

# STRAWSON'S CONCEPT OF PERSON: A SIGNIFICANCE OF EGO IN STRAWSON'S PERSON AND NAESS REFLECTION OF EGOCENTRIC TO ECO-CENTRIC ATTITUDE

## Abstract

Person is a being with all its attributes as reason, morality, consciousness and being a part of establishing social relations. Traditionally it is said a person is an 'autonomous being'. Rousseau and Kant hold that there is a normative aspect to personhood. To have an autonomous character in a person is not actually acceptable. Regarding the nature of 'personhood' many philosophical questions comes to our mind. In fact the English word 'Person' has been derived from the Latin word 'person' which means--"The mask worn by actors in dramatic performances. It generally stands for a living conscious human being". Peter Strawson concept of 'person' in his book 'Individual' has tried to throw light on the problems of 'personal Identity'. He defined person as a 'primitive concept' as it is unanalyzable. The concept of person in Strawson's view is "a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characters are applicable to a single individual. Thus, Strawson belief that both M-predicates and P-predicates can be applied to persons. According to Strawson there is a theory which tries to account for personal identity which may be called "no- ownership theory". Strawson's person is not an embodied ego, but an ego might be a disembodied person, retaining the logical benefit individuality from having been a person.

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Let us see the concept of 'ego' and 'eco'. When the 'ego' and 'eco' are balanced, then we can find the true meaning of 'spirituality'. If we see ourselves as a part of the tree of life or as threads in the tapestry of life, then the lifesaving spirituality is seen to respond to our environmental problems of the world. If too much emphasis is given on the self, the ego, an imbalance occurs which is later collectively spread to the entire culture that is not sustainable in the long term. To change the outlook one has to combine natural value with human values so that, we can better our lives by choosing a higher moral standard towards our environment. 'I' should be removed from 'ego' and transform to 'eco' which leads to the great Maxim "Live and Let Live".

**Keywords:** Person, autonomous being, no-ownership, ego, eco, self.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A Person is a being with all its attributes as reason, morality, consciousness and being a part of establishing social relations. Traditionally we have been saying that a person is an 'autonomous being'. Rousseau and Kant hold that there is a normative aspect to personhood. To have an autonomous character in a person is not actually acceptable. Regarding the nature of 'personhood' many philosophical questions arise where it would not simply mean how we are in fact, but rather it means how we ought to be. In fact the English word 'Person' has been derived from the Latin word 'person' which means--"The mask worn by actors in dramatic performances. It generally stands for a living conscious human being". Moreover Strawson's view on 'person' is slightly different from others.

## II. STRAWSON'S PERSON

Peter Strawson's concept of 'person' in his book 'Individual' has tried to throw light on the problems of 'personal Identity'. He defined person as a 'primitive concept' as it is unanalysable. The concept of person in Strawson's view is "a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characters are applicable to a single individual". (Strawson, Individual p 97,98). Thus, Strawson believes that both M-predicates and P-predicates can be applied to persons. The idea of attributing a state of consciousness to a subject cannot be analyzed as the notion of attributing a state of consciousness to a body. That is the state of consciousness is ascribed to one substance while the physical states are ascribed to the other.

According to Strawson there is a theory which tries to account for personal identity which may be called "no-ownership theory". The no-ownership theory asserts that the states of consciousness do not belong to anything at all. Of course, if by the word 'belong' we mean 'being constantly dependent on a particular body', then in a special sense we can say that the state of consciousness belongs to a body. The two sentences like 'I have a toothache' and 'I have a bad tooth' grammatically seem to be similar but different in nature. The sentence 'I have a bad tooth' shows that there is a bad tooth in my mouth just like 'Ram has a match box', that is, 'I' here is logically equivalent to 'Ram' (a different person). Both 'I' and 'Ram' have the same status. 'I have a toothache' this sentence shows that it is because of experience, a state of consciousness which cannot be possessed by anyone and there is no place for 'Ego' to own the experience. But the previous sentence with the word 'I' is in the possessor sense. So experience not owned by anything except in a double sense of being causally dependent upon the state of a particular body. Thus according to Strawson the person's 'ego' happens completely because of confusion. There is no need to imagine an 'Ego' as non-transferable ownership is not possible for the purpose. Pointing to the no-ownership theory of Strawson it goes to establish that the state of consciousness and experience are necessarily possessed by a particular person in a non-transferable way as it is not possible that it also belongs to someone else.

Strawson in his book 'Individuals'---"The concept of a person is not to be analyzed as that of an animated body or of an embodied anima". (Individuals, p.103). "A person is not an embodied ego, but an ego might be a disembodied person, retaining the logical benefit of individuality from having been a person". (Individuals, p.103).

### III. EGO VS ECO

Now, let us come to the word 'Ego' that is seemed to us very precious. History, tells us that, we as humans always accept our position above all creatures of the earth. But human beings, like all living things on this planet are inextricably intertwined with each other. The idea of ecologism is alien to our society in which we live. When the 'ego' and 'eco' are balanced, then we can find the true meaning of 'spirituality'. If we see ourselves as a part of the tree of life or as threads in the tapestry of life, then the life saving spirituality is seen to respond to our environmental problems of the world. If too much emphasis is given on the self, the ego, an imbalance occurs which is later collectively spread to the entire culture that is not sustainable in the long term.

Exceedingly vital is the necessity for everyone to think beyond humans as the survival of Homo sapiens is fully dependent on the non- human world that is non-anthropocentric approach. It's necessary that humans should opt for non- anthropocentric approach for future cities and holistic environmental that re- integrates nature. But anthropocentrism is just like a force which is favour for human concern and not for sustainability.

### IV. DEFENSE AGAINST UTILITARIAN AND DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS

Through the normative ethical theories, they are exploring the roots of anthropocentric which are properties to humans. Jeremy Bentham Utilitarianism is based on the assumptions is based on three assumptions--- Firstly; the sentience is what determines which entities are to be considered by this moral framework. Secondly, Utilitarianism demands that this sentence is determined by the entity's capacity to experience pleasure and pain. Finally, Utilitarianism assumes that both pleasure and pain can be effectively measured and compared.(Unknown, p-10)To broaden the utilitarianism standpoint is to include the environmental side, or if any one tried to incorporate animals into utilitarianism with pleasure and pain, one cannot generalize this animal consideration to non-biotic components regarding environment or even to the whole species. Thus the main features of anthropocentrism which is human centric whereas holistic environmental ethics argue that we have duties not only to humans but we should preserve wild places, species, biotic communities and also the eco-system. As Aldo Leopold describes the greatest good as "land" not an individual.

According to Deontological theory 'Categorical Imperative' is to treat all autonomous agents as an "ends and never as a means". This right includes human centric and excludes animals.

### V. DEFENSE AGAINST ANTHROPOCENTRIC APPROACH

An Anthropocentric theory values only humans desire and regarded as a useful resource for human beings as it ends when human duties fulfill with their desires. Here the problem of this theory arises as the environment is viewed as a resource where humans can use any way they see fit. So, supporters of anthropocentric theory to environmental value assert that a natural entity used by humans or through human experience becomes valuable. It

is for this reason the anthropocentric theory is criticized by some environmental philosophers.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Thus for the society betterment instead of anthropocentric lens we have to see the world through eco-centric lens. To change the outlook one has to combine natural value with human values so that, we can better our lives by choosing a higher moral standard towards our environment. 'I' should be removed from 'ego' and transform to 'eco' which leads to the great Maxim "Live and Let Live". This maxim in the whole ecosystem suggest a class free society taking all in one whole.

Thus with the formula 'Live and Let Live' will derive the norm "Self – Realization for every being". Through self realization joy and the meaning of life can be enhanced towards a new way of seeing the world where our self can develop and undergo three stages-- from ego to social self, comprising the ego, and there to metaphysical self, comprising the social self and identify with others where the self is widened and deepened. Thus, self realization is the norm which connects our life through the ultimate principle—"Life is fundamentally one".

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