

Essay, Unit 15 Philosophy of Mind
John StGeorge

“I”

“I” as a concept is essentially self-referential and although meaningless in the objective world is no less than dynamic in the subjective world. By a simple change of reference, from “I” to “you”, the worlds move from subjective to objective. That is, “I” subjective becomes “you” objective.

This simple change introduces many and varied routes to the “you” of the objective world whilst the routes to the “I”, the subjective world, remain private. These different routes are the standpoints of the “I” and “you” of everyday life for the subject and viewer.

“I” stands for self-reference and human existence for each and every specified subject. Take “I” from the common language and what would replace this un-identifiable concept of specific existence and reality? Self-awareness is always a private route, unique to the “I” of every person.

By sheer necessity each and every “I” carries the particulars of the life history, no matter how brief, of the specific “I” in the frame of reference. There can be no “I” without an existence history, that is, birth, genetic pool, family. The Cartesian soul belongs to the subjective world, problematic, whereas the “I”’s necessary history seems to qualify for the objective world.

“I” as a concept word is limited to self-reference in the way of rational, intelligible and essential discourse. The “I” carries no metaphysical baggage and is available to all and sundry without qualification other than existence, that is, a specific existence. This allows us to regale in our achievements and seek refuge from our errors and misdemeanours, that is...

“Did you do this?”
“No, it was not me.”
A small voice enjoins,
“It was I.”

This little discourse shows the certainty of identity, existence and responsibility encapsulated in “I”.

Some time ago there was an acquaintance of mine who was a police officer. He had a category of “who-me?s”. When asked how he arrived at this particular category, he gave the example of observing an unlawful act in progress, and calling to the offender, “Come here, you.” The anxious riposte from the offender was, “Who, me?” Seemingly a regular reply.

For me, this analogy very clearly illustrates the difficulty that people have in accepting their status as “I” in particular circumstances of life, which demand extensions of identity and responsibility. The first person fact was the “who-me?.” The third-person facts were the “who-me?”’s denial of his location, who he was and what he was doing there. “I” was a long way off, self-reference was not on the agenda, the only person “who-me?” could be was “I”.

Therefore for me, “I” identifies a specific being, existing in an objective world bearing a life history, brief or otherwise. This essay illustrates the more practical outcome of “I” as a self-referential concept, extending to the acceptance of the fundamental responsibilities of life. That is, our relationships to others, and their culture (way of life).

Dr Klempner
Dear Geoffrey,
Herewith essay on the topic “I”, Unit 15, Searching for the Soul.
Annotations to follow.
Regards, John