

# THE ONTOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF SELF

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Modern philosophical thought recognizes the problematic status of the reality of self. Earlier philosophers like Locke and Hume had raised serious taxing questions. Locke held that we have intuitive knowledge of the existence of self and that it is impossible to perceive without perceiving that we perceive. In Hume's view the material world, where the emphasis is on perception and sense experience, acquaintance with real world remains beyond us (4-55). Phillip Hodgkiss (5-40) also affirms that the thing-in-itself is unknowable and a solitary ego is destined to be detained in an unreal world of appearance.

Self is a complex phenomenon, it possesses an inner propensity to striving, it cannot remain closeted and isolated. Johari Window Theory stipulates that in its outward journey, only one fourth of self is known to itself and to others where human interaction occurs, with full awareness and understanding. One fourth of self is hidden from the other selves but is open and clear to self. The self must open up through more disclosure for better interaction. One fourth of self is not known to self but the other selves act as mirrors and through feedback may help the self to attain still better interaction. One fourth of self is a blind spot for self and others - an unknown area of self. So we may say that self involves some mysterious and exoteric dimension along with the tangible and the objective aspects of it. The hidden and the apparent, the visible and the invisible, the objective and the subjective represent two poles which are indicative of two distinct dimensions of self. In order to understand self we shall have to consider these two time-honoured ontologies.

The part of self which is objective can be separated for scientific study and it is therefore common concern of every other self. Phillip Hodgkiss (2005) says that human beings work on the assumption that they have a self and that others are similarly so endowed. This ontology may be called positivistic, well within the purview of scientific study, as we do in all

physical sciences. By extension we also include the social sciences which are following scientific procedures for study of reality which lies outside as part of nature. This is the dimension of self which is knowable, understandable and testable, self linked with other selves in various inter-relationships and inter-actions, self studied at the organizational levels, at the cultural, the linguistic. Self is considered in all these inter-relationships as an entity, a reckonable and almost stable entity. The interplay of active ingredients of consciousness namely thoughts, emotions, imagination, reflection, language, volition and action enhances the interaction of selves. We also know that there is a least common denominator of self which for practical purposes may be reckoned as stable, knowable and testable as evidenced by cultural, linguistic, sociological and historical studies in large human group. The self seen thus has extended itself from self consciousness to collective consciousness. When the self as a person relates to others it moves outward towards the dimension of personality amongst other personalities. It has moved away from purely individual self to grouping of nations, classes and professions, i.e., the human self. This is that one fourth dimension of self which according to Johari Window Theory is the arena of human interaction, with full awareness, understanding and disclosure 6-190.

The other reality belonging to self is born from its inside, the subjective, the intuitive, the mystical and purely singular nature of self belongs to each self and makes it unique, Deep down lies, sui generis singularity, the unfathomable, the unknowable, the unconscious and the mysterious. It is this reality of self which makes it different from the positivistic and objective ontology. The inner world of experience, cognition, affection belongs to a relativistic ontology, the subjective, the peculiar and introspective reality. The dictum "Know thyself" refers to this type of reality of self. What type of inner self emerges out of this subjective experiential and perceptive self Philip Hodgkiss expresses (5-405) this link between two different ontologies succinctly: Consciousness symbolically represents the objective world and experientially remains subjective. Does consciousness have identity, intentionality, consecutiveness, stability and durability? All types of creativity, originality, spontaneity and perfectibility belong to this inner self which yearns for individuality and achievement. McGinn (1993) considers mind a noumenal realm, with consciousness having a hidden structure not revealed to conscious beings themselves. This is that area of Johari Window Theory

of self which remains dark, unknown to self as well as to the other selves. A great deal of imagination, reflection intuition, meditation and Intention is required to make it available to self-consciousness. The latent, the endowed, the inborn tendencies are brought to surface by the self to make itself self-actualized and self-satisfied. All innovation all advancement, all achievement, is the direct result of individual self working with inner propulsion and self-direction. All great men in the field of literature, art, history, philosophy, natural and social sciences delved deep into themselves to self realize and self-actualize. It is through the self consciousness that a progress towards the collective consciousness enshrined in various substantive aspects of civilization can be made. Gadamer (5-177) however puts the case of the external world as follows:-

*Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self examination we understand ourselves in a self-evident way, in the family, society and the state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self awareness of the individual in only a flickering in the closed circuit of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.*

He explains the effective historical consciousness in two ways In one sense, it refers to a consciousness or understanding that is produced or effected by history. In another sense it signals an awareness of the effect of being historically situated. Pragmatic philosophy denounces this separateness of self and the external world. It claims that reality does not lie solely either in the one or the other but resides in their mutual interaction and coordination. Thus reality is constructed reality; it does not exist in any other form in isolation

The self in its pursuit of extension becomes aware of his situation as being effected by historical time and also enclosed by it. So the extension of self to others is not unlimited; the existentialists are very cautious in moving outwards. They use the concepts of inclusion and presence to relate one self with the other selves, but with one condition that the essential freedom of self shall not be compromised on the pretext of emotions of love and self sacrifice (2-75). Self moves in two types of cognitive experiences the ones which limit him, and others which liberate him. The home, the community,

the professions, the society, the nation, the comity of nations are the stages through which collective self extends itself and creates a common social consciousness and then cosmic consciousness to reach its ultimate association with human kind and the natural world. The inner self, the mystic and intuitive, the subjective does not lose grip, however, on its various stages of expression in the objective world or the ontology of realism or positivism. It leaps to the metaphysical reality, the reality of man's connection with its creator, the supreme self the transcendental self. Robert S. Zais (7-123) puts forth idealistic metaphysics as a distinct dimension of ontology. The philosophic idealist claims that ultimate reality is spiritual rather than physical, mental rather than material. Idealists claim idea as a reality. Parmenides, a Greek philosopher, had asserted long ago that what cannot be thought cannot be real. Schopenhauer had in the same vein asserted that the world is my idea. Berkeley, Hegel and Kant also asserted the reality of ideas (2-9).

Those who accepted Plato's theory of innate ideas i.e., a priori existence of ideas linked up the existence in this world to the existence of the other world, the world of perfection from which the souls came (4-78). The religious idealists also emphasize the reality of the other world. Iqbal also recognizes the two faces of the self. The efficient self, he considers to be affected by historical time and limited by the linearity of historical time. He gives a higher level of mastery to the appreciative self which lives in time duration and is therefore beyond the limitations imposed by inclusion and presence to relate one self with the other selves (1-38). It is this self which very few philosophers of the calibre of Iqbal consider to be guardian angel of the other part of self which is tied to historicity of time. The past, present and the future of this part of self is likened by Iqbal to a seed which contains its future possibilities (1-97). The appreciative self working with one quick jump reaches the pure duration of the Ultimate Ego; the finite ego (self) enters in the loving embrace of the Ultimate Ego, the infinite i.e., the Almighty Allah. The analogy of human consciousness working in duration time dimension with its metaphysical relation with the pure duration of Allah's Supreme Ego, is not far to seek. Iqbal, therefore, considers the ultimate journey of self towards the supreme ego. He does not circumscribe the journey of self to the finite limits of this universe but gives it a far

superior task of understanding the Pure Ego of the creator by entering into schemes of things of the creator as his helper.

The ontology of objective reality, therefore, is left behind by the subjective experiential self and leaps up to reach the third type of ontology of the Supreme Ego, the Creator, the infinite, which encompasses all finite things in its loving embrace without absorbing them or uniting with them, as is conjectured by some, ideologues.

In the final analysis, therefore, three distinct realities seem to exist in connection with the self, the subjective reality of self which nobody can visit even the self itself is normally not aware of it. It is through meditation, reflection, imagination, introspection and intuition that the dark niches of self get illuminated. The second type of reality comes into being when it extends itself to other selves and consciousness surfaces itself in social thought. Whole civilizations including economic, political, social, historical systems of thought get built around the social consciousness. The social consciousness leads to cosmic consciousness. The self in its attempt to come to grips with social and physical environments becomes cognizant of the ultimate reality of the Creator. The self makes a transcendental leap and finds a connection between self, the cosmos and the Creator, the Last and the Everlasting Reality.

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