

UNDERSTANDING THE SELF

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Chapter 1

PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SELF



PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is derived from the Greek words “Philos” and “Sophia” which literally means “Love for Wisdom”. It is the study of acquiring knowledge through rational thinking and inquiries that involves in answering questions regarding the nature and existence of man and the world we live in.

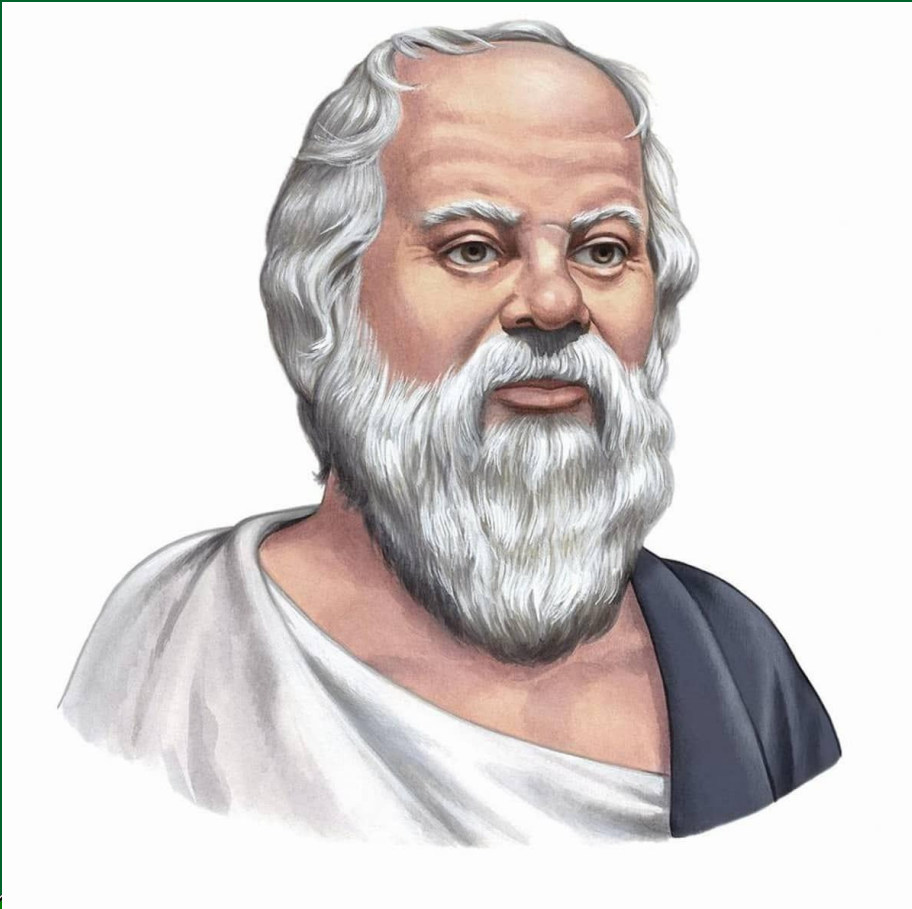


PHILOSOPHY

...As such, it is imperative to look into the various explanations from different philosophers their notion of what the “Self” its nature and how it is formed in order to have a better picture on how people develop their behaviors, attitude and actions and to be able to identify and understand who we are and how we came to be.



SOCRATES



Socrates' work was never published, we were only able to know who Socrates is and his works because of his illustrious students spoke generously and in detail about his knowledge, wit, wisdom and intellect.



SOCRATES

He could be considered as the first martyr of education, knowledge and philosophy. For lighting up the minds of his students, he was literally charged with corruption of minors. He was made to choose between exile and death via the intake of hemlock. Socrates chose the latter, thus dying as a martyr that fights against ignorance and narrow-mindedness.



Knowing Oneself as the Key to Happiness

Socrates emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, asserting that understanding oneself is fundamental to achieving happiness.



Knowledge as Virtue, Ignorance as Depravity

Socrates views possessing knowledge as virtuous and ignorance as a form of depravity. He suggests that acknowledging one's ignorance is the first step towards acquiring wisdom.



The Socratic Method: Internal Questioning for Self-Understanding

Socrates advocates for introspection and internal questioning as the means to comprehend oneself. This method, known as the Socratic Method, involves assuming both the roles of teacher and student in a dialogue with oneself.

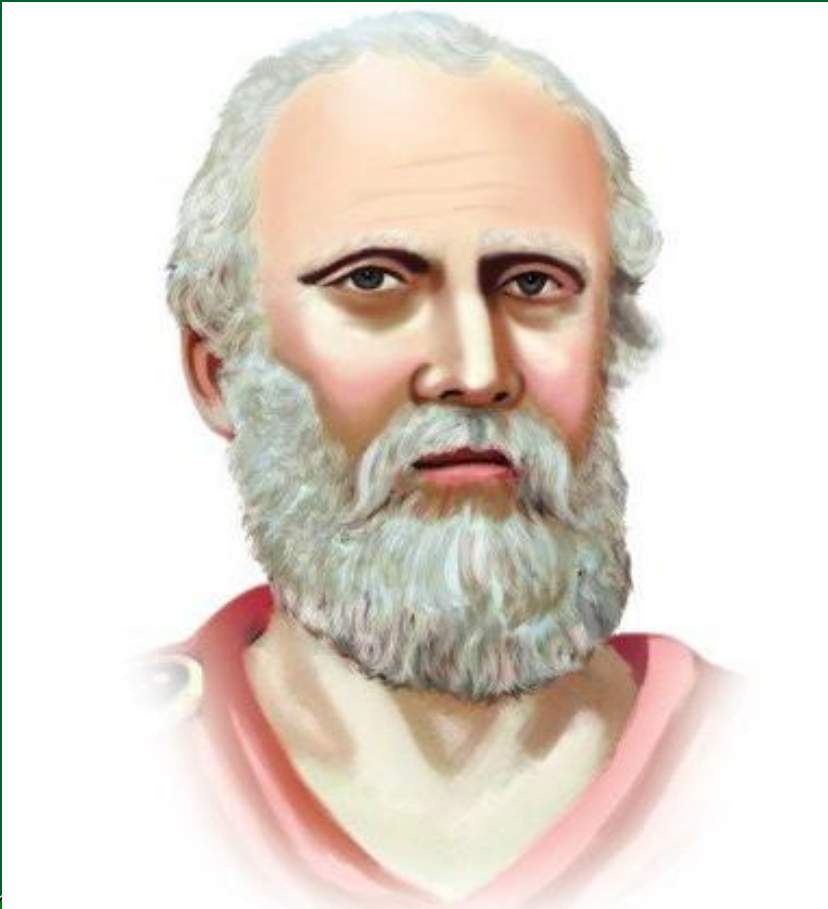


Continuous Self-Questioning for Personal Growth

Socrates believes that by continually questioning and evaluating oneself, individuals can uncover their strengths and weaknesses, preferences, and values. This self-awareness enables them to align their actions with their true selves and lead a fulfilling life.



PLATO



One of the most prominent thinkers of his time, Plato, included in his work the learnings and ideas shared to him by his teacher Socrates. He wrote several literature that tackles politics, human nature, and established the idea of virtue and intelligence.



PLATO

Plato is historically known to be the **father of the academy**, a place where learning and sharing of knowledge happens, that later became one of the pillars and basis of what schools and education is now in the present.



Plato generally followed his teacher and the idea of knowing thyself although from his works such with the notable ones' such as the allegory of the cave, the apology, and his work on a perfect government and societal system, "the Republic" where he said that the world can only be led by a Philosopher king, a person who is virtuous as well as intelligent.



According to Plato, a person who is a follower of truth and wisdom will not be tempted by vices and will always be just.

Plato also believed in the division of a person's body and soul which forms the person as a whole aside from the material things and that could be observed and associated with a person.



Plato presented the idea the ones' soul is divided into 3 different parts that has different views leading to different behaviors, these parts of the soul are known as the **Appetitive**, **Spirited**, and **Rational Soul**.



APPETITIVE SOUL

Plato's idea of the appetitive soul is the part of the person that is driven by desire and need to satisfy oneself. This satisfaction both involves physical needs and pleasures and desires. As long as the person find an object or situation good or satisfying, the Appetitive soul can drive the person to lean towards those objects and situations.



SPIRITED SOUL

This part of the soul can be attributed to the courageous part of a person, one who wants to do something or to right the wrongs that they observe. Spirited soul are very competitive and is very active, his competitiveness drives one to expect positive results and winning.



RATIONAL SOUL

The last part of the soul could be said is the driver of our lives, this is the part that thinks and plan for the future “the conscious mind” it decides what to do, when to do it and the possible results one could have depending on their actions.



ST. AUGUSTINE



- Embraces the notion that God encompasses all existence.
- Believes that life is better when aligned with God's teachings.



Understanding Self and Existence

- Views understanding oneself as intertwined with questioning and seeking God.
- Sees humanity as modeled in God's likeness but distant from His essence.
- Rejects doubtfulness of academia, advocating for critical discernment of ideas.



Higher Sense of Being

- Suggests that true understanding transcends bodily senses.
- Believes questioning and doubt are vital components of a meaningful life.



Integration of Church Teachings

- Integrates church teachings into philosophical framework.
- Acknowledges limitations of bodily senses in grasping existential truths.
- Advocates for virtue and individual discernment in establishing a relationship with God.



Individual Autonomy and Truth

- Asserts the importance of personal understanding and beliefs.
- Encourages continuous questioning and pursuit of truth despite societal norms or opposition.



RENÉ DESCARTES



- Revered as the **Father of Modern Philosophy**.
- Utilizes systematic and early scientific methods in his philosophical inquiries.



Departure from Previous Philosophical Concepts

- Draws comparisons to St. Augustine and Plato but introduces modern dualism.
- Emphasizes the distinction between body and mind, supported by both experimentation and philosophical reasoning.



Methodical Doubt

- Advocates continuous questioning and skepticism as essential components of existence.
- Challenges traditional beliefs and perceptions through rigorous inquiry.



"Cogito Ergo Sum" - I Think, Therefore I Am

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- Challenges traditional beliefs and perceptions through rigorous inquiry.



Skepticism of Senses

- Argues that sensory perceptions are not always reliable.
- Instances of sensory deception, such as dreams or optical illusions, highlight the fallibility of the body's perceptions.

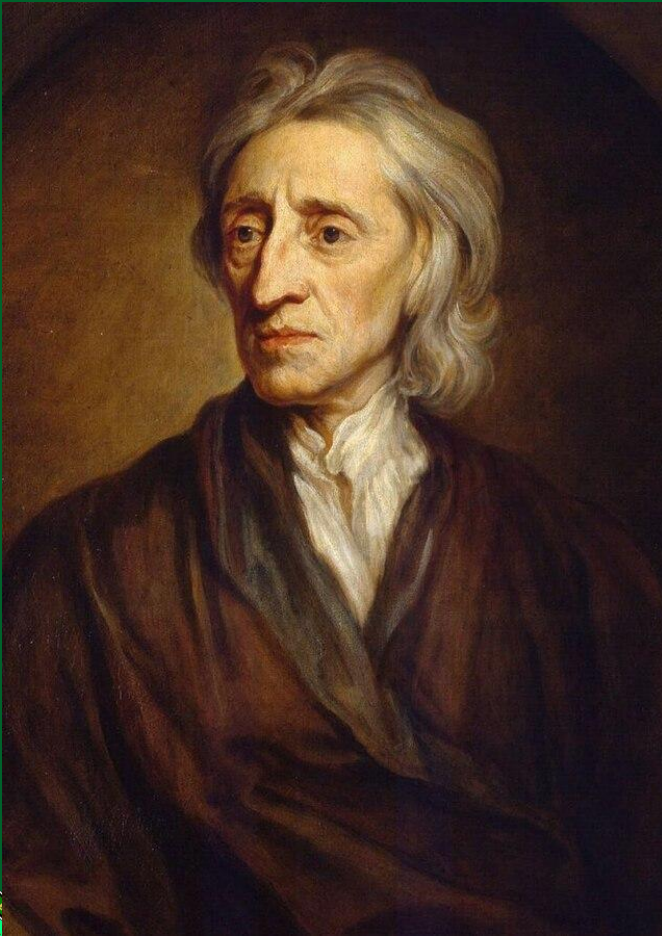


Emphasis on Rational Thought

- Advocates for the primacy of the mind in understanding oneself and existence.
- Believes that persistent questioning and doubt lead to a deeper understanding of one's true nature and existence.



JOHN LOCKE



- Regarded as the **Father of Classical Liberalism**.
- Contributions to political thought paved the way for revolutions against absolute monarchs.



The Concept of "Tabula Rasa"

- "Tabula rasa" means "blank slate" in Latin. It's a philosophical idea suggesting that individuals are born without pre-existing knowledge or beliefs, and that their minds are like empty slates waiting to be filled with experiences and learning.
- Central to Locke's philosophy of the self.



The Concept of "Tabula Rasa"

- Advocates for the idea that individuals are born as blank slates, devoid of inherent knowledge or traits.
- Emphasizes the importance of experiences and perceptions in shaping one's identity.



Embracing Human Experience

- Contrasts with the views of other philosophers who downplay the significance of human experiences.
- Acknowledges the role of experiences, failures, references, and observations in personal development.



Process of Knowledge Acquisition

- Highlights the mind's capacity to absorb information and accumulate knowledge.
- Suggests that individuals can shape their identities through exposure to diverse stimuli and learning opportunities.



Potential for Personal Growth

- Asserts that individuals have the potential to become whoever they aspire to be.
- Attributes this potential to the influence of environment, experiences, and personal choices.
- Promotes openness to learning and growth by recognizing the inherent flexibility of human identity.



DAVID HUME



- Focuses on empiricism, skepticism, and naturalism in his philosophical inquiries.
- Contrasts with previous philosophers by emphasizing concrete evidence and observable experiences.



Rejection of Permanent Self

- Challenges the idea of a permanent self, contrary to earlier philosophical beliefs.
- Argues that the self is not fixed but rather a fluid accumulation of impressions and experiences.



Impermanence of Identity

- Asserts that impressions and experiences shape one's identity and behavior.
- Contends that since impressions and ideas change over time, the concept of self is also subject to change.



Fluidity of Self-Perception

- Highlights the variability of self-perception and identity.
- Questions the notion of a consistent and unchanging self, as individuals may exhibit different characteristics at different times.



Case of Changing Characteristics

- Poses the scenario of a neighbor whose characteristics change over time.
- Challenges the notion of identity by questioning whether a person remains the same if their characteristics alter.
- Hume's philosophy suggests that the self is not a fixed entity but rather a dynamic construct influenced by experiences and perceptions.



IMMANUEL KANT



- German philosopher renowned for blending empiricism and rationalism.
- Addresses Hume's idea of the self as a collection of impressions and contents.



Beyond Impressions: The Role of Consciousness

- Argues that awareness of emotions, impressions, and behavior is only a partial understanding of the self.
- Proposes the concept of "Transcendental Apperception" - the process by which the mind organizes and synthesizes sensory perceptions into a unified experience as, essential for fully comprehending the self.



Essence of Consciousness

- "Transcendental Apperception" synthesizes experiences, intuition, and imagination to define the self.
- Goes beyond mere perception, allowing for a deeper understanding of oneself.



Understanding Abstract Concepts

- Draws parallels to understanding abstract concepts like time and space.
- Despite being unable to directly observe these concepts, humans can comprehend them based on representations.



Dynamic Nature of Self

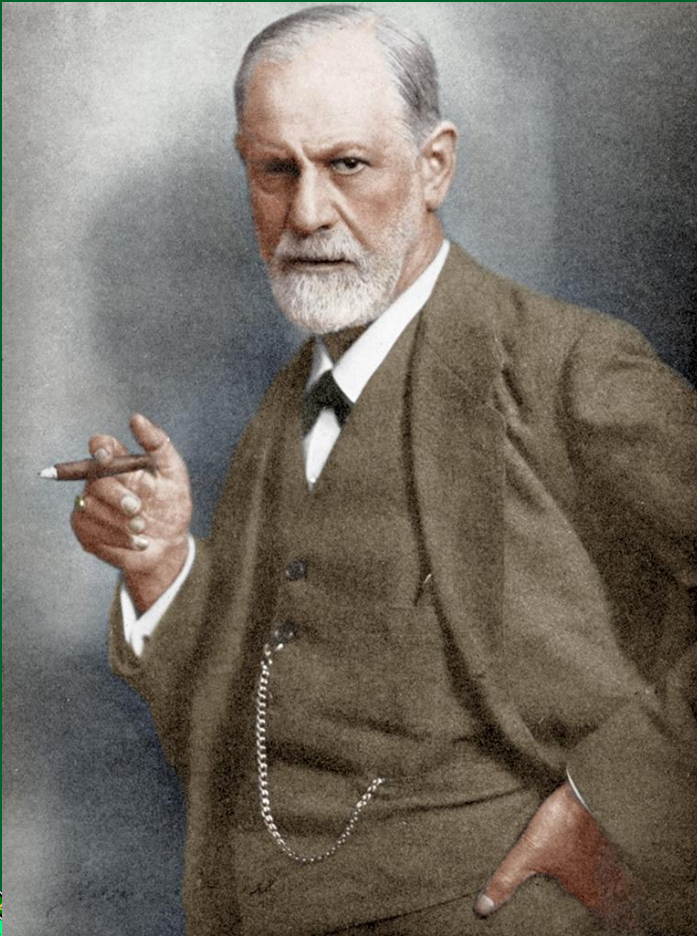
- Rejects the notion of the self as merely a reactive entity.
- Believes individuals possess the ability to transcend immediate experiences and establish a unique and distinct sense of self.



- Kant's philosophy suggests that the self is not limited to perceptions and reactions but includes the capacity for deeper understanding and self-identification through consciousness and intuition.



SIGMUND FREUD



- Austrian psychologist and physician, recognized as the **Father of Psychoanalysis**.
- Explores human nature and the unconscious mind to understand personality development.



Constructs of Personality

- ID: Represents the primal, instinctual aspect of personality focused on self-gratification.
- SUPEREGO: Acts as the conscience, instilled with moral values and societal norms.
- EGO: Functions as the mediator between the ID and Superego, operating within the boundaries of reality.



Influence of Experiences on Personality

- Freud posits that personality is shaped by accumulated experiences.
- Memories from childhood play a significant role in molding personality.



Levels of Consciousness

- Conscious: Information you are aware of this moment.
- Pre-conscious: Also known as Subconscious. Information below your conscious mind.
- Unconscious: Information hidden from your awareness but still affecting you.



Role of Experience and Pleasure-Seeking

- Believes individuals are influenced by past experiences and motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain.
- Actions are driven by the desire for happiness and the instinct to avoid discomfort.



- Freud's psychoanalytic theory provides insights into the complexities of human personality, emphasizing the role of unconscious processes and past experiences in shaping individual behavior and identity.



GILBERT RYLE



- Ryle's behavioristic approach asserts that the self is manifested through one's actions, emotions, and behaviors.
- Rejects the notion of dualism, viewing behavior as a direct reflection of the mind.



Integration of Mind and Body

- Dismisses the idea of the mind and body as separate entities.
- Believes that behaviors and actions are inseparable from the mind, challenging the concept of a distinct soul.



Understanding Self through Interactions

- Emphasizes that others' perceptions of our behavior contribute to our understanding of ourselves.
- Suggests that self-identity is established through interactions with others.



"Ghost in the Machine" Analogy

- Illustrates the concept of the mind as a "ghost" within the complex machinery of the body.
- Intelligence and characteristics are represented by the mind's influence on behavior.



Analogy of the University Tour

- Compares the self to a university, where different aspects contribute to its identity.
- Emphasizes that the various components of behavior and actions collectively define the self.



- Ryle's behavioristic perspective offers a holistic view of the self, emphasizing the integration of mind and body and the significance of behavior in defining individual identity.



PAUL CHURCHLAND



- Churchland proposes that the self is defined by the movements of the brain.
- Focuses on improving the use of words to identify the self.



Challenging Folk Psychology

- Critiques common sense explanations of behavior, feelings, and thoughts.
- Advocates for understanding physiological phenomena and emotions through neuroscientific principles.



Eliminative Materialism

- Opposes common sense understanding of the mind, arguing that many mental states do not actually exist.
- Challenges traditional notions of behavior and emotions.



Development of Neurophilosophy

- Advocates for understanding behavior through neurological movements in the brain.
- Believes that comprehending neural pathways and their effects on the body can eliminate subjective interpretations of the self.



The Brain as the Self

- Churchland and his wife emphasize the concept of "The Brain as the Self."
- Argues that the constant movement of the brain serves as the basis for understanding individual identity.



- Churchland's work in neurophilosophy challenges traditional understandings of the self, behavior, and emotions, emphasizing the importance of neurological processes in defining individual identity.



MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY



- Rejects the idea of the body and mind as separate entities, emphasizing their unity.
- Proposes that the body and mind function as one integrated whole.



Phenomenology of Perception

- Concept divided into three divisions: The Body, The Perceived World, and People and the World.
- The Body: Receives and integrates experiences.
- The Perceived World: Accumulation of perceptions integrated by the body.
- People and the World: Facilitates cultural experiences and interactions with others.



Gestalt Ideation

- Draws upon Gestalt psychology, emphasizing the importance of the whole over the sum of its parts.
- Perception guides actions based on integrated experiences.



Perception Guides Action

- Body perceives, while consciousness interprets perceptions.
- Actions, behaviors, and language reflect the unified perception of the world.



Establishment of Self

- Self is established through perceptions of the world.
- Actions, behaviors, and language serve as reflections of unified perceptions.



- Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception highlights the interconnectedness of body, mind, and world, emphasizing the role of perception in guiding actions and establishing the self.

