

**It's just me, myself, and I**

Julius



Whether it be philosophers, people suffering from a midlife crisis, or Sociology Majors, they all worry about *the self*. They ask, “Who am I?” “Who are other People?” “Why?” I too am interested in social interaction and its relationship to myself. Intrigued, I looked through my memories, and I found that throughout much of my life I designated sections for specific tasks. My earliest memory of this was in elementary school where I created a town of Julius character that would work on tasks or fight off things I would think up. Later, it became more about insecurities and self-reflection; I would analyze class thinking of how I could make others feel better about it yet still meet my parents’ expectations. Those reflective insecurities grew into my social life; I worried about how I wasn't wanted, and how I could be valuable enough to my friend. I pushed myself to be more socially competent and more socially accepted. All this changing of myself grew to where I feel better about my skill in these areas, but I've lost myself. I've become a mask wearing “yes man”, hiding my disguise with amounts of sass. My new character may have partially fulfilled my want for better social skills, but it also lead me to an act I wasn't happy with. So, I decided that I would set a goal to change my current self to find a better way to live. Guessing how to do this, I ventured out to complete my task.

First, from my prior endeavors in changing systems and people, I knew that I needed to know what I was talking about. I started to research the classic “how to know yourself” and found things such as the need to live in the moment or to figure out your personality. These were all much too broad ideas to actually capitalize on. So, I started to research deeper, asking wider questions such as “what is the self?” Talking to teachers and friends, I started to look at identity, psychology, and philosophy. First, I researched some suggested names. However, I ended up falling down a whole rabbit hole of philosophy, sociology, and psychology interspersed with ted talks. The Ted Talks were very helpful to understand a basic idea of psychological + Sociological identity, and ways of identifying those identities.

First, my educational procrastination had me spending much time watching Ted talks. The main idea besides self-betterment was something called trait psychology. Trait psychology is defining human personalities through a number of characteristics. One of the most popular examples is the Myers-Briggs test. It takes a person, dissects their personality through questions, then categorizes it into four parts. This was an excellent idea until I realized the inherent dehumanizing ideas. While the characterizing traits were a good synopsis of the human personality, it doesn't explain the full idea of human personality. Humans change, have unique quirks, and individual mannerisms, all of these phenomena cannot be explained by Trait psychology. The whole of Idea in trait psychology boils humans down to these traits; this branch of psychology is not a valid generalization of the self. This was a helpful idea, but it did not provide enough information for me to understand myself.

Next, I decided to try using another educational source, crash course. It introduced me to two basic ideas of the self: body theory and the memory theory. The body theory states that your personal identity is the same because you remain in the same body from birth to death. The mind theory states that your personal identity remains the same because you have memories of yourself. I thought about this for a long time until realizing that these flawed theories of personal identity are showing base necessities to an identity. If there were a person with a different body and memories every day, society would not recognize them as the same person. Knowing the base knowledge I felt that I was ready to jump a couple steps and read the larger philosophical ideas. Stepping partially blindly into this, I chose to research a name I heard in a fit of boredom research, Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre believed that people don't have some sort of true self they can know. He firmly believed that people instead had a consciousness and self-consciousness. These

two things are *always* malleable. Sartre is a strong believer in the idea of self-deception when it comes to the consciousness. He said people were deceiving themselves when they spoke about how people couldn't be changed, or basically when they disagreed with his views. Sartre does not think that people can just be 'someone else; however, he believes that to change oneself, they must venture through a long journey. First a person must recognize *facticity*. Facticity is where a person recognizes all of the facts that are affecting the current self. Then after that they must recognize *how* all those forces are affecting the current self. That's not all; a person must also understand that they can change independent of those forces. To make this even harder, Sartre states that the way to understand your situation's independence, you must see yourself being perceived by another as yourself. So, even though everyone is possible to change, it's an extremely hard process that might involve splitting yourself up and taking control of another body. While he may have had some crazy ideas, Sartre did have some valid points in there. His idea of the ever-changing self was quite interesting in that it lets people become more free. It might be harder for a person to face the fact that there is not a true them, yet it also lets them become who they would like to become. This is discouraged by his highly complicated ideas on the subject however he does let the believer follow their path. This is something that was encouraging to my journey, that even if it takes shit loads of work, someone can still make it happen.

After the philosophy got my head spinning I needed to center myself with some cold psychology. I read part of Carl Jung's idea of the self. He believed that the Self was two things: First was "a more complete sense of wholeness" (Hopcke 20) related to someone's psyche<sup>1</sup> The second was the human ego. First I researched the thought that the self relates largely to a sense of human created by ideas unconsciously integrated into their psyche<sup>1</sup>. This sense of human is inherent in everyone; it is a pattern in human nature. One way he believed people showed the similarity of the self in masses was religion. Religions used patterned symbols such as mandalas to represent their universe, or had all people created by the same thing/man. This was quite clever in my mind, and it made me want to research Jung's findings more. I decided to read more about the individual self. The individual self in Jungian psychology is much different than the archetypical self. Jung believed in an ego complex, not Freud's classic id, ego, and superego, but as their perception of themselves along with the feelings and thoughts that accompany that perception. This is a quite complex identity system, while one defines themselves, they still are defined by the thoughts of them they believe society has. I later found that that was reinforced by Jung's ideas that some of the most valid representations of a person's self, was their actions in a dire situation. A person in a dire situation will generally be forced act using core ideas and beliefs because of a lack of time. At first this was an amazing representation of the self, however problems slowly started to form. It made me want to explore more of the psychological self because A) I was amazed at that theory, and B) the Psychological self much more concretely related to identifying myself instead of improving myself.

Jung's Ideas on the self had me excited to find other psychological and sociological ideas. I remembered another project a friend had done on something called the chameleon effect. The chameleon effect is the idea that people mimic others behavior to match their social environment without thinking about it. The mimicry of behaviors is reported to have created smoother feeling interactions and increase likability. This effect shows more in people who are more open about themselves and in people who pay more attention to the other. The people who mimic in social settings more, are more likable, and generally have more friends. This effect is largely helpful for people, it increases their social skills, and helps their relationships right? Well, the effect can go

overboard. People can end up imitating negative action of the other people, hurting relations. This idea was slightly unsettling in that now I am partially conscious when I mimic people. This consciousness makes me question my behavior and become more insecure about my social abilities. There is a small bit of comfort knowing that I do mimic and cause better interactions I just need to work on it.

Finally, I follow through on my teacher's original suggestion of researching sociologist, Erving Goffman. Goffman's Idea was that people are actors that create an impression of their identity. All people are born into this stage and are given societally generated roles. Becoming socially competent is learning how to become a better actor, and how to portray your role better. A good actor will use setting, appearance, and their manner of interaction to influence others better. When actors are alone, instead of stopping their role, they will practice in front of an imaginary audience, allowing their performance to become better when they must go back on stage. Goffman's idea is interesting and I agree that it at least partially applies to everyone, however I don't believe that people are acting all the time. This idea is comforting though because it reminds me that others act much of the time too.

Second I had to analyze who I was and when. I did a multitude of things to figure this out. Starting at the basics, I went off and took most official trait psychology tests that I could<sup>2</sup>. I tried to look at my decisions in sticky situations, but I could not remember them. I created multiple mind maps of myself and lists of my roles in society. I included many personal ideas in them and things that I generally do not share. Unfortunately these attempts to understand the parts of myself never were truly satisfying. I felt like I wasn't gaining any knowledge of myself because I was simply organizing what I had. So off that lack of satisfaction I sent out surveys to my home school and Oxbow attempting to find my 'true roles' (if they existed). Many of the results were simply reinforcing my previous thoughts, but there were also responses that I would have never thought of. People said I was an artistic inspiration, professional ball3r, informer, and a voice of reason (wise old man). The newfound roles sent a mental express train out the station. It took me back to my research; I started thinking about Sartre's idea of the lack of true self, along with Erving Goffman's ideas. If I do not know my roles, however those roles define me, there still must be an unknown self to be discovered (whether it be the 'true self' or other). Next, If there is no true self, wouldn't there be a role that most people play, whether they know it or not? So I do not need to find a true self, only a self that I can play most of the time, which I am comfortable with. Thinking about this, I thought that I should name, describe, say when I use them, and rate the templates I carry. I spent hours sitting and reflecting on much of my social interaction back at home, how I felt like I acted, and when I generally imposed that persona on myself. I created a list of the different Juliuses. I rated these personas using three categories: Mean Skill (at task(s) mentioned, Mean Social skills, and Mean Happiness. Skill is based using how peers evaluate my work (1 being equivalent to an average toddler's skill 10 being a master of said craft). Social skills is based on how I feel my comments and behaviors affect current friends in a positive way or helped me become closer to them (1 being speechless and anxious, 10 being becoming their savior and best friend), Happiness is rated on the average happiness alone, and average happiness with friends (1 being intense depression, 10 being euphoria)\*. This system worked wonderfully, but I encountered a problem. I needed to be sure that I embodied these roles, especially as it seemed that the surveyed people had little clue of this changing, so I had to take time venturing through the roles to find evidential actions of these things.

Fourth, I had to pick through some of the intellectual weeds. I know that this process of changing myself takes more time and people than I have at oxbow. However, I did find that

through my research I started to get a concept of my belief on the self. An eternally complex thing, I enjoy the idea of starting with Sartre's lack of true self. Also, I agree with Sartre in that people can change, it's a complicated process, however it is possible. Next, similar to Jung, I believe that there are two versions of a person, however unlike Jung and closer to Goffman, there's the self that you are to yourself, the internal self, and the self that you are to other people, the perceived self. Both selves influence the other differently depending on a person's attitude. One person may constantly worry about how others perceive them and will modify their internal self in an attempt to change the perceived self, while another person may leak more of the internal self to others radically changing their perceived self. Both of these selves are very complex. The perceived self can almost never be truly described without exaggeration or generalization, it more provokes feelings in the person. The internal self however is highly layered and instead of provoking, regulates and releases feelings. The ways to distinguish these two selves can be quite hard, but like Jung's self, the base layer of internal self will come out when a person is put into a sticky situation. For most people I believe that base layer is their moral code, not one they attempt to practice, but one that is lodged deep within a human identity. An identity that comes from both one's body and one's mind in conjunction.

Finally who am I? To be honest I'm not sure I'll ever know who exactly I am. I know that I am a student, artist, mathematician, and much more, but I don't believe that there is a true 'me'. I do, however believe that I will eventually be able to monitor my roles in society, and use my knowledge to become happier because even though I may just be roles I play, that doesn't mean that I can't be comfortable and happy in one. I think Oxbow has been a large step to finding that ability. Here I have proven to myself that I can be comfortable with minimal change, and gathered an arsenal of knowledge on the subject. This comfort could simply be because I live with and see the same people every day, but it could still be a large sign in what I need to find. Perhaps I just need to find more stability, or perhaps I need to allow ideas to come out. I believe that I will find this role will appear naturally with much trial and error I just need to know when to see it. I'm going to keep looking, and hopefully you'll tell me if you see me find it.

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## APPENDIX OF TEST RESULTS AND SOCIAL ROLES:

Results of each test. These were NOT conducted by a professional so results are not 100% valid.

Myers Briggs: ENTJ

16PF (scored 0-4)

Warmth 2.8

Reasoning 2.8

Emotional stability 1.2

Dominance 1.8

Liveliness 2.9

Rule consciousness 0.9

Social boldness 2.1

Sensitivity 1.6

Vigilance 2.9

Abstractedness 3.7

Privateness 2.1

Apprehension 2.7

Openness to change 3.5

Self-Reliance 2.1

Perfectionism .9

Tension 1.9

### LIST OF SOCIAL ROLES

#### ***Social Turtle (blank mask)***

A baseline part of my social interaction, I start out very observant and awkward speaking to people, not knowing how to interact with them. Quickly (takes about two times hanging out can put effort into it to speed up) leads to a catered way of conversation and interaction.

Used always before I know the person, or even get a hint at their personality. Varies slightly on visual impressions

2.5/10 social skills

Happiness alone 4/10

Happiness with others 5/10

Actions: I'm always an awkward person when I meet someone (just ask my roommate about the first time I met him)

#### ***Introverted tech wizard***

Here I exercise much of my skill with math or technology. I keep to myself mainly, sometimes sharing memes, teaching others, or playing video games with my clique,

Generally used in math classes where I understand the material easily, or where I can help the teacher; used near other people who have understanding of technology. Finally, used to teach other people how to use technology, or explain mathematical concepts.

3-4/10 social skills

4.75 Skill (tech support)

4 Happiness alone

6 Happiness with others

Actions: I have spent over one thousand eight hundred hours of my life playing video games. I'm on the team of tech support for my school. Placed advanced in mathematics.

#### ***Artist***

Puts self down to have others bolster ego. Wants to be better at what he does. Needs others to shut him down in ways. Needs some limits. Confused. Generally passive and adapts to others too.

Used around other artists to become a better artist. Used around people who will enjoy my art. Used during free time as something to do.

5.75/10 skill Visual Arts

5.5/10 social skills (for specific group, for others closer to four)

4/10 happiness with self

6/10 happiness with others

Actions: Went to Boarding arts school, practicing VA for multiple years. I do put myself down and insult many of my creations

#### ***Debating intellectual***

This Julius utilizes most of his intellectual ability to play devil's advocate and start debates/conversations. Researches strange facts, or listens to podcasts. Sometimes the conversation can cause this persona to switch into someone else depending on the conversation

6.5/10 social skills

6.5/10 happiness with others

5/10 happiness with self

Actions: Ask my connections class. Joined Model UN,

#### ***Problem Solver***

This version of me is one of my most prized versions that I have. I turn solely to my extraverted intuition and think through all of my problems, then I plug in my emotions into those problems. Brutally honest

Used in dire situations, where other people are being emotional with their problems, or I would get emotional with my problem.

N/A social skills, Persona doesn't think

7/10 skill at helping people solve a problem

4/10 happiness with others

4/10 happiness with self

***Subsona: Wise old man***

This version is very similar to the problem solver however it puts much more time in the ability to simulate emotions, and less in finding all of the possibilities.

6/10 Skill helping people solve a problem

4/10 happiness with others

Not used on self

Actions: I have helped guide many a friend through emotional troubles

***Semi-Extraverted Homeschooler***

The most comfortable of the julius'.

This here is where I can relax and have fun. Can

do most of what I would like to do with support and without worry of many repercussions

Used almost strictly around homeschoolers, unable to be accessed in other places.

7/10 social skills (for specific group, 2/10 for others)

8.5/10 happiness

***Actions: I'm not sure what really encompasses this personality, it's simply there and I know it's there. There's just a feeling of comfort in the way I interact with homeschoolers.***