

Week 4 – Notes on the Mystery of Self

Recap

A. Challenge of presenting very broad categories ('Life's Mysteries') in a meaningful way in a short space of 5 meetings.

B. Leaving many questions, thoughts, ideas, etc. unanswered or poorly explained

1. Different words for referencing Self:

- Self, Soul, Pneuma, Psyche, Spirit, Mind, (Consciousness), Ego, (I, me, myself), Ātman

2. **Plato** – Soul is the principle that accounts for all movements in living things. Three parts to human soul: rational (mind, intellect); spirited (emotions, high-end desires); appetitive (sensual desires). Soul is eternal; participates in divine life through ideas; somehow got conjoined to the body. Would like to get back to its homeland in the idea(I) world, the world of forms.

3. **Aristotle** – The soul is the form of the body (matter); theory of matter and form. Body and soul are one substance; when body is destroyed, form is destroyed (except maybe for the intellectual part of the soul which may continue to exist after death).

4. **Augustine** – Influenced by Plato and Neoplatonists (Plotinus). Believed soul is intimately conjoined and separable from body. Rejects Aristotle's view.

5. **Aquinas** – tries to rectify Plato and Aristotle with Christianity; self as 'embodied spirit'

6. **René Descartes** – soul (mind, thinking stuff) is separate from body (matter, extended stuff); soul (self, mind) and body are two distinct substances; dualism

7. **Baruch Spinoza** - Spinoza claims that a person's mind and body are one and the same. "Monism is the strange and beautiful idea that the cosmos is the source of all being. Historically, this view had its most influential exponent in Spinoza, who held that there was only one substance in the world, which he called 'God or nature'. Twentieth century English speaking philosophers poured scorn on monism, taking it to be unscientific and contrary to common sense. However, a number of leading contemporary philosophers have been drawn to the view, believing it to be not only consistent with common sense, but resonant with contemporary science." FROM *Spinoza on Monism* by Philip Goff

8. **Buddhist** – "But there's another passage where the Buddha advises all the monks to avoid getting involved in questions such as "What am I?" "Do I exist?" "Do I not exist?" because they lead to answers like "I have a self" and "I have no self," both of which are a "thicket of views, a writhing of views, a contortion of views" that get in the way of awakening (*Majjhima Nikaya 2*). <https://tricycle.org/magazine/there-no-self/>

9. **Self and Neuroscience** – "...an unusual meeting hosted by the New York Academy of Science. "The Self: From Soul to Brain" brought together a range of experts in neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, theology and anthropology, to discuss the extent to which our sense of self can be explained in the language of neuroscience." <https://www.nature.com/articles/nn1102-1099>

10. **Brain creates Self** - A mind is just an object that some brains can model, and so become aware of according to neuroscientist Michael Graziano at Princeton University.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg23931940-100-the-me-illusion-how-your-brain-conjures-up-your-sense-of-self/#ixzz6EGbQt5wN>

11. **Narrative Self** - The theory of **narrative identity** postulates that individuals form an identity by integrating their life experiences into an internalized, evolving story of the self that provides the individual with a sense of unity and purpose in life.^[1] This life **narrative** integrates one's reconstructed past, perceived present, and imagined future. Furthermore, this narrative is a story – it has characters, episodes, imagery, a setting, plots, and themes and often follows the traditional model of a story, having a beginning (initiating event), middle (an attempt and a consequence), and an end.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_identity

12. Sigmund Freud – Id, Ego, Superego; conscious mind, unconscious mind...
<https://www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html>

13. Carl Jung - The idea that there are two centers of the personality distinguished Jungian psychology at one time. The ego has been seen as the center of consciousness, whereas the Self (an Archetype) is defined as the center of the total personality, which includes consciousness, the unconscious, and the ego; the Self is both the whole and the center. While the ego is a self-contained center of the circle contained within the whole, the Self can be understood as the greater circle. Jung considered that from birth every individual has an original sense of wholeness—of the Self—but that with development a separate ego-consciousness crystallizes out of the original feeling of unity. This process of ego-differentiation provides the task of the first half of one's life-course, though Jungians also saw psychic health as depending on a periodic return to the sense of Self, something facilitated by the use of myths, initiation ceremonies, and [rites of passage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self_in_Jungian_psychology). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self_in_Jungian_psychology

14. Self in Hinduism - Ātman (/ˈɑːtmən/; Sanskrit: आत्मन्) is a Sanskrit word that means inner self, spirit or soul. In Hindu philosophy, especially in the Vedanta school of Hinduism, Ātman is the first principle, the true self of an individual beyond identification with phenomena, the essence of an individual. In order to attain liberation (moksha), a human being must acquire self-knowledge (atma jnana), which is to realize that one's true self (Ātman) is identical with the transcendent self, Brahman.
<https://iskconeducationalservices.org/HoH/concepts/key-concepts/atman-the-self/>

15. One Self or Multiple Selves – “Although we often think about the self as a “thing,” it is also the case that one can think of the self as a pattern of behavior through time. In this view, the “I” is synonymous with what I feel, think, and do feel across time. When examined in this light, then the idea that there are multiple self-states becomes clear in the sense that we do very different things across time. This basic insight frees us to think about the self in a much more dynamic way, as opposed to attempting to characterize it as a specific, fixed, and unchanging object.”
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/theory-knowledge/201404/one-self-or-many-selves>

16. Disorders of the Self - The term 'Disorder of the Self' comes from Kohutian 'Self Psychology'. It is a more accurate descriptive, at least of the underlying dynamics of the syndromes, than the older and more familiar term 'Personality Disorder'. However, 'Disorder of the Self' is a general term that does not distinguish between the various presentations.

The Psychodynamic model maintains there are five distinct types: The Borderline, The Narcissistic, The Closet Narcissistic, The Schizoid and The Psychopath. James Masterson suggests that the seeds for a possible full blown personality disorder are sewn during the first 36 months of life. It is generally agreed that this period is one of intense learning and experimentation; a time when the foundations of personality are set down by internalising and fine tuning the complex interactions between the physical and emotional environment and the developing psyche of the infant.

17. Identity theory - Type physicalism (also known as reductive materialism, type identity theory, mind–brain identity theory and identity theory of mind) is a physicalist theory, in the philosophy of mind. It asserts that mental events can be grouped into types, and can then be correlated with types of physical events in the brain. For example, one type of mental event, such as "mental pains" will, presumably, turn out to be describing one type of physical event (like C-fiber firings).
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Type_physicalism

18. Social Identity theory - Henri Tajfel's greatest contribution to psychology was social identity theory. Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s).
<https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html>