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# Dynamics of Self-Consciousness and Its Bodily Basis: A Comparative Analysis of Depersonalization and Meditation

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## Résumé

In this paper, I explore the dynamics of self-consciousness, focusing on its various aspects and their interactions. Drawing on recent neurophilosophy, I examine altered states of self-consciousness as a method to refine theories of self.

A key conceptual distinction distinguishes two forms of self-consciousness (Zahavi 2014). Minimal self-consciousness (MSC) refers to the core subjectivity of experience, encompassing embodied and affective dimensions. Reflective self-consciousness (RSC), instead, is the capacity to take oneself as the object of reasoning and self-narrative.

Both meditation and pathological depersonalization can be defined as de-identification: mental states in which the self feels distant. That is, alterations in the sense of self in these mental states bear notable similarities (Ciaunica et al. 2021; Kirberg & Chadha 2024; Metzinger 2003). Minimally self-conscious affective aspects diminish, while bodily awareness may intensify. Similarly, changes in self-reflection show parallels, with RSC continuously engaged in focusing on MSC.

However, I argue that experiences of depersonalization disorder and meditation also differ significantly. In particular, bodily MSC shows distinct characteristics, leading to different alterations in RSC and the overall MSC-RSC dynamics. In meditation, RSC actively modulates MSC, involving voluntary adjustments of affectivity, enhanced bodily awareness, and reduced narrativity. Conversely, MSC is distorted in depersonalization disorder, with a diminished sense of agency and bodily self-consciousness. This disruption results in compulsive hyper-reflectivity (Sass et al. 2013). By comparing these phenomena, I highlight the crucial role of bodily processes in grounding self-consciousness and the need to study the intricacies of the dynamics of self-consciousness in more detail.

**Mots-Clés:** sense of self, minimal self, reflective self, depersonalization, meditation

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