



Contempt for the Self in the Age of Reason- A Story of Denial

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Abstract:

The authors attempts to discuss about 'the self'- as a unit in the society. This paper tries to answer the question on independent existence of self in the society. Can there be an existence of self in the society without being influenced by the society? The conclusion can be driven for the independent existence by establishing self as a catalyst in the society. Yet the reaction given by the self, what it has experienced in the past, injection of the society's values into a self.

Agreeing with Looking Glass Self theory and disagreeing with Goffman, the authors try to conclude that the self cannot exist independently. The society is the gravitational pull, if by any chance someone tries to work against gravity; there is acknowledgement given to gravity.

Key Words:

Self- Contempt of Self- Looking Glass Self- Goffman- Glass Bead self- independent existence

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Clothing the Self:

Encapsulation of human identity within bounds of social norms is a myth. What is defined as the self is but contemplation made through the eyes of society or better through the eyes of the self which thinks that such is the identity perceived by the commune in general. The nuances of one's identity are often circumscribed under the notion of uniqueness. But as we probe into individuals who fall within the same strata of the society we see patterns emerging. These patterns tell us the identity which is emulated by a particular person belonging to strata has nothing to do with the individual identity. It is the manifestation of the collective identity that persists. What is left is the empty shell bearing colour codes of collective identity, the empty shell being the individual himself. But we see that people zealously profess their collective identity as their own individual intellect. Speculations regarding identity are not new for even the early men from primitive times who often in times of solitude found out they are not what the groups defines them to be. When such realization is achieved anomic tendencies tend to dominate the intellectual landscape of the realized ones. Curiously this realization is not anomic in the traditional sense of the world neither does it promulgate isolation nor does it perpetuate segmentation from the main stream. What is left is the dissociated association plagued by vices of existence; it is the necessity that keeps the realized ones within the ambit of social dogma. Fear of being ostracised keeps the realized one from indulging in derelict behaviour. We do not tend to confer upon the so called realized ones with crowns of sainthood for these men could be anything but saints. They spread disorder some call them rebels, others revolutionaries on the whole they are nothing but misfits. But even according to their own definition all of these allegations do not matter. One finds hard to believe that such asceticism of self realization is only ascription made by the society which is used as the frame of reference. The induction of norms of mores into individual personality is a assimilative process that usurps the sense of self in an individual. It seems to be generally accepted by sociologists that the distinction between "us, the we-group, or in-group, and everybody else, or the other-groups, out-groups" is established in and through conflict. This is not confined to conflict between classes.... Nationality and ethnic



conflicts, political conflicts, or conflicts between various strata in bureaucratic structures afford equally relevant¹ example. Above all these conflicts, rises the conflict of the self.

Some say we exist because we do not have an option they say. We exist because will of an unknown entity. We exist and that is for sure; or at least we think we exist. We do not want to presume otherwise. If we were the figments of imagination of some unknown entity then as the imagination fades so will be unable to bear a universe our own complete obliteration cannot be envisaged by the self. This leads to deception founded in fear of non existence.

Transcending origins:

Overcoming prejudices of a cultural origin is a mammoth task. Undecipherable to those who tend to de-culturalize others by standing within their own frame of cultural reference. The plenary aspects of culture are not discussed when notions of superiority arise. After a point of time sense of superiority itself becomes a part of one's cultural identity. Definition of one no longer carries aspects linking to description of elementary values unique to the culture in question. Instead the self is defined as the negation of the (alien) other. Manipulation tend to occur as one tries to consolidate the artificial identity which is not native in its inner chord but still tries to resonate the original rhyme scheme of culture within parameters that are in consonance with alien aspects of the negative other. Assertion based on negation of an external element leaves you with a shallow sense of identity which becomes an antithetical element that exists only as long as what it negates also exists. Instead of giving unique perspective of the self, tendency to give definitions of identity with negative rhetoric serves only one purpose. The dissolution of inherent aspects of the cultural bedrock leads to image construct totally different from the initial construct that existed before the repartee of the alien influences. So destruction the self occurs in the very attempt to protect it.

To keep pondering about aspects of existentialist fallacy and to consider the self as the product of a foolish endeavour capitulating to preceptors of existentialism. Can there be any truth in considering that there is no absolute truth? Meta narratives that symbolise the ultimate truth, that stipulate universal doctrines profess absolute truth in some aspect or the other. Is there merit to a proposition that argues on the basis of defeat of logic that enables framing of such a proposition? For image constructs of the self at certain times reflect the icons of Greek mythology. We see that Cronos the father of all the gods believe castrated and banished by his own son. Similarly the self which is the offspring of culture tends to kill the very notion of culture that forms a part of its image construct. By hegemony of ideas what forms a collage in the wall of the identity of the self is not of artistic temperament it's a mess of an idea that transponds any form of solidarity. There is no implication of this abstruse collage that shatters an existing image construct fracturing the outward surface and denting the internal mechanism of the person's individual identity.

We as a species tend to assume ourselves as being of a higher order yet the reality stares bluntly in our face, the reality being that we are all confined by our physical carcasses bound by elements of the habitat around us. Any attempt to look beyond ends up as an exercise stressing on the need to look within. To seek, to expound, and to manifest the self into the confines of images of identity is cumbersome task which is both unnecessary and vein in

¹KUNOVICH, ROBERT M.; RANDY HODSON, "Conflict, Religious Identity, and Ethnic Intolerance in Croatia [*]." *Social Forces*. 1999. *HighBeam Research*. (March 3, 2014).<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-59552707.html>



every sense of the word. What you are to yourself is a question implying extreme ego that has no pragmatic goal of any kind. Emergent properties of a social act cannot be understood in isolation from the total context of the social system within which it occurs.²

Various trends of postmodern theory build on the proposition that the paradigm of universalism, rationalism, individualism and the image of man in modernity have been exhausted. Diverse currents of philosophy agree on the fact that the nineteenth century view of humanism and progress are ambivalent and they relate critically to abstract, humanist notion of man.³ To dwell upon the prejudice regarding the inherent identity moulded by the social premise is a pseudo reasoning that annihilates the basic notion of identity as a process of self realization. Critique of the same in varied dimensions does not satisfy the ultimate question as to what the construct regarding such an identity is based on. Manipulations along the contours of identity have grave repercussions along many lines. The resultant conundrum gives way to repercussions that manifest in violent forms. The fascist doctrine inoculates the cultural premise asking for consolidation of an identity that is manifested for the sole purpose of promoting autocratic exclusivist identity that transcends the very nature of original identity mostly.

Having clarified the preliminaries, let us note that science begins when there exists ‘problem’, that is, when something needs to be understood. To understand a phenomenon we have to describe, classify, analyse and explain it. Usually, but not necessarily always, scientific investigation starts with the hypothesis regarding the problem under study. A hypothesis is a guess or an assumption postulated about the problem to be studied. The effort of the scientist is to verify – to prove or disprove – the hypothesis, with the help of the facts collected for the purpose. Admittedly, all the facts need not or cannot be collected but only the relevant and accessible facts are collected which scientist present with the help of concepts. Values, norms, roles etc are examples of concepts in sociology.⁴

The central question that emerges from this comparison of ethnic and religious movements concerns their implications for democracy. Although the process of democratic change may give rise to varied forms of identity politics, the consequences of each form of identity politics for democracy, are quite different. In general, ethnic movements that are accommodated by the state have strengthened democratic processes.⁵

Conscience is ubiquitous in our law, but it is usually unexamined, functioning as a presumed shared starting point with every citizen’s cognitive grasp from which the law can do its work.⁶

The Creation of Deviant Sub-communities:

To see how this works, recall that signals are necessary for the creation of relationships and communities but that they are historically arbitrary. Typically, an action that

²Richard Swedberg, American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 65, No. 1, Talcott Parsons: Economic Sociologist of the 20th Century (Jan., 2006), pp. 71-74.

³Margit Koves, Anthropology in the Aesthetics of the Young Lukacs, *Social Scientist*. v 29, no. 338-339 (July-Aug 2001) p. 68.

⁴T.K. Oommen, C.N. Venugopalan, Sociology for Law Students, Eastern book company.

⁵Jyotindra Das Gupta in ‘Ethnicity, Democracy and Development in India: Assam in a General Prospective’, in AtulKholi, India’s Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State Society Relations.

⁶Robert K. Vischer, Conscience and The Common Good, Cambridge University Press.



serves as a signal of loyalty to the community imposes different costs on different people. This means that while the average persons rationally incurs the cost of the signal in order to obtain the gains of cooperation, people for whom the action is very costly do not. These people will be ostracized by members of the dominant community. They respond by forming sub-communities.

An example is ideology or religious belief. If a community has certain theological commitments that I share, it is costless for me to signal my loyalty to it. If I do not care much about theology, it is costly, but maybe less costly than forgoing gains from cooperation. If I care deeply about my religion and my beliefs contradict that those of community, I may incur greater costs (in terms of psychological or spiritual well-being) than I gain (materially or psychologically or spiritually) from membership in the community. Since it is too costly to convert, I seek out like-minded people to form a sub-community that distinguishes itself from the dominant community. Or consider the creation of sub-communities in response to racial or ethnic discrimination. I cannot change physical characteristics of my body, or my ancestry, so if everyone discriminates against me on the basis of these characteristics as way of showing each other that they are loyal to each other, then I cannot join their community. I am forced to form a sub-community with people who share my characteristics.⁷

Nonetheless, a structural analysis of cases can potentially carry a heavier burden and engage in hypothesis testing, or at least identify ‘theory- confirming’ and ‘theory-infirmiting’ cases. Toward this end, to classify designs of case-oriented comparative research offer promise. In the first, which Przeworski and Teune term the ‘most similar systems’ approach, analysis’s select cases that differ with respect to the outcome, but match across a host of potentially explanatory variables. Differences in outcome can thus be explained by any differences between the otherwise very similar cases. The design, something Stinchcombe refers to as “deep analogy” has a highly intuitive logic that mirrors the notion of statistical control. Przeworski and Teune, however, argue that the method often leads to an analysis of outcomes that are largely “over determined” and suggest that a “most different systems” design yields greater leverage for casual inference. A most different system design compares cases that differ cross a host of exclamatory factor, but share similar outcome. No one pretends, of course, that either one of these approaches provides for an airtight test of rival hypotheses. However both methods are widely used in field of comparative politics and have yielded insights that form the core knowledge in the discipline.⁸ The hither to history of mankind is a culmination of manifestations of systems that attempted, consolidate identities at various junctures. Identity was collateral pledged to sub serve the principle of societal stability. Stability in form and structure was over emphasised while the plenary aspects of the human behavioural traits that have gone unnoticed and uncared for. The promulgation of thought that all individual have a collective identity regarding some aspect or the other tautology that has flawed reasoning as it soul basis. Cultural identity, applied to world history, is a problematic but indispensable concept. This uneasy contention reflects not only the contorted posture one tends to assume in viewing the world through a postmodern prism, but also the seemingly impossible task of trying to write integrative and ecumenical world history while some of our most durable political and cultural constructs are in a process of dissolution. Under these conditions, in which the familiar boundaries between groups may either fragment or rigidify

⁷ Eric A. Posner, Law and Social Norms, Universal Law Publishing Co. ,Pg101

⁸Zachary Elkins, Tom Ginsburg and James Melton, The Endurance of National Constitutions, Cambridge University Press, pg 148



unpredictably, cultural identity has presented itself forcibly as a problem for historical inquiry. William McNeill, for one, has distinguished between the cultural boundedness of conventional historians who are "willing to remain safely encapsulated within a group's universe of discourse and those seeking somehow to transcend cultural boundaries."⁹ "World historians," he writes, "are trying to perform a feat of intellectual prestidigitation, subordinating their own local social universe along with everyone else's to patterns and processes of which those concerned remain largely or entirely unaware."¹⁰

Ideology is a concept both broader in scope and more specific than those of 'societal consensus' and 'social symbols' used earlier. The existence of a pervasive or controlling ideological system in a society does not guarantee consensus but merely limits dispenses within certain bounds. This is because it provides the framework of thought within which individuals and social groups interpret the nature of the conflicts in which they are involved and recognize and understand the interests which they are involved and recognize and understand the interests whom they seek to promote. Similarly, ideology provides the context in which social symbols are interpreted. It fixes their meaning and significance. The symbols of law and government do not exist in isolation but as part of wide currents of understanding about the nature of the society and individual life. The manipulation of social or political symbols relies on existing ideologies and at the same time contributes to sustain or direct it. At the same time Arnold's very important insight that socially significant symbols can exist in mutual contradiction has to be preserved. Thus, ideology tends to disguise its inconsistencies in vague, infinitely fluid concepts. Emotion may substitute the perfect coherence and completeness which cannot be obtained through rigorous and systematic analysis of experience. In ideological thought social experience tends to be perceived and interpreted selectively in order to preserve and generalize values taken as immutable.¹¹

Paradigm of non-existence:

That which is perceived by the self is an abstraction as conceived by the social milieu of the paradigm of existence. Aporia faced by the self on encountering that, no paradigm of existence is possible to be perceived by the self without considering the self at least as an observer makes the situation even more complicated. Conceiving the inconceivable becomes the order of the day when one tries to predict the future without him present as a living entity. Anything that is predicted is in the format of prophecy devised by the logic of probability. Ascension of the individual as a soothsayer who defies the probability of the own nonexistence with a prophetic vision to envisage a world without him is a means of self-deception and nothing more.

The first ground that the self-stand on is, 'the epoche of the denial of nonexistence', which means the problem following or not following the 'rule of existence'. Argument thus is the effect of the self even after the obliteration of the paradigm of the self.

The objective of the sustenance of the self even on apparent nonexistence is a fixture made for the convenience of one's ego, where the self-appointed judge of the self-perpetuates his existence in the imaginary paradigm of nonexistence while standing within the confines of

⁹ William McNeill, "The Rise of the West as Long-Term Process," in *Mythistory and Other Essays* (Chicago, 1986), 51.

¹⁰ Lewis D. Wurgaft, *History and Theory*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Theme Issue 34: *World Historians and Their Critics* (May, 1995), pp. 67-85

¹¹ *The Sociology of Law An Interoduction*, Roger Cotterrell, Butterworths, 1984



his own existence. Then we see the judge takes into consideration the case on hand and its context, which results in the difference in judgment from case to case, making each case unique and . Each judgment becomes a special judgment. Which means the rule is followed sometimes and not followed some other time depending on what the case demands. If justice can be done by following the rule, then it is followed; if not, it is not followed.

They knew a tremendous number of things — But was it worthwhile knowing all these things if they did not know the one important thing, the only important thing?¹² We ought to be imperative about the existence of the society- the only important thing. Arguments may raise say occurrence of self as a catalyst is momentous for existence of individuals distinct from the society. Self as a catalyst is nothing but the upshot of influence of the society even before birth.

"There's nothing in the world we should trade for what we do have: the bent to sustain in regard to all elements of social life a spirit of unfettered, unsponsored inquiry, and the wisdom not to look elsewhere but ourselves and our discipline for this mandate"¹³ Goffman stand on the unblemished self with the goal to strive for unsponsored inquiry is a myth for the self stands within the gravitational pull of societal influences which is the only paradigm the self-survives. The idea of self- preservation and admonition of self is a natural outcome that is not to be shielded with the confines of individualistic traits; rather the self is to embrace the societal inputs, as an imbibed part of the self. In this way, the self-stand in an amalgamated form with the society where the self realizes itself to be as a product of social interactions and nothing more.

Instead of subscribing to a particular doctrinal thesis regarding ultimate achievement of the self which is in isolation from societal abrasions, it is prudent to embrace the scars on the surface of the self made by the society to be birth marks, that are borne with pride. Any attempt to erase these birth marks would even more scar as those effects to remove the surface abrasions would leave more scars by way of persistent societal intersections that occur in the process of cleansing one of the same.

¹²<http://www.terraquote.com/quote/12078/they-knew-a-tremendous-number-of-things/>

¹³Gregory W. H. Smith, Human Studies, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Oct., 2005), pp. 397-415

John Lofland, "Erving Goffman's Sociological Legacies." *Urban Life*. 1984, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 7-34.

Age of Reason – Reason, Rationality and Enlightenment The Age of Reason brought about a great change in the tale of man’s sojourn on earth. Reason, rationality and enlightenment became the new “gods.” For the previous seventeen hundred years the perfection of man was only to be obtained through grace after death. Age of Reason – The Christian View The Age of Reason was fraught with attacks on basic Christian beliefs, rejection of God and denial of miracles. In an attempt to divorce himself from the mysticism of the Middle Ages, man during the Age of Reason, applauded intellect and disdained spirit. God was believed to be unknowable, if He existed at all, and certainly there was no need for divine communication or revelation. The Age of Reason in the 17th century can be viewed as the forerunner to the Enlightenment of the 18th century. It was a time in the history of philosophy when thinkers strived to unify epistemology, ethics, metaphysics and logic into an integrated framework. Rationalists championed the primacy of mathematics as their framework for knowledge while empiricists voiced support for the physical sciences. One can also look at the Age of Reason as a triumph of modernist thought over earlier medieval scholasticism. It was at its base level cautious however it did inspire a stronger radicalism that would become more prominent in the continental philosophies of the later Enlightenment period. But, now a days, it is meant to be self realization of God or a high state of. Continue Reading. The Age of Reason; Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology is a work by English and American political activist Thomas Paine, arguing for the philosophical position of deism. It follows in the tradition of 18th-century British deism, and challenges institutionalized religion and the legitimacy of the Bible. It was published in three parts in 1794, 1795, and 1807.