

Macintyre, Ricoeur and Charles Taylor on the concepts of Self and rationality

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Abstract

For one to remain autonomous, they have to act and decide, or generally, live in accordance with the motivations that count as one's expressions of self. That is, of whom they want to be or are. For that reason, a people governing themselves forms the notion of individual autonomy that people shall act and decide according to own values, desires, convictions free of the unwanted external and internal influences. An individual might be perceived autonomous where his/her actions, life or decisions are understood to be the accurate expressions of who such being is. The first part of this paper gives an introduction to the concept of self and its relevance in modern day culture, and a serious evaluation of the concepts and brief outline of MacIntyre, Paul Ricoeur and Taylor Charles' understandings of practical rationality and self. The second part of this paper offers a sober comparative examination of three authors' concepts of practical rationality and self and critical evaluation.

Key words: Self, Identity, Rationality, Morals, Ethical identity

Introduction

This paper is an analysis of Jean Paul Gustave Ricoeur (February 27, 1913 – May 20, 2005), Charles Margrave Taylor (November 5, 1931) and Alasdair Chalmers MacIntyre's (January 12, 1929) notions of rationality and self. The paper offers the differences and similarities between all three theorists on rationality and self. It also avails a critical appraisal of these two concepts. For example, Charles Taylor proposes that socially established ethical and moral standards are used to map individual actions and behavior. For example, individuals willing to build a future model of themselves will leverage the societal understanding of the model stereotypes they want to be. Paul Ricoeur on 'self' advances that the story

narrative is instrumental in the construction of 'self' identity. This means individuals with the ability to give an honest narrative of their lives may end up offering crucial indicators that explain their lives. The third scholar Alasdair MacIntyre, on self and rationality, is of the idea that rationality is the total of one's values, morals, and their moral compass. Also, that rationality differs from individual to another; a fact that underscores the current variations in international justice regimes. Of special concern for the paper will be to offer an exhaustive analysis of scholarly views and contributions; alongside comparisons of major arguments among the three scholars.

The Relevance of Self in Modern Day Culture

Self underscores a person's intellectual, psychological, and emotional resources. It is a confession of one's rationality and an illustration of personal values, ethics, and moral foundations. The modern-day culture has evolved in pace with the growing technology. Integrated tech networks have engineered a shift in social touch where digitized connections define social relationships. *Face*, *Skype*, *Instagram* and similar Social channels drive the modern culture. The relevance of self in this merging process between the growing technology and social norms is to provide a good mix so that man uses 'modernism' to address the complexity of life. Self, by identifying and mapping resourceful ethics and value resources, offers an ethical standing and a unique rationality that influence thoughts and actions. Hence, using self to tame pervasive technological development and to keep the growth in the scope of human morality will be an instrumental step in sustainable civilization. Hence, the 'self' plays an instrumental role in shielding human values from corrosion by advances in technology which affect social touch and threaten social development.

The Essential Human Nature and the Negatives of Individual Modernism

Perhaps a glaring limitation of individual modernism is that it harbors a false promise of self-actualization. Sources note that modernists, by rejecting the contemporary realist ways of thinking, believe they can actively re-discover new ways of thinking. Individual modernism further presents challenges associated with shifting from older, conservative traditions to new Enlightenment that demands a man to subject everything

to reason. Hence, the individual capacity to embrace change may not necessarily match the period through which the change strikes. This means as much as individuals may automatically assume 'modernism' in their most basic actions and undertakings, they may not necessarily harbor the capacity to address fundamental shifts that modernity presents. The resultant scenario is a crumbling system and vastly eroding moral foundations and compasses due to lack of correspondence in two competing transformations. Hence, individual modernism presents genuine concerns with regards to human nature, moral formation, and rationality.

Modernity has sketched a person's character by depriving them of essential qualities that are customarily connected to the ethical personality (Charmaz, 2016). Paul, Taylor, and MacIntyre agree that such shaping has resulted in a pale and abstract character as well as ways that put into query the identity and continuity of intended subject. It is, as of fact, shaped through loss of customary connections that structured the social identity as well as an understanding of people's lives as some order in the direction of a particular end. For example, in the past, moral compasses were shaped by stringent cultures and traditions which rebuked and violated practices that were inconsistent with established norms. Modernity has redefined cultural standards through the dilution of the earlier rich morals. The increasing use of technology, for example, delineates social touch as a result creating a gap in personal relations. This means as opposed to using real-life interactions to orchestrate and strengthen personal relationships and informal networks, individuals are resulting in digital platforms and tools. As a result, they lose the meaning of 'rationality.' Hence, modernity remains a threat to past ideals, notions, and values that anchored rationality and provides a fade shade of present-day rationality.

Eureka Concept of Self

The basic and most fundamental conceptualization of 'self' is two-tier. One, it includes an actor with the capacity to think [the person] and the object which is 'about me.' In the exploration of 'self' philosophical scholars often overlap and their thinking points towards similar proofs. For example, in the definition of 'self', the actor is able to think and to know of his ability to think. The same concept is used by Rene Descartes in his query of human existence when he concludes, 'I think hence I am.' The self

consists of multiple facets like; the physical, the senses, and the higher faculties which are integrated to define one's rationality and self.

Taylor Charles' Theory On self

Taylor presents the concept of self as an articulated product. This articulation process undertakes certain sets of psychological ingredients of attitude such as feelings, motivation, inclinations, emotions and desires. However, individual's self is not be recognized by such attitudes because of two reasons. First, these psychological attitudes being normally immature and vague are unable to assign the 'true' identity of the self to the individual. Subsequently, the articulation of such attitudes and states by the individual as he interprets and finally constitutes such states and attitudes, happens. However, these attitudes are not comparable to the individual's self for two main reasons. Firstly, every psychological states and attitude regularly inchoate and vague; they never offer an individual the 'true' identity of self. As a result, such there must be an articulation of such states and attitudes. That is, the individual must interpret, as well as lastly constitute, such states and attitudes in some way (Blakely, 2016).

For instance, if they have an unclear feeling of attraction to some other being, they must concretize and observe the emotion they are experiencing. In responding to such queries and understanding personal feelings, culture and society come-into-play simply because the interpretation of imaginary concepts needs language. And not merely the contemporary languages but concepts and terms that are particular to a specific culture and society (Clayton, 2016). For this, people depend on the socially born concepts to have the capacity to describe themselves (Prickett, 2017).

Another second major argument forwarded by Taylor Charles is an inquiry into who people want to be or the 'persons' they envision in the future. People must not take every mental attitude as simply offered, but can be evaluative towards them. Characteristically, such people assume the strong assessments' shape that evenly can be termed value decisions. Cultural and social factors, at such point, become significant because of the need to evaluate various emotions and desires. They need suitable vocabulary thus the eventual want of the value concept (Wietzke, 2015). Nonetheless, these identical linguistic articulation tools can only be

attained only by cultural and social interactions (Martin, 2017). Taylor Charles hence contends that persons looking forward to developing and transforming themselves into who they want to be must first satisfy two major provisions. One, they must define the social or cultural definitions, expectations, and concepts of who they want to be and with regards to self-identity. Secondly, they should interact and actively connect with people or social players to truly idealize this transformation.

Taylor further notes that essentially, the self is dialogical; meaning it is a relation, a negotiating process, and a struggle. He argues the qualitative differences that somebody else creates are constitutive of the individual's identity; some identity involving one's considerations of "self" as the individual in a specific religion, family, nation, or similar affiliations. Taylor contends that the qualitative divisions that people generate or present are inherent to the ways they conduct their existence and ultimately the way they establish their orientation towards the universe (Mellon, 2016). The argument extends to note that justifications of the identities that position people towards specific orientations and social considerations should be clear for one to fully explain people's lives (Taylor, 2016). More clearly, this is to mean that to understand a person's life and the substance of their being, an evaluation of their identities, and how they position their actions and behaviors is crucial. Such positioning is not reducible to some natural laws that never explain the qualitative differences in the moral possessions that some particular being or cultural society adheres to.

It never explains the differences that, in opposing cultural societies at opposing times, place differing ethics upon opposing social perceptions. This analysis, therefore, notes that Taylor Charles makes a genuine contribution to the philosophical body of knowledge as pertains to 'self' and identity creation. Throughout Taylor's philosophical contributions, it is clear that his arguments are founded on the themes of identity, social constructs, and the alignment of a person's values with those of the society. The author constantly proves that a person can best transform into who they wish to be by first identifying the moral inclinations of the model person. Then, they proceed to align the societal standards and conceptualization(s) of this person to that of their own. Which means the concept of self-revolves around both the individual and the society. The

next section discusses Charles Taylor's concepts, arguments, and contributions to the concept of rationality, its scope, underlying features, and characteristics.

On Rationality

To Taylor, rationality has striking features and involves particular criteria to identify and define. First is that the explanation of rationality must consider the qualitative differences of value. These are variations tied to frameworks and structures supporting identity. Second is rationality is central to human operation as the agents of social ethics. This argument advocates for the non-instrumental attitude towards reasoning in regards to politics, ethics, amongst others. Last is that the ad-hominem attitude must consider individuals as well as their genuine motivations. It must be founded the substantive people-content of self-interpretation and not external procedures or criteria to labor towards the best explanation that debating parties or person can resolve on (Meijer, 2017).

Hence, this analysis believes that Taylor Charles approach to rationality is segmented into three broader themes. The first is the differences in person's values, ethics, and moral compasses underscore the identity of their rationality. More clearly, to fully understand a person's state of rationality, it is important to scrutinize their values and morals. The second theme is that rationality is central to the overall human operation as agents of social ethics. This implies that humans must constantly seek to develop their state of rationality as it guides their everyday actions, decisions, and behaviors as agents of social ethics. The third broad theme establishes that a person's motivations should be established to properly define their rationality, ethical, and moral standing. Hence, as opposed to looking at external influences, procedures, or criteria, Charles proposes that an individual's motivations define their rationality hence offering a benchmark for evaluating 'rationality.'

Ricoeur Paul Theory 'on Self'

In his scholarly debates and philosophical commentaries, Paul emerges as an advocate of the narrative interpretations of self (Altshuler, 2015). In differentiating between *idem* (sameness) and *ipse* (self) as well as solving the dialectic association of the two, Paul intends to generally

illuminate the identity problem through narrative justification. It is important to focus on Paul's narrative attitude towards asperity or self-proposed to solve the self-query. To Paul, the beginning point is the understanding of who the individual is. That is, intuitively people have a habit of telling life stories (Ricoeur, 2017). This offers a footing for the person themselves. Therefore, it is the story's identity and the narrative landscape that functions as the primary foundation for 'self' in a person. The vital stroke in such stage is that the story's lone aspects gain meaning merely in connection to one other as well as whole the story. Paul argues that in order to, therefore, create a sense of the distinct aspects of someone's life, people must tell stories where main narrative features are arranged in an expressive order. They must be arranged in a manner that diverse pieces are interpreted appropriately, and where each connects to another to give meaning and life to the whole story (Coeckelbergh, 2016).

Paul further forwards that life tales must be understood in the poetic footings of Aristotle. The story identity is conveyed to the individual(s) whose personality operates as the second foundation of Paul's theory (Ricoeur, 2012). In storytelling, coherence or concordance is what must be accomplished. To accomplish this undertaking, features of the character's life that are understood as contingencies or discordances should be defined and explored for their life story to successful make meaning (Sigrist, 2015). Therefore, a person requires a suitable story configuration with the capacity to provide coherence or concordance for their life stories to be used as a benchmark of the identity of 'self.' This outline must then constitute an active identity and concordant of the story's key characters. The last and third keystone argument is in the documentation of the individual (actual) with the central appeal of the narrated or given a story.

The individual, hereto, participates in the imaginatively game changing the detailed telling of the story as well as the identity of the key character with which to categorize. Furthermore, Ricoeur notes the individual can attain new facts or awareness of themselves insofar as the individual is continually cognizant of variable storytelling and identification question. The imaginable understandings are, therefore, a type of lively interpretation of self. In following Paul, it is illustrated the 'self' is nothing but some specific interpreted difference of the concordant tale with the key personality for the individual to recognize themselves

with (Hardwick, 2016). More clearly, this means the ‘self’ of a person lies in the varied interpretation(s) they give about their life stories. More clearly, the ability to properly and accurately illustrate a person’s life story is the basis of their ‘self’ as it allows others to gather details and make interpretations of the identity of the person.

MacIntyre on Self

MacIntyre additionally claims that identities have to possess some narrative configuration. The harmony of self-exists in the harmony of a narrative that joins death to life to birth which reflects the person’s narrative of the end, middle, and starts respectively (Hicks, 2016). No ethical identity exists for some abstract person; self must discover its ethical identity through and in its communities’ membership (Arch, 2016). MacIntyre offers an ethical agent’s self-features. To remain an ethical agent, the person must first understand their distinct identity in every role they fulfill. Second is that the person must perceive themselves as the ‘rational person’ with a sound judgment and a rejection of unjust societal actions and behavior. Last is the person must appreciate themselves as answerable to other people in regards to human qualities not merely in role duties (MacIntyre, 1989). This means their actions and conducts must mirror to the society what they believe to be ethical or moral. The notion of self is logically reliant on the narrative concept and vice versa. That is, it is worthless to dialogue about a character unless the person assumes that such subject has some individual identity (Taylor, 2016). A person’s biography should concern repeatedly-existing things. It is meaningless and pointless to say that somebody has the identity of self without providing a solid back-up and a proof record of their constant actions, activities, and behavior(s).

MacIntyre on Rationality

MacIntyre’s concern is with practical rationality that is to him, consists of formal, intellectual and substantive procedures that are applied by the individuals for judging true and false and also to the judgments of values in human actions. Rationality is not regarded as general or universal due to the fact that it varies from one person to another and from community to community because it developed over the person’s life span and a community’s history. So also for MacIntyre rationality surely has

some particular history (Freeman, 2016). And in this context there exist a number of different inquiry traditions having specific past experiences and histories that reflects the variations in rationality and justices. More accurately, the differences in rationality are followed by the variations in traditions and their histories (MacIntyre, 1988). Rationality is the collection of facts, theories, principles and beliefs that is created in individuals by their education and ethical development and is used for criticism of universe by the persons.

MacIntyre's concept of rationality is both tradition-instituted as well as tradition constituting simply because a person's rationality is developed under the influence of a tradition and the value system of a community on the whole is influenced by the rationality of a person. And for Professor MacIntyre, rationality varies in the history of a person's life and that of a community (Stolz, 2017). It is commonly accepted that any ethical theory based on human inquiry can never be imposed on everybody belonging to a particular community and persons can merely fight for truth and justice. In the same way the standards of rationality and justice can be revised accordingly by the state and community. However, these moral standards based on human inquiry, in order to be followed by the individuals need collective influential power to fight for justice and truth. Professor MacIntyre, to sum up, states that because of the diversity of inquiry traditions reason and justice both do not possess the characterization of generality. Furthermore, as concept of justice is reason dependent and in this context different versions of rationalities generate various justice systems (MacIntyre, 2016). This means that community and tradition based understanding of rationality subsequently has clear impact on the enforcement and implementation of law and justice systems across the national and international frontages.

MacIntyre argued that all the attempts to get consensus with the help of reason concerning various issues are failure now (MacIntyre, 2014). And for modern thinking the remaining concern of practical rationality is nothing more than in some much deteriorated sense (Green, 2017).

In a nut shell, for MacIntyre the rationality jointly has intellectual, formal and substantive properties that regulate and form individual actions

and behavior. And the variation in persons' behavior mirrors differences in population rationality and various justice systems. Hence, rationality as understood and practice in different ways become instrumental in order to define and influencing the law and enforcement systems. In this way MacIntyre analyses the failure of rationality in modern era for resolving various issues and agrees that a new definition or approach to practical rationality is needed that is tradition based conception of rationality that may be helpful to get consensus.

Differences and Similarities in the Philosophers' Concepts of Rationality and Self

Similarities

The first identifiable similarity is that both Ricoeur and MacIntyre come out as advocates of the narrative interpretation of 'self'. They both contend that modern cultures suffer from a deficit in normative command, a cost that, in theory, the time philosophy reproduces. Consequently, the only way out of ethical problems is deemed as impossible. MacIntyre and Paul's findings pertain general modernity with the proof that misunderstanding never concerns only the philosophical, theoretical attitudes, but whole life collective individuals (Moran, 2016). First proof surrounds ethical matters of rationality and truth. Past-enlightenment cultures are swayed in the direction of emotivism at a theoretical grounding and in the direction of bureaucracy at the socio-political level. Under bureaucracy, modern societies constitute the exemplary alienation practice; something that Taylor Charles terms as qualitative divisions that people generate. These divisions are inherent to the ways humans conduct their existence and establish their orientation towards the universe through both justice and legal systems.

In regards to the contemporary and modern ethics, MacIntyre and Paul argue that since decisions are acknowledged as the direct expression of individual attitudes. This implies the feelings of a speaker do not influence or drive honest decisions and hence a hindrance to ethical decision-making. Another major similarity is that all philosophical inclinations appear to favor the thought that moral judgments are perceived to be of arbitrary selection since they are unjustified by rational criteria. Therefore, the connection of self to a person's ends is in the free-will

(Kolak, 2004). Such cosmopolitanism approach, when deprived of roots, is the foundation of MacIntyre and Paul's tracking the notion of society and self. Just like the homeless person with potentially all but nothing in truth. To evade each basic fact with a specific moral viewpoint or societal role in such ability of self, contemporary philosophy mistakenly notices the core of ethical subjectivity.

The Differences

Perhaps one outstanding difference lies in authenticity. Charles contends and believes that staying 'human' is assumed as attained through staying distinctive and unique even where the two crash with certain societal norms. Taylor Charles views the result of such capacity as the difference in the person's unique and private individuality and their communal self. MacIntyre, on the other hand, contends that the authenticity notion sets restrictions to constant identity re-definition. The restrictions are dictated by the incorporation of themes into the ethical framework pattern that is not of the human making. The criticism of MacIntyre is founded on the proposition that critical freedom, which is linked to the autonomous-selection ideal, results in some ethical orientation loss. In such context, MacIntyre acknowledges the reasoning capability but contends that such supposes a precedent, multifaceted commitments, for the appraisal of good and right. Therefore, it is ignored as the detachment capability from the traditionally fixed evaluation practices (Gahl, 2018).

While Taylor Charles contends that identity is not entirely dependent on some will, Paul, on the other hand, contends that Freedom is dependent on recognizing that people's shared cultural legacy is part of the things that give them meaning. People must be able to appreciate the fact that intrinsic limits (holy spaces) exist in their self-determination capacity. As a result, valuing such limitations assists them to handle the pressures that rise amongst internal, new and the old, between the unlimited and limited as well as the collective and individual; all of which Charles Taylor terms as ethical identity. Hence, ethical identity is the ability to recognize one's irreparable disabilities and intrinsic limitations that shape their 'true self' and which render their rationality as imperfect.

Charles contends that individualism disregards the communal integration of peoples' end (Palaver, 2017). Individualism view humans as

isolated makers of choice, unable to offer an intelligible model of decent living. From this perspective, it is possible to concur with the argument that people are what they select to be and hence rationality is a self-will decision. People can constantly, whenever they want, question such elements held as only random societal features of their existence. On the other hand, Paul and MacIntyre contend the formation of a 'good' has a social aspect as it is indissolubly and inherently linked with the outline of a given historical society. The argument henceforth is that the society limits ways through which a person's ethical and moral conceptions are shaped. In the last analysis, the identity of the 'self' lies in those social duties a person inherits. Therefore, the description of a subject's identity includes the elements expressive of duties that person undertakes or roles they play on a daily basis (Ikäheimo, 2017).

Critical Evaluation

This argumentative analysis notes that Ricoeur takes a different philosophical approach to explain and expound on the meaning of 'self' as opposed to Charles who views 'self' as the sum of human values and ethical standing. Ricoeur believes the narrative of a person's story is central in defining their true identities. Another major observation and scholarly contribution by MacIntyre is that an account of a person's life or a narrative must be used to provide an account of individual actions and behavior, and ultimately a model to judge or justify a person's identity of 'self.' The author champions that a narration that gives an account of a person's life' from birth to life, and death – is an instrumental evaluation tool. This paper hence agrees that both observations for Taylor and Ricoeur, with regards to 'self,' are altogether crucial in explaining the nature of people in relation to their social environment; communities, populations, and the society at large. In contrast to communitarianism of MacIntyre, there must be the discovery of ideas in traditions and life as well as the free judgments in the modern world. These ideas must be assumed by the individuals and communities all through history even where they do not agree with them (Lovat, 2018). People cannot reach universal concepts short of considering the things that matter to the people or those things they jointly share to construct communities. The idea that there exists more to someone than their bodily instantiation goes way deep into the psyche of humans. It generally is a founding element of the virtual

worlds around humans. Not only motor regulation or perceptions make the features of the human but also the consciousness, character, and sense of divinity. The emergence of science and technologies cannot be ignored as reducing humans to mechanisms than the human thinking of the existence of ghosts of will (Coeckelbergh and Wessel, 2016). It can be premised that since technology is a man's creation to make work easier and life more enjoyable, such unique creations mirror the human's immense capacity to change conditions around him. Hence, the emergence of science and technology exemplifies the continuous growth and gradual development of man's high faculties. Such developments forge the very changes humans want to accomplish in the alignment of his values with the surrounding conditions.

The tradition concept by Paul or MacIntyre has not availed a precise definition to tradition. It arises through illustrations, in some manner that not conveys a cohesive conception. Since people belong to same or several traditions, they nevertheless, understand differently that a problem exists in the definition of tradition on such footing of people being self-resolute. The emerging questions that Paul and MacIntyre hardly solve are whether the topographical, racial, religious, or national elements are even important. The cohesion degree indispensable for such tradition recognition is not defined as well as the ways the much nonconformity such tradition can bear. Lastly, the values and basis of people's primary obligation to some tradition are never justified in the works of MacIntyre.

Conclusion

Since the more people's social resolve is reinforced, the better the limitations for the liberty of such will, people can never conceive as a modest personification of social-historical ailment. Ricoeur, Taylor, and MacIntyre must understand that people cannot be taken as individuals completely open to anything since such would result in an emotivism slip. The better the person's profound commitments and beliefs are hardly solved as the choice object though as some belonging expression to the given life form. The belonging value contains the thinking reorientation, under such feature for that reason. It never aims at a serious impartiality from social and historical situations but perceives them as the things that determine ways people move into the life form through belonging. This

argumentative analysis believes that Taylor, MacIntyre, and Ricoeur's philosophical contributions add insight on the concept of 'self' and its influence on rationality, also the scope of human values, variations in understanding of human values, and their influence on judicial systems. The scholarly analysis of the three authors shapes the 21st-century thinking of morality; and how humans can cultivate values and ethical standards that idealize them.

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