

WHO AM I?! - Between Psychological Continuity and Cognitive Complexity

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ABSTRACT: The problem of identity is, equally, an exogenous one—that of the identification and limitation of man and the borders of his person—and, an endogenous one—that of self-identification, re-identification and self-knowledge, more precisely, self-knowledge, its components and dynamics. This raises questions about the coordinates of this identification, self-identification and re-identification and self-knowledge of man, as unity and physical, spiritual, moral and cognitive identity of this world. How many come and how do they come from its exteriority, and what and how are those that belong to its interiority, that is, to feeling, intuition, the operations of thought, knowledge, logic, the concrete and the abstract? These are thought-provoking questions for which answers, benchmarks, structures, arguments, determinations and connections have been sought at all times. The question “Who am I?!”—which is both questioning and wonder—constitutes one of the fundamental problems of psychology, philosophy, logic, thought and self-awareness, but not only. Approaches to this are different and very complex, and the results are commensurate, in a dynamic and complex universe, open to all horizons. Who struggles with the management of identity, self-identification and re-identification, and other components of the human person and personality? The first answer could be: psychology, as a science of the soul or psyche; philosophy, as a science and art of thinking; and logic, in its capacity as manager of the generation, coherence of rationality and the reason of the expression of the realm of cognition. The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive overview, bringing a broader perspective to the profound and timeless topic of personal identity.

KEYWORDS: identity; identification; re-identification; psychological continuity

Introduction

This question is not of the whole world, of everything and the concrete and the abstract, but actually of the individual man, as an existing object, as a person, as the basic identity of this world. That is why every man on this planet—whether he is an element of ontology, epistemology and logic, a vase scholar or an ordinary man—asks himself this question to which he searches for answers all his life. These are never quite enough for him because beyond good and bad in self-knowledge there are few certainties and many doubts. The non-linearity of the evolution of the human being gives its dynamics and, as such, the endogenous need for self-knowledge, self-evaluation, continuous or sequential penetration into the interiority of one's own personality and its development is itself dynamic, very complete and always questioning. In every man there is a question, a Socrates of the self, which is not always agreeable, but, most of the time, absolutely necessary.

Navigating the Complexities of Identity

All people ask themselves, in one form or another, this question: Who am I?! As evident, it is a question-wonder, since such a question is not only a question in itself, but also a question-wonder. Always, the one who asks it has, outside a horizon of ignorance which wants to be explored and, therefore, known, and a universe of wonder and doubt. It is as if the one who questions and wonders

stands before a parachute jump or at the base of a cliff he is following to escalate it. It is an intrinsic expectation, it is a tense expectation, a questioning expectation and, at the same time, full of potential wonder. But, in the strict sense, in the narrow sense (because not every person asks it, everyone knows who he is and what is on his mind and does not waste his time with such things), it is a question that - either the amnesiacs put it, or, say, some of the confused teenagers (Schechtman 1990). It is clear that in this case of endogenous abnormality, so to speak, the answers are different. The adolescent needs a here-and-now knowledge of what he is and what he will be, to identify the landmarks, the value systems in which he exists, and further, he needs not only their identification (and not their re-identification), but also of the discovery of its waiting horizons, whereas the amnesiac needs re-identification. In adolescence, it is considered normal, while in the one affected by amnesia, it is a deviance, an abnormality, i.e., a type of illness that must be treated. The amnesiac needs continuous re-identification, while the teenager needs knowledge and, above all, self-knowledge. “The main contenders for a criterion of personal identity have been the bodily criterion and the psychological criterion, which are based, respectively, on the intuition that body similarity and personality similarity are responsible for the person's similarity. Of these two, the psychological criterion has been by far the most widely accepted, and current philosophical discussions of personal identity have focused almost exclusively on attempts to refine and defend this criterion” (Schechtman 1990).

Given that the question “Who am I?” mainly belongs to the field of personality, the self, self-awareness, inner experiences, the soul, i.e., the psyche, and the answers can be found primarily through a psychological approach, the theory of psychological continuity has found many followers, the most important being Derek Parfit.

Derek Parfit, the most prominent representative of this theory of psychological continuity, outlined, in *Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons*, a picture of this area, especially through a presumptive-implementation engineering, which means creating situations that do not exist in reality, but which could exist. Suppose a neurosurgeon were to implant, in one person's brain, a portion of another person's brain. In this case, the person receiving the implant would remember things that, in their genuine memory, do not exist, but which they have organically appropriated as if they did exist. It is a loan memory or a transplant memory. If so, it is likely that one day there would be psychological continuity through this fact, with the recipient of this partial brain transfer behaving as if it were their own. The examples that are given are conclusive in this regard. The transfer of memory and, as such, of sensibilities and cognitions creates a re-identification of one through the other, even if the many particularities and details are more like the recollection of an incomplete dream, a hazy dream.

When it comes to the brain, the issue of the split brain or the brain receiving portions of another brain is debatable and controversial. However, today, there are transplants of other organs – heart, liver, lungs, etc. – which the receiving organism identifies and assimilates as if it were its own. There is, therefore, already confirmed an organic biological continuity. Regarding the psychocognitive dimension of the person, i.e., the answer to the question “Who am I?!” the truth does not support a similarity, since it is not the brain organ that is important, but the memory and the extremely dense information that contains and which consists not only of memories, but also of the complicated and multiple “databases of feelings, sensations and cognitions” that are based not only in the brain, but practically in all the cells of the body and in the networks complicated relationships between them. With the advancement of artificial intelligence, we will also better understand the complexity of the human body and its universe.

The idea so much circulated through most texts that at any moment what unifies and fortifies consciousness at any moment is my experiences. **In its most familiar form, the Cartesian view, each person is a purely mental thing that persists - a soul or spiritual substance** (Derek 1987).

Butler's objection that the connectedness of memory appears to be a criterion of personal identity because, properly speaking, our memories are only our own experiences does not support psychological continuity, even if Parfit believes otherwise. The quasi-memory connection appears to be as real as genuine memory, on the criterion of identity. And in quasi-memory there are those elements of memory that make it a central part of identity. Memory presupposes the identity of the remembered with the experiencer, which underlies the crucial role that memory plays in the construction of personal identity. The delusional memory of Waterloo is not that it sticks in his psyche, but that he believes it was an experience of his.

"We don't remember the quasi-memories of other people's past experiences. But we could begin to do so ... Suppose ... neurosurgeons develop ways to create in one brain a copy of a memory trace from another brain. This could allow us to remember other people's past experiences almost exactly" (Schechtman 1990). He then goes on to give an example, the story of Jane and Paul, to show that it is possible for one person to have another person's memory non-delusionally. We have to imagine that Jane has copies of Paul's memory traces implanted in her brain, and shortly thereafter has a vivid new set of apparent memories of experiences she knows she never had. In particular, she has an extremely vivid memory of a storm in Venice and lightning striking the bell tower of San Giorgio, although she was never in Venice. By questioning Paul, she discovers that he has had such an experience. Parfit concludes: "Given all this, Jane should not dismiss her apparent memory as an illusion (Derek 1987). Paul and Jeane's experiences in remembering Venice are relevant. Jeane's sudden idea to join the French Foreign Legion seems to be a way of psychological connection with Paul that resonates in Paul's psyche. Casey recalls a memory of going out to a movie. The memory is not extremely accurate, Casey retained insignificant details, but she does not remember what the movie was called, what her children were talking about during the movie, or the music in the movie, etc.

Memories of striking visual images, such as the memory of Venice, are of a different nature. These memories are much more complex due to the number of personal associations and life details. These memories lend plausibility to the idea that the connectivity of memory which is an essential feature of personal identity is different from memories of the kind described by Parfit, and in any case, since quasi-memory is meant to provide a defense of theories of psychological continuity, memories of this kind richer will also have to be possible quasi-memories (Schechtman 1990). "This fact, however, forces Parfit and other identity theorists to adopt some rather implausible views of the inner life of individuals. To see this, consider what it would be like for Jane to receive Casey's memory from *Small Change* as a quasi-memory. The amount of personal detail this memory includes makes it difficult to imagine Jane receiving it as a quasi-memory. Some striking visual images are an experience that, under the right circumstances (that is, if Jane were really in that place in Venice at that time), could be experienced by virtually any sighted person, regardless of the rest of their psychological makeup. Casey's memoir is not like that, and contains a good deal of elements that refer to other parts of his life and personality" (Schechtman 1990).

Each individual is the bearer of his own memory. However interesting and consistent the scenarios, montages and developments in the psychological area of the person may be, it is clear that they can only be elements of a whole, that is, of a coherent, but extremely dynamic and extremely complex construction, in that there is not only psychological coherence, but also psychological and cognitive tumult or dynamics, to which all the personality characteristics of this universe concentrated in one human being are associated and integrated. Man walks all day through

various memories; he is a historian of his own history, a researcher of his own personality. Of course, each exists, in one form or another, in the memory of the other, the psycho-cognitive universe of each one, although it is strictly personalized, intersects, especially in essence, with the other universes. The cyber age, although it will not change the essence of the human being, will bring new and important details, information, cognitions and connections regarding the answer to the question, "Who am I?!"

Conclusion

To the question "Who am I?!" a possible answer today could be that man, as an individual and a person, is a bio-psycho-cogno-social being, which gives him a synergistic identity of uniqueness, in the sense that every man is a unique identity and unrepeatable on planet Earth and in the Universe. It involves complexity and dynamism, which has the capacity and ability to always re-identify, to know itself and, at the same time, to explore and know its existential, material and spiritual universe, in connection with other fellows, to implicitly generate and manage universality, society, sociability, complexity and to strengthen, validate and honor their uniqueness.

References

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