CHAPTER - I

SEMANTICS OF SELF
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The word ‘self’ is quite uncommon in ordinary language. We are more familiar with the reflexive form, e.g. myself, yourself, himself and so on. Earlier, philosophers wrote much about ‘soul’, and if we turn to the writings of this century we find that yet another term has gained considerable currency – that of the ‘person’. The word ‘self’ is perhaps a conveniently neutral word which avoids the religious connotations of the former term and the existential aura of the latter.

‘Self’ is not a unified entity but is fluid and shifting. It consists of plurality of voices. We do not have a single self but multiple ‘selves’. ‘Self’ therefore is a pluralistic term. Selves are evidently unique phenomena. But some would aver that selves are not phenomena at all. They are not the same as objects. They are manifestations of the individual self. They are incarnated. This is a fact which the earlier thinkers and philosophers had overlooked. It was but St. Paul who was quite aware of this point. Self exists in space and time, since people have spatio-temporal existence. The individual in the beginning of his life and at the end of his life is not the same self. Whatever account we give of the ‘self’, we shall have to remind ourselves of the fact that the self is intimately related to the body. Objects too have a spatio-temporal existence. How then are we to distinguish between selves and objects? The most significant aspect of a self is that it is conscious. Animals are also to some extent conscious, but selves are self conscious. But one should not take this to be a circular statement. Since if one considers the theory of evolution, then one shall reckon that man has emerged on the scene of things after a long phenomenon in which mutation followed mutation. The most amazing
thing that emerged during this process was the gradual growth of what one might call 'awareness'. Man is a being aware of himself in a manner which is denied to other animals. This faculty finds ventilation in his capacity for an articulate speech.

If philosophy is the love of wisdom and if wisdom is complete self knowledge or self consciousness, then presumably the best way to begin philosophizing would be an immediate turn to the self. But can the turn to the self be accomplished immediately? Or has it already been accomplished unknowingly? Are we already disengaged from our situations and is disengagement the same as a turn to the self, or could there be a disengagement that is unwilled and unconscious, a disengagement that separates the individual from his surroundings without provoking a consciousness of the self?

In mediating a turn to the self by reflecting on how the contemporary situation provokes and determines that turn, we are following the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel on his quest for self knowledge. Hegel was one of the first to acknowledge the importance of viewing one's contemporary situation as a culmination of all that precedes; which influences any attempt at contemporary self consciousness. Rather than attempt an immediate turn to his own personal psyche, he analyses the psyche, or spirit of the age – the combined social or natural product of man's successive stages of growth. Hegel insisted that no one could go beyond his own historical period; he could only sum it up through the process of self consciousness. He viewed history as being something like a single subject, evincing stages of growth through experimentation and self reflection. An active man like Napoleon or Hitler is a medium for history's
experimentation; a reflective man like Hegel is a medium for history’s self reflection. Together they render history a dynamic and self conscious whole.

One need not believe in some disembodied, widely dispersed ‘mind’ in order to grasp some truth in Hegel’s theory of history and its relation to self. Hegel took history seriously because he saw that to be self-conscious; we would have to answer the many queries in relation to the nature of ‘mind’ and ‘self’. But could these answers be absolute, that one can take for granted? The answers keep constantly changing. Therefore, to know oneself requires that one ought to know one’s time, rather the spirit of the times (Zeitgeist).

A remarkable characteristic of selves is their capacity for memory. The memory of animals, on the other-hand is relatively short. Rats have what is called a ‘steer’ and higher animals can be conditioned to behave in ways which suggest that they have a memory but which might be explicable solely on the basis of conditioning. Elephants, as we all know have a strong memory power and they never forget. We human beings in contrast are very prone to forgetting things.

Selves, however, are capable of coming into a form of association with each other which seems far removed from the aggregation (or, alternately coalescence) that is to be found in the world of physical objects. If there is the ‘I’, there is a possibility of ‘you’. If there is ‘he’, there is a possibility of ‘she’; there is also the possibility of ‘we’ and the recognition of this in others in the word ‘they’. But the self is not something simple. Can we deny ‘selfhood’ in the split personality? If the self is something which possesses unity, are we, in justice to abnormal
cases and to the intermittent consciousness of normal life, to regard such unity as a matter of degree?

Self is the result of man’s awareness of himself as a separate object in the environment, enabling him to regard himself as the subject of his physical and mental states, actions and processes; and emotionally experience his own integrity and identity with himself in relation to his past, present and future. Self forms in the course of activities and communications. By changing the surrounding world in the course of his object related activity, and in interacting with other people, the subject separates his self from the non-self to emotionally experience his non-identity with other objects. Self is evaluated by the subject in the self concept to form the nucleus of human personality.

The question of identity of self is no less fraught with puzzles. In what sense is one the ‘same’ as one was ten years ago? There are similar puzzles about the identity of physical things. In judging of the identity of persons, general structural resemblance may or may not be there. The criteria of identity for the agent and the spectator are bound to be different. To the agent, organic sensations are probably an important source of the sense of identity. In addition, the agent has his memory as immediate evidence of who he is. But this evidence of the nature of self is always in relation to ‘others’. When we say ‘so and so has changed’ we often say this on the basis of a change in the other’s attitude to ourselves.

The characteristic of the self that has most impressed the philosophers is that the self is that which knows. Now this brings up the whole question of what it means to ‘know’. Consciousness has always been considered to be the presupposition of knowing. But philosophers
have been by no means in agreement, as to what sort of self, knowing
demands. Knowing in the case of man is bound up with his ability to
speak, with his capacity to put his knowledge into propositional form. Man
has a dual capacity, both to do and to think, and some philosophers would
object to this way of putting it, saying that both reflect what might be
called his ‘intelligence’. On such a view, man’s knowledge would not be
something to be exhibited merely in propositional skills. It is not difficult,
at any rate to see that whatever view we take of the self is closely linked
up with the view we take as to the meaning of ‘know’. The self is not
merely a contemplative being but a being who acts, however wide the
disagreement as to what ‘being’ may be or as to the appropriateness of
using the word ‘being’ at all.

The view that self is a substance was held by the rationalist
philosophers of Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries. But the origin of the
theory is to be found earlier than this, in the writings of Plato and
Aristotle, and in the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages. From
Plato’s famous myth of the chariot and the wild horses which need to be
kept on a tight rein by the charioteer, it is quite plain that Plato believes,
apt from the control of reason; there will be no order in man’s life, no
sophrosyne or moderation. St Paul, on rather different grounds believes
that unregenerate man(and this, of course, is not the same thing as
emotional man)is likewise a creature who has fallen short of his high
calling .Christian teaching insisted that the human soul was a thing of
immense value, something for whose sake Christ died. It would be
therefore inappropriate to deny the status of the highest category of all that
is the category of substantiality, to such a being. The doctrine of the fall,
however, showed that man had to some extent fallen from grace since the
time of Adam, and therefore in comparison with God, man's substantiality must be regarded as finite. In this way the Aristotelian theory of hierarchy of substances becomes fused with the Christian insight that man was, after all an imperfect being.

When Cartesians spoke of the soul then, it should be by now evident that they were drawing on a long drawn tradition, a tradition whose contents were woven into the warp and woof of catholic thought. The conception of the soul as 'substance' carried with it a very definite connotation comprising ultimate particularity, causal independence and persistence that is continuity. Causal independence was no less essential to substance for that which is capable of being causally acted upon is capable of being changed, that is of having its essence altered, and that is not being a substance. To say that substance is causally independent, it can be seen, is tantamount to saying that substance is changeless, that is eternal. It is small wonder, then that the traditional doctrine held soul to be immortal. Persistence, amounts to the same thing, a continuity of existence which has no end. It is understandable then that Descartes should have maintained that the soul always thinks. Otherwise wherein could lie its continuity? Thinkers like David Hume and Jean Jacques Rousseau gave a picture of human nature that is far close to the teachings of Christianity than to the picture given by the rationalist thought that the prime business of the soul was to know and the presupposition of knowing is consciousness. Knowledge so they held, presupposes self identity. For instance, in the case of inferential knowledge, when we follow through a connected argument, the same self that recognizes the premises must recognize the conclusion. Locke the empiricist seems to have taken over this piece of doctrine unexamined, for one of his main criticism of 'demonstrative
knowledge', is the dependence of such knowledge on memory and the involvement of the latter with a unitary self. The time had not yet come for disentangling the notions of the unitary self and a substantial self. Knowledge was thought to demand both a unitary self that is unity at a time and an identical self that is unity over time. Memory seems to give us direct evidence that the 'I' which exist now existed in the past, and even Hume is unclear on the question whether it is memory which discovers unity or it is memory which brings about unity.

The Rationalists further held that we have immediate awareness of a substantial self, or what C.D. Broad calls pure ego, in introspection. Descartes thought he was making a great discovery when he propounded his 'Cogito ergo sum' because this was in his view, the one statement which possessed intuitive certainty and at the same time existential import. To him therefore, it was one clear and distinct perception which concerned the realm of existence. There are other philosophers outside the rational camps like Bergson who have also quite differently of course based their theories of the self on an appeal to intuition.

The final trump card produced by the Cartesians is the view that above all in willing, the self exercises its substantiality. This is a piece of pure scholasticism, something which in the history of modern philosophy, finds its vivid expression in Berkeley. According to this view, volition is regarded as the first hand and a self conscious activity of 'production', of making something happen. But Hume considered this a mistaken psychological theory and debunked the whole account of volition on which it was based.
The rationalist theory of the self does not stand up very well against a battery of arguments from both epistemology and psychology. Kant showed that knowledge does require a cognitive subject, this by no means is the same thing as to that knowledge which requires a substantial self. The manner in which he argues is to be found in the Paralogisms of his *Critique of Pure Reason*. The self, the empiricist will say is reducible to its experiences whether pre supposed in the notion of ‘experience’ is something which is itself not an evidence. Causal independence is a characteristic far removed indeed from selfhood. Not only is the self acted upon by the world and by god but selves act upon and modify each other. If this were not so, how could the phenomena of human ‘influence’ be accounted for? The self, moreover is most dependent on the body. This is so even if we use the words ‘self’ and ‘mind’ interchangeably.

The evidence of memory was as hinted above, ambiguous and unclear. If memory could give direct acquaintance with the self as an entity, and this would be the strongest plank in the rationalist platform. But memory, after all, acquaints us with something historical, something which is the essence of time. It acquaints us with the sense of past, something therefore to which entity language is hardly appropriate. The appeal to intuition is always a dangerous one in philosophy. Intuition may be fallible and in any case the deliverances of intuition are unverifiable by the spectator.

Berkeley, an empiricist retained the concept of the ‘substantiality of the self’ insisting that the self or spirit was substantial par excellence. It was David Hume who denied the applicability of the concept of substance in its last stronghold— the self. The empiricist account of the self is also
known as the ‘serialist’ or ‘phenomenalist’ theory. But the main lines of
the theory even in recent terminology had already been laid down by
Hume.

Hume’s starting point is something which he had maintained prior to
his dealing with this specific problem. That is, all ideas are traceable or
‘cashable’ in, as William James would say, preceding impressions. His
procedure therefore, in dealing with any putative “idea” is to examine its
credentials by trying to trace the preceding impressions from which it was
derived. This procedure he had already tried in examining the idea of
causality, finding that in this case no simple impression reveals itself and
he carries out a similar examination in the case of the idea of the self.
What remains of permanent importance about Hume’s theories both of
causality and of the self is not much the particular answers he gives to the
problem but his diagnosis that our ‘ideas’ in these two cases are of a
special kind not being traceable to any simple impression. His first
assumption then, is that ideas are to be investigated by hunting for the
impressions which give rise to them. His second assumption is that all our
perceptions are distinct. Since all our perceptions are different from each
other, and from everything else in the universe, they are also distinct and
separable, and may be considered as separately existent and many exist
separately. They have no need of anything else to support their existence.
In this way Hume makes use of his atomic view of the contents of the
mind to counter the view (which Locke had supported) the perceptions
must adhere to something, counter the rationalist theory that thoughts are
modification of the soul.
As far as tracing our idea of the self to an impression is concerned, Hume confesses that in his own case, he can find no such impressions. He ventilates to say of people in general, "that they are nothing but a bundle or a collection of different perception which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity and are in a perpetual flux and movement". In this manner Hume puts his finger on the most striking characteristics of the self— a characteristic which had been completely ignored by rationalist philosophers — its temporality. Now the traditional concept of substance had involved both simplicity, i.e. the absence of complexity, and identity, i.e. the absence of change. It is clear, Hume thought, that whatever the self may be, and that we have still to determine the characteristics of simplicity and identity are foreign to it.

Now the manner in which we judge objects to be identical can give us a clue to the nature of self-identity. In effect we judge the identity of objects in terms of relation. What we actually perceive is a succession of parts, connected together by resemblance, contiguity or causation. In ascribing identity to variable objects, as we certainly do, we do not in our actual experience come up against anything of the nature of absolute identity. But if this is so, we realize the inapplicability of the word 'substance' to what we find in experience, and this even more so when we examine the subjective flow of perceptions in us as distinct from the succession of perceptions which purports to be informative of the external world. Hume fails to find any real bond among our perceptions. He traces the connection that we feel to customary associations of ideas. The principle of union is therefore an interrelation among the perceptions themselves and in talking about these relations, Hume recognizes the importance of the part played by memory. According to him memory not
only discovers the identity but also contributes to its production, by producing the relation of resemblance among the perceptions. He conceives our various experiences to be related.

The Self is a bundle, and a bundle may be noted is not a mere aggregate. Self identity is more a matter of degree, a matter of more or less our awareness of ourselves is a function of various experiences we have i.e. it is not an awareness of anything ontological. The empiricist or phenomenalist theory of the self has received fresh interpretation in recent years especially in the works of A.J. Ayer. Ayer’s phenomenalist draws on three sources the Humean reduction of selves to sense-contents, behaviourism and Russell’s theory of logical construction. In Ayer’s view, Hume’s account is faulty in that Hume admits that he is unable to discover the principle of connection between perception in virtue of which they constitute a single self. Ayer thinks that he has been able to solve Hume’s problem by defining personal identity in terms of bodily identity. He says that “bodily identity is to be defined in terms of resemblance and continuity of sense contents” (Ayer 1990:136). That organic sensations do form important element in our awareness of ourselves cannot be denied. But philosophers like Gilbert Ryle do recognize the part played by speech as well as behavior in informing us what selves are like.

The other contemporary theory of the Self which must be mentioned is that of existentialism. The most noteworthy feature of the existentialist treatment of the self is the way in which it lifts the discussion out of its usual context of cognition. That man is a being that acts rather than contemplates had been emphasized by philosophers before. But such accounts had either, with the scholastics, centered man’s activity in his
essence as a substance of a unique kind as a centre of volition or with
pragmatists, interpreted action in terms of the mere production of changes
in an external milieu. Existentialism discovers man’s selfhood in his
freedom, his powers to shape his own destiny through his own choices,
predilections and proclivities and decisions. In employing the word
‘person’ rather than ‘self’ the existentialist reminds us that man is not only
a being who tries to know but a being who feels and acts. He further
asserts that man’s most significant relation is not his relation with his
external world but his relations to his fellows.

Further, a woman’s life is made up of multiple selves that not only
overlap but also override and contradict one another. She depicts herself in
three positions. Anjali Kulkarni talks of three types of selves:

(a) The Social Self which projects her public image. She views herself
in connection with society at large, more often as the daughter,
sister, wife, mother of someone and occasionally as an individual
working in a certain capacity or for a certain social cause. This Self
occupies the visible, peripheral fringe off her existence.
(b) The familial self in which she is inextricably bound to her parents,
siblings, husband, in-laws, children and relatives. She looks at
herself again from an outsider’s point of view, evaluating herself on
the basis of how far she succeeds in rising up to other’s expectations
determined by the role she plays. This self occupies a major part of
her life. She seeks both the social and familial selves in the eyes of
others seeking satisfaction in being ratified by others.
The Private self is at the core of her consciousness. Sometimes she even fails to recognize, face and explore this self. To recognize this self is to stumble upon self realization. Grasping this self, comprehending it, evaluating it and above all respecting it is perhaps the most significant but the most difficult outcome of an autobiographical writing. This is essentially the quest for the 'real me' which may run contrary to the image of the social self and this makes her feel apologetic about the different herself.

An analysis of any text on the basis of an examination and exploration of how the writers deal with the evolution of the social, familial and private selves will help one in understanding the conditions and the predicament of womanhood in any social milieu and how the self is moulded and transformed by the society. ("The Bitter Story of a Divided Self", Critical Practice, Vol.III, No2, June 2000, p.82).

One has the impression that philosophers have often been misled by phrasing our problem of the self. But what is needed is to rephrase the problem in pluralistic term-the problem of how selves encounter, communicate, get to know and ultimately live with each other in harmony or otherwise.

Self is that conscious thinking thing, whatever substance made up of (whether spiritual or material, simple or compound, it matters not) - which is sensible or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery, and is so concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness extends. The aforesaid observation of Locke is further illustrated by the example of the little finger which is a part of oneself. He maintains:
... the little finger is as much a part of himself as what is most so. Upon separation of this little finger, should this consciousness go along with the little finger, and leave the rest of the body, it is evident the little finger would be the person; and the self then would have nothing to do with the rest of the body. As in this case, it is consciousness that goes along with the substance, when one part is separate from another which makes the same person, and constitutes this inseparable self: so it is in reference to substances remote in time ("An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" in Porter 1974, Philosophy: 26-27)

That with which the consciousness of this present 'Thinking thing' can join itself makes the same person and is one self with it, and with nothing else.

The philosophic problem of the self is essentially that of defining the term 'I', for although we assume that we know that we are, it is quite puzzling to describe the meanings of 'ourselves' in a rationally satisfactory way. We do not gain knowledge of the self by means of sense perception as we know a tree or a rock and yet we do perceive our bodies and, in some sense our bodies as our selves, not something we have but something we are: "We are not sure whether the self is a real psychic entity which surpasses all explanations, or whether it is simply an illusion" (Hume, "A Treatise of Human Nature", qtd. Porter in Philosophy, p.07).

Faced with such difficulties, some philosophical systems of a mystical nature have denied the reality of self altogether. If the assumption of an internal self is uncomfortable if assumption of an internal and a bodily self seems somewhat extraneous, then perhaps 'self' does not refer to anything at all. Perhaps it has the same status as the terms 'Santa Claus' and 'unicorn' which do not denote actual things but function to designate imaginary creations. Indian philosophies, for instance, will often make this claim, treating self as an illusion (Maya) which we maintain through ignorance. The enlightened man understands that there are no selves; the
universe is 'One' and the separation of subject and object is a pseudo
distinction. To conceive of the self in this way as undifferentiated and
consequently unreal is quite appealing when our lives are full of anguish
and suffering and we long for escape from our mundane and materialistic
existence. However much our individual loneliness or the consciousness of
anguish may persuade us to believe that our separate self is unreal, we are
aware of selves with a vividness of immediacy and directness which seems
to guarantee authenticity and to render all denials absurd. Western
philosophers generally argue that if the 'I' is not real then everything is an
illusion, for few things strike us as more certain. Thus the Indian equation
of the self and the universe atma and Parramatta/Brahma as
fundamentally one violates our 'self awareness'.

To assert the reality of the self is to face the puzzling burden, or
rather the issue of defining its nature. The very question of what the self
is, has occupied philosophy since the time of Plato. Two alternatives have
emerged from this philosophic debate whether to identify the self with the
body or with the mind, the physical organism or the mental being. The
theory of reductive materialism denies the notion of mind altogether, and
elucidates all activities in terms of mechanical sequences of a
physiological kind. 'Brain' is substitution for 'mind' as the agency
responsible for action, and the self is treated identical with the physical
organism which includes the brain as well as the nerves, muscles, organs
skin and so on. We are nothing but our anatomical parts and physiological
processes. Not only is a physical explanation thought to be adequate for all
activities of the self but the concept of mind is vigorously challenged on
the ground that there can be no possible evidence for its existence. This is
because mind by its very nature belongs to a permanently unknowable
realm beyond the reach of either scientific verification or confirmation by
the senses. It cannot be seen, touched, heard, smelt or tasted. No
conceivable test could detect its presence within the body. Due to this,
reductive materialist rejects the notion of mind and defines the self strictly
in terms of its physical components; the ‘I’ is thus reduced wholly no
matter without any spiritual or mental part.

Panpsychism, on the other hand asserts the link between body and
mind, and that of self. This theory maintains that body is explicable in
terms of mind, and that mind is the essential seat of self. Panpsychism
rejects the materialistic explanations because its empirical presuppositions
are viewed as pure prejudices in favour of the scientific approach –
prejudices which are inconsistent with our experience of phenomena such
as remembering, desiring, deliberating, reflecting and acting in accordance
with a conscious purpose. To reduce the phenomena of this sort to
physiological process does violence to our deep feeling that something
other than a physical process is occurring when, for instance, we are
experiencing aesthetic joy or the emotion of love. The materialistic
explanation also arbitrarily narrows man by declaring that he cannot be
anything other than that which is empirically verifiable.

The panpsychist avers that the self fundamentally and basically
consists of mind and that the reality of physical events occurring within an
individual existence can become a matter of doubt. Viewed from the
context of mind, an alleged physical event such as breaking a tooth is
experienced as the consciousness of pain, a morning swim as a feeling of
invigoration –feelings belonging to the realm of the mind.
Our minds are real and central to our selves. We may not be willing to accept the theory that mind is the only reality, or attribute consciousness to inanimate objects, but we tend to accept the assumption that our mind as well as our bodies are real; the one belonging to the realm of psychic reality and other to the domain of physical reality. The former is the psychic self of a person and the latter, the physical self of a person. Thus, the self embraces both mind and body. It is a psycho-physical entity.

If the self does embrace the mind and body, then further set of questions become relevant: To what extent are we physical beings and to what extent mental? The self cannot be identified wholly with the body since we are more than the sum of our physical parts: nevertheless the body seems to be a definite part of self and albeit the self is closely associated with mind, it is not just mind but something more encompassing. For if the self were only that series of mental phenomena making up mind then it would be impossible to account for the fact of self-awareness. Awareness is not the same as self-awareness; consciousness is not the same as self-consciousness.

What, then, are the boundaries of self? How much or what part of our bodies would have to be lost before one felt a diminution of selfhood? When our bodies grow, decay and otherwise change throughout our lives how is the self affected? How can the self reflect upon itself be both subject and the object; how can 'I' contemplate 'me'? Related to these questions are others concerning the relation of the self to the non-self: what should necessarily be included as essential to the self and what should be excluded as antithetic to it? What lies outside as the objects of consciousness and what within as subject? The self may be held to include...
the people one loves and personal property, especially objects such as tools worn from a lifetime of use, one's land and home, beloved books or paintings, a favourite chair, or clothing which has conformed to the body from repeated wearing.

In the Modernist perspective, myth is a mode of perception which alone can expand consciousness enabling it to include the other within the self; for this to become a possibility, the self must discipline itself by playing roles, by becoming other than self" (Pillai 19). "If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are and assume the second self", said W.B.Yeats, "we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves" (Pillai, op cit.). Yeats' mythical device was that of wearing masks. To the Moderns, myths thus served as a device for turning the problems of the self and society (in the historical sense) into a cosmic drama in which the self must determine the role appropriate to itself (Pillai, op.cit).

One can enlarge the self to embrace the whole of mankind within one's consciousness, as John Donne declares in his Meditation XVII:

No man is an island, entire of itself everyman is a piece of continent a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less as well as if a promontory were; as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thin own; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

The problem is that of deciding how wide or narrow the self is. What is then the individual self? An individual is the sum total of all that he can call his, the self is whatever entitles us to declare we are the same person throughout time, legitimately referred to by the same name whatever is seen as the persistent pattern, the constant ground of our being, that principle of personal unity underlying all change. It is the core or personal
essence which survives all the transformation and developments that take place during one’s life.

Rainer Maria Rilke, in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, dissociates the person from his body and appearance, distinguishing clothing, faces and hands, in particular, as extraneous to self. Faces are masks, clothing is costume and both are assumed by the individual in a continuous series of impersonations. They do not function as reflection of our nature but are roles imposed upon us by society which we may well be unable to stop playing when we try to be ourselves. Even hands are a part of the world divorced from us to the point of autonomy and they bear a greater affinity to farther than to our volitional selves. To Rilke, the authentic self consists of internal forces dynamic and spiritual, and ‘will’ above which courses through men, nature and objects. It is the internal aspect of all things (man especially) which defines their nature all men resist the self alienation that comes from defining oneself by looking a mirror. The ‘I’ is known through ‘interior apprehension’, which discloses indwelling spiritual centers as essence of the individual.

In his “Introduction” to metaphysics Henri Bergson reaffirms the view that the self resides within and is known by intuition and apprehension. On the crust of the sphere of self lie perceptions, memories, tendencies and motor habits, while within this exists a continuous flux, both manifold and one which is the essence of self continually developing in time.

John Locke examines questions of personal identity, the distinction between one self and other person, and the continuity of the self in his *Essays Concerning Human Understanding*. His conclusion stresses
consciousness as basic to identity, defining self as a conscious thinking thing. Though an empiricist, Locke uses introspective evidence in analyzing self hood, whereas his fellow empiricist, David Hume describes selves as bundles or collection of perception and experiences; the self can be nothing else to Hume since it is not the object of any perception. In his elucidation of the nature of self, Hume is more consistent in his empirical approach but at the same time less persuasive.

Gregor Samsa in Kafka’s short story, *The Metamorphosis* is a symbolical representation of the disparity between the mind and the body. Internally Gregor remains fundamentally unchanged; the metamorphosis into an insect is wholly external. We respond to the demands of our body. We are chained to the body which is compared to a “dying animal”. We may not primarily identify with the body we inhabit but it determines our behaviour in significant ways. Gregor’s transformation could stand for degeneration of our bodies in old ages. We all undergo a metamorphosis from birth to death. Towards the fag end of our lives, our skin becomes crusty, our voice grows shrill and squeaks, our eyesight degenerates and our mouth becomes tender. We must be careful in our movements because our bodies grow sluggish of old age. All these transformations in our physical appearance, our body do certainly affect our self. The mind grows dull when the boy becomes weak. An unsound body cannot have a sound mind.

In his *Meditations*, Rene Descartes prepares the method of “systematic doubt” to the point of denying indubitable reality to everything but the thinking self. We may be deceived about empirical matters by god, an evil spirit, or dreams which are sometimes
indistinguishable from waking life but the proposition "cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am) cannot be doubted; it is in fact affirmed even in the act of doubting, for we must exist in order to doubt. Descartes consequently defines the 'I' as "a thing which thinks", is the "thinking self".

Henrik Ibsen's play Peer Gynt Jean Paul Sarte's essay, The Humanism of Existentialism stress the point that the individual self is defined through commitments. Ibsen portrays Peer Gynt as a charming but worthless rogue who has skittered across the surface of life, selfishly enjoying a variety of experiences but never decisively committing himself to any specific type of existence. Peer Gynt has never found a meaning for himself, never dedicated himself to anything, and therefore his self has remained stunted and insignificant, a virtual nonentity.

Dealing with Mind, Self and Society George H. Mead has pointed out that "human beings tend to act on the basis of their influences about the probable behaviour of others towards them" (Mind, Self, and Society 34). Our feelings about ourselves are mediated by how we think others feel about us and how we see ourselves. Mead believes that it is necessary to take temporal changes into account in order to demonstrate empirically functional relationships among the self processes. Rosengren helds: "Ideally, changes in the self would occur over a relatively long period of time during which the individual moves sequentially through the different periods/stages of life" (American Journal of Sociology, LIX, Nov. 1954: 454). Moreover, once having developed to the stage of socialization, most persons maintain a rather stable and persisting set of relationships among the function of the self. In terms of the consequences in overt behaviour,
Sullivan has referred to such stability as “repeated situations which characterize a human life” (Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry vi). The behaviour of persons becomes relatively stable and predictable in so far, as there is some convergence between how the persons see themselves, how they see others, and how they think others see them, i.e. the self as it sees it and the self as it sees others and how others see it (Self-projection).

With the exception of clinical descriptions of distorted self-concepts of individual psychiatric patients, little empirical evidence is available about the processes of self definition among persons who are emotionally disturbed (i.e. the self in the emotionally disturbed). The concept of self as used in the social psychology of Mead is one that continues to be an intriguing basis for much speculation and interpretation. It also continues, however, to present many difficulties for empirical investigation and validation.

Self is a dynamic entity. It is in a state of flux. But it remains stunted and insignificant, a virtual non-entity, if it fails to find a meaning for itself; it is never dedicated to anything and if it exists without any purpose or objective.

Sartre in explicating existentialism asserts that individuals define their essence by freely chosen actions and are responsible to themselves and mankind for the person they have elected to become. Despite the anguish of responsibility and the forlornness of decision without the guidance of God, we must make a commitment: otherwise we are nothing. Once our choice is made, integrity demands that we accept the consequences standing by the self that we have created. It is our own personality in its flowing through time – our self which endures. We may
sympathies intellectually with nothing else, but we indubitably sympathize
with our anguished and wounded selves.

Self is that conscious thinking thing—whatever substance made up of, - which is sensible or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of
happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself, as far as that
consciousness extends:

.....everyone finds that whilst comprehended under that consciousness, the
little finger is as much a part of himself as what is most so. Upon separation of
this little finger, should this consciousness go along with the little finger, and
leave the rest of the body, it is evident the little finger would be the person, the
same person; and the self then would have nothing to do with the rest of the
body (Porter 1974:26).

It is the consciousness that goes along with the substance, when one
part is separate from another, which makes the same person, and
constitutes this inalienable self Porter further asserts:

...consciousness of this present thinking thing can join itself, make
the same person, and is one self with it, and with nothing else; and so
attributes to itself, and owns all the actions of that thing…(ibid; p.27).

The loss of self and the quest for identity has been the pervasive
theme in contemporary American fiction. This theme has been explored by
several contemporary American novelists such as John Updike, J.D.
Salinger, Ralph Ellison and Bernard Malamud. These novelists assume
that the contemporary cultural milieu is some sort of a wasteland in which
an individual has to salvage his own self. Saul Bellow affirms that the
individual self’s quest should come to terms with society. He disagrees
with the writers who assume a loss of self and the inability to redeem it in
the technological dislocations of the post industrial and post-war period.
The theme of the quest for self is one of the dominant themes in Western
literature. This quest on the part of the self is the basic operative assumption behind creativity. With the emergence of scepticism and empiricism, the "quest" has acquired a peculiar complexity.

Since the contemporary concept of the self branches off into philosophy and epistemology, an awareness of the significant changes in these areas becomes necessary. Since contemporary civilization is technological, the individual self is threatened with the loss of identity as a greater possibility today than ever before.

Freudian thought conceives personality as a series of tentative psychological states. As a result, it is quite arduous to postulate a permanent self. Therefore, the quest for self-knowledge, and by implication, integration, becomes still more intricate. The concept of self remains ambiguous still further by Freud's assumption of sex as the unilateral propelling force behind human activity. The concept of the libido thus reduces self to the quest for sexual gratification. Similarly from the anthropological and sociological points of view, identity is correlated with status, age, sex, family, profession and nationality etc. These categories actually define the external ambience but do not solve the problem of identity.

Heidegger and Gabriel Marcel realize that the problems of identity is essentially one of "defining the connection between one's inward experience of being, one's wish, one's private desire to be, and the strange, compulsive meaningless duty, merely to maintain existence in the community of material need (Hardy 1964: 10)."
Similarly Marcel describes this dilemma of the modern man as “a result of deep historical causes which can as yet be understood only in part “On the ontological mystery” (The Philosophy of Existentialism 10). As a consequence the individual” has been led to see himself more and more as a mere assemblage of functions” (ibid). Man must, therefore, define himself in terms of a community of selves since self does not exist by itself. It is not an autonomous entity but a dependent being.


