

## INTRODUCTION

"Who am I?" is a very fundamental existential question. It is an inquiry that the *self* addresses to the owner of the self. The *self's* (you) answer to this defines how much you know about your *self* and thus presents your identity. It is critical as this will give meaning to your existence and help you navigate this world of different co-existing beings and things. "Know thyself" is Socrates' advice to make your life worth living since, for him, "an unexamined life is not worth living." That is his mandate as a philosopher.

Socrates and the other thinkers had long tried to propose different tenets on seeking the answers to that main inquiry "Who am I?" Philosophers from the Pre-Socratic period up to the contemporary time of philosophy provided different answers to related questions "*Is there a self?*", "*Does the self really exist?*", "*Who am I in relation to the cosmos, God, and others?*" and "*In what ways do I get to know my self?*" Their answers to these questions are very foundational but deep. Upon reflection, they will help you define the concept of the self and identify the meaning of your self.

This lesson will introduce you to philosophy as an intellectual enterprise and relate it to the inquiry. Further, this will mainly discuss the philosophers' ideas on the self.

I believe you are ready to dig more into the ideas of different philosophers and then complete at the end the following learning outcomes:

## INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Identify the different philosophical perspectives in the conceptualizations of the self;
2. Examine the different influences, factors, and forces that shape the self proposed by the philosophers; and
3. Demonstrate critical and reflective thought in analyzing the development of one's self and identity by developing a preliminary philosophical theory of the self.

*Ready? Then you may begin, motivate yourself to learn more, and enjoy!*

## MODULE 1.1 LESSON on Philosophical Perspectives

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### Introduction

### Intended Learning Outcomes

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## MOTIVATION

### GIVE ME A SYMBOL

In the box, draw one thing that symbolizes yourself and explain it. How and why does it symbolize you?

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*Do you know that finding a symbol for yourself is one step to philosophizing the inquiry "Who am I?" That is right!*

*Congratulations! You have a symbol; you already got one answer for that question. Way to go to find more!*



## LESSON PROPER

Philosophy  
etymologically  
means "love of  
wisdom".

When you love something, you spend time, effort, and resources to search, care for, and attain it. That is the mandate of philosophy. It encourages you to ask questions and seek answers to fundamental ideas that will give meaning to your life and existence. It encourages you to ask, "Who am I?" It inspires you to love that question and the answers to it.

In this lesson, the main question posed by philosophy is, "How do you answer the question, 'Who am I?'" Let us see how the philosophers of different periods sought the answers.

WHO AM I?



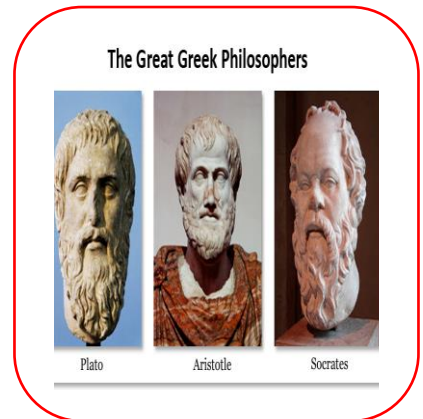
## ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

Some pre-Socratic philosophers tried to seek answers by relating the inquiry to the cosmos with the question, "*Who am I in relation to the natural world?*" These early philosophers focused on the workings of the things around us, i.e., elements, numbers, heavenly entities, and the microscopic substances as the underlying principles of everything, including the human self (Price, 2000). For example, for Democritus, the foundation making up an individual matter or human is a bundle of atoms.

With a shift of focus from the cosmo-centric approach to humans' inner world, the *Ancient Triumvirate*, i.e., Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, began the inquiry, "In what ways do I get to know myself?"

*Socrates'* answer is "Know thyself" by examining your life. Examining life means continuous inquiry, searching for answers, and reflecting on anything you encounter. His reflections arrived at the dualism of the soul and body.

As *Socrates'* student, *Plato* also upheld the immortality of the soul. Further, he believed that the three aspects of the soul, i.e., reason, physical desire, and passion, are in a dynamic relationship in conflict or agreement. It is the body that is always the cause of endless trouble; thus, it should strive to attain harmony through reason.



For *Aristotle*, the self is known through experiences through the senses. The self (mind) is brought into the world as a *tabula rasa* (blank tablet). Thus, we are all born with empty minds.

The *Post-Aristotelians* maintained the dualism of the soul and body as the composition of the self. However, they became more ethical in approaching the concept of the self. The Stoics believed that the self should be apathetic or indifferent to pleasure. The Hedonists encouraged the self to attain happiness by focusing on the present since everybody will die tomorrow anyway. The Epicureans maintained moderate pleasure for the self.

*Let's check if you remember the ideas of the three Greats.*

In what ways do I get to know myself? According to

Socrates: \_\_\_\_\_

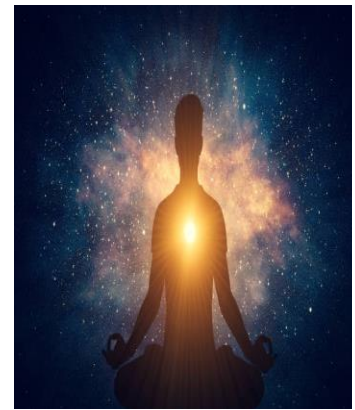
Plato: \_\_\_\_\_

Aristotle: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you get them right? I hope you did. There is still much to learn. The following sections will tell you about medieval, modern, and contemporary philosophers' thoughts about the self.

## MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

The Medieval philosopher *St. Augustine of Hippo* turned the main question into "*Is the self related to a supreme being/God? Who am I in relation to a supreme being/God?*" His time aimed to merge philosophy and religion. Thus, he integrated the ideas of Plato and Christianity of his age. He believed in the dualism of the self as body and soul. The body in the temporary world becomes a proving ground for the soul's superiority, which should be unified with God through faith and reason (Price, 2000).



## MODERN PHILOSOPHY

The *Modern philosophers'* approach became anthropocentric and less reliant on handed-down knowledge (Moore & Bruder, 2002).

- ✓ For *Rene Descartes*, the mere fact that the self thinks implies that the self exists. His phrase "cogito ergo sum" means "I think; therefore I am." According to him, the thinking thing, the self, can exist independently of the body.
- ✓ *John Locke* believed in Aristotle's concept of the self (mind) as *tabula rasa*. For him, the self is created by memories written on the tablet. Thus, there is a self that exists because of memory.
- ✓ As opposed to Locke and Descartes, *David Hume* suggested that the self does not exist. According to him, what we believe as the "self" is just a bundle of constantly changing perceptions that we encounter. There is no unified self that forms our identity.
- ✓ *Immanuel Kant* contested Hume's No Self theory and suggested that the self is a priori. Thus, it exists independently of experiences and serves as the unifying and organizing consciousness that makes sense of all aspects of identity.
- ✓ *Sigmund Freud's* focus on identifying the structures of the self implies that the self exists. The self is multilayered and has three personality structures, i.e., id, ego, and superego, and has three levels of consciousness, i.e., conscious, pre-conscious, and unconscious. All these layers shape the personality/identity of the self.

Independent inquiries became the trend as they attempted to ask questions like "*How can I be sure that the self exists? What are the proofs that the self exists?*"

Further, *Gilbert Ryle* and *Paul Churchland* did away with the concept of the mind being the seat of self.

*Ryle* proposed that the seat of self is the behavior and not the mind. The self is the pattern of behavior, the tendency or disposition for one to behave in a particular circumstance.

The self is "*I act; therefore, I am.*"

*Churchland* believed that the self is the brain itself. The physical brain gives us the sense of self, not the imaginary mind.

Philosophizing is a continuous process of asking a question and finding the answers. It does take plenty of reflection. To do that, you should first review the primary concepts you have learned. Do you remember? Then try it below.

What are the proofs that the self exists? According to

Rene Descartes: \_\_\_\_\_

John Locke: \_\_\_\_\_

David Hume: \_\_\_\_\_

Immanuel Kant: \_\_\_\_\_

Sigmund Freud: \_\_\_\_\_

Gilbert Ryle: \_\_\_\_\_

Paul Churchland: \_\_\_\_\_

So, what do you think? Does the self indeed exist? Remember, you must come up with your answer for that critical existential inquiry. Reflect on it.

Moving on, learn more about the other questions about the self posed by philosophers. The next topic tells you about the contemporary answers.

## CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

Contemporary thinkers approached the concept of human existence and being humanistic (Chaffee, 2016). They focused more on human experiences. Thus, the inquiry about the self could be translated into one sample question that probes the human experience of falling in love by the self: "*What happens to you when you fall in love—physically, emotionally, and mentally (cognitively)?*"

The approach is called phenomenological. The idea is that the self has its way of experiencing things like falling in love. It is subjective. It is a lived experience. When you fall in love, physical (biological), emotional, and mental aspects are seamlessly woven together, unified by the self. Thus, when you fall in love, the whole self – your body, feelings, and thoughts are in love.

Edmund Husserl proposed the concepts of mental and physical as intertwined.

**Mental health and Physical health Relation**



For *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, the self is the "lived body" that is the primary site of knowing the world and experiencing everything in it. It is the body that experiences everything, including falling in love.

Thus, the self is not just the mind, the physical brain, or the behavior. The self is the living body, the natural synthesis of mind and biology.

Have you experienced falling in love? If you have, then maybe you can confirm the two philosophers' ideas about it. Reflect on it below.

*What happens when you fall in love physically, emotionally, and mentally?*

Husserl said \_\_\_\_\_

How about Merleau-Ponty? \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have explored and reflected on the different ideas of the various philosophers regarding the self, it is time to know how to apply those learnings.



## APPLICATION

Which among those philosophies can you relate with? Please share any personal experiences that may relate to those views.

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## BULLET IT!

Summarize your learnings into three points. Give three statements summarizing everything you have learned from this module.

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## DEFINE SELF

How will you define the SELF using your ideas gathered from the different philosophical thoughts of the various philosophers? Create a philosophical theory that contains your definition - your answer to the question "What is a SELF?" Remember that the theory should be credited to you and not to others. Thus, it should be originally yours.

— MOVE FORWARD —



## GUESS WHAT

The next topic will be about the self through the lens of sociology. This self is called

SELF.



## RUBRICS for Define Self Activity

CRITERIA	Needs Improvement 76 – 85 pts	Sufficient 86 – 94 pts	Excellent 95 – 100 pts
Originality 40%	Only 50% of the ideas are original	About 51-89% of the ideas are original	About 90 – 100% of the ideas are original
Thesis 30%	The thesis is not well-defined and stated.		The thesis is clearly stated and well-defined. Logical premises support it.
Organization 20%	There are many grammatical issues. Its readability is problematic.	There are a few grammatical issues. The flow of thoughts is at least easy to follow.	There are minor to no grammatical issues. The flow of thoughts is clear. The presentation of ideas is logical.
Comprehensiveness 10%	There is, at most, one learned concept presented and utilized.	More than one learned concept is presented and utilized.	More than one learned concept is presented and utilized. The concepts are synthesized logically.

## REFERENCES

Chaffee, J. (2016). *The philosopher's way: A text with readings: Thinking critically about profound ideas*. Pearson.

Moore, B. & Bruder, K. (2002). *Philosophy: The power of ideas*. McGraw Hill International Edition.

Price, J. (2000). *Philosophy through the ages*. Wadsworth Thomson Learning.