

# Facebook and Identity Issues: Making Case for Biometric Sign Up

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## Abstract

Beyond the primary vision of having a platform to connect family and friends, the Facebook's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, was inspired by an ethical vision of integrity and authenticity. He was certain that with Facebook, the days of duplicity of identity were probably coming to an end pretty quickly. In reviewing this claim with philosophical approaches to identity and its construction on internet, this paper finds out that contrary to the initial vision, Facebook has rather offered the society more tools to play on different identities. It suggests biometric sign up as a suggest ways of achieving authenticity.

**Keywords:** identity, authenticity, social media, Facebook, representation, biometric capture etc.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Borrowing from the success of Course Match, a software he designed to enable students take a course based on who else was taking it;<sup>1</sup>Facemash, a platform designed to enable students project who was hottest person at campus and which was modelled on facebooks, a photo album of students taken on the first day in school and maintained by each of Harvard hostels<sup>2</sup>; and Friendster, a service which helped people connect for dating purpose,<sup>3</sup> Mark Zuckerberg on Wednesday, February 4, 2004, successfully hosted the facebook.com for public consumption of students at Harvard University. The home screen explained the new platform, Facebook, as online directory for social networking in school, for searching people at school, finding course mates, looking for friend's friends, and visualising one's social network.<sup>4</sup>Since its launch, Facebook has continuously developed with people taking advantages it offers to engage in all kinds of online activities.

However, less-emphasized is the radical social premise that through Facebook, inevitable identity transparency will dominate modern era. Zuckerberg during his 2009 interview said that contrary to earlier demand from users for separate work profile and fun social life, infusion of identity has been central to his invention. "You have one identity... The days of having a different image for your work friends and co-workers and for other people you know are probably coming to an end pretty quickly."<sup>5</sup> Interrupting Zuckerberg at this point could have been taken as Craig Detweiler noted in *iGodsto* mean that Facebook would make obsolete such sites like LinkedIn that focused on professional networks.<sup>6</sup> However, besides stressing three times in a single minute that identity is one, the founder backed it up with several arguments that, "Having two identities for yourself is an example of a lack of integrity" and pragmatically insisted that "the level of transparency the world has now won't support having two identities for a person."<sup>7</sup> Again, a long time Facebook Chief Privacy Officer, Chris Kelly reiterated the founder's dream, "we've been able to build what we think is safer, more trusted version of the internet by holding people to the consequences of their actions and requiring them to use their real identity"<sup>8</sup>This investigation starts with understanding identity.

## II. IS IDENTITY ONE? PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION

The question of identity is central to social sciences with every discipline having different approach to it. While psychology views identity as a fairly stable sense of who one is which is shared by people significant

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<sup>1</sup> David Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect: The Real Inside Story of Mark Zuckerberg and the World's Fastest-Growing Company* (Croydon: Virgin Books, 2011), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect*, 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>6</sup> Craig Detweiler, *iGods: How Technology Shapes our Spiritual and Social Lives* (Michigan: Brazos Press, 2013), 144.

<sup>7</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect*, 199.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

in one's life, philosophy perceives it as definability and recognizability which make one unique, genuine and authentic. Identity covers such wide scope as personal conception, group belongingness or expression. Philosophically, a criterion of identity seeks to understand what makes an identity, what an identity over time means, which transformation retains or destroys a person. It, therefore, links the question of identity to the concept of person who through biological, psychological, or technological possibilities can result in another form different from who one is. To fully grasp identity issue, we need to explore the problem of a person to whom identity defines and who is recognizable through it. Our concern with identity will take a numerical above qualitative priority, that is, how a person is understood to be different from another person.

## 2.1 Person as carrier of identity

In ordinary use of language, a person is presumed to be a human being, a member of species, *Homo Sapiens*, but there are ways of referring non-human beings as persons.<sup>9</sup> The philosophical approach adopted in this paper considers a person beyond memberships of *Homo Sapiens*. This approach itself is diverse on study of person. While epistemology looks at knowledge and its justification, metaphysics studies being as being, that is the world itself. Epistemology looks at individual awareness of the existence of another person; but metaphysics looks at identification (essential property of a being to count as one), re-identification (essential property which a being retains over time) and characterization (what makes a being the person what he is)<sup>10</sup>

Both philosophical approaches with jurisprudence and theology enrich our concept of person and would be helpful to us. This study reviews their approaches using three categorizations adopted by Amy Kind, namely, legal, moral or metaphysical.<sup>11</sup> While each of the three approaches to a person points to a particular interest, this piece sees in each of the approaches something important in discussing identity in reference to media realities.

Before the law, a person is understood as a subject with legal rights, privileges and burden. The concept of legal person arises from laws, constitutions which assign person to corporations while even excluding persons of certain class or stage of human being development. While laws apply differently in different countries or at international level, looking at the notion of legal person as written, interpreted and applied in different constitutions, domestic or international, there are two deductions worth remarking.

First, being human is insufficient to be considered a legal person, because legal personhood has been denied to certain classes of human being, women and slaves at various points in history even as the personhood of unborn babies is still a subject of legal and ethical debate today. Again, what follows from the first is that being human is not a necessity for being a legal person since non-human entities like corporations have been considered by landmark court rulings as legal persons and there is even a debate to extend legal person to animals.<sup>12</sup> The implication of this is that identity is not only about a human person; it includes non-human person, businesses while excluding some human persons in certain stage of development.

The second is to look at a person as moral being. This perspective is both theological and philosophical. While theological considers ontological view that every person is part of one moral community and from the shared origin drives his dignity, rights and responsibilities, philosophy sees mental capacity as ground for responsibility. However, there are no general agreements on necessary or sufficient features a being must have to be counted as a moral person.

The Judeo-Christian tradition considers membership of human species created in the image of God as necessary and sufficient reason for personhood. Augustine influenced by Christian worldview sought for a term that could describe the Trinity without multiplying their divinity and essence nor compromise their individuality. He found it in the Latin "persona" a term that does not describe specie but signifies something singular and individual. For Augustine, "*singulisquisque homo una persona est*" (Every single man is a person).<sup>13</sup> This definition contains two elements, namely, singularity and individuality. In Severin Boethius, an element of rationality was added to Augustine's; hence, "*persona rationalis naturae individual substantia* (a person is an individual substance of rational nature)"<sup>14</sup> Boethius definition was generally accepted by scholastics although Thomas Aquinas brought in the concept of rational subsistent, *subsistens rationale*. With the term "subsistent" Aquinas replaced the concepts of individual, nature, and substance in Boethius but retains his adjective 'rational'<sup>15</sup> For him, a person is individual and a concrete man, singular, unique and unrepeatable. Therefore, a person has four elements, namely, matter, substantial form (soul), the accidental form and the act of being (actus essendi). The act of being is the maximum perfection and confers actuality to substance and its

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<sup>9</sup> Amy Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV, 6, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Boethius, *Contra Eutichen et Nestorium*, C. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1, 23; C. Gent. IV, 35, 1.

determinations. “The fullness of being, which is the act of presence...is nothing else than to be an active self-possessing presence, present to both itself and to others.”<sup>16</sup>

With the Enlightenment came an emphasis on consciousness and mental capacity of moral person. A person is considered a mental being with self-consciousness, a fact well highlighted by John Locke when he speaks of a person as a being with thinking, intelligence, reason and reflection which enables it for self-acknowledgement as a thinking being at different time and places.<sup>17</sup> While Locke left unsolved ontological categories of a person as to whether he is an immaterial soul, human being, body, brain, or bundle of perceptions, Descartes descended with his concept of immaterial soul which continues to live after the body has disintegrated. Hume fell for the idea of perception comparing human being to republic whose members are united by mutual ties of giving and taking order, of independence and interdependence. “Just as the constituents of a republic (its citizens and territory) can be understood without reference to the concept of a republic, so the constituents of the self or person (thoughts and experiences) can be understood with reference to the concept of a person.”<sup>18</sup>

From anthropological perspective, Batista Mondi gives what he calls a global definition of a person as a subsistent gifted with self-consciousness, communication, and self-transcendence. Through self-consciousness he recognises himself as unique and unrepeatable, through communication he enters into rapport with others, through self-transcendence he is called to surpass all the confines in which space and time seek to limit and is able to ascend, to penetrate the realm of the absolute and eternal.<sup>19</sup> While Mondi’s anthropology reintroduces subsistent as applied in Judeo-Christian tradition, other authors like Mary Anne Warren,<sup>20</sup> Michael Tooley,<sup>21</sup> Daniel Dennett<sup>22</sup>, Tom Regan<sup>23</sup> without necessarily referring to a particular specie enumerate in their own ways different traits and features that distinguish mental capacity of moral personhood.

Worthy of note is that the categorisation of mental concept of moral person by the above authors and later thinkers opened two debates, namely, the likelihood of non-human moral persons since some animals have mental capacities; and the likelihood of non-moral humans since new-born infants lack most of the capacities.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, contemporary thought tends to address the latter debate by showing how our social and interpersonal relationship as specie allows an individual to drive at least in part from this complex web of relations making even a child with damaged brain to be treated as a person.<sup>25</sup> This line of thinking is a defence to safeguard the tendency in mental conception of a moral person to exclude members of specie because of their lack of required traits or features.

Legal and moral notions of person are evaluative and prescriptive, but metaphysical notion of a person is descriptive studying being as being. In Metaphysics, person includes human, other mammals, organism, alien beings, non-organic and spiritual beings in different life-stages and with their various disabilities. In fact, David Wiggins warns against assuming a person to be substance rather than stage.<sup>26</sup> Moral and metaphysical notions interact closely because metaphysical sense of existence qualifies one for moral consideration. Some claim that moral and metaphysical persons are one and the same.<sup>27</sup>

Interestingly, the three approaches to person show consistent possibility of incorporating non-human and excluding human being. This is both a blessing and a curse to our inquiry. As a blessing, most of what is represented on social media are not just human beings but also products and ideologies. It gives us ground to talk about their identity and individual identity on Facebook, nay, screen. On another note, it poses a problem, because if we would be arguing for biometric capture as a way of validating identity on Facebook, one would want to know how non-human persons would be biometrically captured. This, however, reignites our curiosity that Facebook is actually a tool for multiplying identity. Again, the inclusion of non-human and exclusion of some human persons as a person is a purely semantic. However, in whatever representation, all non-human rest on human person for definition and recognition.

<sup>16</sup> Stefan Oster, *Person und Transsubstantiation: Mensch-Sein, Kirche-Sein und Eucharistie- eine ontologische Zusammenschau* (Freiburg: Herders, 2010), 127.

<sup>17</sup> John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. W. Carrol (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1990), 9.

<sup>18</sup> Brain Garrett, *What is this Thing Called Metaphysics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 124.

<sup>19</sup> Batista Mondi, *Philosophical Anthropology* (Bangalore: Theological Publications, 1991, reprint 2011), 256-257.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Anne Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion.” *The Monist* 57 (1973) (1): 43-61.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Tooley, *Abortion and Infanticide* (Oxford: University Press, 1983)

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Dennett, “Conditions of Personhood.” In Rorty, Amelie Oksenberg, ed. “The Identities of Persons (University of California, 1976), 175- 96.

<sup>23</sup> Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004)

<sup>24</sup> Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>26</sup> David Wiggins, *Same and Substance* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 62-66

<sup>27</sup> Dennett, “Conditions of Personhood,” 193.

## 2.2 Theories of personal identity

From the concept of person, we would turn to continuity of a person. How a person persists over time is a question of what preserves the authenticity of a person. Generally, there are two ways of looking at identity- qualitative or numerical. In qualitative sense, we think of person as looking exactly like the other; that is, the two are identical at a time. In this sense, persons can be counted based on identity. Numerically, we think of persons as not being one and the same; that is, they are not identical over time. Personal identity is numerical qualities of person over time, the necessary and sufficient conditions for judging a person at one time as the same with a person over time. Contemporary metaphysics looks at personal identity not as a *synchronic* question- a question concerning personal identity *at a time*- but as a *diachronic*- a question concerning personal identity *over time*.<sup>28</sup>

In Metaphysics, debate on personal identity falls into two categories- the simple and complex view. While simple view holds that there are no substantial and informative answers to the question because personal identity is not explainable, complex view seek to explain personal identity either as substance, bodily continuity, physical continuity, or psychological continuity.<sup>29</sup> We would proceed with complex view.

## 2.3. Complex view of identity

### 2.3.1 Identity as Continuity of bodily substance

This view equates personal identity to persistence of bodily existence. In other words, personal identity is the material identity of an object. "A at t1 is the same as B at t2 and only if A's body is the same as B's body" (Garrett, 125). The persistence of material objects is not taken as retaining of same matter which is known for gradual replacement but steady substitution of matter "as is consistent with describing the person in question as retaining, over time, the same body."<sup>30</sup>

The bodily substance criterion sees a person as biological organism and contradicts the holistic view of person we demonstrated above. Such physicalist conception of identity forecloses discussion of identity on media representation where a person is not a bodily continuity but iconic, index or symbolic continuity. There is therefore no ground for using identity while referring to media reality. It is also difficult to imagine that Zuckerberg had imagine using Facebook to duplicate man into two physical being.

### 2.3.2 Identity as continuity of brain

This criterion looks at identity from the concept of cognition and elevates immaterial faculties of thinking above the body. It sees persistence of the mind irrespective of change in substance as ground for identity. "A at t1 is the same person as B at t2 and only if A's brain is the same as B's brain."<sup>31</sup>

While mind is very important aspect of a person, it is worth stressing that mind is activated through stimuli picked up by the body. Beyond metaphysical and epistemological problems raised by this view, recognition of a part as an identity of the whole is quite limiting. If identity is consciousness, there is no identity online since avatar is not itself conscious but only plays roles assigned to it by human agents or robot. The same logic that disqualifies bodily continuity disqualifies brain continuity more so since computer is only a technological extension of human abilities and senses.

### 2.3.3 Identity as physical continuity

This theory, a modification of bodily and mind continuity, considers identity as sameness of biological organism over time. It simultaneously rejects bodily and brain criterion without denying the persistence of any physical entity as part of constituent. "According to this proposal, person P2 at t2 is the same person P1 at t1 if, and only if, enough of the brain of P1 at t1 survives in P2 at t2 to be the brain of a living person."<sup>32</sup>

This part-brain identity theory not minding its leaning on psychological aspect, is not a safe ground for one who has seen reason to reject bodily and brain criterion. Physicality conception is still a problem if person represented in the medium is to be adjudged by identity of the entity outside the medium. As long as physicality is involved, Zuckerberg's dream is not represented by this identity.

### 2.3.4 Identity as psychological continuity

According to psychological continuity, "A at t1 is the same as B at t2 if and only if A and B are psychologically continuous."<sup>33</sup> In the book, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,<sup>34</sup> John Locke locates personal identity in consciousness or memory and conceives personal identity as psychological continuity of

<sup>28</sup> Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Garrett, *What is this Thing Called Metaphysics*, 122.

<sup>30</sup> Harold Noonan, ed., *Personal Identity* (England: Dartmouth, 1993), xi.

<sup>31</sup> Garrett, *What is this Thing Called Metaphysics*, 125

<sup>32</sup> Noonan, *Personal Identity*, xiii.

<sup>33</sup> Garrett, *What is this Thing Called Metaphysics*, 125

<sup>34</sup> John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. W. Carrol (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1990)

first-person memory of self. Mathematically put, Lockean account of personal identity says: “P2 at t2 is the same person as P1 and t1, only if P2 is linked by continuity of experience memory to P1.”<sup>35</sup>

Lockean view makes knowledge and accountability private and came under criticism first from thinkers who consider it too circular since memory presupposes personal identity just as knowledge presupposes truth; and secondly from Bernard Williams’ reduplication theory which argues that the rival candidates for identity with the original are new existents. While consciousness is good, it is insufficient in exhausting other direct psychological connections like connection between intention and an act that eventually proceeded the intention. Psychological continuity is preferably viewed as an overlapping chain of psychological connections.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.3.5 Preference of psychological continuity

Among scholars, psychological continuity enjoins wider acceptance. For instance, 34 percent of over 900 professors drawn from leading universities in English speaking world in 2009 said they preferred psychological continuity as a better account of identity. 17 percent lean towards physical approach, 12 percent said they needed more fact and 37 percent were undecided.<sup>37</sup>This result comes from decades of thought experiments and theorizing which tend to favour psychological approach above others.

In 1963, Sydney Shoemaker came up with a thought experiment, “Brain Transplant” where he spoke of possibility of a human body continuing to function normal should its brain be replaced by brain taken from another human body.<sup>38</sup> He imagined a case of two men, Mr Brown and Mr Robinson, who in undergoing brain tumour operations had their brain inadvertently exchanged by medical assistant. Mr. Brown’s brain was put in Robinson’s head, and Mr. Robinson’s brain put in Mr. Brown’s head. While one of them died immediately after the surgery, the man with Mr. Robinson’s head and Mr. Brown’s brain survived. Now designated as MrBrownson, when asked his name replied ‘Brown’ recalling Brown’s life events, wife and family but he didn’t show any knowledge of Robinson’s life.<sup>39</sup> While some say that Mr. Brown is Mr. Brownson, others think that Mr. Brown is dead, and Mr. Robinson needed a new brain and new psychology. This imagery paints a discontinuity and continuity between Brown and Brownson. One could say that Brownson is a psychological continuous of Brown.<sup>40</sup>

However, David Wiggins’ fission theory poses challenge to both brain and psychological problem. Fission thought experiment imagines a case where human brain of say, Mr. Felix is divided into two equal hemispheres and each transplanted into two bodies without brain, Mr. James and Mr. John. Messrs James and John are psychological continuous with Mr. Felix when they wake up sharing in Mr. Felix’s beliefs, character and memory. But with time, differences begin to emerge between Mr. James and Mr. John. Garrett argues that this logical possibility challenges psychological criteria which assumes Mr. Felix is Mr. James and Mr. John which by transitivity of identity means that Mr. James is Mr. John. However, the fission experiment showed that Mr. James and Mr. John though at wake appear similar, they are actually two people and not one.<sup>41</sup>The theory also refutes brain criterion since the entire brain of Mr. Felix is not in either of Messrs James and John. Needless saying that people do survive even with half of their brain damaged. It can only be safeguarded if it admits that part is enough.

Consequently, brain criterion as noted earlier was revised and reformulated as “A at t1 is the same person as B at t2 if and only if B has enough of A’s brain to sustain psychological continuity”<sup>42</sup> But despite the revision, fission theory still challenges the revised form, since it assumes that the donor is both the two beneficiaries since they have enough of his brain. This means defending revised brain and psychological continuity demands more exercise. Garrett proposes two ways. One is to retain the two criteria and argue that fission case is not well described. This is known as multiple-occupancy response. The second which he tagged uniqueness response is to modify the “criteria by inserting of non-branching clause in the analyses.”<sup>43</sup>

The multiple-occupancy response as propounded especially by Dennis Lewis,<sup>44</sup> Harold Noonan<sup>45</sup> argues that fission in the case of brain transplant was not represented well. They say that three people (Messrs Felix, James and John) are not involved but only two people (Messrs James and John). They say that both beneficiaries were there in existence before the fission residing in the same body of the donor but move to possess their own body after the fission. But such description does not safeguard the psychological view which

<sup>35</sup> Noonan, *Personal Identity*, xiv.

<sup>36</sup> Noonan, *Personal Identity*, xiv

<sup>37</sup> Kind, *Persons and Personal Identity*, 102

<sup>38</sup> Sydney Shoemaker, *Self-Knowledge and Self-Defence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963)

<sup>39</sup> Shoemaker, *Self-Knowledge and Self-Defence*, 23-24

<sup>40</sup> Garrett, *What is this Thing Called Metaphysics*, 127

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 128

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Lewis, Denis, “Survival and Identity”. In A. O. Rorty ed., *The Identities of Person*, (Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 1969), 17-41.

<sup>45</sup> Harold Noonan, *Personal Identity* (London: Routledge, 2003), 139-143.

was the intention of Lewis and Noonan. If the two beneficiaries were in existence before the fission, could it not be correct that both are psychologically continuous after the fission. This leads back again to both beneficiaries being the same which was what the re-description wanted to surmount. Next, it is metaphysically illogical to locate two beings in a single body. Finally, the donor's claim of "I" before the fission will not agree with the claim of "I" from the resulting persons. It would be difficult to know which of them is referred to by the use of "I".

On the uniqueness response, Derek Parfit stepped in with suggestion that analysis of personal identity should be done in terms of non-branching psychological identity. Parfit reviews three possibilities in the brain transplant thought experiment: i. Mr. Felix does not survive; ii. Mr Felix survives as either Mr James or Mr John; iii. Mr. Felix survives as both.<sup>46</sup>

On the first, he argues that if one's half is successfully transplanted into another, it could be argued that one will survive since most people live with brain half-damaged. This means that Mr. Felix can survive if his brain is successfully transplanted because a double success cannot amount to failure. Secondly, he says there is a contradiction imagining Mr Felix to be either of the resulting Messrs because each half is exactly similar which makes it difficult for a person to survive as one of the two halves. Owing to difficulty in knowing what makes Felix, James rather than John, the possibility is not convincing. On the third possibility of one surviving as both people, he maintain that if 'survive' means identity, it makes no sense- that Felix can be two people; and if it is not, the description is irrelevant to identity discourse.<sup>47</sup>If "survive" is taken to mean identity, the admission of surviving as both two different people can only be figurative. This sense retains the language of identity but alters the concept of a person. If one survives as two different people without claiming to be these people, "The relation of the original person to each of the resulting people contains all that interests us- all that matters- in any ordinary case of survival."<sup>48</sup>

If identity is one-one relation, 'survive' according to Parfit is relation of degree and need not be one-one as seen in Wiggins. While most of the relations described as "psychological continuity" incorporate casual continuity, Parfit argues that the language of personal identity is used to imply psychological continuity. He says when it takes a branching form inconsistent with judgments of identity, what we need to do is to take a judgment of identity and attach it differently to each limb of the relations.<sup>49</sup> Revised therefore, psychological criterion should read "A at t1 is the same person as B at t2 and only if A and B are psychologically continuous and A's stream of mental life has not branched between t1 and t2."<sup>50</sup> Since branching has taken place in fission, one is not identical to the resulting persons. While the revision seems to solve the problem, the revised psychological view appears to say that if one person has resulted during the fission, one would have been identical as if killing one will guarantee the survival of the other.

Consequently, Parfit later revised his earlier position where he had played on the medical word, success. He sees fission as ordinary survival. He says that since I am not identical to the persons resulting, identity is not what matters, what matters is psychological connectedness.<sup>51</sup>In this way, Parfit defended all objections against psychological continuity. The ordinary survival is the type of identity adopted in media because although not ontological identical, but it is psychologically and semiotically linked to the ancestral person.

#### **2.4. Simple view of identity**

This view sees relation of personal identity as indescribable. For Butler, the word 'same' has 'strict and philosophical sense' when applied to persons, but a loose and popular sense when applied to bodies and other kinds of things. Identity according to his view has no permanent form when referring to bodies but it is a question of words which are not ambiguous when applied to person in ordinary sense and are always precise with no degree of more or less. These are grounds for rights, obligations and accountableness. Calling a particular material object, the same as a previous object is a verbal question but not so with a person. Parfit already said that we assume personal identity to be an all-or-nothing matter, but this does not apply to nations and machines because England of 1066 is not the same as England of today.<sup>52</sup>

While complex view implies indeterminacy in personal identity and that identity is not what matters, simple view considers identity as all-or-nothing; it does not come in different degrees. While complex view tilt towards non-branching with its concern that identity is not what matters, simple view sees in fission the beginning of the opening question of identity. One can only be one or nothing more. Anyone who agrees to go multiplication will be risking fission.

<sup>46</sup> Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity (1971a)". In Harold Noonan, Harold 1993. (edited), *Personal Identity*. England: Dartmouth, 1993), 43.

<sup>47</sup>Parfit, "Personal Identity", 43.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>50</sup> Garrett, *What is this Thing Called Metaphysics*, 129.

<sup>51</sup> Garrett, *What is this Thing Called Metaphysics*, 130.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 132.

## 2.5 Implications for media discourse

Our excursus with its holistic concept of person shows that personal identity is a definability and recognition of a person which in its complex overview is not exhausted by continuity of substance such as body and brain but something psychological which in view of Parfit allows figurative description of survive as identity. Simple view says identity has no permanent form when referring bodies and a matter of clear words which referring human person. Both complex and simple views therefore allow us to talk about identity from linguistic and semiotic perspectives.

Secondly, if identity is one-one relation, and reality exists outside language but can be known or expressed only in and through language,<sup>53</sup> there must be a different way of thinking identity on social media. Already, Parfit's re-description of fission theory allows figurative use of 'survive' as identity. If the resulting persons in the "brain transplant" are considered less as ontological continual identity since it is impossible to locate two beings in a body, but more in figurative sense, we would have found a safe ground to talk about identity on the media. Therefore, personal identity on social media is a tense semiotic resemblance between ancestral (actual) and the descendant (constructed) persons. Authenticity is then measured by the degree of definability and recognizability of a parent in a descendant. In this sense, identity is not ontological persistence but semiotic persistence of person over time in and through media representation. There is a psychological relationship between the parent and the descendant. That is why a parent feels pain when a descendant is reproached like in cases of cyber mobbing. 'Survive' is thought of as a descendant self which psychologically connects to ancestral self. "Since psychological continuity is transitive, "being an ancestral self of" and "being a descendant self of" are also transitive."<sup>54</sup> In all, Parfit's reductionism offers useful tools for discussing personal identity on the social media.

Both simple and complex view invariably conceded that identity is all-or-nothing. Identity on the media is semiotic continuation of first-person perspective through representation. The greater the degree of definability and recognition of this perspective on the media, the greater the authenticity. The depth of this resemblance is the ground for a claim of "I" on social media, for defining and recognizing a character, for social engagement with other users, and for moral accountability.

The above taken would mean that Zuckerberg envisioned Facebook to be a tool for authentic definition and recognition of each user's identity on social media. What follows from here is finding out how Facebook 'curates' single online identity for each person in view of the claim that days of having different images for ourselves at home, work, school would come to an end with Facebook.<sup>55</sup> Does Facebook narrow or extend or multiply identity? Does it allow duplication of one's identity to survive in many forms? Does Facebook allow multi-tasking or multi-living?<sup>56</sup>

## III. CURATING IDENTITY ON FACEBOOK

### 3.1 Identity on the media as representation

Although personal identity is one-one relation, man uses language and signs to curate ways of recognizing a person. This cluster of signs becomes an identity for the person. Every person has unique cluster of signs used in recognizing him or her in every society or institution. That is why, we speak of national identity which confers on a person not only citizenship both rights and burdens; we also talk of school identity card as marks of membership, etc. In this sense, Zuckerberg noted we could link to people through things which science like geometry offers us.<sup>57</sup>

Media identity is therefore a constructed identity through signification that relates the signifier (signs) with the signified (person). Representation is a question of symmetry, that is understanding and misunderstanding and rests on 'relations of equivalence' achieved between personification, encoder and decoder. Relations of equivalence rests on the degrees of identity non-identity between the codes which perfectly or imperfectly convey, disrupt, or systematically pollutes what is represented. Reality exists outside language as seen in visual discourse which translates three-dimensional reality into two-dimensional reality. However, reality is mediated by and through language.<sup>58</sup> The unit of language is a sign.<sup>59</sup> There are three ways of achieving a fit between sign and reality, namely, index, icon and symbol.<sup>60</sup> Icon has physical resemblance to

<sup>53</sup> Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse* (1973), 131. Available online.

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/history/cccs/stencilled-occasional-papers/1to8and11to24and38to48/SOP07.pdf> retrieved 27. 10. 2018

<sup>54</sup> Parfit, "Personal Identity", 60.

<sup>55</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect*, 199.

<sup>56</sup> Detweiler, *iGods*, 144.

<sup>57</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse*, 131.

<sup>59</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Grundfragen der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967) [Französischem Original, 1916].

<sup>60</sup> Peirce, C. S., and Welby-Gregory, Victoria, *Semiotic and Significs: The Correspondence between C. S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*, edited by Charles S. Hardwick, assisted by James Cook, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana Uni Press, 1977)

the thing represented like a drawing of dog represents a dog in real life; index has relationship of continuity to the reality represented like a finger print or analogue photograph; and symbol has no relationship with a reality signified but works on social conventions. Faithfulness of representation to reality results from agreement of language use on reality and is achieved through discursive practice.<sup>61</sup> Identity on the screen is therefore a curated identity that enables a person to play role in virtual life.

### 3.2 What's so special about Facebook?

Each social media platform constructs identity differently. The uniqueness of Facebook is its integration into one, features of other social media networks in constructing identity using index, icons and symbols. Its structure includes news feed, friends, wall, timeline, likes and reactions, comments, message and inbox, notifications and groups. The applications include events, market place, notes, places, platform, Facebook questions, Photos, Videos, live streaming, Facebook paper, Facebook mentions. General features Facebook dynamic text/type, credits, feature phones, graph search, IPv6, listen with friends, mood faces, phone, poke and Greetings, smartphone integration, fundraising, status updates, subscribe, ticker, URL shortener, verified accounts, hast-tagging support, impressum, tor hidden service, "Say Thanks", call-to-action button, snooze, "Did You Know?" Social questionnaires, sound collection music archive. Worth mention is also its security authentication. Facebook keeps updating as features like email, FBML, lite, that were once featured have been removed from it.<sup>62</sup>This innovation offers hope for whatever feature this paper would be proposing.

While YouTube concentrates on Videos, Pinterest on pictures, Twitter on short, mass, and instant messaging, Facebook combines these features into one. It enables text, photo and videos upload, video and live text chat, private messaging, events organization, live streaming, etc. If Facebook were taken as world or community into which a person is born, question about identity on Facebook must begin with looking at how one gains access into this online reality. Setting up Facebook account demands certain basics . To create a Facebook account:

1. Go to [www.facebook.com/r.php](http://www.facebook.com/r.php).
2. Enter your name, email or mobile phone number, password, date of birth and gender.
3. Click **Create an Account**.
4. To finish creating your account, you need to [confirm your email or mobile phone number](#).<sup>63</sup>

At sign up, Facebook gives a prospective user a unique identification number, Facebook ID, through which the user can search out other users, send friend request, view another's wall posts and other possible activities. This unique number should not be confused with "an identifier (FB ID)", a "positive integer like 12345" on Facebook which Facebook uses in classifying content materials for easy citation using the URL `fb.com/<fbid>`. These identifies come in different types depending on content. Typical examples listed on *Find My FB ID Team's* page is given below.

- <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=4>
- <https://www.facebook.com/pages/doorsopenTO/361063578336>
- <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151052362543337&set=a.402126878336.167300.36106357833>
- <https://www.facebook.com/doorsopenTO/posts/10150868476418337> <sup>64</sup>

The Top-level types in content classifications as identified on Facebook are person, page, event, group. Each of these has an FB ID providing attachment for top-level items such as text status update, photo, video, album which have their individual FB IDs. However, comments attached to the above items as well as like, the news feed, private messaging, file attachment in private messaging have no FB ID.<sup>65</sup> The ID is specifically used to cite item, remove ambiguity of refereeing someone by names or distinguishing between two similar names. However, these integers presuppose Facebook account. Next, we look at how identity functions on Facebook, the kind of identity do we encounter on Facebook.

### 3.3 Kinds of identity forms on Facebook

In our categorization of person as a carrier of identity, we identified legal, moral, and metaphysical person. We also stressed the exclusion of some human beings and inclusion of some non-human being in each perspective.

<sup>61</sup> Hall, *Encoding and Decoding*, 132.

<sup>62</sup> Wikipedia, "List of Facebook Features", [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Facebook\\_features](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Facebook_features), Feb 26, 2019, 13. 04pm)

<sup>63</sup>Facebook Help Centre, "How do I create a Facebook Account?"

<https://www.facebook.com/help/188157731232424?helpref=topq>(accessed 26.02.2019 16.49pm)

<sup>64</sup> Find My FB ID Team, (Dec 05, 2017) "What is Facebook ID and how it is used?" <https://findmyfbid.in/blog/facebook-id-used/25.02.2019>

<sup>65</sup> Find My FB ID Team, (Dec 05, 2017) "What is Facebook ID and how it is used?" <https://findmyfbid.in/blog/facebook-id-used/25.02.2019>



Through language and signs, man is able to construct unique signifiers for every person and through these signifiers, unrepeatably signs, which form an identity of a person. By using signifiers available on Facebook platform, we tend here to delineate three identities given different persons one encounters on Facebook. The three correspond to human person as a being with social life; ideology as thought movement propounded, accepted or rejected by human person; products as advertised, sold and bought by persons and institutions. The human persons are agents of delineating identity of other persons on Facebook. We, therefore, talk of identity on Facebook as being curated around a person, an ideology, and a product.

### **3.3.1. Facebook identity as human person**

Conceptually modelled on “The facebook” a photo album of students maintained hostels in Harvard University,<sup>66</sup> Facebook was designed to curate identity on man since all identities are subject to man, since realities in the world are defined in their relation to man. This identity must not be perceived as continuity of substance but linguistic identity with psychological affinity since man plays role through them online and is uniquely defined and recognized through them.

Initially, signing up to Facebook required creating a profile with a single picture of oneself, few basic information, specifying relationship status, political affiliations among others. Joining was possible with a Harvard.edu email address and one’s real name. Through these, people’s identity was validated since having the email address presupposes registration.<sup>67</sup> Throughout its nascent stage, the Facebook team was busy collecting emails from different schools to enable students from there register.

Today, signing up requires basic facts which are characteristically human. The instruction on sign up page reads, “Note: you must be at least 13 years old to create a Facebook account.”<sup>68</sup> Next, the account set-up also has column for gender specification, date of birth, first and last names. It overrules use of numbers, symbols, unusual capitalisation, repeated character or punctuation, character combinations from different languages. At completion of sign up, a user is allowed access through Facebook ID to set up his profile with a chain of basic information detailing one’s work, education, places lived, contact info, basic info, other names, relationship, family members, interests, religious view, Political views, others, life events, check-ins, films, tv programmes, books, apps and games, likes, those followed, events, reviews, groups, those following, notes. It is through these facts that a person is defined and recognised on Facebook as a user with a profile name. The profile setting gives an option of uploading user’s photos or video depending on user’s wish. The assumption is that by providing the above information, a user creates a near-to-reality online identity of self through which man can play online role.

However, while the above facts may appear delineate one identity for each user, they are subject to manipulation since the platform allows an individual multiple entry. If Facebook were to keep just one identity for each user as Zuckerberg claims,<sup>69</sup> one would expect only one form of identity for every user of Facebook. Unfortunately, although this vision drives Facebook, sign-up’s requirements are prone to multiple creation of identities for an individual. Names, mobile number, date of birth and gender while appearing to checkmate double identity entry into the platform are daily manipulated by individuals to host multiple accounts. Although, deciding which information to make public or photos to us may be explained as part of privacy options, users take advantage of it to blur the resemblance between their online and real-life appearances. The possibility that one can change profile name every 60 days as contained in Facebook policy makes it vulnerable for users to switch identities from time to time, a problem widely discussed as role playing.

The vulnerability of sign up signifiers makes it possible for persons to multiple Facebook identities. Hence, users now share information publicly on how to create double Facebook account without getting into trouble. When this topic came up on *Quora*, a username, Linda Swan (Steven) Parker detailed how one can violate Facebook rule recommending among others- avoidance of making both accounts look similar or have clear features like similar photos so as to elude robot’s recognition, manipulation of sign up information like birthday, desisting from interacting with one’s two accounts, acting like different personalities and never confessing one’s real name on Facebook.<sup>70</sup>

Again, owing to manipulation of signifiers at sign up, users not only find reason to set up different identities for selves, but use the signifiers to take identities of others. More often than not, people’s photos are stolen and their names and locations are used to create pseudo Facebook identities and through them deceive unsuspecting Facebook users. Consequently, identity theft is a big issue in today’s social media discourse. It is not uncommon to hear people denouncing a Facebook Identity as creation of cheats.

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<sup>66</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect*, 23.

<sup>67</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect*, 31.

<sup>68</sup> Facebook Help Centre, *How do I create a Facebook Account?* <https://www.facebook.com/help/188157731232424?helpref=topq> (26.02.2019 16.49pm)

<sup>69</sup> Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect*, 199.

<sup>70</sup> Park Linda Swan (Steven) “Is it possible to create a second Facebook account without getting into trouble?” <https://www.quora.com/Is-it-possible-to-create-a-second-Facebook-account-without-getting-into-trouble>. Accessed on Jan 25, 2018 at 14.03.

### **3.3.2. Facebook identity as ideology**

Again, Facebook curates identity around ideology. Given its capacity as tool for role playing, Facebook is being used to propagate people's perception of the world around them and how to solve its problems. Ideology is always a thought extension of a person and carries the trade mark of the founder. Like in our brain transplant thought experiment, ideology is a descendant of an ancestral person, psychological continuity which Parfit argues is in figurative sense. Where survive is taken as identity.

Facebook offers opportunity for users to create, join, share and spread ideology. Such ideology could be on political, religious, philosophical, psychological, or otherwise. Part of earlier sign up requirements for Facebook was listing one's political and religious view. In this way, the platform opened way for people of like mind to come together and promote their taste. Gradually, Facebook grew to be a tool for mobilization based on shared principles of life. Groups now see the need to create pages dedicated to their belief. In this way, like minds were able to create identity for themselves on Facebook. Ideological identity on Facebook could be described as thought identity.

Unfortunately, the abuse on Facebook has seen rise in number of pages bearing the similar ideological identity. In fact, as part of its effort to tighten its recidivism policy on hate speech, graphic violence, and bullying, Facebook in February 2019 announced removal of 22 pages linked to conspiracy theorist Alex Jones and InfoWars. The Facebook spokesperson is quoted as saying that they use "a broad set of signals" to track similar titles or admins which have double identity, thereby violating their policy.<sup>71</sup>

The vulnerability at Facebook sign-up has consequence for integrity of ideological identity. Ideological identities are infiltrating Facebook given the infiltration of fake Facebook ID linked to amorphous users. The impact of this anonymity is felt in two ways that undermine the integrity of ideological identity. Dubious users easily create a page name of a known ideological movement as a hide out to spread different message unnoticed by authorities. This explains why the platform can be used to spread hate and radicalize people. Secondly, amorphous users are also stealing ideological identities of reputable person, organization or movement either to defraud unsuspecting people.

Keeping ideological identity one ought to make it impossible for two pages to bear the same ideological identity or something similar.

### **3.3.3. Facebook identity as product**

People use Facebook to sell their products and services. The conditions and features which allow the creation of ideological identity permits this identity too. Through Facebook Business, people are able to create a business page to build and promote their products, services through advertising. Business Manager offered by Facebook helps people organise or manage their business. Like in every Facebook page, creating this product identity online requires personal Facebook account to confirm one's identity.

Unfortunately, this identity is not fully protected too for genuine users. The possibility of dubious people using amorphous account to create profile name is a setback for the integrity of product identity on Facebook. Owing to issues discussed in the above two forms of Facebook identity, people have stolen one's business name to create online presence and from there extort innocent prospective buyers. It is therefore difficult to make this identity one too.

## **IV. TOWARDS IDENTITY INTEGRITY: BIOMETRIC OPTIONS**

Clearly, we have seen that limited signifiers at sign up into Facebook plus their vulnerability to manipulations makes it difficult to keep identity one on Facebook. This creates room for multiplications of selves and multi-living on Facebook thereby defeating the aim of Zuckerberg. Keeping identity one on Facebook ought to validate one identity for each user not in psychosocial sense of identity roles but in semiotic sense of preserving a person over a space through signifiers in which a person is best defined and recognized. Of three different ways of expressing relationship between a signifier and a signified, index with its relationship of continuity represents clearer reality than icon and symbol.

Therefore, achieving one identity for each person demands incorporating features that are more indexical than iconic or symbolic at sign up. Index signifiers are naturally unique, authentic and hardly permits multiple sign-up into the platform. This is the success behind national passport enrolments in countries and organizations in which one national or organizational identity is achieved for every person. Regulations of corporations is also achieved through platform that makes it impossible to steal a corporate identity. The same applies to registered ideological movements.

Initially, signing up to Facebook was restricted to having a valid Harvard.edu email address and using one's real name.<sup>72</sup>This restriction validated early users' identities since one needed to have been a registered

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<sup>71</sup>Oliver Darcy, "Facebook removes 22 more pages connected to conspiracy theorist Alex Jones and Infowars." <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/02/05/media/facebook-alex-jones-infowars-pages/index.html>. 26.06.2019. 16.52 p.m.

<sup>72</sup>Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect*, 31.

student to have the university email address. This validation marked Facebook out from every platform else that predated it. However, the identity integrity was lost with expansion into a wider and open society.

A return to that period of authenticity can begin with integration of biometric sign up features that allow replication of one Facebook ID for every person. Such features may include use of finger print at sign up to generate permanent and one ID for every user; or use of direct image capture for profile picture of those wish. Users who care for their privacy may forgo using profile picture rather than using different image to confuse people. While the proposal of finger print safeguards against identity multiplication or theft, the proposal of direct image capture for profile photo will help to know when a user is on role playing. The finger print will help to expose the identity of a user who uses role playing to harm another user.

There is an assumption behind this proposal of biometric option which tends to focus on Facebook identity as a person. Since pages either for products or ideologies are created from existing Facebook account, authenticity of Facebook pages as ideology or products can be established using validated identity of a human person to whom product belongs to and from whom ideas originate. There may be an option of demanding for company registration number in creating product identity on Facebook; however, the fear is that such demand would present Facebook as a new instrument for hegemony.

Finally, much has been done to achieve identity integrity like removing identities with resemblance on Facebook. However, the dream is far from being realized for reasons enumerated in this study. It is the position of this piece that integrating biometric capture at sign up will help to keep identity one, solve problem of underage sign up, and will to keep track of fraudsters on the platform. The task would appear difficult but not impossible.

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