual, is the source and object of rights and obligations, is that which takes roles and discharges functions,” (1958, 89) and not merely an immaterial substance as postulated by John Locke or a physical body as postulated by Chimakonam.

### **Chimakonam on the Problem of Personal Identity**

56 In the world, we observe things constantly changing. We see ice melting into  
 56 water, firewood burning into ashes and children growing into adults. Yet we still  
 56 believe that these things that have undergone considerable change are still the

same things they were before the change. We still believe that a football team is still the same, even when the team comprises of entirely new players and coach. We would believe that a car is still the same, even if most of its parts have been changed. The question is what gives us the propensity to believe that those beings remain the same after a noticeable change? What gives us the propensity to believe that a baby who becomes a man is still the same person with the baby? For Locke and some others, the man can no longer be the same person with the baby, for he cannot remember what he did when he was a baby. Chimakonam on the other hand believes that the continuity of the physical body is what constitutes personal identity.

Chimakonam gave the argument for his position in a brilliant and captivating style. Though his argument is very appealing, it is still hard to concede that all that constitutes personal identity is the material body as he envisaged (2011:200). I am sure G. O. Ozumba would share my doubt, because he believes that man is a being unto eternity (2010, 24, 44). If the physical body is the seat of personal identity, then personal identity inevitably ends at dead, and thereby man cannot be a being unto eternity. Although it would be fair to indicate that Chimakonam does not out-rightly hold this eternity argument in his paper.

However, Chimakonam imagined himself undergoing a mental surgery that transplanted his mind into the body of Prof. C. S. Momoh. After the surgery Prof. C. S. Momoh's body had the mind of Jonathan, and Jonathan's body had the mind of Prof. Momoh. The consequence of this was that the entity that had the body of Prof. Momoh and the mind of Jonathan, acted and behaved like Jonathan but people addressed him as Prof. Momoh. And the entity that had the body of Jonathan and the mind of Prof. Momoh acted and behave like Prof. Momoh but people see him as Jonathan. The former entity believes himself to be Jonathan but people see him as Prof. Momoh. The latter entity believes himself to be Prof. Momoh whereas people see him as Jonathan. The fundamental question, and which Chimakonam seeks to answer becomes where lies the true identity of these persons? Do the identities of these persons lie in what the individual believes himself to be or in what the observers believe them to be. The entity that has the mind of Prof. Momoh and the body of Jonathan, believes strongly that he is Prof. Momoh, but the society also with the same vigour believes that he is Jonathan and is addressed as such. Chimakonam goes along with the society, arguing that the idea of the society is right. He asserts; "personal identity is to the body, and wherever it is, there lies identity" (2011, 197). For Jonathan therefore, what constitute personal identity is the body and not the mind. Thus, if my mind is separated from my body, my identity goes to wherever my body is taken to, even if this body eventually is given a new mind. Chimakonam believes this to be so because to him, "person is not an internal but an external thing... that I am what I think I am is socially meaningless for one



cannot talk of person without the society. Without the society, there is no person” (2011, 200). Chimakonam is obviously true to his “Africanness” here, for he closely holds to his chest the African conception of personhood. Menkiti expresses African conception of a person in these words; “in communal Africa, it is the community that defines a person as a person, not the static quality of rationality, will and memory” (2011, 172). If a person is defined by the society, then it becomes vivid, why Chimakonam would argue for the body as the sole constituent of personal identity. Only the body is perceptible, and therefore could be the only judging parameter for the society, thus “identity does not involve the internal mind but the external body” (CHIMAKONAM 2011, 200).

Chimakonam’s argument is admittedly valid but definitely not sound. Even the society he so ardently defends goes against him by refusing to plant identity on the physical body. The corpse of Mr. Paul can never be referred to as Paul but as the remains or body of Paul. Nobody points to a corpse and says this is Paul. If a corpse is not identified by the society as Mr. Paul, then it implicitly implies that personal identity is not tied to the physical body by the society. If Paul’s body is not Paul, then Chimakonam cannot possibly be right in his identification of personal identity with the physical body. To attach personal identity to the physical body would mean that even at death, the corpse would still be Paul. But the African society Chimakonam seemingly defends goes against such attribution. The society sees personal identity as going beyond the material body. There is something else, the society thinks is Paul that is different from the corpse of Paul lying in the mortuary. This belief informs the doctrine of reincarnation. In the doctrine of reincarnation, Paul is said to come back to life in perhaps another body. He does not come back to life with the same body—this one has been lost at death and thus a new body would be needed for the reincarnated Paul. The physical body therefore, when seen as something that could be dropped for another at reincarnation defeats Chimakonam’s position. However, how can one explain African reincarnation theory in which sometimes dead people are said to reincarnate with the same body marks they had on their bodies in a previous life? This becomes a puzzle for further research.

Taking the physical body to constitute the identity of a person is the same as saying that animals especially primates are persons, because they have similar bodily physique like humans. If external appearance is the hallmark of identity as Chimakonam seemingly suggests, then what constitutes personhood is the external part of the body. If the external body constitutes personhood, then primates would undeniably qualify as persons. This however, is what humans would not want to admit, pointing to the fact that personhood is not attached to the external body by the common man, implying that personal identity cannot be based on physical appearance. Rationality or consciousness is therefore, the mark of a person and by implication the seat of personal identity. Personal identity is

the identity of persons. Thus, if personal identity is identity of persons, then identity necessarily lies in rationality or consciousness. This has to be so, because what marks a person from animal is rationality or consciousness. I am sure if animals had consciousness, they would be addressed as persons. To attribute identity to the physical body is to confuse a person for a man. The identity of a man is in the physical body, but identity of persons is in the consciousness. It follows therefore, that Chimakonam was actually talking about identity of man and not persons. If the society attributes identity to physical appearance, then they are erroneously attributing identity to a man, and not a person. Personhood is a far deeper concept than mere physical body. What makes a person is what marks animal from humans, and this cannot be bodily appearance but rationality. To construe it as merely physical is to make chimpanzees persons. As we said earlier, the problem of identity revolves round the concept of persons. If there is considerable agreement on what a person constitutes, then the problem of personal identity would not be there. Since there is an implicit agreement that what constitutes a person is the rational consciousness; then consciousness is a constituent of personal identity. Thus, in Chimakonam's thought experiment the entity with Jonathan's mind or consciousness and Prof. Momoh's body is Jonathan and not Prof. Momoh as the people mistakenly think. A little explanation by Jonathan to the people, that he is Jonathan with Prof. Momoh's body will clear the mistake of the people. On hearing this explanation, the people will understand that the entity standing before them is Jonathan who underwent surgery to assume Prof. Momoh's body. This is much the same way as somebody who underwent plastic surgery on his face; he would only need to explain to the people that he is Mr. A with a changed face. This little explanation will be enough to bring the erring society to track. Therefore, Jonathan, mistakenly called Prof. Momoh will regain his personal identity after this simple lecture to the people as regards who he actually is.

Let us do some ratiocination to make this discourse sink in. The entity with Jonathan's mind and Prof. Momoh's body always thinks that he is Jonathan no matter how much the people may try to persuade him to believe that he is Prof. Momoh. No counselor would be able to do this work; he always continues to believe that he is Jonathan because he remembers himself as Jonathan. Even the mirror cannot make him to think otherwise. Seeing the mirror would only solve the puzzle as to why people think he is Prof. Momoh, but it would not change his mind as regards who he is. The effect of the mirror would be to instigate him to attempt to clear the people's ignorance by educating them that he is Jonathan but with a different body. This explanation would take away his mistaken identity attached by the society and replace it with his true identity. What needs to be noted here is that the society could be made to see their mistake and change their minds but the entity can never be made to change his perception

about himself. This shows us where identity lies, it is in the individual and not the society. This is because the society knows of its vulnerability to error and would be quick to adjust to the right. But the individual being so sure of his identity can never be swayed to contrary positions. For instance, nobody can successfully convince me that I am not Peter but Paul. This shows that I can never be wrong about my person but others could be wrong, thus, needing to be corrected. The entity that thinks he is Jonathan, is right in this thinking. Consequently, people that believed that the entity was Prof. Momoh were wrong in their attribution, for Jonathan's consciousness tells him he is Jonathan.

### **Consequences of Bodily Theory of Identity[Initial Cap]**

To hold to the bodily theory of identity could lead to the case I would call "multiple identity". If personal identity is external as Chimakonam wants us to believe, then one individual can carry multiple identities. For instance, a criminal known as Mr. A in society B, because he changed his name to Mrs. B and underwent a surgery that changed his sex to female. He moved to Society C and is known as Mrs. A. the question is, which is his true identity? Is it the one ascribed by society A or that ascribed to him by Society B or both? Whatever the answer may be, it would turn out to be absurd; for if we take the society's A ascription as right, society B would refute that, because they know him as Mrs B and that is the identity attributed to him. If we take the two societies to be right, we will be implying that an individual could have two identities—identity A and identity B which is absurd.

An individual who changed himself to a woman through the aid of recent sex change technologies would possess a mixed identity, if identity is measured through the criterion of the physical body. Which would be his true identity—a woman or a man? There is a current research on the possibility of changing humans to other animals. If a man is changed into a bird, using bodily criterion of identity, would he maintain his identity as a man or assume the identity of a bird? Would Chimakonam ascribe the same identity to Mr. A now turned bird. If he does, then he would be indirectly renouncing his bodily identity position, for the society does not consider a bird as a person. The society cannot ascribe identity of Mr. A to a bird based on the differences of bodies. But if Chimakonam does not ascribe identity of "Mr A" to the bird, where then lies the identity of Mr. A, is it lost with the bird? Does a man turned bird lose his identity as a person? The African society does not think so. In Boki of Cross River state in Nigeria, a man could turn to a lion, crocodile, cat, snake etc., and still retain his identity as a man even in this animal form. As a lion he is Mr. A and as a human he is Mr. A. A story is told of a certain man in Boki whose son told him that he would love to experience what a lion looked like. The father promised to show him a lion. Then in the bush, the father turned to a lion to the utter astonishment of the son. The

son in this case would not assume another identity for the lion but the father's identity. The lion is the father and the father is the lion. Some hunters in Boki have claimed to hear antelopes and other animals speak to them, claiming to be this or that person. By hearing this, the hunter who initially had mistaken animal identity for this animal would correct himself by ascribing personal identity of Mr. A to such an animal. The bodily identity as proposed by Chimakonam cannot account for this ascription and counter-ascription of these identities. Therefore, as we have explained before, personal identity is not something external as held by Chimakonam but something internal. The identity ascribed by the society is not necessarily the right one, rather it is the one ascribed by the individual that is necessarily right. In case of error, the society can always be corrected by the individual as in the case of a father turned lion and that of the experiences of the hunter. The hunters at first mistook the animals for mere animals, but this ascription was immediately changed, when the animals spoke and explained themselves. The same change would necessarily happen if Jonathan explains that he is not Prof. Momoh.

Apart from the problem of multiple identity whereby strict adherence to the bodily identity theory makes one individual to assume different identities, say, man, woman, lion, cat, etc., in one life span. Another consequence of strict adherence to the bodily theory would be a denial of personal identity after death. There is a general belief that after death, the body decays while the person unites with the ancestors, saints or whatever name it is called. There is general agreement as to the continual living of the spirits in the after world. This belief is also shared by Chimakonam, for this is what is portrayed by his statement that "we see man as a being unto eternity" (OZUMBA & CHIMAKONAM 2014, 8). The bodily theory of identity questions this general belief. In fact, it even denies it. To assume that the external body is the criterion of identity means, that the death of this external body is the death of personal identity. And when there is no personal identity, there is no existence. If there is no personal identity after death, then using Chimakonam's own words 'I' is "void". If I is void, then there is no existence after bodily death. Where there is no 'I' there is 'we', and we is nothing. Thus, after death there is nothing. I wonder if Chimakonam envisaged this implication. It is true that his theory did not extend to the world beyond but is limited to the physical world. However, his theory remains open to such implications, since even he himself believes in the world hereafter.

Adherence to a bodily theory of identity could also be shown to go against the common belief of people. It is a common belief that life does not end here on earth. Let us assume that two people knew Mr. A at different times. Mr. A was known to Mr. B as a handsome young man, and in his later life was known by Mr. C as a blind, crippled old man. Mr. B did not know Mr. A at old age when he was crippled and blind, and Mr. C did not know Mr. A in his

youthful handsome age but as a crippled blind man. Since almost all religion believes in the afterlife, the question becomes, in heaven or home of the ancestors, how would Mr. A look like? Would he be in his former handsome self or in the later ugly self. If he appears in his handsome self, then Mr. C who knows him only in his ugly state would not identify him. Also, if he appears in his ugly self, then Mr. B would not be able to place his identity. If the body is the criterion for personal identity, this sort of puzzle would always arise. Mr. B would in heaven search out for a Mr. A with clear sight, strong legs and a certain bodily shape but may not know that the blind lame man by his side is Mr. A in a different body. Thus, two people who know an individual in separate times may not have the same identity of the person in heaven, if the body is the sole criterion of identity.

As said earlier Chimakonam based his concept of personal identity on the conception of personhood by Africans. He did this without minding the flaws in this African conception. The assertion that a person is defined as a person by the society may be appealing but it is not plausible. This is because the society is never unanimous in its characterization of a person. As regards one person, the society may have conflicting views about him. For instance, some describe me as being fair in complexion; some others see me as having a chocolate colour. When I pondered over these conflicting views of people about myself, I wondered what actually I am. I know the larger societal characterization of “me” would be divided along this line. One segment of the society would see me as having a chocolate colour; the other one would see me as fair in complexion. How can the society be the judge of my identity when it lacks agreement on what I am? Some people in Nigeria would see President Jonathan as handsome and a lot of others would see him as ugly. Who is this Goodluck Jonathan from the society’s perspective? Can a society be a true judge of personal identity as Chimakonam’s claim? To insist on clinging on the African conception, without minding the implication is what Asouzu would call unintended ethnocentric commitment (2007b, 25-192).

### **Conclusion**

Chimakonam asks the adherent of memory theory of personal identity a pertinent question: “if memory is the rock bottom proof of one’s identity, how can one retain his identity when this memory is lost?” (2011, 202). But he fails to ask himself the same question; if one loses his body, what happens to his identity? This is actually a case of pointing at a log in another’s eyes, when one’s own eyes are covered with bigger logs. Asouzu would call this, a case of “phenomenon of concealment” (ASOUZU, 2013, 15-80).

Chimakonam may not be totally wrong in adhering to the bodily theory of identity but he is definitely wrong in upholding to the body as the sole criterion

of personal identity. The physical body is a criterion, the consciousness or the spiritual body is another criterion. The problem of personal identity has persisted over the years because of the penchant towards divisiveness and extremism. What is the rationale behind holding unto the physical body in utter negation of memory or consciousness, and what is the rationale behind holding unto memory and consciousness in utter negation of the physical body. The physical body as well as consciousness add up to constitute a person. Negation of any of them would give us a partial understanding of a person as well as personal identity. However, in all kinds of combination, there is hardly a case where the constituent elements combine in the same degree to form a compound. Consciousness could be said to contribute more to personhood than the body. This is because it is consciousness that is one distinguishing mark between a person and a mere animal. An animal though may have the same physical body like man, but lack of consciousness makes it to fail to qualify as a person. If this consciousness was embedded in animals, they would be persons. To talk of personal identity in terms of bodily identity alone is to equate humans with non human animals. Faunal identity or identity of animals is bodily identity. But man is much more than animals, and this “much” must be captured in a complete definition of him as well as his identity. To define him in terms of the body alone as if he is merely an animal is to make knowledge of him obscure. To define him as such is to “derobe” him of his personhood. This seeming conclusion of the bodily theory as beautifully coded by Chimakonam woke me up from my intellectual slumber. In as much as we agree that animals are not persons, we must also make this distinct element in man to be felt in our definition of personal identity.

Though it would appear at surface that the society attributes personal identity to the physical body alone, but a deeper reflection as we have done already would show that the society in which Chimakonam postulates his theory holds a deeper view. The society holds unto the body as a criterion but holds more dearly to consciousness. This is exactly why the society would be quick to change its opinion on personal identity that was hitherto based on physical appearance, if the entity in question explains to them in clear terms whom he is. We all often mistake somebody’s identity based on physical appearance but a little coaching from the person makes us correct our mistake. For instance when we see a twin, we may mistakenly call him Peter based on his bodily appearance, but a protest by the person, that he is not Peter but Paul, would make us quickly change our conception. We would not say to this person, no you are not Paul but Peter. In the thought experiment presented by Chimakonam, the entity that has the mind of Jonathan and the body of Prof. Momoh, would easily change the perception of the society by making key explanations like: “I am Jonathan, my father is Chimakonam, my grandfather was buried in Ntamante a village in Boki, school in Ekpashi Technical College, I had a surgery that switched my mind

into the body of Prof. Momoh. These explanations that describe events in Jonathan's life would sway even the most unbelieving people to change from seeing the entity as Prof. Momoh but Jonathan in a new body, the society would be willing to change this view because they understand that consciousness is a superior criterion for personal identity than the body. A real life case occurred in Mbarakom, a village in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State, late last year. A 2 year old child, whose father was from Oban village claimed to be from Mbarakom and asked to be taken to Mbarakom. After persistent disturbance and failed attempts to convince her that she is from Oban, the father decided to hearken to her request and decided to take her to Mbarakom. At Mbarakom the child directed the father on which compound to enter. On entering that compound, the child pointed to a grave and claimed it is her own. She explained to the people in that compound who she is, how she died and why she has come back to life in another body. The description of the events and things in her past life were said to correspond to that of the girl that died and whose grave the girl pointed at as her own. Though she was disbelieved at first because of differences in bodies but the consciousness of the events of her life re-established her identity. Thus, consciousness of the individual is always seen as superior to the body and its demands are always tilted to. Therefore, in a situation where there is a conflict between the individual consciousness and the society's perception of the individual, the individual consciousness shows its superiority by winning over the debate. However, when consciousness is lost like in cases of rationally impaired individuals, the body could be used as a sole criterion of personal identity, but this attribution must be cautious, for the individual may regain consciousness one day and prove beyond all reasonable doubt that he is not the person they thought he was

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