



WHO IS I, WHO IS ME  
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## WHO IS I, WHO IS ME

Usually, I wake up with some difficulty. My brain is reluctant to start up, looking for any excuse to happily prolong its lethargic state. I have to scold myself to decide to get out of the sheets. But this morning, all the opposite: as soon as I opened my eyes, my mind was alert and, a few moments later, I was in front of the mirror, shaving. At the time, I didn't pay attention to this unusual behavior. I must have slept well and the ideal temperature of this start of summer must turn out well for me.

Yet things continued to be weird. Normally, my breakfast is devoted to artistic activities such as drawing on the butter pat with the teeth of the bread knife, or cultural ones such as reading in detail all the little texts written on the cereal packets . Finally, to keep a small chance of catching my train, I am forced to push myself out while vigorously lecturing myself. But, that morning, none of that. A breakfast swallowed in two shakes of a lamb's tail and here I am calmly walking down the street towards the station, comfortably ahead of schedule. After: same. On the train, instead of dozing off dreaming that I was saving the world with a brilliant invention of a CO<sub>2</sub>-absorbing machine, I took advantage of the journey to revise the presentation of the second quarter sales results that I had to do in the morning. Never seen before! At the office, I was so focused and full of enthusiasm that I began to worry: at this rate, a burnout was guaranteed. I wanted to calm down, but it was stronger than me, I couldn't help myself being efficient.

That evening, back home, I was paralyzed. I didn't dare do anything for fear of seeing myself acting enthusiastically again, without looking for an excuse to avoid the task, or even just to postpone it. I

didn't understand what was happening to me. Someone had to help me. Karl-Gustav, my psychoanalyst friend, might have an idea. I called him ... without hesitation, which confirmed the seriousness of my condition. To my great surprise, he didn't seem astonished by what I described to him.

“Before this happened to you, what did you tell yourself to wake up?”

“Things like: "Stop dozing; get up; you're going to be late to work again and get yelled at; the world belongs to those who get up early, you won't progress if you don't get going more.”

“And now?”

“It's the complete opposite. I try to hold myself back as much as possible. I tell myself: "Don't get carried away, there's no rush; you can do that later; enjoy yourself a bit; go see the new girl in PR, she's super cute...", you know the kind.”

“Yes, I see very well. There's no doubt about it. It's a theft of the I. Very interesting.”

“What's that? Is it serious?”

“Not necessarily. Let me explain. When you say something like: "I tell myself that...", "I can't help myself to..." you can see that there are two people in the story. There is clearly one guy who is saying something to another or who is trying to hold another back. For example, if you say "I'm angry at myself for having ... ", that means that "I" is crossed with the other(myself)'s behaviour. Do you follow me?”

“Uh! Yes, vaguely.”

“What is happening to you is that, during the night, the first guy took the place of the second. As a result, the second had no other choice but to take the place of the first! Your old "I" has become your new "myself", and vice versa. That's what we call a theft of the I. We don't know how it happens, but it always manifests itself when we wake up, like you this morning. Some people think that it's in a dream that "I" surreptitiously manages to push aside "myself".

Others say that it's simply "I" who is fed up with always having to tell the other to do this or not to do that, and not being listened to."

"Well! I'm in a right mess."

"Or rather the other way round, since the "I" who got you into trouble has become your "myself". So, it's him who's in trouble."

"Oh la la! And can it be cured?"

"No, sorry. Since there is no difference between the new situation and the old one, we have no control over the phenomenon. Often "I" ends up taking its place again, without us knowing why. Otherwise, you stay like that and you get used to it. I can't tell you more. Keep me informed, I'm very interested. And if there is a problem, don't hesitate to call me."

I was stunned. This story was really disturbing. When I say "I tell myself", the one who is speaking is me, of course. But if I and me are both myself, then why do I need to tell anything? Who is talking to whom, who controls whom in "I forbid myself to..." or "I force myself to..."?

My old "I" was moralizing and my actual "I" is lazy. They are very different and yet they can take each other's place overnight. Karl-Gustav is right: it doesn't change much. I am still with an "I" who keeps trying to stop me from doing what I want... Ouch, ouch, ouch: "I stop me from doing what I want": it seems like there are three of us now.

From the depths of my bed, I ruminated on all these questions without result. Fortunately, the theft of the "I" does not protect against fatigue. Exhausted by this upside-down day, I end up falling asleep.

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Karl-Gustav placed me in front of the mirror and said to me:

"Look at yourself carefully in this mirror."

I didn't see anything special.

"Look carefully, you'll see."

I then saw that my beard and hair were beginning to grow visibly. But I didn't feel anything. I touched my cheeks: no beard, my head: no long hair, while, in the mirror, I took on the beautiful look of a bearded hippie with bleached hair. The hippie beckoned me to come towards him. Taken aback, I turned towards Karl-Gustav who was standing behind me. He was staring at me with a strange smile. Suddenly, before I could react, he threw himself on me to push me onto the mirror. I closed my eyes, waiting for the shock against the glass, but there was no shock. Just a little draft of fresh air on my face, and I found myself on the other side. From there, I could see myself, without a beard or long hair. I looked for Karl-Gustav, wondering which side he was on, but ... the alarm clock rang. Opening my left eye (at least so as not to risk waking up completely), I squinted my eyelids to read the numbers clearly. Phew! It was only 7:15. My train was at 7:55, I still had plenty of time to dive back under the covers, and doze for another quarter of an hour...