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PERSONAL IDENTITY VERSUS SOCIAL IDENTITY

Аннотация: в статье рассмотрена проблема идентичности, которая всегда волновала человечество. Традиционно человек создан, чтобы жить в социуме. Однако истории известны многочисленные попытки выделиться из толпы. Даже известный математик Декарт разрывался между благодарностью к обществу, воспитавшему его, и своей неординарностью.

Ключевые слова: идентичность, индивидуальность, социум, общество, неординарность, Декарт, познание, мышление, различие, картезианство, дуализм.

Abstract: the issue of identity always concerned humanity is discussed in the article. Traditionally, any human is born to live in a society. However, history knows many attempts of standing out in the crowd. Even Descartes, a renowned mathematician, put himself between his gratitude to the civil society and his extraordinariness.

Keywords: identity, individuality, community, society, extraordinariness, difference, consciousness, way of thinking, Descartes, Cartesian philosophy, dualism.

The personal identity phenomenon has been attracting philosophers throughout history and has been recognized as one of the central philosophical issues. At first sight, personal identity equals to the awareness of the individual self. Therefore, some medieval thinkers, including Descartes, considered personal identity as a soul, which makes people who they are. However, one significant difference between Descartes' and others' perception lies in his doubts regarding the veracity of sense perception and respectful knowledge of them that can be deceptive and misleading.

Descartes laid the foundation for Cartesian philosophy, which represented a culture of reason and confidence in thought's supreme power. The human mind, according to Descartes, can elevate and glorify people. Moreover, he claims that it is impossible

to come up with something of what people are not thinking. This thesis lays the foundation of Descartes' definition of personal identity – I think, therefore I am – as an appeal to question everything, both visible and perceived, as well as to consider it as non-existent, including the individual self.

Cartesian philosophy attracted many proponents. Even Pascal, who was harboring resentful feelings toward Descartes, supported his contemporary's opinion that any person should develop his or her mind rather than space and time. Furthermore, both of them agreed on God's influence on any mental impulse of an individual.

However, Descartes makes a hasty conclusion because the perception of the process of thinking does not differ much from understanding of any other mental or emotional process and, therefore, cannot be considered as a criterion for existence. Moreover, the process of thinking can be perceived and monitored like an emotional process. Nevertheless, the emotional perception does not provide evidence of existence. Descartes claims that knowledge from God almost always tempts people and makes them believe in their superiority distracted from the worship of the Creator. It made Pascal disappointed because he recognized God as the only power and dreamed of making all people get right with the Lord again.

Descartes's dualism – the existence of body and soul separately – proves the idea of an afterlife. The physical body and mental abilities exist independently, as Descartes declares. Moreover, he thinks that any person lives until he or she can think and reflect. Thus, an idea of an afterlife is rational for Descartes. He remarks later that he considered thinking as a combination of all psychological processes, but such statement evoked another question regarding the identification of the particular part of such a combination that could allow judging the credibility of existence [1].

Descartes proposes to realize the existence of the consciousness apart from thinking because of the existence of any subject due to its self-identity. So, all people with thinking abilities exist. Moreover, all people have emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Furthermore, no matter whether all objects belong or not to the animate nature, they can be either subjects or objects of perception and even understand themselves apart from being realized by someone else who manages thinking. Therefore, nature either

animated or not can be considered as the living mechanism of constant internal dynamics following unknown logical patterns. Moreover, it contains aggregate ties that can be called the global spirit or thought, according to Descartes' conclusions, however, denied by him later [1].

Descartes' idea about the mental processes is up-to-date regarding the reflection that leads to the professional and personal growth. According to Descartes, the thought helps realize who a human being is. Furthermore, it does not need anything else except itself as the reason of self-consciousness, which turns out the only obvious reality. In particular, the explanation of all objects of the external world is expressed through the correlation with self, regarding identity. In short, personal identity appears to be the reason and inception of everything happening in the world. At the same time, the cognitive skills of an individual limit the world.

Cartesian's dualism is firmly about the confrontation of individual and society. The understanding of personal identity's importance makes people try to stand out of the crowd. Moreover, the personal belief in one's uniqueness often forces individuals to antagonize themselves. People forget about moral principles if it helps feel extraordinary. However, the euphoria of feeling distinct cannot last for a long time. Even the strongest personalities become desperate for communication with others.

The world is more complicated than just black and white, according to Descartes's vision. No matter how famous and talented an individual is, he or she starts lacking the need of becoming a team player again. It is the main controversy of Descartes's philosophy compared to the views of his opponents who pointed out the importance of the social function of personal identity.

Summing up, nowadays more and more people are willing to return to the times when any human being positioned himself or herself as a member of society. The orientation of Western companies to the teamwork and the communicative skills dominance over the professional experience prove it. The world is coming back to its origin because it is possibly the only way for humanity to survive. That is why the Cartesian idea of self-identity is still topical but in all respects losing the concept of social orientation.

References

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