

Two essays on medicalism (originally in response to this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuLuX1tklLY&lc=UgxyQCFC9csu8QBY3sJ4AaABAq>)

## On medicalism and anatomy

one of the topics linked inevitably with this whole confusion is the general question what is the relationship between science and medicine, and of both of these with psychology. because that is by no means an obvious or natural relationship.

for one, medicine is much older than science. it is sometimes incorrectly claimed that medicine is a science, but it is quite obvious that that's false if we remember that "science" as a historical movement dates to the 17th century, not the ancient world, and comes out of the newly invigorated philosophical debates of the time, that, after what i see as the break of the Renaissance (which is mostly about forgetting about the methodology of scholasticism, to then be able to mock it whilst still believing in it's most peculiar strain and result (nominalism)), thinking people turned back to serious questions and their tradition, and wanted to find answers outside of that empty contrast to scholasticism (especially in relation to theories of motion, the relationship between impetus and astronomy, mechanical devices etc.). Medicine existed for much longer before, and wasn't really that much affected by it for a long time, before the systematic schematisms of the 19th century, when the example of physical science (at that point that was mostly physics of solid objects) was applied to other disciplines as what they should be; that they too should deal in experiments instead of observation, to, as Kant put it, "force nature to give us an answer". The question, if medicine is or was a science, is in this way always tied to the question, if patients are also subjects of experiment or only of experience.

This split is present to this day in almost all medical institutions, for which i therefore want to give a broad distinction, maybe under the term anatomy in opposition to iatrics (borrowing the greek term for the older medical tradition). I would define them as such: Anatomy is the scientific study of the body, and as such the study of the body as subject to experimental physics. It studies it not as an individual, but as an exemplar of a species which it represents, and the ultimate goal of anatomy is gaining as much knowledge about the species as a whole, its essential qualities (be it defined by outside characteristics, or by genetics, or other forms of classification), their consequences, as well as its variances and subspecies, and various states of the body (in normal and extreme environments, virulent and strong or ill and weak), as possible. Iatrics, or medicine (in the old meaning of the word), or you might also call it therapeutics, is none of those things, rather, it is interested in the species only insofar it represents the individual, and not as an object of research, but as a patient it performs a service for, not as a participant in an experiment to study some general question. This is because it's not a science; the goal is that someone can live and live better according to their own will, not that their corpse makes a new discovery that gets you a new paper published. This seems trivial, but is an important difference: science can be a medical tool, and indeed often medicine uses scientific results (say from bio-chemistry), but as means to an end, not as a point of discussion or search for truth. the most obvious example is, that almost all medical action centers around scientific research into curing a disease, and there is relatively less research into causing them, for the obvious reason that in almost all cases there would be no medical, i.e. iatrical, therapeutical, application, with the distinct difference of those few researchers in anatomy totally opposed to medicine (the infamous perpetrators of human experiments in the last century, and weapon manufacturers since the first flourishing of chemistry, are basically the only ones that come to mind).

the problem is though, that both anatomists and iatrists call what they do "medicine". I hope that i could have given by my, admittedly relatively slim, historical record (which focused only on the methodology of it since i have some knowledge of the development of its philosophical base of self

understanding, but admittedly not much at all of its material elements of concern), a suggestion to a justification of calling the iatrical side that which actually should be called medicine, also, more systemically, because then the different part of it (that which is methodologically distinct from the sciences) gets its own category, whereas the category closer to those is subcategorized by them (anatomy as a subdiscipline of biology, not medicine). However, many anatomists believe quite the opposite, viewing medicine as a whole as "applied anatomy", and ultimately proposing that medicine itself is nothing but anatomy and therefore a scientific discipline. This more abstracted methodological outcome or confusion is what I call medicalism of a general kind. (I also believe this to be the ultimate origin of the self-perceived greatness of doctors: that they deem their judgements not (just) advice (as in the practical medical understanding), but fact or at least based on fact, even if often it really only is based on personal experience and observation, which only much later becomes the object of scientific inquiry and at certain points takes these inquiries as inspiration, but certainly not as its main material, as much as it sometimes would imagine it as its own end or goal.)

What does this "medicalism" now have to do with these other, more psychological categories, like transmedicalism or systemmedicalism? I think, that although transposed into the psychological domain, the issue is roughly similar, as the opposition here too is between experiment and therapy, and their relative precedence. And it does in this way make sense: if you believe that the goal of psychology is not helping people with daily life struggles, but an "anatomy of the mind" that some neuroscientists and other confused functionalists envision today, then it makes sense to first "gather more data" to see that the relevant persons fall correctly in the category to be studied (i.e. systems in the sysmed case), since they ought to be studied for the benefits of a theoretical achievement of a theory describing the difference of systems and singlets as the most important part (scientific advancements), and be helped only secondarily (the more medical/iatrical part). The mistake the medicalists make, is not of thinking of such things as distinctness or clarity of definitions as falsely important for a medical study; clear criteria are important for any such study. The mistake lies in confusing the doctor-patient or therapist-client relationship for an experimentator-subject or researcher-topic relationship to begin with.

One of the main differences here, in which its visible, is the underlying conception of truth. after all: fakeness implies realness, realness implies reality, and reality implies truth, or at least correctness (= not being wrong; not the higher, older platonic conception of truth, but also not simply relativist and empty). The fundamental difference between medicine and anatomy is, at least to some distinct, the difference between a reductionist and pragmatist conception of truth, one based on other, more fundamental disciplines (such as biochemistry, which ultimately is based on quantum mechanics), and the other purely based on itself and on application, after the maxim that good is that what does good, what helps, and therefore that the medical truth is determined more by searching for effects than for causes.

I therefore ultimately believe, that the disagreement between these forms of thinking, does not lie in their values alone. but in their epistemological resources and presumptions and presumptiveness too, which is so much more difficult to track down at that, and one reason why so often in these discussions people talk past each other, because they are fundamentally in disagreement what their discipline should be for, if it should be for truth or for practical action, but in confusing both this creates more than mere disagreement, but entitlement over this other discipline, of both the antiintellectual disdain for theory, or, today perhaps more common, the absurd idea, that not the theory should get its value and validity by the measure it describes the things and people in the world, but that those things and people should in the opposite, as if by the example of law, receive their "validity" only in as much as they adhere to the theory, that still ultimately believes it was created to describe them.

## **On the conception of "trauma" and the measurement of pain, or about diagnosis and the objectification of the mind**

one of the distinguishing problems of psychology as a field, or one of its most characteristic dialectical qualities, is the fact that as a discipline concerned with the most possible subjective topic - experience - it althmore tries to show itself to be objective, and buries the object of experience or desire under a mountain of statistics, to only yet find a mean and not a meaning.

one of the more perplexing aspects of this is the persistent drive to measure pain. it is, in certain sense, possible to measure some kinds of bodily reactions that we might call pain, but as they are different (be it for example audio visual vs. tactile pain, let alone pain caused by the mind in itself), the evaluation and study of causation is difficult, and all the more the even more difficult aspect of \_perception of pain\_, that is the psychological study of the experience of that phenomenon and its interactions with the rest of the mind. it is quite difficult to have words or ideas here, let alone measurable, observable variables. And yet: there has been a considerable effort in pretending as if that problem doesn't exist!

the most obvious and blatant form of this are doctors forms of asking people "in how much pain they are", given in unnamed units from 0 to 10, which effectively renders these numbers completely useless if not given by the same person. however, it is generally understood that this is not a scientific tool, but a managerial one, for the sake of insurance more than helping, or learning anything of substance. therefore i will go to the more well considered side of this in psychology: the idea of trauma, or of the unmeasured quantity of pain.

it is again a very paradoxical situation: every serious psychologist will admit, that whether a certain pain is traumatic, is not an objective, measurable question. but the word still carries with itself the assumption that the pain in question is in some sense "more" than other pains. it often then is characterized by results, but again, by different ones: sometimes by being remembered, having flashbacks etc, sometimes by being very hidden. in all this, no clear definition or description seems to emerge.

I think that this is because the word "trauma" has been used more as metaphor, than as a technical term, and often also as a stand in for "pain", while thinking that this would have solved the problem. the main problem, as i alluded to above, is the measuring problem, the idea of quantifying the quality of experience. this, however, is not just a practical, but overall a conceptual problem. because, if it's really not possible, then this very conception of "trauma" as "much pain", also fails to be descriptive of something specific, if the very idea of comparing pain doesn't make sense. that's not to say that this would be the case; i merely argue that the openness of the question, if that is the case, is obstructed by the use of a term that's supposing that it is

this is a typical example of what i call the double misunderstanding of communication, in that too often, one misconception hides itself by producing another. the typical case is that of language: when we talk, we confuse what we mean with what we say, and then too someone else's understanding with how they react, suspiciously often believing that they're reaction is to our thoughts, as if by mind reading, not our language. when listening, it is also very easy to confuse interpretation and text, as well as text and intention. the trade of thoughts through speech and text is in this sense unequal, that by taking place it's hiding itself, making us believe that there really is an immediate connection, and inspiring ideas and concepts such as "understanding", "being of the same mind" or "empathy". these ideas in themselves wouldn't make any sense, as we really can't read someone else's mind, but because of the confusion of interpretation and reality inherent in communication, it seems as if they do nonetheless, but they do only by naturalizing language and

thought. And it is in this precise way in which the study of trauma, or of diagnosis in general, is a hidden problem in as much extent as it seems to already have been solved.

because what is actually measured, objectified, operationalized here? it's not the pain, its the measurement of pain. but this measurement is still subjective. a psychologist might be able to "objectively analyze trauma" as in "analyzing the way this person talks about trauma", but not as in actually understanding the experience. but still, the belief persists that this would be enough; that understanding, that there are certain ways of talking about trauma (shameful, or as an open burden, or as an understated admission, or similar things) would make a good taxonomy of pain. and it is then by this conception that the pain is judged not by the experience, not even by the results of the experience, but by the way these results are themselves experienced, expressed and then interpreted by the psychologist.

and while this can be a possible starting point for discussing possibilities of various pains, a taxonomy it is not, it doesn't cover nearly all cases, simply because it never formally specifies its domain. and more than words it definitely cannot give, since it only operates on expression as observed from the outside, not from phenomenological account of the experience itself, taking everything out of that but a vague concept of "intensity", which replaces the idea of the magnitude of pain from the brutish numerical scales, and an assuredness that something happend, that it was somehow experienced, and then can be labeled as "real and valid", against a non-existent or barely explained standard of validation, which however still makes itself to be an expression of a substantial truth.

i myself had an experience about this some years ago, where i tried to measure my own distress, comparatively, in multiple places at different times. i ended up understanding and measuring all sorts of things (from how many people are out on which days to influences of the seasons etc), but the one thing i couldn't measure was precisely the thing in question: an experience, the experience of distress or pain. i had the fortune of being both subject and experimentalist, although with some assistance, so that i could see that it did not actually describe the experience, that it basically was a pointless exercise to cover for other things at the time. but I do think that it's not unlikely that many a measurement is similarly pointless, just uncaught through the double misunderstandings of communication, and then shapes many people's ideas of "trauma", of what it is, how it is to be measured or understood, and thus gives more way to the slough of imprecise measuring apparata, measuring interpretations of expressions instead of experiences, over the description of experience itself, in light of the imagined "validity" of these tools of understanding.

## **An essay on the idea of culture**

(originally to be published on a forum where it apparently was not able to be, a translation of an older, german text I can't publish directly for security reasons)

### **A foreword about the so called "culture war" and the framing of the reality of politics.**

It is always a strange occasion to be commenting on one's own text, especially one that is not particularly old (only two years in a few days time). Nonetheless, a lot happened in the world; and the text was published under a different name, and in a different language. This does warrant a small explanation of why I still think these reflections are useful, and in what relation they stand to contemporary discussions of politics present within this forum of discussion.

The original article was a submission in a contest about the question of "the importance of culture", or something of that sort, and more or less a reaction to seeing way too many naively positive articles being brought forward (of the sort "culture is important, must be protected" etc, without further examination, or about specific forms of culture (mostly literature) without explaining why this term "culture" should be used there to begin with). It did not get much attention and if any comments, then ones that totally missed the critique presented in it, the ironical positioning against the act of veneration. In any case, it's probably gone from the internet almost entirely, and I will not provide original resources about it beyond this translation, also for its association with my deadname. Therefore, I want to say in which way the confusion, as explained in the article, encapsulated in the concept of culture, comes to be important in today's discussions about the relationship of politics and culture and specifically the standing notion of a "culture war" or "culture wars".

One confusion present in today's discussion about "culture war" is the question: what specifically is the "culture" in "culture war"? Is it about art galleries or all of society? And I do think in fact that one of the main right wing tactics is the active confusion of these terms, translating a critical deconstruction of a form of something specific (a form of art, economy, law etc.) into a critique of "all of society", which then often is understood as some kind of lethal threat. But without this unclear notion of "culture", none of this actually holds up. It is the specific function of the idea of culture to preserve something worthy of veneration, without being too specific of it, precisely by being ignorant of it. This has often been noted about specific things: that the most zealous religious people often know the least scripture; that faith in politics erodes with exposure to the inner workings of it; that the people most (responsibly) critical of scientific results are scientists themselves; and similar with engineers, historians, writers, artists etc. But by calling all those things "culture" a distance towards them can be preserved, that still allows you to venerate, but without learning enough to make you think.

I think therefore that it is for example not an accident when in the discussion of trans rights the other side so bemoans the "attack on our culture"; for it is, in fact, an attack on ignorance, to learn, by theory or example. For the same reason, education is under attack, antiintellectualism is rampant etc; because all of them do not merely criticize certain elements of culture, but the idea of a consistent culture itself and by that too the concept of "culture" itself as something to be separated from the "uncultured".

One response one might have against this critique is then, if the word "culture" ought to be used at all, or if then how. I think that the word can and should be used, but only polemically. Against a certain assertion of "culture" we can put a reality of many things actually meant by it. In a way, this

is the dialectical explanation of the term: you can only learn what "culture" is by learning all these things, and then, looking back at it, realize the shallowness of their description as "culture". A maybe unsatisfactory explanation of a term, but I know no better for this case.

However, what application can we make from this insight now in the political discussion about "culture"? First, that no one talking like that is actually "cultured" in the classical sense of the word, that it's an outside admiration. However, that's only part of it, since that mostly lends itself to an elitist kind of response. More clearly, those people are educated in a certain way, but don't want to have anything to do with it. They already consider themselves dead, because in this way, they can forget about the critiques they themselves know about. Putin is maybe the most extreme example: he famously always asks about how he would be viewed in five hundred years time, and consequently views all people in his vicinity as museum pieces to be put in the right place for the photograph, if alive or as a corpse. This connection of the fight for "culture" and death, is maybe the most interesting and important connection, and one that we ought to be thinking about when evaluating the inner dynamics of systems of thought, that not just deny freedom of will, but the freedom of any kind of the present off of some imagined path for the future.

### **On "culture" as a term of neutralization.**

[Translation from a German article from April 2021, additions/notes are in brackets, also quotes are sometimes added for clarity where the change of language made it necessary.]

I want first to give a small comment on the term culture, necessarily bound to its concept, and which is not an entirely new observation, but could give some elucidation on the question, with which interest it is being used. Because it is astonishing, how different things all are called cultural, and there really seems to be no such thing, that doesn't fall under it in some way. If we then want to answer, what is this culture, it seems me more likely to be successful, to observe the speaker about the meaning of the word, rather than the object being talked about; and I propose, that there is one definite meaning of the term "culture": That it is that, with which the speaker either doesn't have anything to do with or at least doesn't want to have anything to do with.

The first meaning is obvious when talking about the so called ancient and foreign cultures. If one (like it was still possible to genuinely say about a century ago) has nothing to do with China, then it is easy, to call all Chinese things an "expression of a foreign culture" and to look in awe at them, precisely because, as a European observer, one doesn't need to deal with the difficulties of Chinese politics and doesn't have to write legal documents in the signs one is fascinated by; on the other side, it would not be inconceivable, if a Chinese tourist, used to automatic surveillance, if they come to Europe, would call the manual writing of a tax return, or the physical visits to an office to renew a passport, an "expression of the old European culture". With older cultures we do the same after all, and overlook the legal triviality in the Egyptian book of the dead, which in all theological glamour is still clearly visible in the form of a fill-in-form. [The book of the dead basically had the form of a standard court speech, and the name is scribbled in the right spacings between the actual text, typically visible in the difference of the quality of hieroglyphs between the professionally written main text and the scribbled-in names.] In all these cases, culture only can mean, that we have a great distance towards something, because one couldn't so easily and all-incompassingly call these same things "cultural" about one's own society.

So what then do I mean, when I say, that it also signifies that, with which one doesn't want to have anything to do with? Take the way we interact with pictures. To me, there seems to be no easier

neutralization of a terrifying picture, then precisely to call it "a work of culture". Not just, that this term brings value and positivity in all areas, where it is least appropriate; it also facilitates to only look at the picture historically, in terms of cause and effect (where typically only the word "effect" is used and the cause is only alluded to in terms of "influences", but that doesn't change anything about the mechanical character of such statements). This kind of analysis allows it however, to overlook the picture over the picture. (This has now come so far, that the artists, that wanted to parody this, by putting empty canvases into galleries, are also now analyzed that way, and now other artists, which apparently didn't get the joke, are now painting new empty pictures, so that one can see about a whole armee of pictures, that one can oversee over the history of a picture even, that it isn't even a real picture, or nothing but its own emptiness brought to paper. [This is not to say that the original empty pictures didn't have any value; but that it is tragic how little the people who now reproduce them can laugh about what they do, when there was clearly a comedic element at the origin of this.]) Because: by this way of looking at something [purely historically] one puts oneself in the line of all those, that doesn't have anything to do with it, by talking about it, as if writing a cultural-historical monography over one's own living environment, centuries after it was already gone. By honoring something like this, one is attributing this work a place in the obituary of contemporary society, as one hopes it will one day be written. "Present culture" is the name of this prematurely visited future corpse.

In the same way, in the cultural perspective of thought (which mostly concerns philosophy as the general and encompassing discipline [of thought], and especially ontology as the central question [of philosophy], but more and more also science and history specifically), one doesn't even need to ask the question - if something [that is posited / studied by a certain author] is right or wrong - it is enough to state, that this or that author is classical, a part of culture, and with that, one can ignore them. As the most dramatic kind of this kind of conduct, Adorno famously rejected the term "Würdigung" [= honoration, veneration] on an anniversary about Hegel over half a century ago, as it completely perverts the goal of philosophy, to find truth and understanding instead of merely historical knowledge (especially in sight of Hegel's commendation, to let the ideas and topics speak for themselves instead of their literary disguises, to rebirth the spirit instead of inspecting its mummy [see introduction to Hegels book on the difference between Fichte and Schelling]), and I can expand this criticism insofar, that I see most present faculties of philosophy at univerties largely as institutions for such veneration, that deal with philosophy, by literally writing it off [by writing about it], so that one then doesn't have anything to do with them anymore, as they're banned in their time and historical context, and the truth of their thoughts is then broken and powerless. [This is mostly true about German philosophy departments in my experience; FWIW., in the US it seems different, but not much better, as they are more focussed on a single more modern tradition (analytical philosophy) and treat anything older, especially ancient philosophy and modern metaphysical speculation, in much the same way.]

I want to close these comments with a remark about so called "cultural events", of the counter- or sub-culture supposedly presented in them. By ascribing their own works to another culture, these people view themselves already as their own inheritance administrators. Cultural heritage, before having been a possibility to ignore one's own history by staring at it, is ignored again, by condemning the present as a "sub-culture" to death from the perspective of the past. The conscious self-presentation as countervailing, and the therein used concept of culture fit together too, insofar as these people also don't want to have anything to do with their own works, or at least only sparingly: from the view of "mainstream culture" they don't want to have anything to do with their subcultural works, but within them, they want to look althemore rebellious and so don't want to have anything to do with this rejection/boxing-off [hence the presence of an idea of "wholeness", holism, "life" etc. in boxed-off hobbies]. The exeption of cultural events from the world - the \_ l'art pour l'art \_ - is a kind of ignorance towards ones own actions and thoughts. If I view my own ideas as "cultural actions", then I make myself into my own inheritor, and mistreat my own corpse in the

process, so that the "cultural creator" [a very common term in Germany for people who deem themselves as part of a "cultural sphere"], who also calls themselves that, seems equally laughably-tragic, as a pensioner calling themselves an upcoming dead person. It is this specific intuition of decay, that is around art since the time it cut itself off from its own seriousness, that has been around, for about a century, specifically those works of art, that loose by the assertion, to be art, also all aspiration to be something, and therefore confuse their importance with their effect, i.e. the mechanics of reaction. That is the deeper-seated reason, why the administration of spirit could take on so much of the logic of economic exchange: Not because this [logic] is inherently expansive, (that is an overrated [self-] image of the economy of ideas), but because the creators don't see their own works as anything but products [= "content"], that are viewed and used by themselves as objects of their inheritance, and by their managers as a living legacy, but in no way are viewed as one's own, as truths and living gods. (This does not concern everyone of course, maybe not even most artists and thinkers, but at least all those, that for example are in agreement with the conception of pure art, or the absurd suggestion, that philosophy should be about texts, not ideas or things, with which [change/loss of focus] then simultaneously all seriousness and silliness is gone and too the heart of the question, that I myself am to me, and for which I must understand the work/creation not as a general culture, but as the truth of my own existence [be it by the analysis of what came before or the creation of something entirely true; rereadings also must be in this sense "essential" if they ought to be in any sense meaningful.])

It's important to recognize, that this distance, created by the alienation of works under the concept of culture, is importantly distinct from the critical distance [as present in critical thinking]. The idea of culture has a generality in its topic, precisely because it is uncritical against all of them. Even the biggest nonsense is culture, in the broad meaning of the word. That, in the opposite, there existed a higher meaning of the word "culture", I am very well aware of, and by that concept many different things were for a long time called "high-cultural" etc, and people believed to honor foreign countries, when calling their everyday objects objects of culture, not just of a way of life or of a history. However, the reason for this honorifics precisely was the veneration of that, what was traditional and not of everyday life, so that, one didn't critically analyze them and therefore understood them to be valuable (as it still is supposed in these very ideas and their use), but because one already took certain past works (especially of antiquity) as examples, precisely because one could see in them not present, everyday life, but an over the time condensed overview of a long gone, but still just persisting world. Here, no critique is to be made about that interest in itself, but about the idea, that the questions are already clear with this overview and not yet only beginning. The view at the "ancient culture" obstructs the view at the history of politics, religion, philosophy, economy and forms of art, by not clearly differentiating them and therefore not coming to any kind of analytical result, instead basking in forms without understanding them. Historical sense is necessary, but especially to witness the triviality of the impressive looking, and on the opposite site the importance of the now invisible, especially the unused opportunities and threats. As "culture", one views a whole era in a museum cabinet, and gives away what is the most interesting aspect of history, that one can't experience purely from the present: The openness of time, the contingency of the flow and the whole process.

The perspective on so called foreign cultures (i.e. other, to us mostly unknown societies) follows in many aspects this way of looking at antique history. This at least for three reasons: First, because at the time of European domination those cultures were viewed as preformations of European history and were searched through for the origins of European culture, and therefore are very directly incorporated in this process (especially the Near East and India, but in second line also Africa and China were objects of this obsession); Secondly, because since the last century these countries themselves either assimilated themselves to European forms of society or at least developed huge tendencies towards that, so that the differences, that still persist, seem already as past and as later dead; and thirdly, because the very idea of a true separation at least since the internet must seem as



something really impossible and ideological, so that all honest research about the separation and the absolutely repulsing difference of societies (that then are put under the name "foreign cultures") must be done as research about the prehistory of our present global society, not as an analysis of the contemporary world. (That is not to say, that there are no conflicts, but only, that we know of them and can't seriously say, that we don't have anything to do with them, that it's only a far away culture etc.) Therefore I think, that the historical perspective on antiquity is paradigmatic also for cultural anthropology, and a sign too, that we already want to punish our own present with the same honoring ignorance, into which over the last centuries has developed the use of the past, calling itself knowledge of history.

## **Identity, reality and time: an exploration of the (in)abilities of self reflection**

[Three parts as original Post and two answers in a thread]

I have thought now for a few years about the topic of identity, and how strange it is and how difficult to comprehend. I want to write up some of my ideas, translating them from German to English, to see both limits of my style and reasoning pointed out as necessary, and to find thus some ideas of future investigations.

The word "identity" has quite different meanings between English and German, and one of the easiest mistakes here is to simply equate them, leaving us Europeans to overanalyze these ideas, and you on the other side of the world puzzled and confused about the various metaphysical schemes thereabouts. However, this can be quite easily resolved:

In German, (and I think in french also but I don't quite know), identity comes from the adjective "identical", that is, two things share identity if they are the same. In this meaning of the word, "identity" is, what makes someone who they are, thus the equation with essence, spirit etc. It is that what they are identical to, to be who they are. (This is actually present in the mathematical language in English also: Euler's identity etc.)

In English however, if I understand it correctly, it comes from the act of identification, specifically of self identification. It's what you would write in a bio. Not necessarily what defines you as who you are, but as what makes it so that people can identify you amongst others.

Obviously, the other concept also comes up on the other language, but I do think the emphasis is reversed. What you call identity, in German would probably be called "Personalien" or "Persönliche Daten", and in reverse the German "Identität" is closer to personality of character than to identity.

That is merely an introduction to how I came to see and think about identity in general, namely as something that must be thought of as identifying, and therefore as necessarily essential.

This lead me to the following arguments:

A - To understand anything, I need both to know what it is and what it's not. For to know only what it is, it could be everything, only what it not is, it could be nothing.

B - I can't imagine what I can't imagine. What truly is outside of the reach of my imagination is

simply not imaginable, that is, I can't know what my imagination not is

C - therefore per A I can't know my imagination, and thus not myself. I don't know who I am, or more clearly, I don't know what I'm not.

D - Saying that I don't know that however is saying that I'm not "knowing who I am", while I'm saying that I don't know what I am / am not; a contradiction. So I also really can't know even that

E - But those two things - me not being able to know who I am, and to not know that fact - is one and the same. So, what I am is in fact that very fact for me not to understand myself.

Conclusion: I am, that I don't know, who I am

This in fact lead me to disregard that what you could call the "reality" of the subject and to think of myself as the platonic idea of self-misunderstanding itself, disregarding any more specific identify as essentially false (bodily or otherwise).

It's only been very recently that I noticed that there is actually something to that, probably not unrelated to me realizing I'm trans. (In fact, that realization was less one about gender and more about the fact that I have a body.) In a similar way it was about plurality; I didn't think I was singular before at all, but believed to never have an explicit or stable identity, instead always being absolutely dissociated and changing from one moment to the other. Realizing we're a system was much more about, that something like a Who-I-am, besides a What-I-am (as an abstract metaphysical construction of the transcendental subject) exists at all and is more than illusion

But I don't think I was exactly wrong before. We all are ways of confusion, of self-disturbance, of "not getting it" about ourselves. I still am that I don't know myself; only that "I" is now not part of a formless effervescent flow, but of a system, gracefully riding it's butterfly (ψυχή (psyche) too, like the soul) above the abyss; and that to "know" includes too the question why I can be so abstracting and general and philosophically and mathematically riding away, when too I am concret and living, and how life (as the whole of my reality) could be centered and understood from the "living" (the act to live, the body, and all the other peculiarities that in life represent life itself).

That is what I could think about immediately, about how my identity and my idea thereof is bound to time (both mine and that of imagination) and too is unbound from it (through me being still confused as ever, and the argument for me being my confusion standing still like frozen at the origin that grants me my will and its freedom).

Do you think it's profound, nonsense, or something else? And is it at least somewhat comprehensible, or did I fail to convey myself in a still often surprisingly foreign language to myself?

(also, be cognizant of the fact that I'm in a different time zone and might only answer tomorrow, my little is already a bit tired rn, although he also likes to stay around and thinks it's cute I want to ask like this!)

## **Second Part:**

Well, there are a lot of things involved in this. "Bound to time" means for example, that I thought I right now and the I three seconds ago were different persons, that is that I did not believe in persistent identities, because the "I right now" is slightly different from the "I three seconds ago" in that we are different in space-time position of the body (+3s and maybe moved a bit) and therefore

not literally identical, and that is what I used to define "Identity" with. This basically changed when I identified with an abstract concept and considered the body more of an artifact than an identifying thing, to the point that my main identify was my way of thinking, thought of as independent of the physical universe, and it's only once I realized that I was trans that my body was of any significance (besides carrying the soul / making it possible to read and write etc), and it was only once I realized that I was plural that I'm not always a different person than before OR nothing but an abstract mathematical idea, instead switching in various moments in time, but not continually at every infinitesimal time point.

Addition: the main reason I thought of myself and myself before as different like that, is the following riddle: let's suppose you could see in the time axis of space-time. You can see me now and before. Which one changed? If the past me changed, it wouldn't be in the past, and the future me is already different. So, I didn't "change" as an action or property, rather the past and future me are different and only connected by a relation, not an action. For a more trivial example: let's say you put two bottles next to each other, otherwise identical. Which is the one that "changes" into the other? Or are they not rather different? This is the way too I thought about the self, as viewed from a divine perspective overlooking space and time.

I agree with you that free will has here a certain limit, but not necessarily in time, and more in desire. A will can be free if it's not bounded/ necessitated by foreign forces, but that doesn't mean that it is not bound by its own rules. I do personally still believe in free will, because I don't believe the past is fixed forever, and that our free will right now is the power of our minds to reach back to the big bang and changing it so that our brain is in line with our transcendental (first-person, outside of the universe) desire. (in fact I think we're actually still at the big bang and are living through our live as a simulation of the future universe, as kind of a universe configuration simulator, but that doesn't change anything practical about my theory and just makes it sound more absurd, so I leave it out most of the time, although I do quite like the idea)

But back to the topic, yes, it's not unbounded to say who I am, but that's because "who I am" is tied to my will / desire. I think ultimately that I am free to decide what and who I want to be only in the way that I can choose my primary desires

So, because I am a "desire" / Eros, I have free will over actions since I made them happen physically, but I didn't make that desire happen based on another desire; instead, that desire (be it to live or to experience or to think) simply was there or appeared one day

And I feel this the strongest in my internal plural communication: the difference is mostly like a difference between habits and primary desires, and less one of "properties" (in that you would have to measure the mind and find it not identical= a different identity)

But that may also be because I'm coconscious, so memory is relatively transparent to me

I still very much like the view of myself as ultimately in a different world / having an identity of an abstract idea, unbound to the body. But I do now think that I, as desire, have desires about that body and am not indifferent to it, and that I may not be alone with that amongst the various minds connected to its brain. That's maybe the shortest explanation of my idea of "boundedness".

My experience of time has always been relatively strange for that, since I think of that more as part of a universe, that's connected to the body, but not to myself, and as different from "transcendental time", i.e. order and relationship of experiences to the mind.

Which also has to do with my memory being more organized by topic (at least for me, for the others it might be more temporal)

So it's more that I see myself "bound to time" when I realize that my actions are tied to a mortal body, when intuitively I think I should be immortal, and should have infinite expanses in every moment, even when I can't do so much in a day as I want, and don't have in fact infinity days to express myself. That in a way is a boundedness as well

One of the most influential passages to me was the following line from Wittgenstein's Tractatus:

"Death is not an event of life. Death is not lived through.

If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present.

Our life is endless in the way that our visual field is without limit.

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The temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say, its eternal survival after death, is not only in no way guaranteed, but this assumption in the first place will not do for us what we always tried to make it do. Is a riddle solved by the fact that I survive for ever? Is this eternal life not as enigmatic as our present one? The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time.

(It is not problems of natural science which have to be solved.)"

(see [https://www.wittgensteinproject.org/w/index.php?title=Tractatus\\_Logico-Philosophicus\\_\(English\)#6](https://www.wittgensteinproject.org/w/index.php?title=Tractatus_Logico-Philosophicus_(English)#6) , section 6.4311, 4312 for that translation)

And I think ultimately he is right here. In a certain sense, I'm bound to time, but I'm also free in time, in that I'm not necessitated to let a day just go past. But at the same time, sometimes I can't help but do that, having desires and will to just let time be, to see it go away. That, in a way, is a freedom of will, but at the expense of deciding freely of every passing moment, what it passes by and where it passes into

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I'm sorry if that's a bit too much, but I couldn't think of a shorter form to condense all that. I'm still trying to explain it to myself/ves, so trying to find the right words in another language is not always easy, but I hope I could gave you some idea how I think about these things

### **Third Part:**

Thanks, its okay, you werent talking to everyone at once so i guess its fine to talk with singular pronouns. Yeah, I guess its a difference of more visual or abstract thinking, being involved in formal mathematics and philosophy and having a strong interest in physics as well probably formed this in a way, also that i'm more focused on sounds than on visuals. The intuition of time is definently also interesting, in that we only notice change after it happened etc. My first thought-experiments here were also about timelines, but also more about physics etc, so how I could imagine the past having a past etc. as a multi dimensional time (i.e. more than one time dimension, or every moment having its own direction of time), so as to explain time travel etc. but without most paradoxes, but Im currently more interested in just more plainly thinking about what this experience is, what it means for me to experience a "now". Thats why I want to understand phenomenology better, as

well as more classical philosophy and its focus on matching ideas (eternal things) to moving time by being their "appearance" (eidos, idea; funnily enough, the standard latin translation is "species"; since "ideas of animals" were most studied by Aristotle, that's how the word species (= appearance, form) came to be associated with animals and plants and not with other things like numbers and shapes, like if Plato would have been more popular in the middle ages).

### **[Translation] "Art to tell a story" (or about (over)interpretation) (Walter Benjamin, November 1933)**

I always come back to this short essay written by Benjamin, because I think it so beautifully compresses the whole problem with "interpreting" that what we still not even understand what it is. Therefore, I thought it might be useful to translate it here, so that you may weigh in on how well it is readable in English.

References: Selected Works, WBG 2018, tomb V, p.464 = collected works Suhrkamp tomb IV.2 p. 430ff (according to page index at the end of WBG t.V) online:  
<https://www.textlog.de/benjamin/kleine-prosa/denkbilder/kleine-kunst-stuecke>

#### **Walter Benjamin - Think-Images - Short Art Pieces - The Art to tell a story**

"Every morning teaches us about the new things encompassing the earth. And yet we are poor in rememberable stories. How come? It comes, because no occurrence reaches us, that isn't already sipped through with explanation. In other words: Almost nothing, what happens, comes to the benefit of the [telling of the] story, almost everything to benefit or information. Because it is already half of the art to tell a story, to keep it, while telling it, free from explanation. In that, the old were masters, Herodotus on the cusp. In the 14th chapter of the third book of his "Histories" there is the story of Psammenit. As the Egyptian king Psammenit was defeated and imprisoned by the Persian king Cambyses, Cambyses sought to humiliate the prisoner. He gave orders, to put Psammenit on the street through which the Persian parade was to move. And he further ordered, that the prisoner should see his daughter as a servant, that would go with the vase to the well. As all Egyptians mourned and decried this theater, Psammenit alone stood wordless and unmoving, the eyes to the ground, and as he shortly later saw his son, taken with the parade to his execution, he still was unmoved. But as he recognized one of his servants, an old poor man, in the lines of the prisoners, then he punched the head with his fists and gave all signs of the deepest sorrow. ---

In this story one can see, what it is about the true [telling of the] story. Information has lost its value in the moment, that it was new. It lives in that instant. It has to extradite itself to [that moment] and, without losing time, to explain itself. [Completely] different the [telling of the] story; it doesn't overexhaust itself. It keeps its power collected in the inside and is after a long time capable of being expanded. So, Montaigne came back to the one about the Egyptian king and asked himself: Why does he only mourn on the sight of the servant and not before? Montaigne answered: "Because he was already full of grief, it needed only the smallest addition, and it broke his dams." That's a way to understand it. It does however also have room for other explanations. Everyone can make themselves familiar with them, who asked Montaigne's question in their circle of friends. One of mine said for example: "The king is not moved by the fate of the royal, for that is his own." Or another one: "We're moved by a lot on stage, which doesn't move us in real life; the servant is an actor to the king." Or a third one: "Great pain accumulates and only breaks away by relaxation. The sight of the servant was the relaxation" - "If this story would happen today", said a fourth one, "in all papers would be written that Psammenit liked the servant more than his kids." Sure is, that every reporter would explain it in an instant. Herodotus explains it with no word. His report is the driest. Therefore, this story from Ancient Egypt, is after millennia still able to inspire wonder and thought. It is similar to the seeds of plants, that have laid for millennia cut off from the air in the chambers of the pyramids, and have to this very day not lost the power to grow."