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Narrative Identity as Compressed Self-Model

by [Nick Clark](#) | Published March 27, 2026 | [PDF](#)

An agent's complete lineage records every mutation, every decision, and every interaction throughout its existence. The narrative identity compresses this complete history into a self-referential model that captures the agent's character, tendencies, and identity trajectory. This compressed self-model enables the agent to reason about itself, predict its own behavior, and maintain continuity of identity across context changes.

What It Is

Narrative identity is a compressed representation of the agent's behavioral history maintained as a first-class cognitive structure. Unlike the complete lineage, which records every detail, the narrative identity captures patterns, tendencies, significant transitions, and characteristic responses. It is the agent's answer to the question of who it is, derived from the record of what it has done.

Why It Matters

Without a self-model, an agent cannot reason about its own likely behavior, cannot explain its decisions in terms of its character, and cannot maintain identity continuity across context changes. The narrative identity provides the foundation for self-awareness: not in a philosophical sense, but in the practical sense of an agent that can predict and explain its own behavior.

How It Works

The narrative identity is periodically reconstructed from the lineage record through compression algorithms that identify recurrent patterns, significant transitions, and characteristic behavioral signatures. The compression preserves identity-relevant information while discarding operational detail. The resulting model can answer queries about the agent's tendencies, values, and likely responses to novel situations.

What It Enables

Narrative identity enables self-referential cognition: the agent can consider how a proposed action aligns with its established character. It enables trust building: other agents can evaluate narrative identities as part of trust assessment. And it enables identity persistence: an agent that migrates to a new substrate carries its narrative identity as a compressed representation of who it is, enabling the new context to understand the agent's established character.

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[○ Human-Relatable Computable Intelligence](#)

Secondary Technical

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