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WHO AM I ?

Thought Paper

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FINAL DIALOGUE WRITING

WHO AM I ?



The scene: Ali was asleep , dreaming of having a conversation over a cup of black coffee with Ahmad his childhood friend. In the cold winters of New York, the dialogue with the sips of black coffee and cozy bonfire started to vanish their existence.

Ali: How are you brother?

Ahmad: Quite nervous

Ali: Nervous In front of your childhood best friend? Chill dude let's have a coffee we are meeting after 5 years.

Ahmad: I don't know who you are, so talking to a stranger can sometimes make a person nervous.

Ali: Am I a stranger? Are you crazy dude?

Ahmad: Who are you?

Body theory

Ali: Of course, I am Ali your childhood friend

Ahmad: I do have a friend in childhood but how can you tell me that you are the same person that was with me in childhood or whom I met 5 years back?

Ali: Dude, it's so obvious because I'm the same person Ali associated with this body

Ahmad: Oh, don't you know that your body has completely changed over the past years. You aren't having the same body as you had before, your looks are changed, even your outer layer of skin is replaced, so many times so far. Even your skeleton is being constantly remodeled. According to physics in 5 years every atom of our body is changed. Thus, your body is constantly being replaced by a new physical version of ourselves. How can you be the same Ali I met before? I don't know you man please think and drink your coffee; it's getting cold.

Ali turned a little pale

Ali: This is absolutely nonsense. I do agree that my body has changed but that doesn't mean I am not that same person. Can't you see it's so obvious I am still Ali and this body even though it might have gone through changes?

Ahmad: If you think you are this body then how much of you can change until you become a new you.

Ali: I don't know how much change that would be.

Ahmad: Which physical aspect or organ of your body is an essential characteristic for you to exist if others are lost or which has remained the same since childhood?

Ali: I think there is no one.



Ahmad: I don't know might be a good answer but let me explain further for clarity. The Philosopher Plutarch mentioned an idea, a ship launched from the port of Theseus. During its journey, it encountered many difficulties like storms due to which its parts had to be replaced one by one and as the ship continued the journey. Finally, not a single original part remained and the whole ship has new parts replaced now. The question is now when the ship finally returned to the Theseus, was it the same ship that left? Like the ship of Theseus, things change and when they do, they eventually stop becoming what they are and become something else. Likewise, if everything about your body has changed, and eventually you stopped

becoming who you were before as a body, on what basis you are saying that this body is you the same person before. Who are you Ali? Don't you even know yourself? Who's crazy here? I doubt.

Ali: Maybe that's true but even my body has changed but still, I would be called Ali. We don't identify someone as another being only because the body has changed.

Ahmad: But don't you think everything about you has changed other than your name? and what does your name is in essence for? Isn't it for identifying the body too? And it's quite obvious that your name can be also changed like as does your body. If you think your identity lies only in your name Ali, then if you change your name to Hitler, would you stop to exist?



Ali: Okay shut up, but what about the genes? I have the same genes as before. My genetic identity is the same. Why can't that be my persistent identity

Ahmad: That's a good question. However, Somatic genetic modification can add, cuts, or changes the genes in some of the cells of an existing person. If that happens with you will that mean you are dead? Furthermore, researchers have also found that epigenetic marks on DNA chemical marks also indeed change over a person's lifetime.

Ali: It's hard to answer in that sense but I think your argument is so biased by over generalizing changes to everything. I think my identity lies in memory, if not the body, so with some deeper aspects into sameness in my memory my self-remained same. You are still wrong Ahmad!

Ahmad: Why do you think your identity lies in memory?

Memory Theory

Ali: According to John Locke your identity remains stable over time because you retain memories of yourself at different points and each of those memories are connected to the one before



Ahmad: Lol Ali. If that's the case I want to ask do you remember what you ate at lunch last Tuesday? And if you don't that means you didn't exist at that time?

Ali: I don't, but that doesn't mean I didn't exist last Tuesday. This is because I still do remember a time like last Wednesday when I did remember that. If I can remember that version of myself then I am still connected to the Tuesday lunch person through a chain of memory.

Ahmad: That sounds interesting but still a foolish argument. Everything changes.

Ali: That's not the case. Your body can change over time but memories remain the same being connected. I am the same person as before because I remember being that person.

Ahmad: No one remembers being born, and so if our memory makes our identity, then none of us became who we are until our first memory which means we all lost a couple of years at least at the beginning. Doesn't it justify that stupid?

Ali: I don't think so

Ahmad: You don't think so, because maybe, according to your theory you were never born. You would also have to say that people stop being the same person if they lose their memories. For example, someone suffers from dementia, and once he has lost the ability to remember his past, does he stop being that person?

Ali: No, they still are the same person.

Ahmad: You seem trapped by your argument. Furthermore, false memories also exist. How do you know the memories you have are accurate, and if not, and things didn't happen the way you remember then how do those faulty memories influence your identity, do they make you partially a fictional person?

Ali: But if I can't know whether those memories are false, then you can also not say with so much surety that they are true.

Ahmad: I'm not saying they are true but you made a claim that you are the same Ali as before so you still need to prove that. Apart from that, even if you forget many memories, does that will mean you have lost a part of yourself as well?

Ali: No, I think those memories persist in my unconscious mind other than the conscious one.

Ahmad: But what proof do you have to say that they still exist in your unconscious?

Ali: Unconscious can't be proven. You don't know because it's there, not in your conscious mind

Ahmad: Well dude, if you can't prove that with reasoning then stop wasting my time.

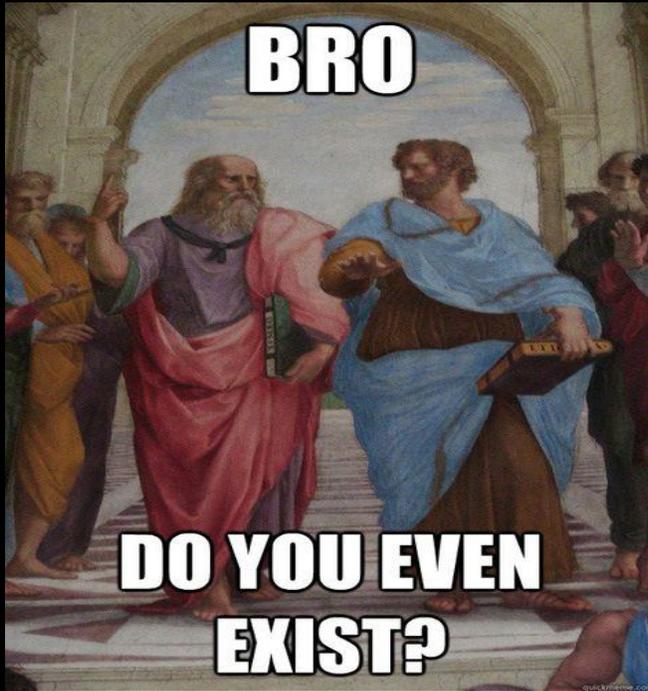
Ali: But can everything be proven with reasoning? If everything is changing, including body, memories, even our sensory perceptions then how can we find our identity?

Ahmad: But why should we must exist at all?

So at least Locke's theory has some advantages over body theory because memory can in some sense persist through your bodily changes but as we have found that memory is tenuous too.

Hume's Self Illusion

Ahmad: I don't think so any persistent self exists. Our existence is just an illusion. As the philosopher, David Hume argued that everything is in flux. Everything changes including body and the mind so, there is no self that persists from your birth to death so the concept of the same self is just an illusion.



Ali: Hahaha, do you think that you don't exist at all? Such a crazy man.

Ahmad: No, I didn't mean that. We are all just ever-changing bundles of impressions that our minds are fooled into thinking of as constant. We are just what we perceive through our senses because if everything is no longer perceived through our senses that means we don't exist.

Ali: If you are what you perceive through our senses, does that not mean you are saying that all you have experienced including sun, stars, sky, people, and coffee are you?

Ahmad: Yes, because whatever we experience is through our 5 senses. Even if everything is changing, this change is experienced through our senses, so the only knowledge we can get about ourselves is through 5 senses. This sensory input also makes us exist because how can we know that we exist if there is no input from external world into our senses?

Ali: So, if I died today, will you lose a part of yourself?

Ahmad: I think so

Ali: If you think you are whatever you experience with your senses, then tell me how can you deal with the experience of deep sleep. In deep sleep, when there is no dream, and we aren't sensing anything directly through our senses. Are we dead at that time? As you just argued we are what we experience through our senses because if nothing is perceived through our senses then we would die. So, do you die in deep sleep, and born again when you wake up?

Ahmad: It's confusing, but maybe it can be reincarnation?

Ali: So sad bro, you die every day, and I'm sorry for not attending your funeral daily.

Vedic Philosophy of the self (Observer/Self and the Observed)

Ali: Despite these all complexities and changes, still I do have a sense of self, so for sure it's certain that I do exist man.

Ahmad: But from where does that sense of self comes from, obviously the senses which all go through changes.

Ali: I think there is something beyond our senses which is our real self. It's something like awareness that never changes. As Vedic philosopher, Vivekananda argues the self is the unchanging observer/awareness which is the experiencer of all these changes in body, mind, and whatever comes from our senses. Although everything is changing including sensory experiences, body, and mind but this experiencer/observer never changes.

Ahmad: But, aren't you aware of this awareness too that you call the self?

Ali: No, you think like that from your mind; however, you need to realize what is the witness of this thought, who also is aware of the fact that there is a thought like the one you just mentioned, and is also aware of the absence of thought.

Ahmad: I don't get that, isn't the absence of thought also known by mind itself? I didn't get that explain more.

Ali: Okay, let's start from the basics. Everything perceived through our senses is changing as we have already discussed that. Now tell me can observer/experiencer and the observed/object of experience be ever same?

Ahmad: I think no.

Ali: Take an example, are you aware of the external objects like this cup of coffee or this coffee is aware of you?

Ahmad: I am aware of the cup of coffee that's so obvious.

Ali: Are you aware from the outside or from inside

Ahmad: I think here from inside.

Ali: Okay, let's take a look at this body, can you not touch, see, smell and feel this body. Isn't this body an object of experience too which is being observed by you?

Ahmad: Oh, I think so they are also an object of experience in that sense.

Ali: Like I asked before, its certain that the observer/experiencer and the observed/experienced cannot be the same. So again, you are aware of this body, as an object of experience from inside, and the body is not aware of you.

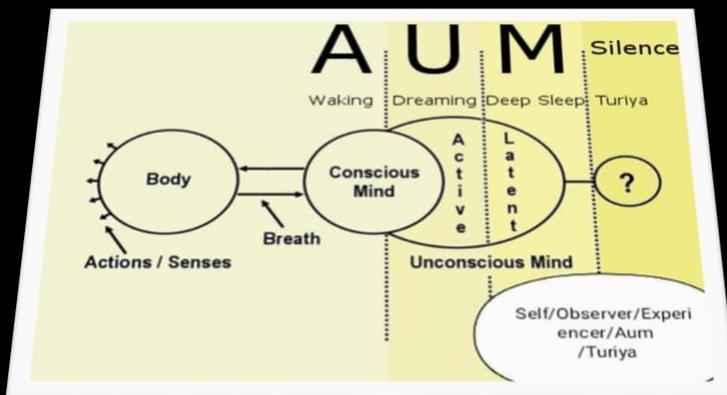
Ahmad: Yes, that makes sense but what link does that have to identity?

Ali: So, If experiencer and experienced can't be the same, then how can you and body be the same?

Ahmad: They are not.

Ali: Likewise, isn't the mind also an object of experience? When you are happy, you are aware of it, and you are also aware when you are not happy. You are also aware when there is a thought and you are also aware when there is no thought, so you are aware of the presence and absence of thoughts and mind, how can you know its absence if you are mind? This shows that like body, mind is also an object of experience, and you are aware of it, the experiencer which doesn't change.

Ahmad: But what is the self you are talking about.



Ali: It's the unchanging experiencer/observer that has been experiencing through your senses through your entire life in which your every sight, sound, object, thought, emotion is experienced. These sensory and mental objects of experience change, decay, come and go in the empty, unchanging awareness, which is the experiencer/observer/self.

Ahmad: Yes, that's interesting, but again I'm confused if you are not the mind, then who is saying, I'm that awareness.

Ali: The thought comes from the mind that I think that's why I must exist. However, the case is that you are that the thinker, through which mind can think. Thus, you are therefore you think, not because you think so you are. Thus, this awareness (self) is the only that is unchanging.

Ahmad: Your argument still seems foolish. You are just picking and choosing from Vedic philosophy. Haven't you also read that it says that self/awareness is not bound by time, cause-effect, space and it's the same in everyone. Thus, there is no distinction between any you Ali and me at all. We are one.

Ali: Yes, that's also true. Let me explain that. Look that unchanging observer self is the same as it is in you as it is in mine. We all witness the changes in mind, and body, just

because this awareness is beyond the grasp of our senses, having no physical nature that's why it seems hard to understand.

Ahmad: Oh yes, but even if it is identical don't you see there is time, and space between us. We are different

Ali: But aren't time, space and causation in our mind?

Ahmad: You cannot prove that, its bullshit you think time space doesn't exist. Are you crazy?

Ali: For example, in deep sleep, we have no experience of time, there is no input from senses, and neither thoughts or mind. Thus, what proof do you have in that situation, of time? Furthermore, in dreams, 6-7 hours are gone, and after waking up we realize It has only been an hour since we had been sleeping. The experience of time is also changing and an object of experience.

Ahmad: Obviously, I can't, I would need my mind and senses, and I could tell in a waking state, but not deep sleep.

Ali: But your concept of time is based on your experience of waking state, however, that changes, in other states of dreaming, and deep sleep. How can you be so sure that your waking experience of time is true one, and in other states it's false?

Ahmad: I think that's something skeptical you can't know that neither I.

Ali: Yes, so for now it's an illusion in our minds of time, nothing else

Ahmad: I don't know

Ali: Likewise, for space, in your dream e.g., you are standing somewhere looking across lake in central park, and suddenly you wake up and you are still lying on your mind. All that distance was where?

Ahmad: In my mind maybe

Ali: Yes

Ahmad: But you are wrong, this doesn't happen in waking state.

Ali: Look, in waking state we feel located in time and space because of our identification with the body.

Ahmad: But if time and space don't exist, then how does the body age?

Ali: I argued that the real self which is the observer/unchanged experiencer is not bound by time and space, obviously body is located in time and space but if you change your

perspective from body to the Vedic self of awareness then it's not bound by time and space like this body or mind is.

Ahmad: Oh, but what about the cause and effect, does that observer self-created it out of no cause? I disagree

Ali: If that observer is not bound by time and space then how can cause-effect exist for it. The cause comes before effect so this idea requires existence of time to exist, but if observer/awareness isn't bound by time like body or mind then your question doesn't make sense.

Ahmad: So, being not bound by time and space, you and me being that observer is one?

Ali: Exactly

Ahmad: I disagree! How can you deny that this space and time doesn't exist independent of our true observer self?

Ali: Look I agree, within this physical world, laws like time and space can be accepted but what's their base? They are a changing appearance that can't be experienced without the observer self which is beyond time, space, and causation and the same one in everyone. That is the ground of awareness, in which all changing objects of experiences come and go.

Ahmad: I don't think we can know at all that so surely, so who are you I ask again?

Ali: That's a wrong question, remove I then remove you, only am remains.



An Earthquake occurs Ali, and Ahmad die. The Angel of Death searches for them, but he couldn't find them anywhere. He asks God, where are they? No reply comes. He finds a mirror nearby and sees Ali in that mirror, he blinks his eyes, and now he sees Ahmad. Later on, the angel cleans the mirror, and sees God

Angel of death: What is this? Where are Ali and Ahmad?

God looked sternly at the Angel of Death and replies:

God: They never existed!