Understanding self and objective self-awareness: Systematic review of the literature.

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Abstract. A systematic review of the origin of the self and the concept of objective self-awareness. Describing the earlier theories of the self, introducing the child behaviour and the influences of environment on the construction of the self. Specifically, in early childhood when self-awareness takes on more in psychological manifestation. In other to the self- referential which is verbalized to attributes and behaviours. Approaching the development of social understanding of the self and others. Furthermore, are introduced the theories of objective self-awareness and its effects. Finally, this article offers the recent progress on those theories and highlights the issues that have been discovered however, still unsolved. Nevertheless, it launches light on a new perspective of the problems and brings gaps for future research.

Keywords. self-consciousness, self-awareness, self, and objective self-awareness

1. Introduction

The sense of self is a slow growth in the context of a social process, in interaction with the environment and others. Who encompass both ego and alter ego, which are thus born together (Baldwin, 1906).

During the childhood, many authors says that the self is represented directly to their behaviour, as the child seems the self only as separate from themselves. (Damon & Harter 1988).

The objective self-awareness theory was concerned with the self-reflexive quality of consciousness. Approaching the question of attribution in contact with the environment and the individual's attention. (Duval & Wicklend, 1972).

This article is attempted to develop a systematic review of the literature, on two topics of self-understanding. First, is introduced a development of the self during childhood, on three periods: very early childhood, middle childhood, and late childhood. In the same topic, we provide the origins of understanding self and others. Second, this article offers the effects of objective self-awareness, objective self-awareness theories and the recent progress.

With this publication, its aimed to recapitulate the latest and previous research and ideas about self-awareness and objective self-awareness. Introducing authors, theories and pointing some gaps that needs to be fulfil and deeper research.

2. Methodology

A systematic review of the literature was searched out in Scopus (www.scopus.com/home.uri), Science Direct (www.sciencedirect.com), APA PsycNet (www.psycnet.apa.org/home) and Google Scholar. Using the following searching terms: self-consciousness, self-awareness, self, and objective self-awareness. Within this material the purpose of this work is releasing a review of the material.

It was searched materials from 1972-2016. And from them was selected articles and reviews from those previous sources. They were selected following the keyboards, the theories, and the contemporary study of this topic. Also, searching for gaps and newest research of those studies.

It was approved 4 articles to review. One of them has the study of the objective self-awareness theory as described by Duval & Wicklund (1972). Furthermore, on the second one has the Baldwins theory of the development of cognitive development and social understanding and self (1906).

Each of them was selected based on those topics and keywords. They were rated based on their quality, accuracy, and safe information. For this evaluation, it was used the UNIGON as reference on those articles.

3. Results

Within, the four selected articles were identified the evolution, the process, and the effects of the environment on self-awareness. It tells that during early childhoods, self-awareness takes on more psychological manifestation, what means that linguistically the young child can now describe the self (Harter, 2021). Usually, it's more common that young boys describe the present self on activities and skills. And on young girls its more likely to appear on social, relational, and emotional (Fivush & Buckner, 1990). The self-representation on the young child is still very directly tied to behaviour, the child understands the self only as separate, Damon and Harter (1988) labelled theses as categorical identification.

At this period, the young child uses they cognitive limitation as protective factors, they lack cognitive ability to compare they self to others. They cannot distinguish real and ideal self-concepts and they cannot internalize critical opinion and construct a balance view of the strengths and weakness. Besides, using these as protective factors, positive self-views can serve as motivations facts, as emotional buffers, contribution to the child development.

To Piaget (1960) very young children egocentrism is defined as a cognitive-developmental limitation because they cannot separate their own perspective from others point of view. Freud (1914) dissert about primary normative narcissism in young child that is an investment of energy in the self, in the service of self-preservation, where the infants represent a sense of omnipotent. Otherwise, Erikson (1968) and Kohut (1977) considered these omnipotent narcissistic illusions to be critical precursors of positive feeling about the self.

Latter on during the middle childhood some of the features of the previous stage persist in that self-representation. As so the child continues to overestimate his/her virtuosity, referencing to various competencies (social, skills, cognitive, abilities) and athletic talents (Rochat, 2003). However, they display a greater sense of self-agency, improving their role in telling their autobiography story. Improving a greater sense of self-continuity as children project their narratives into the future. They also, became more aware of their self-presentation, increasing cognitive appreciation for the perspective of others influences on their self-development (Rochat, 2003).

In the middle to late childhood, self attributes become more interpersonal as relation with others, besides they continue to describe themselves in terms of their competencies, they have more mature sense of agency, and their autobiographical memory is dictated to the child own experience. (Bandura, 1977). A long with that, a major cognitive-developmental advance is the realization that one's self-attributes can be both positive and negative, with that the child has a more balanced view of the self. However, due to that cognitive-development and the ability of the children to construct a global perspective of one's worth as a person their self-perspective become more negative (Harter, 2006; Jacobs Lanz, Osgood, Ecles & Wigfield, 2002). And greater perspective-taking skills allow the older child to realize that there is a wider audience. Provoking self-consciousness and the need to develop strategies to ensure positive self-evaluations.

3.1 Analogical argument: Understanding self and others

The role of the body and the social understanding are discussed and disproved by many authors. One of the contemporary theories of the development of social understanding is the analogical argument, witch for Tomasello's (1995,1996,1999) starts in the infant using intermediaries (instruments) in the pursuit of goals (means-end relations) indicating a new level of intentional functioning. Because infants view others as "like me", he argues that any new understanding leads to the comparison and a new understanding of the functioning of others. Like that, the infant infers other persons mental functioning on analogy to their own.

Otherwise, Scheler (1954) criticises the analogical argument, arguing that we perceive mental state as emotion, so assumption that our only initial datum is the body its erroneous. The second assumption is the origin of the knowledge of others mind. Scheler (1954) critic that analogical reasoning cannot lead to the notion of other, not even the notion of others mind. Rather, it can only lead to the conclusion that "I double my experience in consciousness" (Lipps, 1907). A long with these critics of explaining others and others mind, he argues that they introduce an equivocated concept of "ego". That in the analogical argument, the concept of "ego" is used to indiscriminately refers to an already differentiated ego and alter ego. So, in conclusion, following Scheler lines of argument the theories of Tomasello (1999) fail because they cannot explain the origin of alter e go and others mind.

After comparing those contemporary theories, we are recapturing Baldwin's theory of cognitive development and social understanding. For Baldwin (1906) the sense of self is not innately given but undergoes a "slow growth" in a social context that encompass both ego and alter ego. He says that the infant's consciousness is marked by absence of any polarity or dualism during the pre-logical stage. After that stage, the infant lack of three distinctions with Baldwin separate as dualism of 'inner and out', dualism of 'subject and object' and dualism of 'self and other self – ego and alter ego'. During the pre-logical persons and things are "projected out" and "thought external" (Baldwin 1903) and the child is conscious of others before of himself. The next stage of development, Baldwin call it "the quasi-logical stage", where the dualism of inner-out arises in occurrence of the development of memory. In order of that for Baldwin the inner-outer dualism results from an awareness of disagreements between sensory presentations and mnemonic re-presentation (memory). He believes however that the dualism between inner outer does not yet imply any conscious awareness of the subjectivity of one's own mental life. The inner-outer dualism involves only the contrast between two bodies of data but does not yet imply the infant objectifies her own psychic process.

Baldwin proceeds saying that the inner and outer dualism is essential to the emergence of subjectivity. The first sense of subject is taken over from bodies of others through imitation (Baldwin 1911). The next level the child begins to have her own sense of subjectivity to other person and understands them as subjects as "like and equal to himself". So, for Baldwin (1894) the instrument of transition from protective stage to the subjective stage and the emerge of self-consciousness is the principle of imitation. He emetizes that a theoretical understanding of the world and others is derived from bodily interaction with objects and other person. Where

the body is placed in an ambiguous position (1906), being used as an object to be acted on.

3.2 Objective Self-Awareness

Following those ideas leads to Jones and Nisbett (1971) approach, which indicate that a person who is actively engaged with her environment tends to attribute the causes of his activity. Using comparison, just like the children on Baldwin (1911) theory, the person who passively observes the actor tends to attribute causality the actions. But, since the attention of the actor it toward the environment, his attributes lead to the environment.

On the earliest theories of objective self-awareness (Duval & Wicklund) they approach the question of attribution in a similar way of Jones and Nisbett. The theory provides a general model relating focus of attention to attribution. Whereas people can apprehend the existence of environmental stimuli, they can be aware of their own existence, becoming the object of his own consciousness. As an example of an image in a mirror, the sound of her voice or situations that bring the persons attention inward, toward herself. The theory employed a few constructs, relations, and processes, it assumed that the orientation of conscious attention was the essence of self-evaluation. When people focus on the self it automatically brought a comparison of the self against standards.

So, when the self-standard discrepancy is recognized, people try to reduce it (Bandura, 1977; Lazarus, 1966). Then if the reduction is perceived, people will try to achieve the standard. However, if its unfavourable people will try to avoid self-focus. People will try to reduce the discrepancy to the limit they believe their rate of progress is sufficient relative to the magnitude of the progress. In the other way, who believe their progress is insufficient will avoid.

Resent research, suggested that people will also change their standard to be consistent with the self. Objective self-awareness theory assumes that changing self or standards, should be equally effective ways of restoring self-standards congruity.

Even to changing standards isn't explicit by early formulations of self-awareness theory (Carver & Schelier,1981; Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Gibbons, 1990; Wicklund, 1975), it is compatible with assumption of a self-standard consistency system. Which attribute the cause of the discrepancy to the self or the standard. That appears to determine whether the self or standards is changed or whether action is taken to reduce the discrepancy. (Still, why have researches not observed this effect earlier?)

Self-awareness research has never devoted much attention to the standards. The nature of internalized standards has never been fully explained. Some theories assume a simple positive-negative affective reaction that corresponds to more or less successful attempts to meet standards (Cover & Scheier, 1998; Duval & Wicklund, 1972). Other ones assume that different emotions arise from different discrepancies. Although it has some progress on research, not much is known about how standards are internalized in the first place.

4. Discussion

Some factors have emerged from this literature review. First, the origin and understanding of self-awareness during childhood is a presented the stages of awakening the self-awareness consciousness, it's separated from during early to late childhood. As we move to the topic of analogical argument there is controversial theories in this article, Tomasello's (1995,1996,1999) theory is criticised by Scheler (1954) who says that the analogical argument can not explain the notion of others, and the others mind, including the ego and alter ego.

Within the Baldwin (1911) theory, we are introduced on the dualism of inner outer were the child starts to imitate and see others as subjects. Saying that the understanding of the world and others takes from the interaction of the body.

In the same note in Duval & Wicklund theory of objective self-awareness we found that the body is considered as an object of awareness. Like Baldwin's (1911) theory, but the difference is that the person compares them self with the environment, other than with others body. In the objective self-awareness the environment provokes an aware of the person existence by stimulation. But, in this process the self compares itself to standards, that are present on the environment. However, there is still a few studies about the standards and the effect on the self-awareness. These studies only show the knowledge that standards affect positively or negatively on the self, and that based on their difficulty of accomplish people try to reduce it. (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Duval & Wicklund, 1972). So, this research shows us the importance of the standards on mental health and the self, and that's why it is needed to have more research and studies about them, not only the knowledge that they can be positive or negative influences.

5. Conclusion

The literature review in this article presents multiples theories of self-awareness, the analogical argument and objective self-awareness. Its important to highlight when the self-awareness begins to develop on the person. Focusing on the child and highlighting the importance of imitation on the children perception of other and itself, showing her/him first sense of subject (Baldwin, 1911). It also discusses the Tomasello's (1999) analogical argument of understanding self and the other, where it's pointed that the child sees others as "like me" and uses the others to understand himself. However, Scheler (1954) points mistakes of the analogical argument. Objective self-awareness is presented in this article as the final subject, saying that the environment stimulation can lead the person to know their own existence, and on that we are introduced to the standards. Understanding self-awareness and objective self-awareness leads us to know better about the self and about our perception of other and the influence of the environment on us. Also, the importance of standards and the way we react to them. Still, there's not enough research about standard that can help us to understand them better and their consequences on out actions and life. That's why deeper research of this subject would be so important to the contemporary theories and to fulfil the old ones that had only developed basic knowledge about the positive/negative influences of them.

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