

**Book Review**

**A Map of Selves: Beyond Philosophy of Mind**  
by N.M.L. Nathan

A Review by  
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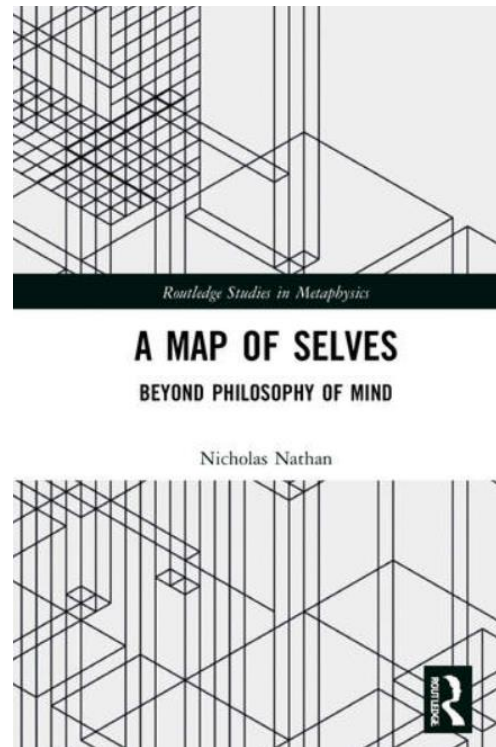
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**Title:** A Map of Selves: Beyond Philosophy of Mind  
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Determining what exactly the self is in its own is regarded as not only an important philosophical problem but also a question that deserves decisive answers for human existence in society. Why do I have such considerations? One of the explanations is that self can be regarded as an integral part of the description of the person's identity, including the characteristics a person has that are different from others. The benefit of these considerations in absolute terms will arise in legal proceedings requiring justification of identification. Another benefit is the benefit of educating the individuals based on the idea of existentialist philosophy of education which aims at providing education that enables individuals to manifest their full potential. These benefits are just a few examples in order to indicate that the benefits are built on the idea of believing that there are various selves that the society as a whole must have recognition of the diversity and differences that exist in individuals.

To define who I really am, do I need an everlasting existing core on which the existing selves of mine to be grounded? In this present book written by N.M.L. Nathan it is argued that I truly need it. My true self which is fundamental is the answer, and my true self is not the same thing with my own body or my own mind or any mental capabilities of thinking or feeling, or even the self-consciousness and the unconsciousness. The substantially real existing self cannot

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fail to exist. It must be really there, and it is beyond what I am capable of experiencing or conceptualizing as something which is called a mind. However, it exists as a substance. In Nathan's present book, to summarize from the author's own definition, he argues for his conceptualization of the self in a new way with the definition of self as "an enduring substance with a *quality*, which is its constant possession" (p. 1).

From previous conceptualizations of the self in philosophical theories, self can be understood in many ways. For those ways of being self-understanding, Nathan calls them "human selves" and he agrees that they exist (p. 3). Human beings are by their nature experiential beings. An individual human being can have many bodily experiences through his or her bodily senses, or mental experiences through emotional and mental introspection (p. 4). Nevertheless, one important thing to be noted here is that all of the experiences must be with a thing with its possessive nature for it to bear with any single experience. Even though we as human selves are experiential in many sorts of ways, there is one thing that we are sure of. The thing is that all of those experiences are woven into a single line of one thing with its possessive nature, claiming its status as the constant holder of those experiences. This sort of explanation is with a new terminology "disseveralties" coined by Nathan himself to denote the quality of the self (p. 10). This quality belongs to only one, and not more than one, substance. So, the quality is "ipseical" (p. 19). It is also advantageous to explain the quality of the self by dissever quality because the conceptualization of selves of an individual being should be single in its nature and the sequences of events must be in "a uniform way" (p. 85).

An individual can have a variety of memories. Self is the ground for those memories. In addition to being such a ground, self also has a possessive nature that verifies those streams of memories as one's own (p. 3-4). It is interpreted here that if it is true that there is no self in reality, there is at least one true self whose role is to be the possessor who is embracing the memories as its own.

For the idea that a person's self is an integral part of that person, such as the person's brain, body, or identity, Nathan points out that it is a consideration that creates a problem of describing the true self in such a wrong way (p. 15). It can be pointed out from Nathan's conception of self that self is not a physical part of memory like the brain. When a person has memories of a particular subject, for example her memories of her own lover, none of those images are the images of the brain tissues that contain the feelings. Those memories of hers are still there. In other words, the memorial sense of the conceptualization of self is not the same image of observed brain tissue motions that the scientist would find in the brain of the person currently having that memory image. If this statement is correct, then, in my opinion, it would be possible to explain how mechanically programmed memory-rich robots cannot be said to be containing the thing which is the true self. This is because the true self is not concrete and it cannot be explained at all by reducing it to being a concrete thing. Self is abstract and even more abstract than the process of memory that self possesses or even self-consciously possesses within its own. Therefore, I analyze that what the author emphasizes at the core is the substantial sense of the conceptualization of self, not the corporeal sense.

The previous explanation that one's self is not to define as one's brain can be found in the book written by Barry Dainton. The early part of Dainton's book describes the hypothetical situation in which a person is told that his brain has been taken by a group of people. In such a situation, if it is still possible for the person to remember that he is the self who has been told so. It can be explained that the self is another part that is not the brain (Dainton, 2014). Dainton explains this main tenet of self in another writing that the self should be considered in relevance with having experiences, and the phenomenon of having experiences in itself is not necessarily a sense of the self which must be in accordance with characters of consciousness (Dainton, 2016). It can be considered here that even though the details of Dainton's explanation are not totally in the same vein of Nathan's, the two explanations are complementary to each other in

the way of philosophical arguments against brain-based and consciousness-based conceptualizations of the self.

This present book of N.M.L. Nathan has greatly contributed to giving the issue of self a new avenue for discussion, and it is undeniable that those new avenues are both deeper and more profound. The author has a great ability to create and derive new philosophical terms to address issues of the self and its qualities in previously unspoken aspects. His book, therefore, has a very high originality. It is, of course, much more interesting than ever.

### **References**

Dainton, Barry. (2014). **Self**. Philosophy in Transit Series. London: Penguin Books.

Dainton, Barry. (2016). The Sense of Self. **Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society**. Supplementary, Volume 90: 113-143.