UNDERSTANDING THE SELF:
PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SELF
(PRELIM MODULE)

By: Cyrus Kyle Osias
Faculty, SEAS

Lesson 1: Philosophical Perspective of Self

Lesson Objectives

At the end of the discussion, you should be able to:

1. State the importance of understanding one's self;

2. Explain various notions of the self from different philosophical perspective;

3. Examine one's self in relation to the philosophical perspective of the self.

Abstraction

Greek thinkers prior to Socrates, like Thales, Pythagoras, and Heraclitus among others, focused on the composition and processes of the world around them. Unsatisfied with me mythological and supernatural explanation, these so - called *Pre-Socratic* philosopher turned to observation, documentation, and reasoning.

Socrates and Plato

Socrates (469 – 399 BCE) – **Know Thyself**

- Provided a change of perspective by focusing on the self. His life and ideas, documented by his students, the historian Xenophon and the Philosopher Plato, showed how Socrates applied systematic questioning of self.
- The phrase "*Know Thyself*" was not invented by Socrates. It is a motto inscribed on the front piece of the Delphi Temple. However, Socrates challenged all subsequent philosopher to attain self - knowledge before anything else. His challenge to other philosophers is this *"I am not yet able, as the Delphi inscription has it, to "know myself",* so it seems to me ridiculous, when I do not yet know that, to investigate irrelevant thing. He wants to discuss through his philosophies is the art that devote its attention to precision; exactness and the fullest truth.
- Socrates saw a person as **dualistic**, that is, every person is composed of **body**, and **soul.** There is an imperfect and impermanent aspect of every one of us, which is our body, and then, there is also the perfect and permanent, which is the soul.

Summary of Socrates philosophy of the Self:

1. The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.

2. Man must stand and live according to his nature.

3. Man has to look at himself: to find what? By what means?

4. Knowledge is inherent to man, not outside. Wisdom is learning to recollect.

5. Knowledge of oneself can be achieved through Socratic method of inquiry. The dialogue is between the soul and itself. In between a student and his teacher (role of questionnaire) – to discover the truths.

Plato (428 – 347 BC) – The Republic

- He further expounded on the idea od the soul stating that it has three parts or components: *the appetitive soul*, *the rational soul* and the *spirited soul*.
  Appetitive soul: responsible for the desire and cravings.
  Rational soul: responsible for thinking, reasoning, and judging aspect.
  Spirited soul: responsible for emotions and also make sure that the rules of reason is followed in order to attain victory and honor.
- In his work The Republic, he emphasized that all three parts of the soul mush work harmoniously to attain justice and virtue in a person. The rational soul must be well – developed and in – charge, the emotions from the spirited soul are checked, and desires of the appetitive must be controlled and focused to those that give life, like eating, drinking, and sleeping among others.
- As ancient Greek Philosopher, a writer of philosophical dialogues, and founder of Academy in Athens where Aristotle studied, Plato id widely believed to have been a student of Socrates and to have been deeply influence by his unjust execution.

Plato's Philosophy of Self:

1. Under the usual haphazard methods of childbearing, accidents of birth often restrict the opportunities for self – development.

2. Faculty upbringing prevents ourselves from achieving everything of which they are capable.

3. The promise of easy fame or easy wealth distract some of the most able and young people from the rigors of the intellectual pursuits.

4. Men with the best ability and natural disposition must receive the best education, engaging in a regimen of mental discipline that grows stricter with every passing year of their lives.

5. The highest goal of self in education is knowledge of the Good. Good directly apprehended by intuition.

7. The reality must be something in the ideal order, not necessarily in the thing themselves, nut rather above them, in a world by itself.

8. Ideas are the foundation and justification of scientific knowledge. Reality does not change, for the ideas in ourselves is immutable.

9. Of all the ideas, the ideas of the beautiful shines through the phenomenal veil more clearly than any other; hence the beginning of all philosophical activity is the love and admiration of Beautiful.
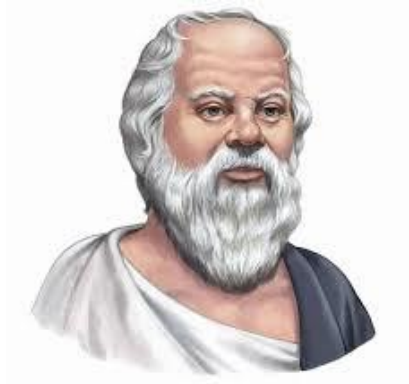
Socrates (469 – 399 BCE)
Know Thyself
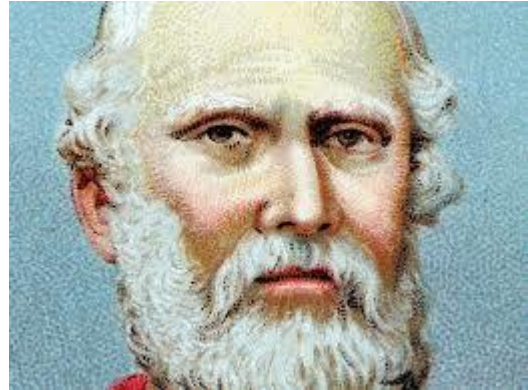
Plato (428 – 347 BC)
The Republic

St. Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 BC)

- St. Augustine is considered as one of the most significant Christin thinkers, especially in the development of the Latin Christianity theology. His idea of the "*self*" merged that of Plato and the then new Christian perspective, which led to believe in the duality of the person.
- St. Augustine traveled to North Africa and after his return he founded a monastic school at Tagaste, Algeria (now known as Souk – Akras, Algeria) for himself and his friends. He became famous preacher and was noted for combating the *Manichean heresy*. He was later made coadjutor bishop of Hippo until his death.
- He believed that there is this imperfect part of us, which is connected with the world and yearns to be with the divine, and there is a part of us that is not bound by this world and can therefore attain immortality.

St. Augustine Philosophy of Self

1. According to him, man should not interpret the Bible literally because it contradicts what we know from science and men's God – given reason.

2. Concerning his idea about original sin, he suggested that the bodies of Adam and Eve were already created mortal before the fall (driven away from the Garden of Paradise). He also rejected the immortality of the human raced proposed by pagans and contemporary ideas of ages that differed from the church's sacred writings.

3. He stressed that the number whom God knows will not be saved are reprobate (hardened sinner). He further said that God has chosen the elect certainly and gratuitously without any previous merit (ante merita) on their part. He firmly maintains firmly that it is God's will to save men. God, according to St. Augustine does not destroy human liberty and free choice, but preserves it, so that the elect would, potentially. Have the full power to be dammed and the non – elect full power to saved.

4. Chastity, according to him, is a virtue of the mind, and is not lost by rape, but lost by the intention of sin, even if unperformed. In short, he considered lust to be one of the most grievous sin, and a serious obstacle to virtuous life.

Some of his notable quotes:

"Man should love the sinner but hate his sin".

"Christ is the teacher of men".

"Nothing can conquer the self except truth and victory of truth is love".

"Total abstinence of the Self is easier than perfect moderation".

"People make themselves a ladder out of their vices if they trample the vices themselves underfoot".

St. Augustine of Hippo
(354 – 430 BC)

Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650) **Father of Modern Philosophy**

- Descartes was a French mathematician, scientist, and philosopher. He claimed that a person is composed of the *cogito* or the mind, and the *extenza* or the body, which is the extension of the mind. Descartes was considered as the first modern rationalist. He was famously known for his principle "*Cargio ergo sum*" (I think, therefore, I exist). He believed that philosophy should move away from the medieval scholastics.
- He was also a believer of the philosophy of skepticism. He was looking for certainty, and used his method of doubt (skepticism) to try and fins what was indubitable.

- In his "*Discourse on the Method*" and "*Mediations on First Philosophy*", he therefore concluded that the only thing that a person cannot doubt is the existence of his or her "*self*".
- His philosophy of "*Corgio ergo sum 'I think, therefore I am'*". He said that the mind (a thinking, non – extended thing) is completely different from that of the body (an extended, non – thinking thing) and therefore, it is possible for one to exist.
- Descartes believe that innate ideas or "*pure*" ideas are the very attributes of the human mind. These *"pure"* ideas are known as "a priori" that represent in all human existence. These innate ideas are the prerequisite for learning additional facts. Without ideas, no the rata could be known to men.

Descartes philosophy of Self

 What makes a person a person is therefore the mind, and the bod1y us just some kind of a machine that is attached and controlled by it. In Descartes words, "*But what then, am I? a thinking thing.* It has *been said. But what is a thinking thing? It is a thing that doubts, understands (conceives), affirms, wills, refuses; that imagines and also perceives* (Descartes, 2008).

Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650) **Father of Modern Philosophy**

David Hume (1711 – 1776) – **First Impression Last**

- Hume was a Scottish philosopher and empiricist who believes that all concept as well as knowledge come from the senses and experiences. Based on such perspective, he argued that there is self beyond what can be experienced.
- The self, according to Hume, "*is bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeeded each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and* movement" (Hume and Steinberg, 1992.
    - Categories of experiences:
        - **Impression:** are real or actual experiences or sensation, like feeling the rough edges of a stone or tasting a sweet ice cream.

Ideas: are the copies of impression or representation of the world and sensations, like love, faith, or even an association that this certain event is caused by something in the past could possibly create another reaction in the future.

His philosophy of Self

1. ***Argument against identity***; David Hume is very true to his extreme skepticism; he rejects notions of identity over time. He believes that there is no person that continue to exist overtime. They are merely impression.

2. *You are bundle of impressions*; individuals follow only a successive bundle of impressions. The bundle of impression is just a collection of "*variable and interrupted"* parts.

3.*Why we make mistake*; Hume notes that we have strong inclination to call something the "*same*" even when it is radically different.

David Hume (1711 – 1776)

Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804)

- He contributed mostly to the field of metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics among others.
- While everything starts with sensations and impressions, Kant believes that there must necessarily be something in us that organizes these sensations to create knowledge. It is like seeing a visual effect in television, your experience says it there, but reasons say it is only a computer generated – image.
- Kant's concept of self is a response to Hume. He wished to justify a conviction in physics as a body of universal truth. The other being to insulate religion, especially a belief in immortality and free will (Brooks, 2004).
- Kant, used inner sense to defend heterogeneity of body and soul: "bodies are the objects of outer sense; soul are objects of inner sense. In Kant's thought there are two components of self:
    1. Inner self

    2. Outer self
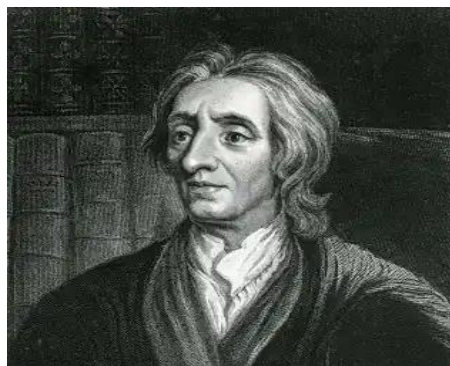
His philosophy of Self

Immanuel Kant
(1724 – 1804)

For Kant, it is the self that organizes and synthesizes our experiences into something meaningful for us. Kant however has rationalistic motive and posits that the mind is actively manipulating data through act of synthesis. The model contains flaw, transcendental apperception should have been placed in inner sense. Overall, the case remains for Kant's use of synthesis from faculties in the mind unifying objects, representations, experience, and consciousness into coherent reference to the self has implications in present day cognitive psychology (Brooks, 2004).

John Locke (1632 – 1704) – **Tabula Rasa**

- He was one of the Philosopher who where against the Cartesian theory that the soul accounts for personal identity.
- Locke holds that personal identity is matter of psychological continuity. Arguing against both the Augustinian view that man is originally sinful and the Cartesian position, which holds that man innately knows basic logical proportions, Locke posits an "*empty*" mind.
- He believed in *Tabula Rasa,* which argue that mind is shaped by experience, and sensation, and reflection being two sources of all our ideas.
- Note, however, that the consciousness us not the brain itself. It is something that goes beyond the brain and thus, for Locke, the consciousness and the "*self*" that comes with can be transferred from one person or body to another (Nimbalkar, 2011).

His philosophy of Self

Locke's theory also reveals his debt to theology and to Apocalyptic "*great day*", which in advance excuses any failings of human justice and therefore humanity's miserable state. The problem identity is at the center of discussion about life and death and immortality. In order to exist after death, there has to be a person after death who is a same person as the person who died.

John Locke (1632 – 1704)
Tabula Rasa

Gilbert Ryle (1900 -1976) – **The Self is how you Behave**

- Ryle's behaviorism was different sort of from that of psychology/ He thought of his approach as a logical behaviorism, focused on conceptual clarity, not on developing techniques to condition and manipulate human behavior.
- The official doctrine, according to Ryle, is derived from the influential thinking of Rene Descartes and contends that very human being has both physical body and non – physical mind which are ordinarily "*harnessed together*" while we are alive. However, according to Ryle after the death of our body, our minds can continue to exist and function.

Gilbert Ryle (1900 -1976)
The Self is how you Behave

His philosophy of Self

Human bodies are in space and are subject to the mechanical laws which govern all other bodies in space and are accessible to external observers. He also proposed that we should instead focused on the observable behavior of a person in defining the "*self*". He thought that this approach as a logical behaviorism to create a conceptual clarity, not developing techniques to condition and manipulate human behavior.

Maurice jean Merleau – Ponty (1908 – 1961)

- He us leading existentialist and phenomenologist, also contributes to the idea by stating that mind and body are interconnected with each other and therefore cannot be separated. Our body is our connection to the external world, including other people, thus all experiences are embodied. This also includes the thoughts and emotions of a person.

Maurice jean Merleau – Ponty
(1908 – 1961)

His Philosophy of Self

Maurice Merleau-Ponty believed the physical body to be an important part of what makes up the subjective self. This concept stands in contradiction to rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism asserts that reason and mental perception, rather than physical senses and experience, are the basis of knowledge and self

ASSESSMENT AND APPLICATION

A. Based on the discussion answer the following questions:

1. Who am I? Who am I really?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

  2. Choose a classmate and then provide your impression to them.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

References:

Alara, J.A. and Tablos, G.T. (2022) *A course Module for Understanding the Self.* Rex Book Store

Ariola, M.M (2018). *Understanding the Self.* Unlimited Books.

Frando F.F. and Isip, L. (2020). *Understanding the Self 2nd Edition.* Book ATBP. Publishing Corp.

UNDERSTANDING THE SELF:
The Self, Society, and Culture
(PRELIM MODULE)

By: Cyrus Kyle Osias
Faculty, SEAS

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, you should able to:

1. explain the relationship of self, society, and culture;

2. compare and contrast how social institutions and culture affected the formation of the self;

3. examine one's self against different perspective in this lesson and various experiences of your classmates.

Introduction:

- When you were born, do you think your infant self just said, "*Oh, I think males should go blue and play guns, while girls should choose pink and play dolls*? Did you already know saying *"po, opo, Sir, Ma'am, Kuyaand ate?* Did you already decide on your own that you will follow a certain religion, or that you will part of the Filipino nation?

- For a long time, philosophers have debated over the *"self"* in a mind -body perspective. The advent of institutionalization of the other social sciences, like history, anthropology, sociology, political science, and psychology, among others, as academic and research fields have widened the perspective of the self. As most of these branches of the social sciences study culture, the *"self"* was also seen as part of the social processes.

Abstraction:

Human being is, by nature, social beings. That is, each of us do not exist in vacuum. We interact with people and even the most introvert of us would have to relate and communicate with few.

Let us discuss this idea by first looking at the key concepts from sociology and anthropology, theoretical perspective on how the "*Self" operates with society* and culture, as well as the main social institutions that affect our idea who we are.

Key Concepts

- Every person lives in a society which is defined as a group of people sharing the same culture and typically interact with the definite territories. Each society has culture or a way of life for those living in that specific society.

- Culture is commonly divided into material culture – the attire, tools, weapons, architectural designs, religious implements – and not material culture or the belief system, the values, the norms or expected behaviors, as well as the shared language and symbols.
- Norms are rules on what to do or what not to do in a certain situation. Values are ideal behaviors or principle that set the standard of what is acceptable and admirable from a person who part of a society.
- Society is composed of *people* and culture is composed of ideas, behavior and material possessions.
- To maintain a smooth functioning society, social institutions are created, which sets of ideas, norms, practices, or mechanism organized and focused on addressing the needs of the community.
- As person grows into a society, he or she imbibes the culture of that society through *socialization*. *Socialization* is a lifelong process od learning, teaching, internalizing, and living the culture and of a society.

Theoretical Approach

It is the frameworks that enable us to combine and use concepts in a meaningful way to look and understand a part of reality – in this case, the connection of, self, society, and culture.

Symbolic Interactionism (George Herbert Mead, 1863 – 1931)

This theory claims that the self is create, developed, and changed through human interaction. Basically, there are three reasons why self and identity are social products.

1. The *self*-did not just come out of thin air. Our sociocultural context affected who we are, most of the choices we think we freely make.
2. Whether we like it or not, we actually need others to affirm and reinforce who we think we are. We also need them as reference points of our identity.
3. Our notion of what is personally important to us is also influenced by the current trends of what us important in our society.

Culture and Personality (Ruth Benedict, 1887 – 1948; Margaret Mead, 1901 – 1978)

- They argued that the personality or the self is dependent on cultural practices and socialization of a certain group. Thus, studying a person's personality can already provide us an idea of his or her cultural background and social upbringing and vice versa.
- Bennedict discusses in her books *Coming of Age in Samoa* and *Sex and Temperament in three Primitive Society* that personal development,

especially on gender roles and traits, is not actually based on biological traits. Most of these roles are based on cultural expectations.

Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology (Clifford James Geertz, 1926 – 2006)

- This theory looks at culture as a collection of symbols with meanings, and these meanings are made, communicates, and negotiated by each person to make sense of their lives and interactions.

Social Institutions

As mentioned earlier, social institutions are organized to address the needs of society and they, too, have a profound effect on our concept *self.*

1. **Kinship/Family** – This is the most basic social institution of a society that organizes us based on our familial ties. It can be based on blood – relations, like sibling relations (consanguineal), by marriage, like a husband and a wife (affinal), or social, which are relationship not falling under the first two but you still consider them as family.
2. **Economic/Market** – This system aims to regulate the flow of resources and services. Ideally, this should ensure that everyone gets a air share or that a person in need will get the service he or she needs in order to address a necessity.
3. **Politics/Government** – This usually composed of various organizations ensuring peace and order by legitimizing the use of power of certain group or people.
4. **Education/Schools** – The basic function of schools is to ensure that the knowledge of the pat and culture of the society gets transmitted from one generation to another. It safeguards continuity or brings about the changes to other social institutions. It aims to produce people who can live harmoniously in the given social environment as well as able to be productive citizens for the country.
5. **Religion/Church** – This is an organized set of practices, symbols, and artifacts regarding the belief of supernatural.
   a. Explanation of the unexplainable
   b. Meaning and purpose of life
   c. Continuity of relationship with the people we care about even after death among other

UNDERSTANDING THE SELF:
The Self as a Cognitive Construct
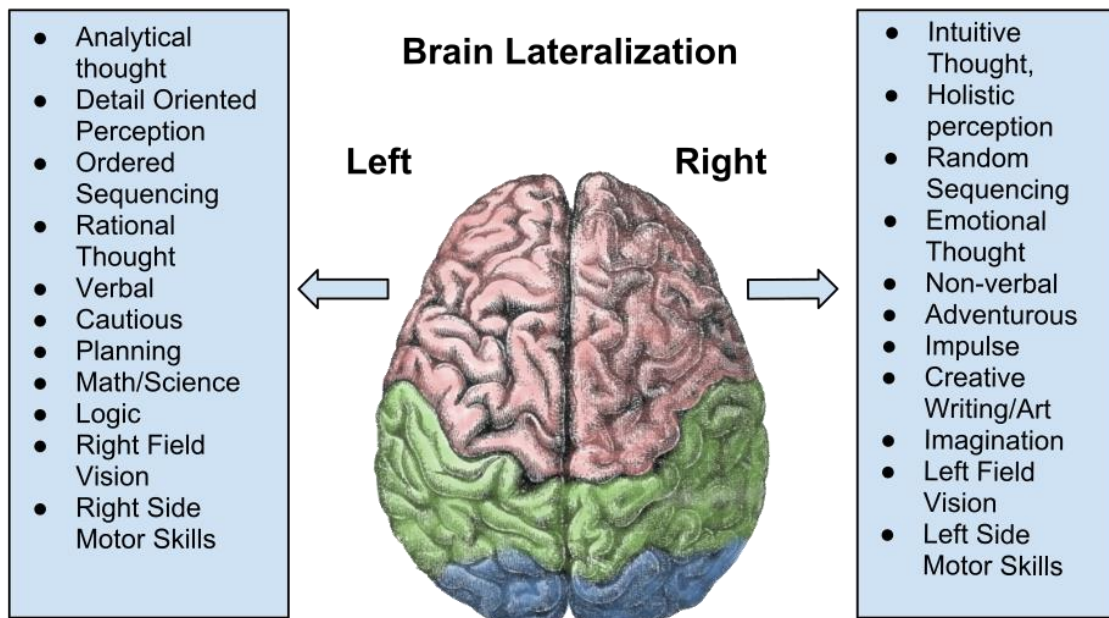## (PRELIM MODULE)

By: Cyrus Kyle Osias
Faculty, SEAS

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, you should be able to:

1. enumerate the various psychological perspective and concepts about self.

2. analyze the effects of various psychological factors in the formation of self.

3. examine one's self against the different perspective in this lesson and various experiences of your classmates.

Introduction

Psychology is interested in the functions and processes of the brain, the mind, as well as the behavior related to the mental functions of a person. Using experimental, clinical observation and other scientific techniques, psychology have contributed to a lot of perspective about the self.

Brain Lateralization

Left

- Analytical thought
- Detail Oriented Perception
- Ordered Sequencing
- Rational Thought
- Verbal
- Cautious
- Planning
- Math/Science
- Logic
- Right Field Vision
- Right Side Motor Skills

Right

- Intuitive Thought,
- Holistic perception
- Random Sequencing
- Emotional Thought
- Non-verbal
- Adventurous
- Impulse
- Creative Writing/Art
- Imagination
- Left Field Vision
- Left Side Motor Skills

Abstraction

Another approach to studying the self is to investigate how we attend to and remember things that relate to the self. Indeed, because the self-concept is the most important of all our schemas, it has an extraordinary degree of influence on our thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

Have you ever been at a party where there was a lot of noise and bustle, and yet you were surprised to discover that you could easily hear your own name being mentioned in the background? Because our own name is such an important part of our self-concept, and because we value it highly, it is highly accessible. We are very alert for, and react quickly to, the mention of our own name.

On Self Within

- William James was one of the earliest psychologists to study the self, and he conceptualized the self as having two aspects the "I" and the "me." The "I" is the thinking, acting, and feeling self (Gleitman, Gross, and Reisberg 2011; Hogg and Vaughan 2010). The "me," on the other hand, is the physical characteristics as well as psychological capabilities that makes who you are (Gleitman, Gross, and Reisberg 2011, Hogg and Vaughan 2010).
- Carl Rogers' theory of personality also used the same terms, the "I" as the one who acts and decides, while the "me" is what you think or feel about yourself as an object (Gleitman, Gross, and Reisberg 2011).
- Other concepts similar to self are identity and self-concept. Identity is composed of one's personal characteristics, roles and responsibilities, as well as affiliations that define who one is (Elmore, Oyserman, and Smith 2012).
- Self. concept is basically what comes to your mind when you are asked about yourself (Elmore, Oyserman, and Smith 2012). Self, identity, and self-concept are not fixed. For example, when asked about who you are, you can say, "I was a varsity player in Grade 5" which pertains to the past, "a college student" which may be the present, and "a future politician" which is the future. While they are not fixed, they are also not very fluid. Think of a malleable metal, strong and hard, that can be heated and hammered to any shape yet retain its core elements.
- Carl Rogers captured this idea in his concept of self-schema-our own organized system or collection of knowledge about who we are (Gleitman, Gross, and Reisberg 2011, Jhangiani and Tarry 2014).

Hobbies	Religion
Self	
Family	Nationality
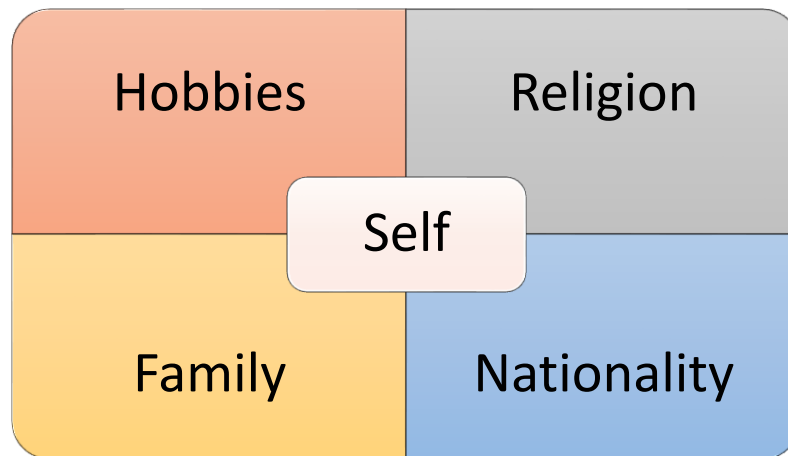
The schema is not limited to the aforementioned example. It may also include your interests, your work, your course, your age, your name, and your physical characteristics among others. As you grow and adapt to the changes around you, they also change. But they are not passive receivers as they actively shape and affect how you see, think, and feel about other things or the people around you (Gleitman, Gross, and Reisberg 2011; Jhangiani and Tarry 2014). For example, when someone states your first name, even if not talking about you, your attention is drawn. If you have a provincial language and you hear someone using it, it catches your attention. If you consider yourself a booklover, a bookstore may always entice you out of all the other stores in a mall. These are all part of your schema working on your behavior and attitudes. Theories generally see these concepts of self and identity as mental constructs, created and recreated in memory (Elmore, Oyserman, and Smith 2012). Current research points to the frontal lobe of the brain as the specific area in the brain related with the processes of the self (Elmore, Oyserman, and Smith 2012).

However, one cannot fully discount the effects of society and culture to the formation of the self, identity, and self-concept. Even as Freud and other theories and researchers try to understand the person by digging deeper into the mind, they cannot fully discount the huge and important effects of the environment. This is not nature versus nurture, instead a nature-and-nurture perspective

Internal and External

If we can remember the previous lesson, George Herbert Mead of the symbolic interactionism argued that human interaction helps develop the self (Hogg and Vaughan 2010). The result of this interaction between who we think we are and how others see us is what others call ***"self-concept."*** Sometimes we are aware about these things, a

lot of times, we do not know that we are actually doing what is expected of us. Carver and Scheier identified two types of self that we can be aware of:

1) the private self or a person's internal thoughts and feelings, and

2) the public self or what a person commonly shows to the others, specifically for creating a good public image (Hogg and Vaughan 2010).

Self-awareness also presents us with at least three other *self-schemas*: *the actual, the ideal, and the ought self.*

The *"actual"* self is who we are at the present, the "*ideal*" self is who we like to be, especially in the future, and the *"ought"* self is who we think we should be in contrast to the actual self.

Example is that you are a student interested in basketball but are also academically challenged in most of your subject. Your ideal self might be to practice more and play with the varsity team, but ought to pass your subjects as a responsible student.

One has to find solutions to such discrepancies in order to avoid agitation, dejection, or other negative emotions. In some instances, however, all three may be in line with one another *Self-awareness* may be positive or negative depending on the circumstances and our next course of action. *Self-awareness* can keep you from doing something dangerous, it can help remind you that there is an exam tomorrow in one of your subjects when you are about to spend time playing computer games with your cousins, among others.

On Self-Esteem

Group identity and self-awareness also affect our self-esteem, which is defined as our personal positive or negative perception or evaluation of ourselves. One of the ways in which our social relationship affects our self-esteem is through *social comparison*. According to the social comparison theory, we learn about ourselves, the appropriateness of our behaviors, as well as our social statuses by comparing aspects of ourselves with other people.

The *downward social comparison* is the more common type of comparing ourselves with others. As the name implies, we create a positive self-concept by comparing ourselves with those who are worse off than us. By having the advantage, we are able to raise our self-esteem. Another comparison is the upward social comparison which is comparing ourselves with those who are better off than us. While it can be a form of motivation for some, a lot of those who do this actually felt lower self-esteem as we highlight more of our weakness or inequities.

Social comparison also entails what is called **self-evaluation maintenance theory**, which states that we can feel threatened when someone outperforms us. especially when that person is close to us, that is, a friend or family (Tesser 1988 in Jhangiani and Tarry 2014). In this case, we usually react in three ways.

However, in the attempt to increase or maintain self-esteem, some people become narcissistic. Narcissism is a "*trait characterized by overly high self. esteem, self-admiration, and self-centeredness*"

They are often charismatic because of how they take care of their image. Taking care of that image includes their interpersonal relationships, thus, they will try to look for better partners, better acquaintances, as well as people who will appreciate them a lot. This makes them a bad romantic partner or friend since they engage in relationships only to serve themselves.

UNDERSTANDING THE SELF:
The Self in Western and Eastern Thought
(PRELIM MODULE)

By: Cyrus Kyle Osias
Faculty, SEAS

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, should be able to:

1. explain the concept of self om several Asian perspectives;

2. differentiate the concept "self" according to western thought against eastern thought; and

3. create representation of the Filipino self.

Introduction

Different cultures and varying environment tend to create different perceptions of the **"self."** One of the most common distinctions between cultures and people is the eastern vs. western dichotomy, wherein **Eastern** represents **Asia** and **Western** represents **Europe** and **Northern America**. It must be understood that this distinction and the countries included was politically colored during their inception. Thus, we should be more open to other cultural differences in the perspective, formation, and expression of the "self" other than what we will discuss in this lesson. In the Philippines alone, each region may have a similar or varying perception regarding the **"self."**

Abstraction

There are a lot of sources in which you can analyze the perspective of each culture and country about the concept of **"self."** You can see it in their literature, like how one culture depicts a hero or a villain in their stories. You can see it in their social organizations, like how they see their boss or their subordinate. Art works, dances, even clothing may show you clues about the **"self"**.

For the purposes of this lesson, however, we will look at religious beliefs and political philosophies that greatly influenced the mindset of each nation or culture, specifically how they see the "self." Since more theories and concepts from previous lessons came from the Western scientific research, we will highlight the Eastern thoughts in this lesson.

EAST meets WEST

LAO TSE: When you have made a thought, laugh at it!

DESCARTES: I think. Therefore I am.

We have a problem!

Asian Philosophies and the "Self"

- ✚ *Confucianism* can be described as a code of ethical conduct, of how one should properly act according to their relationship with other people, thus, it is also focused on having a harmonious social life (Ho 1995). The identity and self-concept of the individual, therefore, is interwoven with the identity and status of his or her community or culture, sharing its pride as well as its failures. Self-cultivation is seen as the ultimate purpose of life, but the characteristics of a chun-tzu, a man of virtue or noble character, is still embedded in his or her social relationships. The cultivated self in Confucianism is what some scholars call a **"subdued self"** wherein personal needs are repressed (subdued) for the good of many, making Confucian society also hierarchal for the purpose of maintaining order and balance in society

- ✚ **Taoism** is living in the way of the Tao or the universe. However, Taoism rejects having one definition of what the Tao is, and one can only state clues of what it is as they adapt a free-flowing, relative, unitary, as well as paradoxical view of almost everything. Taoism rejects the hierarchy and strictness brought by Confucianism and would *prefer a simple lifestyle*. Thus, its teachings aim to describe how to attain that life. The self is not just an extension of the family or the community it is part of the universe, one of the forms and manifestations of the Tao. The ideal self is *selflessness*, but this is not forgetting about the self, it is living a balanced- life with society and nature, being open and accepting to change, forgetting about prejudices and egocentric ideas, and thinking about equality as well as complementarity among humans as well as other beings. In this way. you will be able to act spontaneously because you will not be restricted by some legalistic standards, since you are in harmony with everything.

- ✚ The third belief is Buddhism. There are various groups who have adapted Buddhism; thus, you may find differences in their teachings with our discussion, but more likely, their core concepts remained the same. The self is seen as an illusion, born out of ignorance, of trying to hold and control things, or human- centered needs, thus the self is also the source of all these suffering (Ho 1995). It is therefore our quest to forget about the self, forget the cravings of the self, break the attachments you have with the world, and to renounce the self, which is the cause of all suffering, and in doing so, attain the state of Nirvana.

The self or the individual is not the focus of aforementioned Asian or Eastern philosophies or belief. Even with extended discussions about how the self should work, Confucianism and Taoism still situate the self within a bigger context. The person, in striving to be a better person, does not create a self above other people or nature, but a self that is beneficial to his or her community as well as in order and in harmony with everything else. As for Buddhism, the self, with all its connections and selfish ideas, is totally taken, not just out of the center of the picture, but out of the whole picture.

Comparing East and West

Western perspective *does not discount the role of environment and society* in the formation of the "self," but the focus is always looking toward the self. You compare yourself so you can be better you create associations and bask in the glory of that group for your self-esteem, you put primacy in developing yourself. One can also describe that the Western thought looks at the world in dualities wherein you are distinct from the other person, the creator is separate from the object he or she created, in which the self is distinguished and acknowledged. On the other hand, the Eastern *perspective sees the other person as part of yourself as well as the things you may create, a drama in which everyone is interconnected with their specific roles.*

Westerners also emphasize more on the value of equality even if they see that the individual can rise above everything else. Because everyone is on their own in the competition, one can say that they also promote ideals that create a "fair" competition and protect the individual. Asians, with their collective regard, puts more emphasis on hierarchy-as the culture wants to keep things in harmony and in order. For example, Westerners would most likely call their boss, parents, or other seniors by their first name. The boss can also be approached head-on when conflicts or problems about him or her arises. For Asians, we have respectful terms for our seniors and a lot of workers would not dare go against the high-ranking officials.

It must be emphasized, however, that these are perceived general commonalities. Considering historical or colonial past as well as the effects of migration, intermarriages, and social media, the variation between the Western and Asian perceptions may either be blurred or highlighted. Whereas conflict is inevitable in diversity, peace is also possible through the understanding of where each of us is coming from.

Theorizing the Filipino Self

It has been a trend for **colonized** countries to **"decolonize"** their perspective in order to see themselves from their own social and cultural experience. The Philippines was not left behind by recent studies pushed forth by Pilipinolohiya by Prospero Covar, Pantayong Pananaw by Zeus Salazar, and Sikolohiyang Pilipino by Virgilio Enriquez. Utilizing tradition, native language and concepts, and even folklore, they uncovered a more context-appropriate perspective of looking at the self. Especially with Sikolohiyang Pilipino, Enriquez described the Filipino "self" or personality as a "shared identity," specifically connected to the concept of kapwa. Accordingly, we place importance to values that promote cooperation and social acceptance, because we see the other person as fellow human beings and part of who we are . That is also why we have concepts, such as hiya, utang na loob, and pakikisama, which reflect how we relate to others or want to be perceived by our kapwa.

Activity: Differentiate the Western and Eastern culture. Write your answer and explain it.

Eastern	Western

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____