CHAPTER II
The conception of the ‘self’, over the centuries, has been explored by philosophers, psychologists, sociologists and others, in various ways. The nature of ‘self’ is such that it has eluded a single homogenous definition. If the question has stayed the same, the answers have changed over time. The QED offers one tantalizing glimpse of a possible definition of ‘self’. The dictionary maintains:

Self first appears as a living formative element about the middle of the sixteenth century... The number of self compounds was greatly augmented towards the middle of the seventeenth century, when many new words appeared in the theological and philosophical writing, some of which had a restricted currency of about fifty years (1645-1690).¹

Beyond merely offering a definition, this observation delineates the possible origins of the word ‘self’. The Encyclopaedia Brittanica defines the self as “the ‘I’ experienced by an individual,” adding that “In modern psychology the notion of self has replaced earlier conceptions of the soul.” The concept of ‘self’, thus, is said to have altered its meaning through time. The alterations in meaning are attributed to logical process of human development or fall (from ancient times to modern period) and it is assumed that the phenomenon of the present can be explained and made meaningful by tracing the philosophical tradition and exploring the shifting notions of ‘self’.
The seventeenth century is often identified by historians of Western Philosophy as the great divide, the point from which rationality could serve as the foundation of the self-determining individual. There was an increased sense of the self being connected to natural and moral philosophy as well as society and culture. Christian belief presumed the category of the person, which denoted someone who possesses an immortal soul; while Roman law presumed that civil society consists of individuals endowed with agency, hence responsibility. Since the medieval society rationalized the maintenance of order in terms of Christianity and jurisprudence, this society in some sense, acknowledged the reality of individuals. The use of the word 'self' in the 17th century had a theological dimension. When philosophers like Descartes and later John Locke discussed what they meant by a 'person' or 'self', their views were understood at the time in theological terms. Locke was much criticised when he detached the question of personal identity from the theology of the Trinity and associated it with consciousness.

The Renaissance signalled a truly decisive breakthrough for individualism. Liberating itself from the chains of custom, conformity and the Church, mankind took a fearless leap forward into self-discovery and self-fulfillment. The literary and scholarly movement called humanism rejected the theological dogma of man as a loathsome sinner required to abase himself before
God, and began to take delight in man himself, the apex of creation, the master of nature, the wonder of the world. According to Jacob Burkhardt, "in the Renaissance, man became a spiritual individual and recognised himself as such." The rise of self-awareness or subjectivity was reflected by the rise of genres like autobiography, journals, diaries, portraits, essays and philosophical treatises.

Renaissance humanists were much concerned with self-knowledge. 'Know thyself'- they re-iterated in different languages. It was Rene Descartes (1594-1650), who staked out a new role for the individual by making the basis of his Discourse on the Method (1637) on the proposition: cogito ergo sum (I think, therefore I am): my own consciousness is the one thing of which I can be sure, and hence the one fixed Archimedean point in the Universe. Not God, or nature, but the ego, the conscious self, thereby becoming the source of understanding, and so of everything else. Descartes' vivid use of 'I' in his philosophy establishes a point of departure from the early conception of self. His Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason, first published in 1637, is remarkable for the directness and persistence with which sentences begin with 'I'. Descartes' method to arrive at human knowledge and understanding was in a form of biography: he stressed what 'I' have concluded was a new foundation for truth. The point is not that Descartes was egotistic but that he chose 'I' as the hero.
of the story. He invited readers to reflect as he had done, to find in their own
'I' the grounds for truth. This differed from the language of earlier scholastic
philosophy, in which the personal 'I' was used in disputation but only to serve
deductive argument or textual exegesis, that is, to serve an impersonal sub-
ject. Medieval and Renaissance Aristotelian philosophers considered rea-
son and morality as general conditions of being not as personal acts.
Descartes' 'I am, therefore I exist' rings down the centuries as an individual
assertion.7

It is significant that when Descartes turned inward to examine his
individual mind as a source of knowledge, he represented this as an indi-
vidual act, not an act characteristic of life in a certain community of people.
He stressed self-examination as an individual act as opposed to a social
performance. Yet it must be questioned whether Descartes really did have
a modern sense of the individual 'I'. The style in which he presented him-
self was heavily rhetorical. Further, when he wrote about his 'I', he referred
to the soul as a thinking substance and denoted something universal while
characterizing it by a reasoning nature. He did not necessarily refer to an
individual consciousness. Descartes claimed, for example, that the soul nec-
essarily always thinks but he did not claim that an individual soul is always
conscious. Descartes used the Latin word cogitare equivalent to the French
word penser when he discussed the soul's qualities,
rather than words equivalent to the modern English word 'consciousness'. All the same, Descartes is considered the first philosopher to probe into the mechanisms of the mind. The question who we were, now hinged upon how our thinking processes worked. With Descartes, identity became a matter of the intellect. The reference to 'consciousness' as the defining characteristics of the self came into existence later; in the English speaking world, this came after the work of highly influential English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704).  

In the second edition of his _Essay Concerning Human Understanding_ (1694) Book II, chapter 27, of 'Identity and Difference,' Locke declares that 'self is not determined by Identity or Diversity of Substance, which it cannot be sure of but only by identity of consciousness.' By equating the soul with such an evanescent entity as consciousness Locke seemed to annihilate it completely. Never had such awesome responsibility been imposed on individual experience. To make this revolutionary assertion, Locke pushed his language beyond its existing limits. According to OED, he was the first person to use 'consciousness' in the sense of totality of the impressions, thoughts and feelings, which make up a person's conscious being. Locke thus advocated that the identity of a self or person required consciousness.  

Descartes' understanding of the uniqueness of human interiority invited later introspective philosophers to probe further the mechanism of the
mind. Locke argued in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that the mind is not like a furnished flat, prestocked with innate ideas, but like a home gradually put together from scratch out of ceaseless mental acquisitions. The self is thus the product of experience and education: “of all the men we meet with,” the English empiricist insisted, “nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education.” We are what we become. Different parents, different surroundings, different stimuli will produce different selves. Identity is thus unique, but contingent, the product of perpetual accidents. By implication Locke thus gave his philosophical blessing to human diversity, change and progress, and it is no accident that he became the philosophical mascot to that archetypal eighteenth century fictional autobiographer of indirection, the eponymous hero of Laurence Sterne’s novel, *Tristam Shandy* (1759-1767). The new Lockian psychology awakened a bold mission of man making himself—viewed both as the producer but also as the product of social development and civilizing process.10
The rise of the rational 'self' led to a corresponding decline in religious belief. Reason came to triumph. As the developing scientific methods began to take hold of philosophy, an understanding of man as rational, autonomous and in control of the universe emerged. Drawing on Francis Bacon's championing of science as the key to human progress, many philosophers spoke of man as the author of his own destiny. Man was no longer to be pictured as an Adam, created by God with all his faculties fully implanted; rather the new Enlightenment myths favoured the model of the self-made man. New prominence was given to dynamic and evolving notions of consciousness, built upon Locke's suggestion that the mind began as 'white paper or wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases.' Interaction with nature and the restless dialogue of needs and wants gave man the capacity to progress towards perfectibility.

'Self' was not a happy topic in the eighteenth century. It was fraught with anxieties at the theoretical and existential levels. It was the age of Hume, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Kant, Mary Wollstonecraft. Formerly a sin, self-centredness was being transformed into the *raison d'être*, the pride and glory of the modern psyche.

The individual occupied the centre stage in many other domains of eighteenth century thinking. As the autonomous bearer of rights he became
the basic building block in political liberalism that rebutted old Divine right and absolutist theories with the declaration that the individual was prior to the state. It was during the eighteenth century that the novel established itself as the literary vehicle for the minute exploration of intense inner consciousness, particularly when cast in the form of first person narrative. Enlightenment economic theories also considered the private property holder as the basic unit in an economic order - the possessive individualist or Robinson Crusoe figure. Finding classic expression in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776), political economy envisaged the market place as an arena of sovereign operators, each pursuing personal profit through cut throat competition. The greatest happiness of the greatest number was Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian formulation. The eighteenth century thus marked a spectacular reversal of the old theology. The Church rejected selfishness as sin but self-love and social commitment were considered the same, as sung by the poet Alexander Pope in this age. Enlightenment propagandists and philosophers like Bernard Mandeville and David Hume contended that the rational hedonism of homo economicus was good for the individual and for society at large. Mandeville revelled in the paradox that private vices were public benefits. The virulent critics of the age however considered it as nothing but its own antithesis. They saw it as an age marked by ever greater material inequality, moral and sexual depravity, and the shameless pursuit of the lowest forms of gratification. Never had man been so
alienated from his true self and destiny from other men and indeed from nature. Incapable of being whole human beings, of exercising their bodies and minds completely, and living in complete harmony with themselves and others, the highest ambition of men and women was to acquire and display. They lived outside themselves and existed only in the gaze of others. Hume reacted strongly to those who eulogized the ancient past to see the age in which they lived as dismal. He viewed the 'self' as a kind of theatre 'where several perceptions successively make their appearance, pass, repass, glide away and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations.' The individual's limited sympathies for the welfare of others, he argued, can be fully accounted for in terms of a self interested beholder's response to the poses and demands of others.\textsuperscript{12}

While the eighteenth century was an age of Enlightenment emancipationism, the subsequent crisis of this rationalism is clearly expressed in the age that followed it, i.e., the Romantic Age. While the novel of individual development such as Fielding's \textit{Tom Jones} depicted a sense of history as the progressive realisation of rational order, the French Revolution (in works such as Blake's \textit{French Revolution} 1791 or Wordsworth's \textit{The Prelude} 1850) became the motif of a shift in historical thinking. The violence and disorder which followed from this break with the past provided post-Enlightenment literature with an image of history as an apocalyptic break that could not be explained as another moment in reason's continued revelation. History
was needed to be rethought. Whereas the eighteenth century had proposed a reassuring, 'enlightened' model of the psyche, stablized by reasoned definition and exhibiting all the cohesion of a well-tuned visible mechanism, the nineteenth century found itself wrestling with alternative perspectives that granted space to mystery and imbalance. The hallmarks of Romantic thought were its accentuation of unconstrained impulse, its delinking of the Subject from the religious concept of 'self' and its de-emphasizing of rationality as the shaping principle of art.¹³

Inspired by the revolutionary era, Romanticism in literature and the arts pitched individualism on to even higher plains. The Revolution fostered the sense in writers of the early Romantic period that there was a great age of new beginnings and high possibilities. Many writers viewed a human being as endowed with limitless aspiration toward the infinite good envisioned by the faculty of imagination. “Our destiny”, Wordsworth says in a visionary moment in The Prelude, “our beings heart and home/ Is with infinitude, and only there,” and our desire is for “something evermore about to be.”¹⁴ “Less than everything”, Blake announced “cannot satisfy man.”¹⁵ Humanity's undaunted aspirations beyond its assigned limits, now became humanity's glory and mode of triumph, even in failure, over the pettiness of circumstances. Romanticism idealized the outsider, the Bohemian artist, the byronic rebel, bardic visionaries and even victims like Dr. Frankenstein's
monster. Romantic social critics loathed bourgeois respectability. The world was too much with us, Wordsworth complained; urban man was alienated; and communing with nature was the way to get back in touch with one's self. The odyssey of self-discovery became the key Romantic metaphor, with its wanderer protagonist finding spiritual epiphany through arduous effort. Romantic love privileged the heart; 'sensibility' became essential to goodness and beauty; and in the cult of the man and lady of feeling, every sigh, blush and teardrop proved the exquisite tuning of the superior soul. Life must be a journey of self-discovery. That could be bitter - a Winterreise; but the road was not to be refused. In their comparable ways, Schiller and Shelley, Coleridge and Chateaubriand, Holderin and Hazlitt each espoused a creed of the sacredness of individual development, in pursuit of what Keats called the 'holiness of the hearts' intentions. Self-development was thus assuming a religious ethos. 

In their search for 'self', the Romantic writers turned towards nature. To a remarkable degree external nature - the landscape, together with its flora and fauna - became a persistent subject of poetry. While many major poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, set out from and return to an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape, the outer scene is not presented for its own sake but only as a stimulus for the poet to engage in the most characteristic human activity, that of thinking. Representative romantic works are in fact poems of feelingful meditation.
which, though often stimulated by a natural phenomenon, are concerned with central human experiences and problems. Wordsworth's emphasis on childhood reacted against the scientific and rationalist view of nature as a mere object. Wordsworth asserted, in what he called 'Prospectus' to his major poems, that it is "the Mind of Man" which is "My haunt, and the main region of my song." Romanticism gave vent to a language of feeling rather than to the language of reason as articulated by Wordsworth, that "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". The materials of a poem come from within, and they consist expressly neither of objects nor actions, but of the fluid feelings of the poet himself.17

It was Jean Jacques Rousseau who succeeded in giving philosophical statement to an emergent language of feeling - a solitary self seeking authentic expression in environments resistant to impress and within which persons are seen to struggle, not so much to win approval, but to realize themselves. So conceived, this individual establishes his authenticity and moral freedom by making contact with an inner voice rather than responding to the wills and expectations of others. Taking a solitary stand, Rousseau wrote in the first page of his autobiographical "Confessions": "I know my own heart... I am made unlike anyone I have ever met. I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different." 18 This claim was a departure from the dominant 18th century conception of personality as theatrically plastic. It soon became a model
of Romantic identities and for the practices of representing 'self' which would characterize both autobiography and biography, narrative history and the modern mind.

Immanuel Kant\textsuperscript{19} entered into the debate with the publication of his \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} in 1781. Kant provides an understanding of the self based on a revised concept of rationality contextualizing the understanding of consciousness. Dissatisfied with Descartes' argument "I think, therefore I am" and with the doctrine of the soul that flowed from it, Kant felt that the certainty of self-knowledge had been wrongly described "It is true, however sceptical I may be about the world, I cannot extend my scepticism into the subjective sphere (the sphere of consciousness): so I can be immediately certain of my present mental states. But I cannot be immediately certain of what I am, or whether indeed there is an 'I' to whom these states belong. These further propositions must be established by argument, and that argument had yet to be found, Kant contented.\textsuperscript{20} Kant goes on to find out what is the character of this immediate and certain knowledge. The distinguishing feature of 'my' present states is that they are as they seem to me and seem as they are. In the subjective sphere, being and seeming collapse into each other. In the objective sphere they diverge. The world is objective because it can be other than it seems to me. So the true question of objective knowledge is: how can I know the world as it is? I can have knowledge of the world as it seems, since that is merely knowl-
edge of my present preceptions, memories, thoughts and feelings. But can
I have knowledge of the world that is not just knowledge of my point of
view? It follows from this theory that the 'forms of thought' that govern the
understanding, and the apriori nature of reality, are in exact correspon-
dence. Almost all the major difficulties in the interpretation of Kant depend
upon which of these two propositions is emphasized – The world as we
think it is, and determines the apriori nature of the world? Or is it the world
that determines how we must think of it?

The starting point of all Kant's philosophy is the single premise of self-
consciousness, and the first two of his three Critiques concern themselves
respectively with the questions: "What must a self-conscious being think?"
and "What must he do?" Self consciousness is a deep phenomenon with
many layers and aspects. It is not every being that can know his own expe-
rience but it is only such a being who can pose the skeptical question: 'Are
things as they seem to me (as my experience represents them)?' Kant
maintains in the 'Analytic', what he calls "I think" or the unity of apperception,
is the ultimate condition of experience, in the sense of being the logical
subject of experience or the point to which all experience relates. All ex-
perience is experience for a subject; whatever thoughts or feelings I have,
I must be capable of recognizing my thoughts or feelings. But the subject
here referred to is not something substantial, it is merely a logical require-
ment, in that nothing follows about the nature of my soul or self from the fact that I say 'I think'. So, far from being "an abiding and continuing intuition" for Kant the "representation 'I'... (is) simple, and in itself completely empty ...

We cannot even say that this is a concept, but only that it is a bare consciousness which accompanies all concepts. Through this I or he or it (the thing) which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thoughts." The same view is expressed in an earlier passage in the Critique where Kant says that "in the synthetic original unity of apperception, I am conscious of myself, not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself but (I am conscious) only that I am. This representation is a thought, not an intuition." Thus when the question "who are 'we'?” is posed, Kant means the term 'we' to denote indifferently any being who can use the term 'I': anyone who can identify himself as the subject of experience. According to him, "the unity of consciousness precedes all data of intuition." We know the world within a framework of space, time and substance. They are however creations of our intuitions or reason without which we could not comprehend the world. Independent reality, what Kant called 'thing in itself' is forever beyond our knowledge.21

Hegel critiqued much of what Kant said. He did not agree to Kant's 'thing-in-itself' concept and set out to develop a new method. Hegel's concept of 'self' is seen in the context of history and consciousness. In his own
introduction to *Philosophy of History*, Hegel clearly states his view of the direction and destination of all human history: "The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom." This sentence sets the theme of his entire work. He provides the most celebrated example of a historiography which combines both teleology and an attempt to understand the past. Only with Hegelian history does the past possess its own specific form of truth. Truth becomes dependent upon historical context, while history is not just a series of events but now forms a context, horizon or ‘world’ according to which events, meaning and truth are explained. It enables them to transcend in a positive manner the hostility of the natural world because there is something positive beyond the natural world. This Hegel asserts that what happens in history happens necessarily. Hegelians are made wiser by the past and ready to find rationality in a world that is the result of practical adaptation rather than deliberate planning. Hegel, unlike the rationalist historians, did not see religion as a form of mystified superstition, rather, for Hegel, religion possessed a truth of its own. Human beings, he believes, are also spiritual beings and it is this spirituality which enables them to transcende in a positive manner the hostility of the natural world because there is something positive beyond the natural world. The idea of God represented a form of being which transcended the merely day-to-day existence of ordinary life. When individuals participate in religions they do so because they can sense a form of spirit which is beyond their own limited experience. But this sense of transcendent spirit is destined
to be more authentically understood as human history itself. Eventually, according to Hegel, consciousness will understand that ideas of ‘God’ are actually ways representing the human spirit in an external form. Religion, therefore, is ‘true’ in so far as it provides an accurate picture of the way in which individuals relate to spirit, but these representations must be understood as stages on the way to a more rational historical awareness. The goal of all history, for Hegel, is historical understanding. By recognizing the development and becoming of spirit, human life will no longer posit an external goal or value. Cultures will not be directed to a transcendent God but will see that historical development is the true aim of spirit. Earlier historical period will be recognized as stages on the way to historical becoming. Only when humanity recognizes that God is a projection of its own spirit can philosophical awareness take place. The goal of Hegel’s history was to recognize all spiritual creations as human. Unlike those who conceived of religion as error, Hegel recognized that religious culture was true for its time and that such a history of representations would need to have taken place for ultimate rational self-awareness to be eventually realised. Hegel thus in a way shares with the Enlightenment the belief that the goal of history is reason and that reason will manifest itself as the overcoming of error and will issue in absolute self-understanding.

Hegel’s notion of self-consciousness is also important because in
different ways it has influenced both Marxist and existentialist thinkers. Self-consciousness, he maintains cannot exist in isolation. If consciousness is to form a proper picture of itself, it needs some contrast. It requires an object from which to differentiate itself. I can only become aware of myself if I am also aware of something that is not myself. Self-consciousness is not simply a consciousness contemplating its own soul. Although self-consciousness needs an object outside itself, this external object is also something foreign to it, and a form of opposition to it. There is therefore a peculiar kind of love-hate relationship between self-consciousness and the external object. Hegel's central point is that self-consciousness demands not simply any external object but another self-consciousness. One way of explaining this is to say that to see oneself, one needs a mirror— to be aware of oneself as a self-conscious being, to see what self-consciousness is like. An alternative explanation is that self-consciousness can only develop in a context of social interaction. A child growing up in total isolation from all other self-conscious beings would never develop mentally beyond the level of mere consciousness, for self-consciousness grows out of a social life. Thus, according to Hegel each person needs the other to establish his own awareness of himself. 'Self' in other words can be understood only in context with an 'other.'
Darwin's theory of the evolution was a major discovery in the nineteenth century. No doubt biological Darwinism was the outstanding achievement in that century and is now the foundation of large regions of biological theory. Darwin's theory is an example of scientific innovation that has had reverberations into the farthest reaches of human thought. The theory of evolution by natural selection did not occur to Darwin in an intellectual vacuum. Most important of his cosmological beliefs was uniformitarianism, the belief that nature operates everywhere and always by the same sorts of law. This view Darwin had imbibed from Lyell's *Principles of Geology*. More than a century after Darwin's death, his theory of evolution continues to influence scientific thought, but there is still skepticism and unease about the validity and significance of Darwin's contribution to knowledge and philosophy.

The significance of Darwin and his philosophy lies in its opposition to traditional Aristotelian views about things happening not by chance but for ends. Darwinism in the broader sense was the major philosophical problem of the later nineteenth century. Darwin's theory of evolution engendered doubts about the truth of religious beliefs and humanity had to endure one of the greatest outrages upon naïve self-love. Man had reconciled himself with the finding that he was a mere descendant from the animal world, with animal nature in him, his peculiar privilege of having been specially created being robbed by science. Pre-Darwinian biological theory was strongly influence by the view that all living things are patterned after an eternal idea or archetype. This was held not only for the species but also for other taxonomic categories and for anatomical structures as well. One
of the achievements of Darwinism was to break the hold of this notion on taxonomic and anatomical theory. Darwin's opinions on the origins of man were a threat to the deepest level of Christian doctrine, till man's uniqueness could be given a new theological interpretation. The edifice of traditional theology was touched at other points. Early 19th century theologians placed heavy weight on the co-operation of science and religion. The clergy-man-naturalist was a familiar figure. It was thought that the intricacy and systematic interconnections of nature exhibited the handiwork of God; to study them was an act of piety. William Paley's *Natural Theology* is a good example. By hindsight this attitude appears curiously self-defeating and vulnerable. The religiously inspired examination of organic adaptation was precisely one factor that led to Darwin's account of the origin of adaptation. His theory made the last citadel of divine teleology in nature untenable except, of course, for a few holdouts; but it was also widely interpreted as refuting all natural teleology, especially by the German materialists. Theology in the middle half of the 19th century was especially vulnerable to Darwinism, on a second point, namely its extreme Biblicism and even further, its literalism in Biblical interpretation.

The intellectual compromise that gradually emerged had its repercussions on 'man' and his relation to nature. The problem consists in admitting that man is part of nature and that he is indeed, even in his spiritual aspects, the outcome of an evolutionary process. The problem of divine nature
that is both perfect and yet incomplete is one contemporary heritage of Darwin.

'Self' being a contentious issue, needs to be examined from Karl Marx's perspective, a philosopher who left behind him a legacy of social understanding of Western philosophy. A reading of Marx however needs to be dealt with carefully as his writings have been interpreted in a variety of ways. Three basic features of Marx's thinking need to be kept in mind for any discussion of Marx: Base and superstructure; Class struggle and conflict; and Capitalism and revolution. Class structures are defined through the relations of production; that one class, the unproductive one, extracts the surplus value of the producing class. This exploitative relationship is taken as the crucial antagonism in each mode of production although it takes a variety of forms in the different stages of this historical narrative. The causes of the transformations of productive relations and forces in each stage of history (from antiquity to feudalism to capitalism) are located within the economy (the base or infrastructure). Political, social or cultural transformations are often characterized as a process through which underlying economic contradictions and conflicts are played out (within the superstructure) as a more visible manifestation of class struggle. The operation of the forces and relations of production in capitalism creates a polarized social order in which intermediate social classes (shopkeepers and peasants)
are forced through processes of monopolization into waged labour creating a proletariat which, if it became cohesive and conscious, could transform capitalism into communist mode of production. It is this stage of historical development which Marx believed would resolve these conflicts and contradictions.

Within Marx’s materialistic approach, human beings are conceived as creative creatures whose search for fulfillment can only be achieved by liberating their labour power from exploitative control. Much then hinge on the broad distinction between social relations within which human beings engage in useful work and exploitative social relations. For Marxists, it is the institutional separation of non-economic relations from exploitative economic relations that is the distinctive feature of the capitalist mode of production. In capitalism, exploitation takes place at the point of production outside cultural concerns, like the rest of the superstructure. In this story of historical change, capitalism is unique in being organised in such a way as appearing to segregate cultural life from economic life. The mission of Marx was to attempt to demonstrate the close connections between economic exploitation and all those spheres of existence defined as the superstructure. Unfortunately, at the end of Das Kapital where Marx promises to flesh out these connections, the manuscript breaks off in a somewhat final way. His followers have been trying to fill in the gaps in this grand narrative ever since.
The 'self' or human consciousness in Marxism is thus constituted by an ideology that is, the beliefs, values, and ways of thinking and feeling through which human beings perceive, and by recourse to which they explain, what they take to be the reality. An ideology is, in complex ways, the product of the position and interests of a particular class. In any historical era, the dominant ideology embodies, and serves to legitimate and perpetuate, the interests of the dominant economic and social class.

The quest for the ultimate self seemed to make a crucial breakthrough in the hands of Sigmund Freud. It was he who not only theorized the conscious but also the unconscious. Psychoanalysts argued that the rational understanding proudly cultivated by Renaissance humanists, Descartes prized *ego cogitans*, was not after all master in its own house, not the real thing. What truly counted was what had hitherto remained concealed, an unconscious, profoundly repressed and hence expressed only in foreign tongues or obliquely and painfully by means of illness, hysteria and nightmare. Freud thereby opened up new horizons of selfhood, or rather delved into the psychic ocean, uncovering submarine population of dark desires and dangerous drive. Self-discovery had become a journey into inner space. In order to have a fuller understanding of Freud's concept of 'self' it is necessary to know his concept of the *id*, *ego* and the *superego*. In Freud's view, *id* is the unconscious, which cannot be considered a separate self because, creating a self is a piece of be-
coming conscious. Although the drives of the id, Freud maintained certainly are in some important sense mine, they are not part of my ego or self until as they are taken up by consciousness. Ego is the self or attaining of consciousness. The superego acts as overseer of the ego. The superego is always close to the id and can act as its representative vis-a-vis the ego. According to Freud, the capacity to recognize subjectivity and the capacity for language is both correlated with and definitive of consciousness. A subjective point of view is a subjective point of view for the same reason that a language is a language - namely it is capable of representing the world as being a certain way whether or not the world is in fact that way; both a subject and a language must be capable of representation at a distance and, more importantly, they must be capable of misrepresentation. Acknowledging subjectivity and using a language as a language both presuppose the recognition of this possibility—the possibility of misrepresentation itself. It is the recognition of this possibility that, for Freud, seems to constitute the essence of consciousness.

This interpretation of consciousness helps to explain Freud’s shift from the conscious/unconscious contrast toward the ego/id contrast: If the emergence of consciousness is equivalent to the emergence of a recognition of one’s own subjectivity, it is also equivalent to the identification and delineation of a self or an ego. The id, in contrast, is an assortment of desires
wholly directed toward their objects and wholly oblivious to their subjective character. In attaining a sense of self, that is, in attaining consciousness, or attaining an ego, boundaries between myself and other things must be drawn. Fixing the physical and the psychological boundaries of a self, however, is a complicated and ongoing process. Desire is possessive, seeking to incorporate things we like onto ourselves, while disowning things we dislike, seeking to expel them from ourselves. We tend to attribute desirable features to ourselves (we "introject" them) while attributing undesirable features to things outside ourselves (we "project" them). When I take a whole person rather than a selected aspect of some person as the object of my desire, the possession or incorporation of that object requires the internalization of a whole personality; satisfaction of my desire thus requires that I fantasize the internal presence of the desired person rather than merely the desired properties of that person. The result is the internal presence of not only the loved but also the hated aspects of the internalized other, in imaginatively acquiring that which I desire, I may also consign myself to the continued presence of much that I despise.

The internalization of another does not necessarily give rise to a superego. The internationalization of an other will amount, rather to a kind of merger with that person. No doubt this internalization of an other may lead to some internal conflict given the fact that people differ in their desires
and personalities. But Freud explicitly rejects the idea that the contrast between conscious and unconscious mental states, for example, could be understood on the model of two interacting selves, for in his view, the unconscious, or id, is not a self at all. Although the drives of the id certainly are in some important sense mine, they are not part of my ego, or my self until as they are taken up by consciousness. To the extent that an internalized other is unconscious, its opposition to oneself will amount to a rebellion against the regimentation imposed by consciousness; for consciousness is simply the agency through which previously unconscious material confronts the reality principle, and through which prudence is enforced. To the extent that an internalized other is conscious, on the other hand, it will amount to a set of second order desires regarding one’s conscious, first order desires. In either case, the internalized other retains its otherness only in so far as it directs its desires toward aspects of one’s self rather than toward objects in the external world, hence, a superego. The superego is precisely that part of a person that remains opposed to or critical of the ego.

Friedrich Lange, 27 a teacher and radical, who wrote about Darwin, Engels and Freud, also speaks of the ego. Vision, Lange, says is inseparable from interpretation. Lange addresses the crucial question not just how do we see but where is ‘I’ or “the ego” in the psychological process of seeing. What is inner and what is outer? And he also wants to know in the light of these observations how materialism might go...
forward without returning to idealism. Lange confronts the materialists with something he classifies as 'unconscious thinking' and is not sure whether or not it can be explained away as a phenomenon of a merely corporeal nature. Lange explores the interlocking questions how what we know we are seeing and how we know we are ourselves. Materialism and realism he suggests, have to be understood as involving codes of seeing.

The idea of the Ego is meanwhile, as it is originally with man quite inseparable from the idea of the body; and this body is the diorama body, the retinal picture body, fused with the body of the sensations of touch, the sensations of pain and pleasure.\(^{28}\)

The fictional aspect of the unity of the person is also stressed by Lange. According to him, somehow our sense of seeing connects with our sense of ourselves as unities; so we are able to see, as though from one visual and psychological place; but despite the fusion of the functions of the sensoria, nevertheless, he maintains the enigma remains: 'how out of the multiplicity of the atomic movements there arises the unity of the physical image.'\(^{29}\) This is the central mystery.

The individual in existentialism is always in crisis. The central existentialist doctrine is that men are nothing except what they choose to become, their essence consists in what they choose to know, under what aspect they choose to see the world. One of the greatest existentialist philosophers was Sartre.\(^{30}\) His philosophical culture appears to have been formed almost entirely within the tradition of continental rationalism and
idealism—the line of thinkers that leads from Descartes to Kant and then from Hegel to twentieth century phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger. While Sartre’s deepest interest is in individual human beings, his effort to understand them, to form a general concept of human being, has nevertheless been heavily dependent on a number of other such conceptions, among them the Christian, the Cartesian, and the Hegelian theories of man. All of these Sartre for one reason or another rejects, but he does not regard them as just unfortunate philosophical mistakes. Instead they express in his view an aspiration of human beings that runs so deep as to be virtually definitive of what it is to be a human being: the aspiration to found one’s own individual being in a rational necessity of some sort. Sartre’s whole philosophy can be seen as an attempt to describe a mode of being—human—which essence is just this aspiration, which he thinks is necessarily doomed to failure. This combination of a rejection of all forms of rationalism, theistic and otherwise, with a recognition of the permanent validity of the demand they express may fairly be regarded as the most characteristic feature of Sartre’s thought. It is also the key to his moral philosophy, the fundamental imperative of which is to recognize and accept this unresolvable contradiction that defines human nature.

In *La Trancendance de L’ego* Sartre dwells on the ‘self’. According to him, the ‘self’, unlike pure consciousness, does not disclose itself
exhaustively to immediate intuition and for precisely this reason belongs to the objects that transcend consciousness--in the world. Since the world is constituted by the intentional acts of pure consciousness, the self must be treated as the result of a synthetic act of organization of this kind and not as itself the agency by which these syntheses are made. If the self forms part of the world as Sartre claims to have shown, then it cannot be isolated from history either. The 'ego', according to Sartre, is not located within, but outside of consciousness. It is, neither in the formal nor in the material sense, immanent to consciousness. The Ego or self is transcendent to consciousness and does not inhabit consciousness. Its abode is outside consciousness. So far the 'other' is concerned, Sartre sees in the 'other' not a fellow creature but an enemy, against whom one must maintain oneself. Like Heidegger, Sartre is much concerned with the meaning of human existence. Both speculated about being and nothingness in a somewhat abstract way that run against the central existentialist concern.

Depending on who one believes in, modernity is identified with both making and unmaking of the self. One story about modernity would be to identify it with the apprehension of the self's autonomous self-grounding, the positive precipitation of the act of expelling all in authenticity and error from the self. According to the other story, the absence or impotence of God, the Church, the king, tradition, makes the modern subject more liable to come apart
at the seams than everbefore. The very strength of the modern self is an epistemized self, its will to self is a will to self knowing, even in its most radical assertions of the need to go beyond merely rational or cognitive categories. Alongside 'self's' visualistic paradigm, French thought has produced an increasing philosophical interest in those relations between the self and its environments. There is a shift from the 'self' to the 'subject'. The work of Lacan and Foucault provide signal examples of this phenomenon.

In Lacanian psycho-analysis the subject is produced through social signification. Desire is the effect of the subjects' symbolic structuration. Because subjectivity is achieved by the recognition of the self as a signifier (I), the subject is always dependent upon a system of differences which it cannot master. Those differences (as language) which exceed the subject produce an originary lack or absence which constitutes the subject as such. Desire, the search for pre-signification unity, or the overcoming lack, must therefore always fail within the structure of signification. Lacan emphasised what was outside symbolic structuration; the real was always felt as an absence, a gap or tear in the symbolic order. We may have no unmediated access to what his outside structure may be but it is precisely this lack of distance which constitutes us as desiring subjects. The object of desire can, therefore, never be fully presented. As a consequence, the subject is forever
distanced from the fulfillment of desire. Interpretation or the analysis of desire is infinite. Lacanian criticism, accordingly shows the way in which any representation of the self as an unified entity proceeds by marking or misrecognising its desire -- a desire, which, by definition, can never meet with adequate representation -- precisely because the self or subject is always in excess of any representation. Lacan does not describe the biological origin of the human subject and its passage to culture. Rather, he argues that the subject is the effect of positing its origin. That is, it is through representing our origin, say, biological that we become social/cultural.

Lacan's theory of the individual also sees the subject as constructed in language. This confirms the decentering of the individual consciousness so that it can no longer be seen as the origin of meaning, knowledge and action. It is only with its entry into language that the child becomes a full subject. In order to speak, the child has to differentiate between 'I' from 'you'. The mirror phase, in which the infant perceives itself as other, an image, exterior to its own preceiving self, necessitates a splitting between the I which is perceived and the I which does the perceiving. The entry into language necessitates a secondary division which reinforces the first, a split between the I of discourse, the subject of utterance, and the I who speaks, the subject of enunciation. Thus, there is a contradiction between the conscious self, the self which appears in discourse and the self which is only partly represented there, the self which speaks. The unconscious
comes into being in the Gap which is formed by this division. The unconscious is constructed in the moment of entry into symbolic order, simultaneously with the construction of the subject. Entry into the symbolic order liberates the child into the possibility of social relationship but at the same time a division within the self is constructed. The subject is thus the site of contradiction, and is perpetually in the process of construction, thrown into crisis by alterations in language and in the social formation, capable of change. And in the fact that the subject is a process lies the possibility of transformation.

Bakhtin\textsuperscript{33} approaches the problem of the 'self' and 'other' in terms of one's own speech and the 'alien word of the other.' One's distinctive use of language is thus a critical sign of oneself. It is what makes 'one' other to all others and individual to the self. But the world of the 'self' also expresses a world view. Although one creates oneself through one's own use of language it is indeed the other's language that forms the self, since an utterance is formulated only in the light of another's speech. For Bakhtin, not only does the subject lend specificity to his utterance, but so does another's anticipated or infact articulated reaction, so that the single utterance is penetrated by the speaker's sense of the other, which contributes to establish particular focus of meaning. The consciousness of the 'self' thus spans two worlds: the outer, determinedly its relevant temporal and spatial co-ordinates, its place in the world and the inner where it attempts
to find its 'place' with its self. From the perspective of the self, then, the other exists only within the single outer plane of time and space. There is no way, clearly, for the 'self' to experience directly the inner plane of the 'other'. Yet paradoxically; it is only the 'self' that is capable of actualizing or giving form to the (outer and inner) world of the 'other' on another plane entirely: the fictional or aesthetic.

Martin Heidegger brought about a major change in hermeneutic thinking. What Heidegger discovers is that the Western Ontotheological tradition from Plato to Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche has been essentially a metaphysical tradition in which, essence precedes existence. As such it has been a tradition that has reified being, transformed verbal being to nominal being, into a super thing at best, which contains and determines all other 'thing' (seiende) thus relegating becoming to the realm of the apparent. Simultaneously, in disclosing the temporality of being which the logos as Word or Presence encloses, i.e, covers over and forgets his 'destructuaktion' of the tradition points to a hermeneutics of being which is capable of the surpassing of metaphysics, a post modern hermeneutics of discovery, in which a disclosed temporality is given ontological priority over Being.

Heidegger was concerned with ontology. In his early work he devel-
oped, what he called an "existential analytic" which analyzes the basic structures of Being-in-the-world (Dasein) as against a human essence already expressed in, or signified by human history, independently, of any social and cultural determinants. Most particularly, the existential analytic is not an analysis of the life-conditions of the post-Cartesian man of reason, indeed, it is intended to describe what reason itself presupposes.

In Heidegger’s terms, Dasein is the structure within which Being manifests itself among beings. Dasein cannot structure a being that is an end in itself, because the question of understanding Being is itself essential or, rather "constitutive" of Dasein. Thus Dasein is also a form of fundamental “transcendence” just because no fixed or limited project or object can satisfy the questioning of Being. For Heidegger, ‘Being’ was not itself a given, rather it was revealed in Dasein’s engagement with the world. It requires what he would come to think of as ‘opening’ or ‘clearing’ in the practices by which societies and lives were constructed. This aspect of Heidegger’s thought broaches what might be called an ontology of ethics, that Foucault implies as a practice that produces an individual’s way of life or selfhood.

However, Dasein is constituted by anxiety at the instability and chanciness of its own being, by an experience of nullity and meaninglessness most intensely expressed in death’s simultaneous necessity and arbitrariness. This anxiety separates Dasein from other beings in the
world: it is individualized, as Heidegger puts it, in its anticipation of death. In his later work, 'turn' (Kehre), Heidegger formulates what he calls "withdrawal of Being" or forgetting of Being: The forgetting of Being occurs within a historical process ordered by a will to power, and the primacy of rationality and use value. Yet, for Heidegger paradoxically, the forgetting of being belongs to Being -- which, indeed, discloses itself by withdrawal. Furthermore, Heidegger suggests that thought is not primarily concerned with the human, for him, to believe that man exists at the centre of things is to forget the question concerning the truth of Being. Humanism is a metaphysics in that it replaces concerns for Being with an interest in man and the whole apparatus -- representations, most of all -- that permit man to frame the world as what Heidegger calls a 'standing reserve' -- therefore humanity's control and use. Since this forgetting is characteristic of metaphysics in general, Heidegger argues that it is in his own thought that the death of humanism can be glimpsed. In intellectual historical terms, Heidegger opens the way for Foucault's claim that he, foresees the 'death of man', as well as the ways in which the humanist subject 'man' is, in fact, the effect of administrative and governmental agencies.

J.N. Mohanty, a most influential expositor of Husserlian phenomenology, develops his concept of self also on the Husserlian model of Sachen Selbst, the matter at hand. According to him, a person is a being with a very
complex structure consisting of layers of selfhood. Mohanty proposes to unravel these layers. In Mohanty's usages, the first person pronoun 'I' stands for the person I am, for myself, and refers to my ego. There is no standard way of distinguishing between these. The subject, for him is the source of intentional acts such as perceiving, believing, thinking, imagining, also hoping, desiring, loving and hating. By 'subjective', he means that it is characterized by intentionality. The subjective, in this usage, is not coextensive either with 'consciousness' or with the mental. My body is subjective in the sense that its movements are characterized by intentionality. The idea of the ego is the idea of my interior mental life in its solitude, cut off from my involvement in the world and society. The self is the ego 'clothed with the garments of society.' It lives, acts, and grows in the real time and history. Persons are selves 'whose identities have achieved expression.' A person is thus, he concludes, also a subject, an ego, and a self. Without being a subject, without having the possibility of that reflective loneliness which is the testing of an ego, and without enjoying social and historical identity which belongs to a self, a person would not be a person. But again a person is more than any of these.

Speculations of poststructuralists like Derrida and Foucault on the issue of 'self' have been significant. These philosophers have challenged the Renaissance idea of 'self' as a core inner personal identity. Rather
they have explored the possibilities of locating 'self' in the linguistic system. Through the approach called deconstruction Derrida has begun a fundamental investigation into the nature of the Western metaphysical tradition and its basis in the law of identity. Superficially, the results of this investigation seem to reveal a tradition riddled with paradox and logical aporias. For example, he cites the case of Rousseau’s philosophy. Rousseau argues at one point that the voice of nature alone should be listened to but he also draws our attention to the fact that nature in truth is sometimes lacking such as when a mother cannot produce enough milk for the infant at her breast. Lack now comes to be seen as common in nature. Thus self-sufficient nature, Derrida shows, according to Rousseau, is also lacking. Lack in fact endangers nature’s self sufficiency -- that is its identity, or as Derrida prefers, its self-presence. Nature’s self-sufficiency can only be maintained if the lack is supplemented. However, in keeping with the logic of identity, if nature requires a supplement it cannot also be self sufficient: for self-sufficiency and lack are opposites; one or the other can be the basis of an identity, but not both if contradiction is to be avoided. This example is not an exception. The impurity of identity, or the undermining of self-presence is in fact inescapable. Human beings require the mediation of consciousness, or the mirror of language in order to know themselves and the world, but this mediation or mirror have to be excluded from the process of knowledge; they make knowledge possible,
and yet are not included in the knowledge process. If they are, as in the philosophy of the phenomenologists, they themselves (consciousness, subjectivity, language) become equivalent to a kind of self-identical presence.

The impetus of deconstruction is not simply to show that philosophically the ‘laws’ of thought are wanting but rather the tendency evident in Derrida’s Oeuvre is a concern to generate effects, to open up the philosophical terrain so that it might continue to be the site of creativity and invention.

Derrida coined the word differance in the height of his researches into the Saussurian and structuralist theory of language. While Saussure had gone to great pains to show that language in its most general form could be understood as a system of differences, ‘without positive terms’, Derrida noted, that such an implication was neither appreciated by Saussure himself or latter day structuralists. Difference without positive terms implies that this dimension in language must always remain unperceived, for strictly speaking it is unconceptualisable. With Derrida, difference becomes the prototype of what remains outside the scope of Western metaphysical thought because it is the latter’s very condition of possibility. Difference is not an identity; nor is it the difference between two identities. Difference to Derrida is difference deferred.
Derrida accepts Saussure’s position that meaning is the product of the differential relations between signifiers, but he goes beyond Saussure in claiming that the temporal dimension cannot be left out of account. Structuralism posits that it is language which enables the speaker to posit himself or herself as ‘I’, as the subject of a sentence. It is in language that people constitute themselves as subject. Consciousness of ‘self’ is possible only through contrast, differentiation; ‘I’ cannot be conceived without the conception ‘non I’, ‘you’ and ‘dialogue’. The fundamental condition of language, implies a reversible polarity between ‘I’ and ‘you’.

Post-Saussurean linguistics, however, implies a more complex relationship between the individual and meaning, since it is language itself which by differentiating between concepts, offers the possibility of meaning. Derrida says that, for Saussure ‘language is not a function of the speaking subject.’ This implies that the subject (self-identity, self-conscious) is inscribed in the language, that he is a ‘function’ of the language. He becomes a speaking subject only by conforming his speech to the systems of linguistic prescriptions taken as the system of differences. Derrida goes on to raise the question whether, even if we accept that it is only the signifying system which makes possible the speaking subject, the signifying subjectivity, can we conceive of a nonspeaking, non-signifying subjectivity, ‘a silent and initiative consciousness?’ The problem here, he concludes is to define conscious-
ness - in- itself as distinct from consciousness of something as distinct from consciousness of self. If consciousness is finally consciousness of self, this in turn implies that consciousness depends on differentiation, a differentiation between 'I' and 'you', a process made possible by language.

In his three volumes of the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault focusses on the part played by sexuality in constructing the individual through networks of power and knowledge. According to Foucault, the discursive construction of the private subject is achieved through various social practices of self-observation and personal introspection. In his *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault too argued that modernity is characterised by a shift in power relations, no longer subject to public and corporeal forms of discipline. The modern subject is produced as the effect of procedures of 'self-discipline'. Foucault as well as Roland Barthes and Derrida has questioned the whole notion of the unified subject, the center, the self. His statement "Man is an invention of recent date soon to be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" celebrate the death of man and decenters him. 37

Althusser, the Structural Marxist critic, confronts the problematics of 'self' in his highly influential essay *Ideology and ideological state apparatuses* (1971). Ideology argues Althusser, constitutes individuals as subjects. Ideology suppresses the role of language in the construction of the subject.
People 'recognize' (misrecognize) themselves in the way in which ideol­
ogy 'interpellates' them or in other words, addresses them as subjects,
calls them by their names and in turn 'recognizes' their autonomy. As a
result, they 'work by themselves', willingly adopt the subject positions nec­
essary to their participation in the social formation. The subject is not only a
grammatical subject, 'a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its
actions' but also a subjected being who submits to the authority of the so­
cial formation in Ideology as the Absolute Subject (God, the King, Man,
conscience). 36 'The individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order
that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order
that he shall (freely) accept his subjection:39 Ideology thus interpellates
concrete individuals as subjects, and bourgeois ideology in particular
emphasizes the fixed identity of the individual. Furthermore, the Althuss­
erian notion of a subject as a product of ideology precludes traditional notions of
intention, experience, authorship, desire of feeling, for such notions are referred
back to the ideological structure. By accepting Althusser's stringent anti­
humanism, subject unity is seen as nothing more than the production of
discourse; all analysis of ideology is taken place immanently from within the
structure of ideology. As Althusser argues, "ideology has no outside, but at
the same time it is nothing but outside."40 That is, ideology presents itself
as nothing other than the real, - what is obvious, already there- pure and pre­
given outside ; as such then, ideology is an immanent system in which its
ground – the subject – is already one of its effects. References to seemingly non-discursive factors, such as bodies, desire or experience, are seen from this point of view as further essentialising manoeuvres of bourgeois ideology.

Raymond Williams, the cultural materialist critic, brought the question of culture and experience in the construction of 'self'. Culture in William's sense is not just a way of seeing or the collection of meaningful practices which map a society as a whole way of life, but includes both material conditions and the way in which those conditions are lived. With his notion of 'structures of feeling', Williams effected an inclusion of the subjective dimension of human life within the socio-historical dynamic of culture. In so doing, Williams was at once undertaking a traditionally Marxist manoeuvre: taking a supposedly apolitical or universal phenomenon (experience) and demonstrating its historical specificity and contingency. At the same time, however, William's use of experience also reacted against traditional Marxism that had emphasised individual experience or feeling as bourgeois or mystificatory. Williams' theory of 'structures of feeling' engages, in a debate which is crucial for both conventional Marxist literary theory and the subsequent trajectory of cultural materialism: the politicisation of everyday life and the question of the individual or subject.
Traditionally, Marxist theory has set itself against individualism. The idea of the individual as an inherently rational, self-determining and essentially equal pre-social unit is argued to be ideological in so far as this seeming autonomy belies the market forces of capital which determines the individual’s existence. Against the public life of market society, capitalist ideology posits a private sphere: a domestic realm where emotions, morality, reason and autonomy could be cultivated. To this extent, ideas of the individual feeling and private experience are ‘bourgeois’ and represented a shift in value away from feudal society’s emphasis on social order, duty, obedience and just hierarchy. But this liberated site of individual bourgeois freedom is as Marxist critics argue actually political. Accordingly, Marxist literary theory sought to demystify the realm of private experience by showing its historical and political character.

Instead of dismissing the private sphere as an illusion of ideology, Williams’ idea of structures of feeling accepted the experience of privacy and sought to understand this experience as culturally significant. His work can be compared to Foucault’s later work on the subject and sexuality. For Foucault, the positing of an ethical substance which in certain modern practises—such as confession, psychoanalysis and the human sciences—enables a ‘subject’ to be constituted. This subject is an effect of practices and the network of power within which these practises are formed. According
to Williams, subjects or individuals are specific phenomena characterised by their place in an entire culture. The value of Williams' definition of culture lies precisely in its recognition of the diversity within social wholes, where different structures of feeling are understood as different modes of life and practices. It follows from his definition of culture that different cultures will construct different 'selves'. The concept of 'self' is also culturally determined.

Central to cultural materialism's post-Marxist theorisation is the problematisation of political identity. Questions of gender, race and sexuality have meant that classes can no longer be seen as coherent groups united by a general consciousness or worldview, for differences cut across these already differentiated groups in a number of ways. In addition to the multiplication of differences among individuals, it has been argued that they are also non-self-identical, 'split' or divided. The theorisation of the split subject and its politicisation has been undertaken within cultural materialism primarily by questioning the production of sexuality and desire. Marxist theory was characterised by a changing but critical relation to traditional individualism. Althusserian Marxism intensified the critique of bourgeois individualism by regarding any subject position as an effect of ideology. Cultural materialism has drawn upon theories of the sexual construction of the subject to criticise traditional theories of humanism. For Belsey, the value of Lacanian psychoanalysis lies in its disruption of the unified subject, a subject
whose function is inherently political. What psychoanalysis' theory of the unconscious provides is a way of understanding a subject constructed by a process beyond its immediate self-understanding. But Belsey sees these processes as political, rather than existential or to do with desire. By arguing that the unconscious is not a timeless pre-discursive given but the effect of the construction of culturally specific notion of the subject, Belsey can at once use Lacan's theory of the subject while at the same time arguing for its specifically patriarchal character. Besides Belsey, many cultural materialists have employed both Lacan and Foucault within the same framework of criticism.

Jonathan Dollimore has also investigated the production of the modern subject from a Foucaultian perspective. In particular, his focus on sexual 'dissidence'—the forms of subjectivity marked as 'other' or deviant—demonstrates the ways in which desire is produced through specific forms of discursive legitimation and exclusion. Terry Eagleton, in his essay “Self-Undoing Subjects” traces the different philosophical perspectives of the 'self' or 'human subject' but fails to come to terms with its various notions. The whole concept appears a conundrum without solution. In his opinion once we cease to think of autonomy as purely individual affair, and grasp the decentring of the subject as a transitive social action rather than some curious ontological condition, the terms of the problematic are swiftly altered.
A self-determining human subject is not one who miraculously conjures up him/her-self out of nothing. He or she is rather someone who has been able to negotiate his or her freedom within those determinations set upon it both by nature, and the right to self-determination of others. The autonomy of the human subject simply means that it is determined in such a style as to be able to react back upon those determinants and make something new and unpredictable out of its encounter with them. It is part of the nature of such a subject that it must either continually make something of what makes it, or go under and this is just another way of saying that its nature contains an enormous hole where, if it is to survive at all, it must implant itself in culture and history.

Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* published in 1980 marked New Historicism's focus on the theme of self-fashioning. The new historicists reacted to the previous historical narratives. In Marxist and new-Marxist histories the transition from feudalism to capitalism was marked by the 'rise' of the bourgeois individual. According to this picture, pre-modern societies were characterised by a hierarchical system of feudal relations where selves were solely defined by their social role. Capitalism, on the other hand, placed an emphasis upon individuals rather than communities, and upon competitive interests and social contracts rather than upon reverence and divine right. Instead of accepting the idea of the seamless
'emergence' of individuals, new historicists sought to show the contradictions and ruptures of historical change. Through a study of More in Renaissance Self Fashioning, Greenblatt demonstrates the ways in which conflicting notions of the self as both authentic individual essence and social performance are manifested. Ideas of self-hood were highly problematic and needed to be worked out and contested. Running against the Marxist and humanist idea of a human spirit which would be alienated or dehumanised by modernity, the idea of self-fashioning showed the inextricable link between the formation of subject and power. There are no presocial selves who are then governed by a repressive or dominating authority. On the contrary, the self is the product of power. In the Renaissance, Greenblatt argues, it was the ability to produce the most persuasive or captivating fictions or performances of self which was the most efficacious form of social and political power.

*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* is typical in its stress upon the instability or ambivalence of any performance of subject identity. Greenblatt suggests that there can be no general or transhistorical theory of the subject; rather each act of critical investigation seeks to determine the particular subject-formation at work in any text or performance of texts. The concept of self-fashioning is therefore a general explanation of how texts and cultures interact, at the same time as it works to undermine any general
theory of culture. Self-fashioning takes a number of forms due to its intimate connection with the modalities of power. Despite the fact that the idea of self-information through power gained a general critical currency, Greenblatt's own work turned away from the centrality of the question of the subject towards the process of representation of which selves were the effect.

The social structures in which contemporary selves are constituted are profoundly different to cultural forms of the pre-modern world. The development of modernity has involved a rejection of the certainties of tradition and custom – the worldview that there is an essential, internal order to culture. The culture of modernity is a form of world-construction marked by the rejection of fixed, traditional boundaries. Selfhood and personal identity become increasingly precarious in conditions of modernity, as the individual loses all sense of cultural anchorage as well as inner reference points. Christopher Lasch detects a 'culture of narcissm' at the heart of modern of culture in which selfhood contracts to a defensive core. The result is that personal life turns inward upon itself: a narcissistic pre-occupation in which self becomes central to psychic survival, a pre-occupation that reinforces capitalist consumption and manipulation. Modern social life according to Jurgen Habermas, has become increasingly subject to administrative and bureaucratic control and this has led to crushing of individual creativity and autonomy. Instead of assigning persons to pre-ordained roles, as in
pre-modern cultures, modernity succeeds in leading human subjects into creative and dynamic making of self-identity and the fashioning of life-styles according to personal preference. But the modern way of life also has a darker side. In its attempts to legislate rational order, this century has regularly been destroying individual particularity and human life. Implicit in the foregoing theories of modernity, there is the suggestion that individuals have within themselves an authentic capacity for self-definition and the subjective organization of meanings. In each person there is the struggle to negotiate the opportunities and dangers of modernity in terms of an ongoing, enduring sense of 'self'; to respond to the continuities and discontinuities of contemporary social processes in terms of one's own distinctive subjectivity.

The new postmodern 'self' decentres old versions of autonomy by explaining that the inner-self is composed by cultural constructs that even shapes what counts as 'inner'. Modernity linked responsibility with rationality, autonomy and unity. The autonomous, inner-self was responsible for intention and motivation. In contrast, the postmodern story explains that the 'self' lack such an autonomous inner core and instead makes decision in the context of a finite variety of possibilities presented in a particular context. However this position does not liberate citizens from their responsibility, for cultural patterns do not determine choices, but only provide parameters.
for them. The Self, while given its basic structure by the culture, has choices to make. It selects aspects of the culture that are mixed and matched to compose a self. The composition of this self is not unitary and fixed but is put together for moments and events. Thus it decentres the autonomous inner being, a central feature of the modern "self", without giving up individual choice. The postmodern "self" is thus a dependent self made by others in contrast to the modern man, who makes himself all by himself.

In the postmodern narrative, existence is a linguistic event and selves are made through symbolic moves. The text of one's life is also a communicative act and tells a story. The collapsing of the inner/outer dimension of the modern self makes way for a postmodern self that is composed out of cultural symbols: words, images and metaphors. Rather than focussing on the proposition, "I think, therefore I am," postmodernism suggests "I speak, therefore I am," and to extend it "we speak, therefore we are". Communication presupposes others and creates the possibilities for connections that go beyond the material exchanges and body-to-body interaction. The self includes not only the body, but symbols that enable body to connect with others. The postmodern figure is encouraged to work with others and to acknowledge how he himself or she herself is at the same time like the other and different from them. She is different not so much because of an inner secret self, but because of the diverse social contexts that compose...
that self. No longer does experience set each individual apart because it serves as the means by which individuals develop a variety of selves. Postmodernism made the fragmentary self attractive. The fragmented self can play contradictory roles. No longer are citizens stuck with a singular identity, but can be many things at once. The postmodern self cherishes mixing cultures and supports continual changes in philosophical and ideological consistency.

S.P. Mohanty offers a critique of postmodernist position of identity which demonstrates a general skepticism towards experience. The antifoundationalist thesis Mohanty has tried to retrieve from postmodernism brings into focus the accurate and damaging critique that postmodernists can make of identity politics, but by itself it does not entail either of the two extreme conclusions to which their skepticism can lead. The naturalist-realist account of experience, he defends, is neither foundationalist nor skeptical. It maintains that experience, properly interpreted can yield reliable and genuine knowledge, just as it points out instances and sources of real mystification. Central to this account is the claim that the experience of social subjects has a cognitive component. Experiences can be ‘true’ or ‘false’, can be evaluated as justified or illegitimate in relation to the subject and his world, for ‘experience’ refers very simply to the variety of ways humans process information. Mohanty opines that it is on the basis of this revised
understanding of experience that we can construct a realist theory of social or cultural identity, in which experiences would not serve as foundations because of their self-evident authenticity but would provide some of the raw material with which we construct identities.

Mohanty's post positivist approach thus points that instead of conceiving identities as self-evidently based on the authentic experiences of members of a cultural or social group or as equally unreal to the extent that they lay any claim to real experiences of real people because experience is a radically mystifying term, we need to explore the possibilities of a theoretical understanding of social and cultural identity in terms of objective social location. To do so, a cognitivist conception of experience is needed, a conception that will allow for both legitimate and illegitimate experience, enabling us to see experience both as real knowledge and social mystification. Whether we invent an identity -- femininity, masculinity, black or white or we actively choose one on the basis of our political predilections, our identities are ways of making sense of our experiences. Identities are theoretical constructions that enable us to read the world in a specific way. It is in this sense that they are valuable, and their epistemic status should be taken seriously. In them, and through them, we learn to define and reshape our values and commitments, we give texture and form to our collective future. S.P. Mohanty shows how both essentialism of identity politics and skepticism
of the postmodernist position seriously under read the real epistemic and political complexities of our social and cultural identities.

Paula M.L.Moya and Michael R. Hames-Garcia in their work *Reclaiming Identity* address the question of identity from a post positivist realist framework, building on the alternative concept of identity forwarded by S.P. Mohanty. Evaluating the trend of identity debates over the last two decades, Paula M.L.Moya observes that much of what has been written about identity during this period seeks to delegitimate, and in some cases eliminate, the concepts itself by revealing its ontological, epistemological, and political limitations. Therefore, the editors along with the authors of the work intend to reevaluate and reclaim identity even while trying to rescue identity from the disrepute into which it has fallen. Their response is a critique of the essentialist and postmodernist ideas of identity, which they show to be conceptually flawed. These critics contend that a theory of identity is inadequate unless it allows social theorists to analyze the epistemic status and political salience of a given identity and provide it with the resources to ascertain and evaluate the possibilities and limits of different identities.

The authors undertake the task of reclaiming identity because ‘identities’ are evaluable theoretical claims that have epistemic consequences. Although increasing numbers of theorists have voiced their concerns about
the poverty of the opposition between essentialist and postmodernist approaches to identity, the editors of *Reclaiming Identity* note that no one has offered a richly elaborate alternative theoretical framework that can transcend it. They claim that their work represents the first co-ordinated effort to present an alternative theoretical approach to identity.

The 'self' becomes an even more complex issue under colonialism. Identity is understood in terms of an 'other', however, not in the sense that Bakhtin or Barthes used the 'self-other' dichotomy. Barthes refers to reciprocity: 'in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the other... I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being as subject.' Such a reciprocity allows mutual relations between self and other in which both may at various times willingly function as objects for the other. But in colonial societies, the participants are frozen into a hierarchical relationship in which the oppressed is locked into a position by the assumed moral superiority of the dominant group, a superiority which is reinforced when necessary by physical force. Colonial societies realize their identity in difference rather than in essence and thus colonial identity is constituted in terms of binary opposites -- colonizer/colonized, master/slave, domination/dominated, centre/margin, etc. Power rested in the hands of the colonizers who in order to consolidate their domination induced its subjects to initiate the forms and values of the dominant culture. Colonialism is thus a
colonisation of cultures and minds of the colonised which resulted in a crises of identity.

In postcolonial literary theory the question of 'self' and 'identity' still forms the basis of its main practitioners Said, Spivak and Bhabha, whom Robert Young in Colonial Desire describes as 'the Holy Trinity' of postcolonial criticism. Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978) in many ways is considered the precursor of postcolonial criticism. According to Said, 'ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely the considerations of power, also being studied.' In Orientalism he delves on the issue of identity in terms of East-West dichotomy. In Said’s view, Orientalism (in the sense he uses) operates in the service of West's hegemony over the East principally by producing the East discursively on West’s self-image as a superior civilization. It does this primarily by distinguishing and then essentializing the identities of East and West through a dichotomizing system of representation most evident in the regime of stereotype, with the aim of making rigid the sense of difference between the European and Asiatic parts of the world. As a consequence the East is characteristically coded negatively in orientalist discourse as variously -- voiceless, sensual, female, despotic, irrational, backward. By contrast, the West is characteristically represented in positive terms, as masculine, democratic, rational, dynamic and progressive.
Leela Gandhi in her work *Postcolonial Theory* discusses postcolonialism and its oppositional stance against the traditional humanities. As a new field of study, postcolonialism endeavoured to foreground the exclusions and elisions which confirm to the privileges and authority of canonical knowledge systems, and second, to recover those marginalised knowledge which have been concluded and silenced by the entrenched humanist curriculum. Like feminism, which has posed a challenge to the universalist assumptions of gender-based or 'phallocentric' knowledge systems, and attempted, in turn, to make both ways of knowing and the things known more representative, postcolonialism offers a critique of seemingly foundational discourses. Unlike feminism, however, it directs its critique against the cultural hegemony of European knowledge in an attempt to reassert the epistemological value and agency of the non-European world. Postcolonial studies claim that the entire field of the humanities is vitiated by a compulsion to claim a spurious universality and also to disguise its political investment in production of 'major' or 'dominant' knowledge. An oppositional critical discourse like postcolonialism counters the exclusiveness of humanist thought through an attempt to make the field of knowledge more representative. According to Gandhi, this project relies upon two types of critical revaluation or 'showing'. First, it takes upon itself the self-important function of revealing the interests which inhabit the production of knowledge. Second, the investigative function
of oppositional criticism also draws attention to, and thereby attempting to retrieve, the wide range of illegitimate, disqualified or subjugated knowledge. She quotes Habermas who describes this function as 'emancipatory knowledge interest' which takes the historical traces of suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed.

In the shifting terrains of 'self' it is worthwhile at this point to consider the feminist perspective, for the question of identity is central to feminism. While the story of 'self' dates back to the Renaissance, the quest for women's 'self' is of recent origin. This speaks of man's domination of woman which have had so long rendered her impossible to determine her 'self'.

The feminist agenda, therefore, has been to extricate woman from patriarchal customs, prejudices and constructs, so that a woman discovers her own self independent of patriarchy.

It was the Enlightenment ideals of equality and freedom that inspired early feminists such as Mary Astell, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Harriet Taylor to centralise the issue of women's difference. In creating the idea of individual agency for man, liberalism offered women a way to challenge patriarchy's denial of agency to women, a challenge that carries into contemporary feminism as well. Thus from the beginning of liberalism in the West in the eighteenth century until the advent of the contemporary Women's
Liberation Movement in the late 1960s, feminism in the Western world was predominantly liberal in character. Feminism concerned itself with the rights of the individual to political and religious freedom, choice and self-determination. The liberal feminists believed that only when women were granted suffrage, education, access to the professions and property rights, women's equality with men could be achieved. Thus though the first seeds of feminism were sown by the early mothers, their attempt for women's liberation however was limited within the existing social relations.

It was in the 1960s, for the first time since the women's vote was won, feminism again surfaced as an important political force in the Western World. The 'new' feminists were politically committed activists who were not afraid to take a stand and fight for their views. A whole range of works were written articulating women's concerns that formed the basis for the explosive development of second wave feminism. The goals of the feminist critics have been to expose patriarchal premises and prejudices in order to promote re-evaluation of literature by women. While trying to construct identity, feminist critical theory interrogates the signifying and universalist assumptions of patriarchy, its ideological formations and authority. The Anglo-American and French feminist theorists emphasized the difference between men and women and asserted for separate and distinct sexual identities. Inspite of some of their differences, they unanimously emphasize women's
subjectivity and autonomy of self-hood.

What feminists such as Showalter and Holly failed to grasp was that the traditional humanism they represented was in effect part of patriarchal ideology,\textsuperscript{59} for its centre is the seamlessly unified self — either individual or collective — which is commonly called ‘Man’.\textsuperscript{60} History or the text becomes nothing but the expression of this unique individual: all art becomes autobiography, a mere window on to the self and the world, with no reality of its own. According to French feminists Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous, this integrated self is in fact a phallic self, constructed on the model of the self-contained, powerful phallus. Gloriously autonomous, it banishes from itself all conflict, contradiction and ambiguity.

Kate Millet’s\textsuperscript{61} theory of sexual oppression as a conscious, monolithic plot against women leads to a seductively optimistic view of the possibilities for full liberation. For Millet, woman is an oppressed being without a recalcitrant unconscious to reckon with; she merely has to see through the false ideology of the ruling male patriarchy in order to cast it off and be free. In her preface to \textit{Thinking About Women} 1968, Mary Ellmann says that she is “most interested in women as \textit{words}.”\textsuperscript{62} Her main thesis in her work is that Western culture at all levels is permeated by a phenomenon she labels ‘thought by sexual analogy.’ She observes that our perception of
the world is influenced by sexual differences so much so that a woman introjects within herself what a man tells her what she is. In her work she sums up the eleven major stereotypes of femininity as presented by male writers and critics. Ellmann's point is that men have traditionally chosen to write in an assertive, authoritarian mode, whereas women have been confined to a language of sensibility. A woman's self can emerge only when women start to write subverting the authoritarian modes of writing. Ellmann suggests, male reviewers just cannot attach the same degree of authority to a voice they know to be female.

In Mad Woman in the Attic, Gilbert and Gubar demonstrate how in the nineteenth century the 'eternal feminine' was assumed to be a vision of angelic beauty and sweetness. The ideal woman was seen as a passive, docile and above all selfless creature. Gilbert and Gubar opine that “to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead.” Further they maintain that dominant literary images of femininity are male fantasies. Women are denied the right to create their own images of the feminine, instead must seek to conform to the patriarchal standards imposed on them. The authors of Mad Woman in the Attic see the problematic of a woman artist's self-definition under patriarchy:

For the female artist the essential process of self-definition is complicated by all those patriarchal definitions that intervene between her self and herself.63
Elaine Showalter provides to some extent in her work how a woman’s self could be relocated. She has coined the word ‘gynocritics’ that is to turn to the study of women’s writing, not just to learn what women have felt and experienced, but also that this experience is directly available in texts written by women. She rejects theory as a male invention that can apparently be used on men’s texts. ‘Gynocritics’ frees itself from pandering to male values and seeks to “focus... on the newly visible world of female culture.”

While the Anglo-American critics tried to look at women as represented in literature, French feminist criticism is more theoretically driven. One of the foremost French feminists is Simone de Beauvoir whose *The Second Sex* was an epochal work. Beauvoir’s main thesis in this work is that throughout history women have been reduced to objects and a ‘woman’ has been constructed as man’s other, deprived of the right to her own subjectivity and to her own actions. Beauvoir shows how these fundamental assumptions dominate all aspects of social, political and cultural life and equally important, how women themselves internalize this objectified vision, thus living in a constant state of ‘inauthenticity’. Beauvoir’s famous statement, “One is not born a woman, one becomes one,” shows her uncompromising refusal of any notion of a female nature or essence. It is Beauvoir’s statement which has made later feminists to look upon woman not in terms of biology but as a construct.
Influenced by Derrida, Helen Cixous shows how Western philosophy and literary thought have always been caught up in an endless series of hierarchical binary oppositions that always in the end come back to the 'coupling' of male/female. The hidden male/female opposition with its inevitable positive/negative evaluation can always be traced as the underlying paradigm. Cixous locates death at work in this kind of thought because in order for one term to acquire meaning, it must destroy the other. Victory is equated with activity and defeat with passivity. Under patriarchy the male is always the victor. Cixous passionately denounces such an equation of femininity with passivity and death as leaving no positive space for woman: 'Either woman is passive or she doesn’t exist."

Her whole theoretical project is an effort to undo this logocentric ideology. Her endeavour is to proclaim women as the source of life, power and energy and to hail the advent of a new, feminine language that ceaselessly subverts those patriarchal binary schemes where logocentricism colludes with phallocentricism in an effort to oppress and silence women.

In defining a separate 'identity' for woman, she advocates 'écriture féminine': i.e., writing with the body. She says: A woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies... Woman must put herself into the text as into the world and into history by her own movement."
She rejects the Freudian and Lacanian models which privilege the phallus in the formation of sexual identity. She urges women to break the parameters of masculine definitions and to express themselves in writing. Certainly the 'self' predominates in her narrative. In *From the Scene of the Unconscious to the Scene of History* she writes explicitly of the 'self' as one 'that has come to be reconciled with the difficulties of the world. But it is not given, it must be formed.'

Julia Kristeva refuses to define a 'woman', rather she prefers to see her as a position – that which is marginalised by the patriarchal symbolic order. This relational 'definition' allows her to argue that men can also be constructed as marginal to the symbolic order. Kristeva's emphasis on marginality allows us to view the repression of the feminine in terms of positionality rather than of essences. What is perceived as marginal at any given time depends on the position one occupies. Refusing to define woman she says: "In woman I see something that cannot be represented, something that is not said, something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies."

Thus from an assertion that real concrete women share an essential 'womaness' which is to be celebrated and emancipated to the theoretically sophisticated but politically challenged notion of contingent, fluctuating post-gendered subjectivities, the issue of subjectivity has become of vital signifi-
cance to contemporary feminist debate. As Denis Riley says "Women is indeed an unstable category, that this instability has a historical foundation, and that feminism is the site of the systematic fighting out of that instability." In attempting to define what might constitute a woman's 'self', what matters most is not shared transcendent essence, but politically determined perceptions of pertinent similarities and differences. Identities can come into being and dissolve depending on the concrete practices that constitute them.

Western feminism has more or less limited itself to the white woman's concerns. Contemporary feminism therefore sees the need to study the other feminisms as well. Experiences of woman differ and so it is problematic to talk of a universal 'woman'. Western Feminism had not taken note of class, caste, colonialism, ethnicity and a whole range of other structures of domination that determine the lives of women in Third World countries and also other marginalised groups. Postcolonial feminist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak observes that in order to learn enough about Third World woman and to develop a different readership, the immense heterogeneity of the field must be appreciated, and the First World feminist must learn to stop feeling privileged as a woman. Third world feminists therefore do not talk of 'identity' but multiplicity of identities. As Spivak says, "As subject woman must learn to speak 'otherwise'...The focus should not merely be 'who am I?' but 'who is the other woman?' 'How am I naming her?' How
How does she name me?"

Spivak is concerned throughout her career with the less priviledged constituencies which have no choice but to remain located in the third world. To describe these social formations, Spivak adapts the term 'Subaltern' from Gramsci, in whose writing it signifies subordinate or marginalised social groups in Europe. Spivak's analysis is directed especially at the predicament of the female subaltern whom she represents as doubly marginalised, no matter where she is located, by virtue of both relative economic disadvantage and gender subordination. A principal concern of Spivak's is whether the subaltern can speak for him or her-self or whether subaltern is condemned only to be known, represented and spoken for in distorted or 'interested' fashion by others. In reaching the unequivocal conclusion that 'there is no space from which the subaltern can speak' (i.e. make her experience known to others in her own voice) there is some convergence with orientalism's conception of the colonized as the 'silent interlocutor' of the dominant order. The subaltern, thus, according to Spivak, has no 'identity' as such since she does not have a voice.75

According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty,76 the main problem with the approach of many Western feminists to Third World issues remains in their lack of awareness of the persistence in their work of colonialist modes of representation. In her influential essay 'Under Western Eyes' (1991),
Mohanty addresses this problem while also examining the work of Western feminists. According to Mohanty, any discussion of the intellectual and political construction of 'Third World feminism' must address itself to two simultaneous projects: the internal critique of hegemonic 'Western' feminisms, and the formulation of autonomous, geographically, and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies. The first project she sees as one of deconstructing and dismantling; and the second, one of building and constructing. She is of the view that unless these two tasks are addressed simultaneously, 'third world' feminisms run the risk of marginalization or ghettoization from both mainstream and Western feminist discourses. Mohanty argues that much Western Feminist writing about Third World women 'discursively colonize(s) the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing / representing a composite, singular 'third world woman'- an image which appears arbitrarily constructed, but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse." The composite image which emerges from this writing is one of Third World women as victims of male-control and of so-called traditional cultures and religions. Specificity, history and difference disappear and Western feminism functions as the norm against which the Third World is judged. The answer to representations of Third World women as passive victims lies in detailed attention to social relations in Third World contexts. Mohanty argues that Third World women, like Western women,
are produced as subjects in historically and culturally specific ways by the societies in which they live and act as agents. Thus, for example, rather than portraying women as victims and perpetrators of patriarchal practices, attention needs to be given to the specific contexts in which women live, the indigenous meaning of particular practices and how women in the Third World fight against them.

Even as the ‘self’ has been a contentious issue in the philosophical domain, it needs to be seen how the ‘self’ negotiates within culture, which is a structure in itself. In order to know what do we mean when we say ‘culture’, we need to look into the various definitions of culture. ‘Culture’ is an important, but can be slippery, even a chaotic, concept. It is at one and the same time a mark of distinctions and of assumptions upon which such distinctions are forged. To understand culture we have to recognize the way in which its meaning is tied to historically and socially specific situations. This involves a careful analysis of the practices and life styles of those involved and how people make sense of their own condition. Culture is a ‘suturing’ concept: it indicates a space within which competing visions of the role of human existence can be played out, all of which seek to fix the meaning of culture. In short, the concept of culture is an open window through which we can identify the assumptions, values and classification systems at work. From anthropological and sociological perspectives, the
study of culture involves the exploration of the representations and lived experiences of everyday life. By looking at the lived experiences of other cultures, their rituals, family structures, courtship patterns, etc. we can begin to identify what is so distinctive about our culture. Anthropology thus directs us to the study of culture as concerning the everyday lives of a community, group or society.

Sociologists assume that human behaviour is largely directed and determined by culture. Norms, values and roles are also culturally determined and socially transmitted. From this perspective gender roles are also culturally determined and socially transmitted. Further, gender roles are products of culture rather than biology. Inequality between the sexes results from socially constructed power relationship. According to sociologist Sherry B. Ortner, it is not biology as such that ascribes women their status in society but the way in which every culture defines and evaluates female biology. Thus she hopes that if this universal evaluation changed, then, the basis for inequalities would be removed. She expresses that in every society a higher value is placed on culture than on nature. Culture is the means by which man controls and regulates nature. Thus according to Ortner, the universal evaluation of culture as superior to nature is the basic reason for the devaluation of women. Culture is seen as man’s invention to legitimize their own superiority over woman. If we go by the different theoretical
views that 'self' or 'identity' is a cultural construct and different cultures construct different selves, it still would hold even if culture is a male prerogative. If cultures are 'constructs' invariably the dominant class will legitimize their own superiority over the weaker class.

However, to look at 'culture' just as a way of life would be to simplify the complexity of the term. 'Culture' is not just restricted to the sphere of anthropology and sociology, but the concept of culture has been a part of literary enquiry since the time of Mathew Arnold and F.R. Leavis. More recently, the concept of culture figures in cultural materialist and new historicist criticism. Arnold and Leavis differentiated between high culture and low culture. In other words, their definition of culture implied a hierarchy. Leavis, in developing the culture and society tradition of Mathew Arnold, argued that the survival of intellectual refinement and high culture in the arts, literature and philosophy depended upon definite mechanisms for sustaining the distinction between high and low (or popular) culture. In these approaches, cultural knowledge is seen as being transmitted through the 'authoritative' voices of those willing and able to act as the embodiment of cultural heritage. It was the 'critic' who acted as the custodian of all that is good and worthwhile in culture. For Leavisites, it was the 'intelligent few' who should make wise judgements for the 'unintelligent many'. The role of the custodian of culture could only be given to

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those who possessed the ability and training for a 'discerning apprecia-
tion of art and literature' and were in a position to make up their own minds
on what is valuable in culture. According to him, everyone else lacks the
capacity of judgement and therefore should accept the second hand judg-
ements of those custodians of culture. In this way a division of culture is cre-
ated between valuable culture which should be preserved and passed
on to future generations, and the rest of cultural experience which he
regarded as shallow and escapist, undermining the active use of the mind.
This concept of culture is a crude one because it adopts the view that people
are easily manipulated. Culture, thus, for the new critics was that which
resisted anything other than purely aesthetic forms of justification.

Recent literary criticism has taken on a broader definition of cul-
ture. Culture, according to Raymond Williams, is "one of the two or three
most complicated words in the English language." In his Culture and
Society, he had identified four kinds of meaning attached to the word 'cul-
ture', referring respectively to: an individual habit of mind; the intellectual
development of a whole society; the arts; and the whole way of life of a group
of people. It is precisely because of Williams' redefinition of culture as
'a whole way of life' that the concept of experience can no longer be seen in
an ideal or non-material sense. To the contrary, because culture is defined
by Williams as an entire complex of practices, significations, institutions,
material forces and personal responses, the problem of relating lived experience to a politico-economic reality is circumvented. Experience itself is already a part of a larger cultural context. According to Williams, because culture is a dynamic whole which includes practices, economic conditions and most importantly, forms of communication, the nature of culture will have its specific structures of feeling and its particular configuration of dominant, emergent and residual features. His insistence upon experience avoids the monolithic or totalising emphasis of notions like world-view or class consciousness. Culture, in Williams' sense, is not just a way of seeing or the collection of meaningful practices which enable a society, as a whole way of life culture includes both material conditions and the way in which those conditions are lived. For Williams, culture is dynamic and this dynamism is revealed in the historical complexity of any given culture which contains dominant, residual and emergent elements.  

Clifford Geertz and Mary Douglas offer the anthropological view of culture. While the discipline of anthropology has usually been associated with the study of other cultures, the location of English literary texts within the framework of anthropological theory enables a study of English literature as a specific and determined practice with its own culture and history. As a result the meaning of a text is no longer referred to supposed universals such as 'the human condition' or 'aesthetic value'. Such literary
philosophical concepts are now seen as specifically located in culture.

According to Clifford Geertz\textsuperscript{83} there is no single feature, or essence, which would unite all cultures, but there is a collection of different characteristics which create cultural configurations in different ways. He calls these groupings cultures because some share certain characteristics (such as writing) while others share other features (religion, ethics). There is no single feature which they all share but they are recognised as instances of 'culture' because the term 'culture' could be understood through its various uses. Geertz argues that cultures cannot be reduced to coherent patterns and that there is not a simple underlying pattern which produces behaviour. Rather behaviour itself operates by its own mechanism irrespective of any psychological context. Doing away with the universal notion of mind which would, then be ordered by social patterns, Geertz posits that cultural 'control mechanism' produces varieties of behaviour. Culture is a way of doing things, a form of achievement or a mode of activity rather than an internalised pattern or scheme. Human life, according to Geertz, is nothing apart from its way of behaving. In Geertz's scheme of culture, it is not a rigid set of pre-given rules which are then followed. His model of culture should not be explained through some external cause. Behaviour is a complex phenomenon with its own inherent logic; an event is not just the result of a given tradition imposed upon individuals; behaviour possesses
its own plan or 'recipe'.

Drawing from Geertz's view of culture, the new historicists consider texts as culture. Cultures are not ideal or psychological entities like a 'world-view' or 'mind set'. Cultures are not used to relate texts to worlds because cultures are already texts, persons, practices and rituals. The text is not an expression or reflection of its world; it plays an active part in producing and acting within that world. Because the idea of culture sets texts along practices, rituals and disciplines, it enables critics to consider a text according to any number of variables. Different critics have defined culture in different ways which have indeed opened a negotiation between literature and culture. Though the new historicists believe that culture is not some pre-given patterns which influence a way of life, yet in postcolonial criticism and feminist criticism it is still considered as a weapon of power that legitimates its superiority over the dominated. For Bhabha the postcolonial perspective attempts to revise those nationalist or 'nativist' pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition. In the Location of Culture, he asserts that the postcolonial condition is emblematic of the heterogeneity of contemporary culture, not simply a marginal aspect of it. What characterizes the contemporary cultural moment we inhabit is a recognition that notions of unitary identity are no longer viable. If his project of critique has involved interrogating
and destabilising fixed ideas of identity, the title of his book, the *Location of Culture* invites an examination of how he wishes to resituate the question of identity in the sphere of contemporary culture. What he offers is a celebration of the liminal identity associated with the postcolonial condition.

In post colonial terms, culture is legitimized by those in power to suppress the subjects. In feminist theory, women are subjugated by men through the medium of culture. Culture operates in such a manner that young girls from their childhood are trained to conduct themselves according to social norms, values and practices. Women thus, absorbs social expectations, and in fact experience them as their own; so power, in a sense, does not operate coercively but from within. The images of women as represented in diverse cultures are stereotypical. The stereotypes are internalised by women who have been made to feel, "This is perhaps how we really are." Thus a fractured 'self' of a woman is constructed through the gaze of the other. John Berger puts it aptly in the following words:

Men look at woman. Woman watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of woman to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female.

Cultures, however, are not homogenous whatever might be the definitions. And, different cultures produce different selves. Even within feminism
women from one culture differ from another culture. Therefore, to identify the ‘self’ of an Indian woman, one has to contextualize her location in social and historical settings which undoubtedly affect the nature of her embodied experience as well as her articulation. Issues such as caste, class and the role of community become paramount in the construction of her ‘identity’. To locate the women’s ‘self’ in a complex, fractured cultural representation as ours is not an easy proposition but nevertheless it opens up questions that need to be challenged.
Endnotes


3. Ibid., p. 3.

4. Jacob Burkhardt, quoted in Peter Burke's essay 'Representation of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes' in Roy Porter, ed. *Rewriting the Self*, op. cit., p. 17.


6. Ibid.


8. Ibid., pp. 51-52.


11. Ibid., p. 5.


15. William Blake, op. cit., p. 179.
16 Romanticism, see Roy Porter, op.cit., p.5.

17 M.H. Abrams, op.cit., p.178.

18 Rousseau, quoted in Roy Porter, op.cit., p.5.


20 Ibid., p.17.


23 Hegelian idea, incorporated from Peter Singer, op.cit., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Vol.3.4..op.cit. and Claire Colebrook, op.cit.


27 Friedrich Lange, see Daniel Pick's essay "Stories of the Eye" in Roy Porter, op.cit. pp.198 -199.

28 Ibid., p. 199.

29 Ibid.


Foucault, quoted in Jonathan Dollimore's essay "Death and the Self" in Roy Porter, op. cit., p. 250.

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