Self

Spooky
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The self is an individual person as the object of his or her own reflective consciousness. The self has been studied extensively by philosophers and psychologists and is central to many world religions.

**Philosophy**

The philosophy of self seeks to describe essential qualities that constitute a person's uniqueness or essential being. There have been various approaches to defining these qualities. The self can be considered that being which is the source of consciousness; the agent responsible for an individual's thoughts and actions; and/or the substantial nature of a person which endures and unifies consciousness over time.

The philosophy of a disordered self, such as in schizophrenia, is described in terms of what the psychiatrist understands are actual events in terms of neuron excitation but are delusions nonetheless, and the schizo-affective or schizophrenic person also believes are actual events in terms of essential being. PET scans have shown that auditory stimulation is processed in certain areas of the brain, and imagined similar events are processed in adjacent areas, but hallucinations are processed in the same areas as actual stimulation. In such cases, external influences may be the source of consciousness and the person may or may not be responsible for "sharing" in the mind's process; and/or the events which occur, such as visions and auditory stimuli, may endure and be repeated often over hours, days, months or years—and the afflicted person may believe themselves to be in a state of rapture and/or possession.

**Psychology**

The psychology of self is the study of either the cognitive and affective representation of one's identity or the subject of experience. The earliest formulation of the self in modern psychology form the distinction between the self as I, the subjective knower, and the self as Me, the object that is known. Current views of the self in psychology position the self as playing an integral part in human motivation, cognition, affect, and social identity. Self following from John Locke has been seen as a product of episodic memory but research upon those with amnesia find they have a coherent sense of self based upon preserved conceptual autobiographical knowledge. It is increasingly possible to correlate cognitive and affective experience of self with neural processes. A goal of this ongoing research is to provide grounding and insight into the elements of which the complex multiply situated selves of human identity are composed. The 'Disorders of the Self' have also been extensively studied by psychiatrists. For example, facial and pattern recognition take large amounts of brain processing capacity but pareidolia cannot explain many constructs of self for cases of disorder, such as schizophrenia or schizo-affective disorder.

One's sense of self can be changed if they become part of a group that they consider stigmatized. According to Cox, Abramson, Devine, and Hollon (2012), if an individual has prejudice against a certain group, like the elderly and then later becomes part of this group this prejudice can be turned inward causing depression (i.e. deprejudice).
Religion

Religious views on the self vary widely. The self is a complex and core subject in many forms of spirituality. Two types of self are commonly considered - the self that is the ego, also called the learned, superficial self of mind and body, an egoic creation, and the Self which is sometimes called the "True Self", the "Observing Self", or the "Witness".[7]

Human beings have a self—that is, they are able to look back on themselves as both subjects and objects in the universe. Ultimately, this brings questions about who we are and the nature of our own importance.[8] Traditions such as Buddhism see the apparent self (our identification as souls, minds, bodies and egos) as a "grasping-after" self—i.e., inasmuch as one has a "self," one has it only through a deluded attempt to shore it up. Christianity makes a distinction between the true self and the false self, and sees the false self negatively, distorted through sin: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' (Jeremiah 17:9)

According to Marcia, identity comes from both political and religious views. He also identified exploration and commitment as interactive parts of identity formation, which includes religious identity. Erik Erikson compared faith with doubt and found that healthy adults take heed to their spiritual side.[9]

One description of spirituality is the self's search for "ultimate meaning" through an independent comprehension of the sacred. Spiritual identity appears when the symbolic religious and spiritual value of a culture is found by individuals in the setting of their own life. There can be different types of spiritual self because it is determined on one's life and experiences. Another definition of spiritual identity is " a persistent sense of self that addresses ultimate questions about the nature, purpose, and meaning of life, resulting in behaviors that are consonant with the individual’s core values.”[9]

Further reading

- Thomas M. Brinthaupt, Richard P. Lipka, The Self: definitional and methodological issues
- Jean Dalby Clift, Core Images of the Self: A Symbolic Approach to Healing and Wholeness
- Anthony Elliott, Concepts of the Self
- Anthony Giddens, Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age
- Robert Kegan, The evolving self: problem and process in human development
- Clark Moustakas, The self: explorations in personal growth
- Richard Sorabji, Self: ancient and modern insights about individuality, life, and death
- Charles Taylor, Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity

References

[7] Hall, Manly P. Self Unfoldment by Disciplines of Realization. Los Angeles, California: The Philosophical Research Society, Inc. 1942. page 115 "On rare occasions we glimpse for an instant the tremendous implication of the Self, and we become aware that the personality is indeed merely a shadow of the real."
[9] Kiesling, Chris; Montgomery, Marylin; Sorell, Gwendolyn; Colwell, Ronald. "Identity and Spirituality: A Psychosocial Exploration of the Sense of Spiritual Self"
Individual

An individual is a person or a specific object. Individuality (or selfhood) is the state or quality of being an individual; a person separate from other persons and possessing his or her own needs or goals.

From the 15th century and earlier, and also today within the fields of statistics and metaphysics, individual meant "indivisible", typically describing any numerically singular thing, but sometimes meaning "a person." (q.v. "The problem of proper names"). From the seventeenth century on, individual indicates separateness, as in individualism.\(^1\)

Empiricism

Early empiricists such as Ibn Tufail\(^2\) in early 12th century Islamic Spain, and John Locke in late 17C England, introduced the idea of the individual as a tabula rasa ("blank slate"), shaped from birth by experience and education. This ties into the idea of the liberty and rights of the individual, society as a social contract between rational individuals, and the beginnings of individualism as a doctrine.

Hegel

Hegel regarded history as the gradual evolution of Mind as it tests its own concepts against the external world. Each time the mind applies its concepts to the world, the concept is revealed to be only partly true, within a certain context; thus the mind continually revises these incomplete concepts so as to reflect a fuller reality (commonly known as the process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis). The individual comes to rise above his or her own particular viewpoint, and grasps that he or she is a part of a greater whole insofar as he or she is bound to family, a social context, and/or a political order.

Existentialism

With the rise of existentialism, Kierkegaard rejected Hegel's notion of the individual as subordinated to the forces of history. Instead, he elevated the individual's subjectivity and capacity to choose his or her own fate. Later Existentialists built upon this notion. Nietzsche, for example, examines the individual's need to define his/her own self and circumstances in his concept of the will to power and the heroic ideal of the Übermensch. The individual is also central to Sartre's philosophy, which emphasizes individual authenticity, responsibility, and free will. In both Sartre and Nietzsche (and in Nikolai Berdyaev), the individual is called upon to create his or her own values. Rather than rely on external, socially imposed codes of morality.

Buddhism

In Buddhism, the concept of the individual lies in anatman, or "no-self." According to anatman, the individual is really a series of interconnected processes that, working together, give the appearance of being a single, separated whole. In this way, anatman, together with anicca, resembles a kind of bundle theory. Instead of an atomic, indivisible self distinct from reality (see Subject-object problem), the individual in Buddhism is understood as an interrelated part of an ever-changing, impermanent universe (see interdependence, Nondualism, reciprocity).
**Objectivism**

Ayn Rand’s Objectivism regards every human as an independent, sovereign entity who possesses an inalienable right to his or her own life, a right derived from his or her nature as a rational being. Individualism and Objectivism hold that a civilized society, or any form of association, cooperation or peaceful coexistence among humans, can be achieved only on the basis of the recognition of individual rights — and that a group, as such, has no rights other than the individual rights of its members. The principle of individual rights is the only moral base of all groups or associations. Since only an individual man or woman can possess rights, the expression “individual rights” is a redundancy (which one has to use for purposes of clarification in today’s intellectual chaos), but the expression “collective rights” is a contradiction in terms. Individual rights are not subject to a public vote; a majority has no right to vote away the rights of a minority; the political function of rights is precisely to protect minorities from oppression by majorities (and the smallest minority on earth is the individual).[3][4]

**Biology**

"What is an organism?" is an important question in biology and philosophy of biology. The concept of organism can be fundamental to the demarcation of biology as an autonomous science, with a proper object of research,[5] but there has been little explicit work devoted to the biological notion of an individual.[6]

**References**


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