

- I. Introduction: Here's How the Story Goes
 - A. Emphasizes that Dennett's story is told from the first-person point of view
 - 1. Problem is locating oneself in an objective description of world
 - 2. Lots of candidates and objects (Hamlet, Yorick, Fortinbras, etc.)
 - B. But none seem obviously the bearer of Dennett's identity, from subject pov
 - C. Confesses to finding this all confusing vertigo inducing
- II. What Do We Make of All This: Two Responses: Descartes and Dennett
 - A. Focuses in on the importance of the point of view
 - 1. How we find the story, which tracks this pov, intelligible
 - 2. Its connection to incoming perceptual information and outgoing action
 - 3. Can make sense of it shifting around from one objective location in the external world to another, even in quick abnormal ways
 - B. Illustrates the intuitively very deep divide between objectivity and subjectivity
 - 1. No **object** given in or to the pov
 - 2. Can be identified w/ the **subject** of the pov (or if different, the pov itself)
 - C. Notes the pov's similarities with traditional Cartesian notion of a soul
 - 1. Immediacy, certainty, unity
 - 2. In a nice metaphor, calls it a kind of entity that "retains its identity through switches of brains, gaining and shedding bodies like casting off clothing"
 - D. Frames the story as presenting an apparent dilemma (which she ultimately rejects)
 - 1. Nolipsism: science shows selves don't exist, are but convenient, useful fiction
 - 2. Cartesian dualism about the self: selves are non-physical bearers of identity
- III. Thought Experiments and What They Show
 - A. Notes some general features of thought experiments
 - 1. Hypothetic situations to elicit intuitions about proper application of concepts
 - 2. Good ones are typically aporia (confusion) inducing
 - B. This one does the trick w/r/t the concept of "I", and what it refers to
 - 1. Notes that this is a semantic conceptual way to approach the question
 - 2. Primarily asks a question about how a concept or piece of language functions
 - 3. Secondly about metaphysics/ontology, the character of the referent itself
- IV. How The Mind Stabilizes Separate Conceptions of Self and World
 - A. What the brain does for you in creating subjective experience
 - 1. Filters, integrates, and **stabilizes** the buzzing blooming confusion of information coming in from all the distinct separate modalities and sensory streams
 - 2. Does this so well, quickly, subconsciously, and effortlessly that it seems like
 - a. You are receiving a transparent, unfiltered channel of information
 - b. Have direct unmediated access to environment and external world
 - B. But your brain also performs another important function: **separation**
 - 1. Depicts information and objects in an "objective" world
 - a. Distinct from perceptual surfaces and body that your brain controls
 - b. Relationships between objects and properties in that objective world
 - 2. Locates **itself** within and with respect to that objectively represented world
 - a. Relationships between mobile pov and objects it moves among
 - b. Keeps track of how relationships change as the referent of "I" moves
 - c. If those changes are in the world, or just in my relationships to it
- V. Back to Dennett's Story
 - A. Re-describes story using her own conceptual apparatus: separation and stabilization
 - B. Rejects both nolipsism and Cartesian dualism for an emergent view of the self as that which emerges as a result of the brains stabilization and separation functions
- VI. Recap: selves as virtual objects that emerge late in the hierarchy of complex systems

Main question of chapter: What am I? What is the right account of the self, such that it can cure the kind of aporia generated by Descartes' arguments and dramatized by Dennett's short story? Are there any good options other than Dennett's scientific materialist noliipsism and Descartes' substance dualism?

Author's answer from the text: "I suggested that the story of how the concept of self as subject arises (the rarefied Cartesian "I" of "I think," which is a concept I think we all have, and the one that allows us to give imaginative content to Dennett's story) is at one and the same time, the story of how selves arise, because the self is nothing more than the formal subject of an internal point of view on the world. You aren't a concrete particular, but something more abstract, something given to yourself in thought as unified subject or possessor of a point of view, stabilized out of the changing patterns of light, color, sound, and smell, movement initiated and tacitly perceived not by conscious inference, but by a brain designed to generate a user interface."

My question: Ismael suggests that the brains do a lot of integrating of information for us, and the process functions to separate and stabilize of two conceptions of self and world, one objective, another relational, i.e. one that self-located where you are and your relationship to the more objective stuff in the 'external' world. She also suggests that your brain doesn't do **all** of that work for you, but that some of the more sophisticated and social aspects of it, of developing a self and a corresponding self conception, have to be done consciously. At one point (13) she notes that on this more complicated side of the spectrum, "the process in which the **distinction between discovery and creation breaks down in a fascinating and distinctive way.**" What does she have in mind here? Because it sounds super interesting.