

Riccardo Chiaradonna, Massimo Marraffa
Ontology and the Self: Ancient and Contemporary Perspectives

Università di Roma Tre
Italia
e-mail: riccardo.chiaradonna@uniroma3.it

Università di Roma Tre
Italia
e-mail: massimo.marraffa@uniroma3.it

This article focuses on ancient and contemporary accounts of selfhood and on their ontological background. Among ancient theories, the main focus are Plato's and Plotinus' accounts of soul and selfhood. Their ontological framework now appears outdated but, somewhat paradoxically, it also explains why Plato's and Plotinus' analyses are closer to a naturalised metaphysics of the self than those of the Cartesian tradition. Accordingly, human beings are not simple subjects essentially characterised by consciousness; consciousness and mental life are not co-extensive; our selfhood entails a striving towards the unity of various layers. These insights come up again in recent debates, but they are now re-shaped within a framework in which philosophy of mind and behavioural sciences are combined in an effort to develop a notion of the self which (like that of Plato) is realist, yet (unlike what happens in Plato) does not entail any metaphysically grounded dualism.