PHIL 255
Week 11: Self and Identity
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Self
Personal identity
Please turn off and put away all electronics.

The Transcendental Self
The self is a supernatural entity (soul).
Plato, Aquinas, Kant.
50% of Canadians, 80% of Americans.
Problem: lack of evidence.

The Deflationary (No-) Self
David Hume: The self is just a bundle of perceptions.
Daniel Dennett: The self is a "center of narrative gravity".
Thomas Metzinger: The self is a myth.
Problem: The self is an important psychological concept.

The Self in Social Psychology
SELF-PHENOMENA
SELF-REPRESENTING
SELF-EFFECTING
SELF-CHANGING
E.G. SELF-CONCEPTS, SELF-IDENTITY
E.G. SELF-HELP, SELF-REGULATION
E.G. SELF-IMPROVEMENT, SELF-DESTRUCTION

Multilevel Systems
A system (mechanism) consists of:
Environment
Parts
Interconnections
Changes
A multilevel system has mechanisms at several levels:
<E₁, P₁, I₁, C₁>
<E₂, P₂, I₂, C₂>, etc.
The Multilevel Self

Social self: Parts are people.
Psychological self: Parts are mental representations.
Neural self: Parts are neurons.
Molecular self: Parts are chemicals.
Note: these are not four selves, but all components of one complex system.

Personal Identity

Persistence problem: What makes you the same person you were yesterday?
Supernatural: same soul.
Psychological: same memories.
Somatic: same body.
No-self: nothing persists.
Multilevel: persistence of molecular, neural, psychological, and social mechanisms.

Discussion Question

Who are you? What makes you yourself?