The Problems with the Self: A Conceptual Analysis

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Abstract

Many diverse theories and accounts, scattered across different disciplines, have already been proposed about the self and its nature, but the self has still remained ambiguous without a clear definition universally accepted by the majority of social scientists or philosophers and it is worth understanding why. In this regard, there are some problems that need to be addressed, including the multidisciplinarity, polysemy, multiplicity, multi-referentiality, linguistic issues, and so forth. Also at issue is the improper use of the term ‘self’, that is a serious oversight putting the self into a state of confusion. The primary aim of the present study is to clarify some of the confusion surrounding the self and to identify its various meanings already used in psychology, philosophy, sociology, and neuroscience. Another is to provide some plausible explanations for why the self has become so problematic, and also to shed light on the obstacles to achieving a general consensus on its definition. In the end, a useful set of suggestions for dealing with the problem is recommended.

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