

THE SELF: UNDERSTANDING AND HEALING THROUGH NARRATIVES

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■ OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Talking about self is not new to Philosophy but the term is so equivocal that a consensus is yet to be attained regarding its meaning, definition, nature or function. The self has been variedly understood as the subject, identity, ego, mind, soul, person, individual, agent, and we have volumes of work dedicated to each of these perspectives. The desire to know oneself is an irresistible drive that has stirred the human minds since times immemorial. The phrase ‘know thyself’ is attributed to Socrates and is inscribed at the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Similar theme echoes if we compare with the Eastern counterpart, in philosophies that borne out of India and China. Wisdom from all ages points to the importance of knowing one’s self. Interestingly, talk about the self eludes the same enigma at present as it used to be in the past. We have got pictures from the Mars but have not pictured the self in its entirety, although it is supposedly the closest to us. One does not need to be a philosopher or a psychologist to worry about these questions. At some point in our lives, we do seek an answer to the question ‘who am I?’ This quest is at once private and universal and has been followed for some thousands of years, both in academia and beyond. All religions, for example, have something to say about the self or soul as it is inseparably linked to the rules of conduct, penance, after-life or rebirth. All schools of Indian Philosophy have discussed at length about self and consciousness, even if they endorse the no-self view (like the Buddhists), for it is pivotal in framing their philosophical systems and to explain the concepts such as Puruṣa, Ātmā (Jīvātmā or Paramātmā), Manas, Brahma, Īśwar, Cetanā, Citta, Cittavṛtti, Yoga, the Law of Karma, Ṛta or the Cosmic Moral Order, Re-birth, Mokṣa or Nirvāṇa, etc. However, in the thesis, I will restrict myself within the boundaries of Western Philosophy, although it is my future plan to compare and contrast the Western views with the Indian counterpart, to have a better understanding of the problem and to appreciate the beauty of discovering the underlying similarities and differences.

During my formative years, I have been through several adverse situations that gave rise to uncertainties, feelings of helplessness, vulnerabilities and prolonged emotional turbulences, which I eventually overcame. I found solace in stories and novels; they momentarily detached me from the present as I got engrossed in the characters, and also provided immense hope in a future which can be weaved through one's action, agency and free-will, however adverse the situation might become. But the questions that kept coming back was: 'Am I still the same me? Or have I changed completely? Or have there been a series of interconnected me-s? What is the common link that connects all the me-s? What defines me as a person?' Of course, I was not the first one to ask these questions but knowing the answers seemed urgent to me. This research is almost therapeutic; it is a quest to explore myself, to know more about the self, to attain a better understanding of the self. I, therefore, embarked on the journey to understand the self, which, I hoped, would bring more clarity to understand my 'self' in turn.

While conducting the literature survey, I came across the narrative views of self, or the idea that self is a construct. Well, I was aware of the idea that gender is a social construct, but that the self that is so seemingly close to us, is a construct, was difficult to digest initially. Also, I was intrigued to know what the nature of this construction is or who is constructing it. Is it a metaphysical claim? Can this view of self address the problems of personal identity? The basic idea is that the self is a narrative construct which is dynamic in nature and is pinned onto one's socio-cultural-historical context. This is a postmodernist view of self that gained prominence during the late 20th century and is pitched as a contesting view of self against the modernist understanding of self as an unchangeable given. I realized that all the years of training in analytic philosophy, the predominance of the traditional western foundationalist ideas is probably acting as a hindrance to accept or even consider the constructivist idea of self. The self is probably ingrained in our thoughts and imaginations as real entities like livers or kidneys;

but not discovered yet, waiting to be discovered. So giving up this idea can make one sceptical, uncomfortable or even insecure to begin with. But my love for stories and story-telling attracted me towards the possibility of understanding the self as a story. And once I started looking for the works done in this area, I was amazed at how deeply it percolated into various disciplines and the number of interdisciplinary works being carried out all around the world, at dedicated research centers. I had to seize the moment!

The objectives with which I proceeded to work with was to understand the problematic, explore the various approaches to the idea of the narrative self, how far they intersect or deviate from each other, what are the explanatory advantages that these views have over their opponents, and finally what are the questions that still needs to be addressed by the narrativists, in order to become a full-bodied theory of the self. The narrative view of self, I must clarify at the outset, is an umbrella term and is dealt with by different disciplines like psychology, psychotherapy, film theory, religious studies, literary studies, linguistics, gender studies, subaltern studies, political theories, medical sciences, bio-ethics, cognitive sciences, and of course philosophy, among many others. This is a relatively new approach of understanding the self and is as revolutionary as the linguistic or the mentalistic turn in Philosophy. It is extremely difficult to keep track of all that is happening across various disciplines, but I have tried to give a glimpse of the vastness and depth of the narrative self-views in my work and also discussed the applicative benefits of this approach, where I talk about the healing ‘powers’ of narratives that are being successfully implemented in psychotherapies. I have consulted the major seminal works that have been done in this field, mostly primary resources and also some secondary literature, works translated in English mostly from German and French and cited from empirical researches that are being done in linguistics, psychotherapy and psychology.

■ RESEARCH PLAN

I have divided my thesis into three distinct sections- Part I (Understanding the Narrative Self), Part-II (Healing through Narratives), and Part-III (Reviewing Explanatory Advantages). Before beginning these sections I have added the Preface and the Introduction. The Preface gives the background idea of how and why the research idea was conceived. In my thesis, I aim to defend the constructivist views of self, although I have pointed some of its shortcomings where more research is needed. I have listed some of the areas that can be taken up as future research works. The detailed content is provided in the next section.

■ CHAPTERS

- Preface
- Introduction

Part I Understanding the Narrative Self

- 1. The Narrative Self: Putting into Perspective**
- 2. Linguistic Foundations of Narrative Self**
- 3. Ethical Dimensions of Narrative Self**

Part II Healing Through Narratives

- 4. Making & Remaking of the Self through Narratives: A Feminist Perspective**
- 5. The Dialogical Self Theory: Expanding the Ideas of Narrative Self**
- 6. Narrative Self Views vis-à-vis Cognitive Sciences**

Part III Reviewing Explanatory Advantages

- 7. Objections & Replies**
 - 8. Concluding Reflections**
- Select Bibliography

■ EXPLORING THE IDEA

We aim at discovering the self someday because it's a common-sense idea that the self is 'given' and 'discoverable'. We think we can reach at the self; we just have to discover the correct path. A complete game-changer will be to think in an entirely different track. What if, the self does not exist (there are indeed 'no-self' views in both Eastern and Western philosophies)? Or what if the self is simply not there waiting to be discovered, but waiting to be created or weaved or narrated? What if we ourselves are the makers and interpreters of our "selves"? This might come as a shock to those who were holding onto the idea of a more static, tangible and discoverable self, waiting to reveal itself someday. Think of someone planning to go on a vacation to "Utopia" for a long time and then comes to know that Utopia is a figment of imagination; that we ourselves have created the idea of it and that it does not exist in geographical space. Well, I do not imply that the self is fictional; it is as real as a building that is constructed. The self, according to the constructivists, is a construct. The next logical question would be to ask what is the self made or constructed of? Some say it is a social construct, some say it is a narrative construct. I will discuss what is meant by narrative construction or how selves are created through narratives elaborately in the first chapter. But to give a rough idea about narratives, it can safely be used synonymously with stories. So basically it comes down to saying that we create selves out of stories, or that the self is nothing but the stories that is collectively weaved in and through the society. Needless to say, narratives or stories weigh heavily on the remarkable feat that humans have achieved through language.

We are not just rational, social and political beings, but also talking beings or beings with language. It would not be an exaggeration to say that our civilizations and advancement as a race will not have been the same without language. It is through language that we have been able to transmit the vast amount of knowledge through ages; have depicted events, documented history, preserved discoveries and inventions. Language has also been important

in entertaining, soothing, pacifying and healing. Story-telling is one of the oldest forms of entertainment; lullabies pacify babies, consulting wise and enlightened people would soothe people in confusion and distress and might heal those in emotional crisis or at least help overcome, in some extent, the sense of despair and desolation.

Narratives are important from cultural and historical perspectives. The Sumerian civilization in Mesopotamia, in modern-day Iraq, is known as the cradle of human civilization. It is arguably the oldest documented civilization, about ten thousand years old. That does not mean it was the oldest, but that it is the oldest to have preserved its history in a written form, making it much convenient for historians and archaeologists to understand how they lived in ancient times. The Sumerians used the “cuneiform” scripts and preserved them in baked clay tablets that have survived the test of time. We have not only discovered the elaborate and impressive epic of “Gilgamesh”, but have also found the religious ideas, details of the trade, warfare and even some secret recipes from those tablets, beautifully preserved in time. This tells us as much about the human ability to narrate, as it tells us about the human desire to preserve its stories in time, through the use of language.

Indian civilization is allegedly older than the Mesopotamian civilizations, but they began to write down much later since India had the famous oral tradition called ‘Śruti’, which is preserving wisdom by listening, remembering and passing it on orally through generations and through the system of guru-śiṣya paramparā (teachers passing on knowledge to disciples). That’s how we get the Vedas, Purāṇas, Upaniṣads, Saṃhitā, etc. While it is a very heated debate whether to consider the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the two great epics from India, as historical accounts or mythologies, the point I want to make is that, if human beings did not feel the power of narratives, they would not have taken the pain of documenting such volumes of work in a time when writing was not an easy affair and not everyone knew how to read or write.

Oral transmission of values is also found in African traditions, that propagated important historical events, religious beliefs, the origin of human existence, the meaning of life, the significance of practising virtues through storytelling. So, narratives do not work merely as a form of art, but as an essential tool for teaching values to generations to come and playing a major role in shaping their identity. Greek mythologies have used narratives to weave splendid stories, understand the ethics that guide human life and the interaction between the divine and the human.

This inherent nature of mankind to tell stories, to understand events through stories and to propagate and preserve knowledge through stories, is a key feature displayed across all cultures and civilizations. And thanks to this narrative inclination of humans that we have the most priceless epics from around the world and also marvel at the scientific and technological advancements from a time which we considered primitive. One who keeps track of recent archaeological findings would know how modern-day scientists are amazed at the precision of knowledge and skills that the ancient civilizations bear testimony to; be it India, Egypt, China, Greece or the middle-east. Astronomy, architecture, mathematics, medical science, trade and war strategies reached their pinnacle in all these civilizations which are thousands of years old. The power of narration could never be undermined.

A narrative or story is an account that presents connected events and may be organized into various categories: non-fiction like biographies, fictionalized accounts of historical events like myths, legends, anecdotes, and fiction proper like literature, novel, drama and visual arts. The word 'narrative' derives from the Latin verb 'narrate', which means 'to tell', and is related to the adjective 'gaurus', 'knowing', or 'skilled'. The word 'story' may be used as a synonym for narrative. It can also be used to refer to the sequence of events described in a narrative. An important part of narration is the narrative mode, the set of methods used to communicate the narrative through a process of narration. Along with exposition, argumentation and description,

narration broadly defined, is one of the four rhetorical modes of discourse. More narrowly defined, it is the fiction-writing mode whereby the narrator communicates directly to the reader. A narrative or story is any account that presents connected events. Stories are important aspects of culture. Many works of art and most works of literature tell stories; indeed most of the humanities involve stories. Stories are of ancient origin, existing in ancient Indian, Egyptian, Chinese, ancient Greek cultures and their mythologies. Stories are also ubiquitous components of human communication, used as parables and fables as examples to illustrate points, e.g., Aesop's fables. Story-telling was probably one of the earliest forms of entertainment.

I take an immense interest in story-telling, be it in literature or films. So when I crossed this idea understanding the self through narratives or construing the self as narrative constructs, it immediately had my attention. The objective of this research is to understand the self as a narrative construct and weigh its explanatory advantages over the contesting views of self. In other words, my humble attempt is to explore whether the narrative self-views have any better chance of providing us with a comprehensive understanding of self, that we perhaps lacked so far.

A very pertinent and ongoing debate in the philosophy of the self is whether to think of the self as a given, an unchangeable core, the locus of all our experiences, or in short, the phenomenological view of the self. On the other hand, some views consider the self as a construct, specifically as a narrative construct. I would like to argue for the social constructivist account of the self. From the traditionalist Western foundationalist and reductionist perspective, the self was conceived as autonomous, given and discoverable. Postmodernism challenges the idea of a single, fixed, core self that we can reveal if we peel away the layers. Rather, it marks a shift from a modernist understanding (verifiable reality) of self to a narrative social understanding (constructed reality) of self. This is a linguistic view in which the self becomes a narrative self and identities exist in relation to a perspective.

The narrative is a story-telling metaphor that gained prominence during the late 20th century, mostly in psychotherapy literature, not in the literary sense though, but in the sense of narrative in everyday life. The narrative is a dynamic process involving the way we organize the events and experiences of our lives to make sense of them, as well as ourselves. Our views of human nature and behaviour are just a matter of our descriptive vocabularies, our conversations and our stories. The narrative is a two-way discursive process. It constructs our experiences, and in turn, is used to understand our experiences. Language is the vehicle of this process and the limits of language constrain what can be expressed. As discursive practices, our narratives are in a flux of evolution and change. Stories are thus not concrete facts but are entities in the process of being made. Narratives become the way we imagine alternatives and possibilities and the way we actualize these options. Jerome Bruner suggests that children learn at an early age to organize their experiences narratively through the stories they hear and learn to tell. The linguistic scholar Émile Benveniste was one of the earliest to challenge the traditional Western philosophical notion of self. He argued that the self is constructed and understood in language; language is responsible for the notion of self and language without personal pronouns is inconceivable. He proposed that the 'I' does not exist outside language, outside discourse. In other words, it is in and through language that a person constructs a personal account of the self. Whom we believe ourselves to be, is a linguistic construction. As Hans-Georg Gadamer says that the 'I' is not a pre-existing subject or substance in the epistemological or metaphysical sense; it is a speaking subject.

Narratives are created, told, and heard against a contextual and cultural schema. Therefore, narratives must be comprehensible, coherent and connected. Stories, again, are always situated in history, without which our lives would be unintelligible. For example, the lives of many Bengalis still in some ways or other bear the mark of the partition of Bengal (1905), which shapes their choices; foods habits, hobbies, etc., and in turn their life stories. The

‘Bangal-Ghoti’ binary will not have the same meaning for people of other culture or community and might probably be meaningless to them. We share ourselves and our lives with others by assembling the bits and pieces of our narratives into viable storied versions influenced by memory, context and intention. In this narrative view, a postmodern self is considered as an expression of one’s capacity in language and narration; the self telling the story is, through the story-telling process, being formed, informed and reformed. As human beings, we have always related to each other by telling and listening to stories about ourselves and others. As Jean-François Lyotard said, narratives are our ‘social bonds’. Our ongoing narratives are embedded within and intertwined with other narratives. Both self-and-other stories determine who we are. We are one of the multi-authors of the constantly changing narrative that becomes our and are always embedded in the local and universal multiple historical pasts and cultural, social, and political contexts of our narrative making.

The basic idea is that the self is not something fixed or unchangeable, but rather something evolving. Dan Zahavi observes that the self is something that is realized through one’s projects, and it, therefore, cannot be understood independently of one’s own self-interpretation. According to Charles Taylor, one is not a self in the same way as one is a living organism. Having a self is not the same as having a heart or a kidney. He asserts, “To ask what a person is, in abstraction from his or her self-interpretations, is to ask a fundamentally misguided question, one to which there couldn’t in principle be any answer.” A similar view is echoed in Jerome Bruner’s words when he says, “Life as led is inseparable from a life as told-or more bluntly, a life is not “how it was” but how I is interpreted or reinterpreted, told and retold.”

According to these views, the self is assumed to be a construction; precisely a narrative construction. In other words, selfhood or identity is constituted by the narratives that we tell about ourselves. The narrative identity theory postulates that individuals form an identity by

integrating their life experiences into an internalized evolving story of the self, which provides the individual with a sense of unity and purpose in life. This life narrative has characters, episodes, imagery, a setting, plots, themes and often follows the traditional model of a story, having a beginning (initiating event), a middle (an attempt and consequence), and an end (denouement). According to Paul Ricoeur, when confronted with the question “who am I”, we will tell a certain story and emphasize aspects that we consider to be of special significance, that which constitutes a recurrent theme in our lives, that which defines who we are and what we present to others for recognition and approval. This narrative, however, is not merely a way of gaining insight into the nature of an already existing self. On the contrary, the self is first constructed in and through the narration. Who we are, depends on the story we and others tell about ourselves. The stories can be more or less coherent, and the same holds true for our self-identity. For the narrative self is an open-ended construction that is under constant revision. Owen Flanagan mentions that this construction is pinned on culturally relative hooks and organized around a set of aims, ideals, and aspirations. Who one is, depends on the values, ideals and goals one has; it is a question of what has significance and meaning for one, and this, of course, is conditioned by the community of which one is a part. Thus, as has often been claimed, one cannot be a self on one’s own, but only together with others, as part of a linguistic community. As Taylor puts it, “there is no way we could be inducted into personhood except by being initiated into a language.”

■ **CONTESTING VIEWS & REPLIES TO THEM**

The narrative account, however, is not free from objections and difficulties. Narratives or stories are not mere records or annals, they are also essentially constructive, incorporating thereby, deletions, abridgements and reordering. A storyteller is more likely to impose more coherence, integrity, fullness and closure on the life-events than what actually happened when they were simply experienced. The immediate concern, therefore, is, to what extent one can

talk about the truth or falsity of self-narratives. Can someone be mistaken in thinking who he or she is? In fact for some people, story-telling might serve to compensate for the lack of a fragile self-identity. Given that our self-narratives are fallible, the question that arises is: what are the constraints that the self-narratives should follow? This leads to the controversy whether one commits to the realist or fictionalist take on the self.

Some defenders of the narrative approaches to selfhood have argued that the self is nothing but a fictional center of narrative gravity. It is merely the abstract point where various stories interact. While others have claimed that the narrative self has reality in so far as it is a real social construction. It has also been argued that there are obvious differences between fictional narratives and real-life ones. In life we have to take things as they come, we are in the middle of events and are denied the authoritative retrospective point of view of the story-teller or the historian.

Dan Zahavi, one of the proponents of the phenomenological approaches to selfhood and the main critic of the narrative view of self, is not entirely intolerant to the idea that narratives are a central means by which we come to know ourselves and others. Rather he thinks that such stories reflect how we view ourselves and also that these stories shape our self-understanding. So he would agree so far in conceding that narratives play an important role in the constitution of a certain dimension or aspect of selfhood. However, he opposes that the self is a narratively constructed entity and that every access to the self and others are mediated by narratives.

The crucial point underlying the views of the phenomenologists, as Zahavi highlights, is that an understanding of what it means to be a self is intricately related to the examination of the structure of experience and vice-versa. The self is an integral part of conscious life and its structures. Self-experience is simply taken to be a question of having first-person access to

one's own consciousness. Most people subscribe to the view that there is something 'it is like' for a subject to undergo a conscious experience; to have the blues or to taste tamarind for example. Therefore, the subject must in some way, have access to and be acquainted with the experience. Moreover, although conscious experience differs from one another, what it is like to smell crushed basil leaves is different to see the full moon, although they share certain features, i.e., the quality of mineness.

Zahavi inquires whether the self is a narrative construction and are narratives the primary access to the self. His view is that the experiential core self is an integral part of the structure of phenomenal consciousness and it must be regarded as a pre-linguistic presupposition for any narrative practice. Because only a being which enjoys a first-person perspective could consider her own aims and ideals as his or her own and can form stories about them. However, to articulate one's first-person perspective linguistically, one needs mastery of the first-person pronoun. Taking cues from Alzheimer's disease, narrativists such as Jerome Bruner have argued that there would be nothing like selfhood if one lacks narrative capacities, a condition that is known as dynarrativia. But even though Alzheimer's affect one's narrative capacities, it cannot be said that the disease brings about a complete destruction of the first-person perspective. It cannot be rightly said that an Alzheimer's patient does not feel pain or discomfort as his or her own. From this, Zahavi concludes that there is more to the concept of self than is grasped by the narrative account.

Galen Strawson vehemently opposes the ethical narrativity thesis put forward by Alasdair MacIntyre, which proposes a teleological view. It prescribes that humans should be narrative in order to be ethical. Life should not be compartmentalized into the different roles that we play but should be planned and lived holistically, like a novel, having a beginning, middle and end.

I believe that the objections raised by Dan Zahavi and Galen Strawson are extremely pertinent and that the narrativists must answer these objections to put forth an undisputed view of self. However, I feel that these objections are not a full-blooded rejection of the narrative self-views. Dan Zahavi does not admit the self as a construct, in so far as the claim is metaphysical. But on an epistemological level, we have no other choice of knowing the self and others without narratives and interpretations. As for Galen Strawson, he might not be fond of a prescriptive or normative view of the self as proposed by MacIntyre. Strawson sets his own example and makes a distinction between the notions of diachronic and synchronic experiences. But rejecting MacIntyre's views does not entail a rejection of a constructive self. I might not like the doctor's prescription, his medicines or approach towards treatment, but that does not falsify the doctor's position. One might not like the rainy season, but that does not deny its existence.

■ WEIGHING EXPLANATORY ADVANTAGES

- i. The most important advantage of the narrative self views is that they have an edge over both the physicalists and the dualists in explaining the persistence problem of personal identity. Our identity is pinned in the narratives that we and others tell about ourselves. The constructivist views, therefore, are not speculative in nature, but something experiential and appeals more to common sense.
- ii. Appreciates the embodiment, dynamicity, growth, changeability, experientiality, and the relational aspects of the self therefore have more accountability in explaining different problems relating to the self and mind.
- iii. The narrative self-views have applicative advantages. This view of the self is being successfully used in psychotherapy by Hubert J. Hermans and his team in the Dialogical Self Research Institute in the Netherlands, by trauma therapists around the world and it

is also yielding positive results in cognitive science researches. Therefore, these views of self have opened up avenues for empirical research.

- iv. The narrative self views being a new research trend and due to its multi-disciplinary approach, we should make the most of it and hope to gain new insights as the problem is being dealt with from different approaches.

■ CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

I have been trying to understand and analyze the narrative self-views in the backdrop of the emotionally and physically paralyzing pandemic that has gripped the entire world for the past eleven months. Nothing that we ever read, heard or experienced has prepared us for this day. I had watched the movie *Contagion* (2011), which depicts a similar scenario of a virus outbreak causing severe respiratory illnesses and spreading like wildfire, while entire medical facilities collapsed in combating and containing the disease. I watched it with a cinematic thrill and chuckled to myself, “this is just a movie”. As Albert Camus wrote, “Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world; yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky. There have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise.”

The pandemic has challenged our technological supremacy, exposed our vulnerabilities, fragilities, triggered our fear of death, changed our life plans, made us re-think what is of more value and importance in life, thereby contributing to major changes in our selves or rather the stories that our selves are. I want to propose that the pandemic situation might be considered as a strong case for arguing for the narrative views of the self in philosophy, which construes the self as a narrative construct, as opposed to a core, fixed and given idea of the self.

■ FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE

The narrative self-view is an umbrella term to understand the self in a new light, making a radical shift from the traditional western views of the self. As we have seen that several disciplines have made use of the concept of self as a construct, rather than a given, a lot of interdisciplinary works are going on and there is a wide range of research ideas that can be put to test. The narrative self can be studied from the perspectives of literary theories, linguistics, anthropology, psychotherapy, psychology, philosophy, gender studies, film studies, subaltern studies, sociology, cognitive science, religious studies, and also in the backdrop of war, natural calamities and trauma studies, to name just a few.

The PhD work for me was not just a means to attain a higher degree for academic or career advancement, but an internal journey that would validate my existence and give meaning to my life-story by connecting the dots. The road has not been easy, with several changes in the external world to which I had to adapt myself to; different jobs, different locations, different people and situations, countering moments of self-doubt, confusions and feelings of incompetency which many researchers face, and finally, the pandemic which challenged our complacency about medical and technological supremacy, leaving us emotionally and physically paralyzed for months. But the voyage has been extremely rewarding. I could track the gradual transformation that I was having with passing time; gaining new insights, understanding novel concepts, contradicting past beliefs, reshaping former ideas and being able to dissociate and observe the totality from a distance. I have not been able to convey all the thoughts and ideas that I have encountered, many of them are shelved for future research works, preferably collaborative ones, in the areas concerning literature, film theory, gender studies and psychotherapy. I also want to explore the idea of a hybrid view of the self which can merge the phenomenological or experiential views of the self with the narrative views, although they

seem to have locked horns. But whether and how these two ideas can exist in unison is also an engrossing and lucrative research project, that some thinkers have just started exploring.

I began the research work and had continued it with a kind of personal urgency, believing that I might find an answer, but I am left with more questions than answers. The research exercise makes one more humble, I believe. Life is an eternal quest for truth and I hope to keep sailing in this ocean of knowledge, dreaming of reaching the shore sometime.

*“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both...
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by”*

— Robert Frost, *The Road Not Taken*

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