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# Self-Knowledge: Based on Knowledge of the First Cause of Creation (Aristotle's Conception of the Soul)

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► **To cite this version:**

Leon Miller. Self-Knowledge: Based on Knowledge of the First Cause of Creation (Aristotle's Conception of the Soul). *Tattva - Journal of philosophy*, 2019. hal-02161038

**HAL Id: hal-02161038**

**<https://hal.science/hal-02161038>**

Submitted on 20 Jun 2019

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**Self-knowledge: based on Knowledge of the First Cause of Creation  
(Aristotle's conception of the soul)**

*Things that are closest to the sense perception are better known than things far removed from the senses. In this respect individuals easily detect particular manifestations but have great difficulty discerning universal causes (Aristotle 1984, 115-116).*

**Abstract**

This article argues that Aristotle depicts the soul as a detectable aspect of one's being, is in the form of properties, and is discernable by cognition. Thus, he proposed that it is possible to discern the complementary connection between one's being and the first cause of creation. Aristotle, like Kant, recognized that the age-old problem of scepticism posed a challenge to epistemological, ontological, and ethical claims. However, Kant did not develop his ideas regarding bridging the gap between what is demonstrable and the first cause of creation – which resulted in perpetuating problems with scepticism and Dualism. Consequently, in the effort to resolve the problems of scepticism and Dualism, to promote self-actualization, Holistic well-being and, and to help individuals realize their full potential there is a resurgence of Aristotle's explanation of the relationship between self-knowledge and knowledge of the first cause of creation.

This article contributes to The Philosophy of Science, The Philosophy of the Social Sciences, The Philosophy of Religion, to contemporary literature on Social Psychology, and to literature addressing the interface between the sciences and perennial philosophy by demonstrating that Aristotle's perennial wisdom and his epistemic approach – based on logical positivism – resolve problems related to scepticism, materialism, and Dualism.

**Key words and phrases:** psyche, triadic, integral being, conjoined, mediating catalyst

**To quote or make reference to this article please use the following reference information:**

Miller, Leon. Self-knowledge: based on Knowledge of the First Cause of Creation (Aristotle's conception of the soul). *Tattva Journal of Philosophy*. Volume, 1, Number 1, 53-70.

## 1. Introduction

*“The age-old question What is being? is just the question What is substance?”*  
(Aristotle, 1984, p. 1624)

Aristotle provided a viable and comprehensive explanation of the first cause of creation: i.e. the essential cause, the ultimate cause, the Arché ('ἀρχή), or the final cause of creation. His explanation encompasses the teleological significance of knowledge concerning the first cause of creation, *the process nature of reality*, and his explanation depicts the life process as a movement toward reaching one's full potential – although, as he stressed, the life process continues even after one has reached full growth. In this respect Aristotle referred to the purpose of existence as not only reaching one's full potential but also achieving self-knowledge. However, he stressed that realizing the true nature of one's being requires a great deal of contemplation and self-cultivation (Aristotle, 2004, p. 6-13). For example, a child is not likely to have gained self-knowledge and to have grown to full potential at such an early age. But ideally, by mid-life we would expect that a person has fully matured and has grown toward full potential although, even at this point, the person may not be concerned enough with what has ultimate meaning or what has ultimate value to devote the time and undertake the discipline necessary for self-realization.

Aristotle thought of the soul as a fundamental motivational force impelling the life process (something akin to the inner-most aspect of one's being or the universal aspect of one's being – what in Greek is referred to as *psuchē*). By gaining an understanding of the nature of one's soul a person comes to understand the relationship between one's inner-most being and the first cause or ultimate cause of creation. In other words, gaining an understanding the nature of the soul provides insight into The First Principle, the principles underlying the natural order, and insight into the elemental force(s) that ordained the laws of nature and which are manifest as matter and form.

Aristotle described the soul as an actuality that is discernable while, at the same time, has the primary characteristic of being the source of potentiality – although as mentioned earlier not everyone undertakes the effort to develop the ability to discern the nature of the force that enables a person to understand what makes actualizing potential possible – which means that not everyone achieves full potential. For Aristotle self-knowledge affords the possibility to realize the highest good worth pursuing, to realize the purpose of one's life, and to realize the intention of the force(s) directing the life process (e.g. *telos*). In terms of being an actuality the ultimate cause is discernable but in terms of potentiality it reflects *the process nature of reality*. Although the soul has a personal aspect that is related to a particular individual it also has an aspect that connects the individual with the universal principle (i.e. it enables a person to sense the relationship between that which appears as particular manifestations of existence and that which is perpetuating existence). Aristotle viewed both the human form and the matter that comprises the human organism as a composite of natural elements and substances. He asserted that because the soul reflects the connection between the composite aspects of the individual's make-up (that are detectable) and aspects of natural phenomena that are

universal it can be studied in terms of Natural Philosophy (i.e. The Philosophy of Science).

However, Aristotle was primarily concerned with the dimension of each individual's nature that provides the possibility for experiencing happiness, well-being, and flourishing and that dimension of the individual that provides insight into the teleological significance of existence – which becomes evident when exploring the nature of the soul. For Aristotle the soul, on the one hand, is connected with the ultimate intentions of creation. While, on the other hand, he held that nature's primordial force seems to be accessible to individual consciousness and can be discerned as properties that urge moving toward realizing one's full potential, toward self-actualization, Holistic well-being, and toward being well-integrated within the fabric of one's social and natural environments. The value of Aristotle's conception of the soul is that it is inclusive of the early mythological insight of perennial philosophy but at the same time advances analyses of the ontological nature of existence and the ontological nature of human being based on the reliability of his logical positivism approach to epistemology.

This article contributes to resolving problems with human fragmentation and the schism between humanity and the ground of being (e.g. nature-human, body-mind, and material-transcendental dichotomies) that have become an increasing concern since Cartesian-Kantian Dualism and, as well, due to the extent of the dichotomy between humanity and the forces shaping the natural order (i.e. environmental crisis and climate change). The schism between humanity and the ground of being is addressed by means of an Aristotelian methodological approach to analysing the connection between *ousia* (the essence of being) and *ousia* (the nature of one's being). That is to say that an analysis of Aristotle's conception of the soul is based on his methodological approach to studying *being qua being* (i.e. studying the nature of being by means of an empirical analysis of being). Aristotle methodology is a viable approach to addressing and resolving “The problem of *the one* and many [thus] it serves as part of the methodology that determines the nature of being” (Halper, 2009, p. 29). This article contributes to literature regarding the Philosophy of Science, The Philosophy of Social Science, and The Philosophy of Religion that endeavour to resolve problems related to the impact of scepticism, Dualism, and materialism. The remainder of the article explains three aspects of Aristotle's conceptualization of the soul.

The following section explains the soul in terms of Aristotle's depiction of the ontological nature of existence (e.g. human nature – the essence of one's being, First Principles, and the first cause of creation). Section three explains the connection between the nature of the soul and the human psyche – Aristotle explanation of the connection between one's psychic potential and *the first cause of creation* (i.e. in terms proposed by Carl Jung it means understanding the difference between the ego and the collective level of consciousness – what Jung implies regarding the universal self and the true self) (Aristotle, 1947, p. 177; also see Jung, 1988, pp. 55 & 161-162). The concluding section explains Aristotle's description of self-actualization as achieving attunement with the intention of one's soul or, in other words, a movement toward integral being. That is to

say that the concluding section provides a brief explanation of why there was a resurgence of Aristotle's transcendental perspective on psychology.

## 2. The Ontological Nature of Existence

*'The soul is the cause or source of the living body'* (Aristotle, 1947, p. 180).

At one point in existence the human experience was determined by what was ordained by creation. At this stage biological patterns, established by the laws of nature, motivated the human experience – with little or no judgment based on higher cognitive abilities. During this stage something in the nature of existence would arouse an attraction or affection (either positive or negative) within the individual (Aristotle, 1947, pp. 183-186). In other words some actual quality in the environment signalled some determinable aspect of human nature and the interaction sparked an interaction/interchange between the person and his/her environment – which perpetuated the life process. Such dynamics are not determined merely by cognition but are prompted by the universal principle acting from within the nature of the person to impel interaction as an essential aspect of the necessary interchange and reintegration demanded by nature that is necessary to sustain the life process – e.g. the life process requires being conjoined or intermixed with other elements in life (Aristotle, 1947, pp. 177-178). Aristotle introduced his explanation of the soul as part of his endeavour to explain the cause of change and growth. For certainly the life generating principle urges individuals to change and to grow by intermixing with or becoming conjoined with elements in the environment – for nourishment, satisfaction, and survival. But, as Aristotle pointed out, in doing so the individual and the environment are both changed.

Aristotle explained that the change of state brought about by the interaction can either be experienced as a change to one that is preferred which is regarded as satisfying or a change to a less desired state which would be experienced as disturbing (1947, pp. 227-228 & 229). However, the acquisition of *the knowledge of good and evil* (i.e. the ability to discriminate or higher level cognitive abilities) introduced a third factor in the human experience which resulted in humanity manifesting a triadic nature or a triadic basis of experience. In this respect Aristotle concurred with Western perennial wisdom by emphasizing that humanity developed what semioticians call triadic dimensions of human nature and motivation: e.g. *the first* – the soul, *the second* – sensations, and *the third* – the development of humanity's cognitive ability (1947, pp. 274-275 & 283). At the sensual level one acts on the basis of the utilitarian drive to experience pleasure and avoid pain. However, at the cognitive level knowledge plays a role in deciding action – based on memory, principles, values, norms, and discrimination – which complements the basic, elementary, instinctive drive to increase satisfaction and reduce disappointment. However, the primary aspect of one's being is of a universal nature – meaning that because sensation and perception are basic to the life experience of every individual there must be a dimension of our being that is of a universal nature or, in other words, there are aspects of that which is perpetual that are superimposed upon that which is temporal (Aristotle, 1947, pp. 186-187).

Consciousness provides the potential for the individual to become more fully aware of the significance of the connection between the corporeal and the universal dimensions of one's nature. However, to sense the essence of one's own nature a person must contemplate on what lies beyond the limitations of the ego (i.e. what lies beyond the sentient aspect of one's being that is inclined to focus on what is near to sense perception) and the person must devote time and energy to self-development (i.e. realizing one's true self or the essential aspect of one's true nature). Aristotle claimed that it is the true self (something within the deeper nature of the individual) that prompts the individual to pursue fulfilling the desire for immediate pleasure in ways that will bring ultimate satisfaction and long-lasting happiness. Aristotle described it as The First Principle of life which is love/desire (Aristotle, 1947, pp. 187 & 252; also see I John 4:8; & Aristotle, 1984, pp. 1694-1695). However, as mentioned earlier, self-knowledge requires some degree of contemplation but results in the individual becoming Holistically well-integrated within *the fabric of existence*.

In other words individuals are motivated by something within their nature to become more effective in their endeavour to experience satisfaction in terms that are immediate, actual, and tangible. That is to say that sensation is the manifestation of an urge that motivates the individual to engage in the life process by intermixing with life elements in a way that increases the likelihood of enjoying the satisfaction of doing so effectively. One's psyche mediates the semiotic interaction between actuality (what can be tangibly experienced on the material plane) and potentiality – the possibility of doing so in a way that heightens physical and mental well-being. In fact, the desire to increase one's ability to create beneficial outcomes to life's interactions while avoiding dissatisfaction (i.e. avoiding pain and suffering) can be considered to be the basis of human drives. In this respect, Aristotle regarded the psyche as connected with fundamental properties that are discernable and demonstrable.

Understanding the nature of one's soul involves becoming aware of the nature of the universal principle and its essential complementary interaction with matter and form (i.e. discerning that aspect of the individual that triggers impulses that are of a type experienced by humanity in general thus reflects a transpersonal aspect of one's nature). This universal aspect commingles with cognition to help the person realize how practical pursuits contribute to experiencing intrinsic value ends plus urges acting in relationship to others and the environment in a way that results in harmonious interactions, increases flourishing, and results in the feeling of happiness. In fact, aligning one's life pursuits with the intention of the essence of one's being sparks improved physical and mental abilities, provides a greater sense of peace and harmony, and enables a person to sense his or her connection with the first cause of creation (Aristotle, 1947, pp. 217-218). By turning the focus to the depth of one's being something within the psyche is aroused (i.e. what is called intuitive insight) that enables the person to transform the possibility for realizing full potential into actually achieving one's highest good or most desired outcome(s).

In this respect Aristotle, like Kant, escaped the limitations of materialism by proclaiming the significance of humanity's intellectual, rational, intuitive, and ethical capabilities.

However, unlike Kant he also resolved the problem of Dualism by establishing the psyche as the aspect of consciousness that mediates the difference between what can be known empirically as a distinct particular and what can be known in regards to universals. Thus, Aristotle's depiction of the soul bridges the gap between *phenomena* and *noumenon*, science and perennial philosophy, and between science and faith (Aristotle, 2004, pp. 104 & 108). In fact, while Kant was hesitant to ascribe demonstrable status to essences Aristotle asserted that essences are the properties of substances and that the psyche is a detectable primary substance that is demonstrable in terms of the properties that contribute to helping individuals realize their full capabilities (Aristotle, 1947, pp. 145-147).

### **3. The Nature of the Human Psyche (i.e. the nature of the Soul)**

Aristotle provided a conceptual framework for avoiding problems related to scepticism that have plagued the Western intellectual tradition since the time of the pre Socratic philosopher Pyrrhonian. However, aspects of scepticism also resulted in the problem of Dualism which is now ascribed to the Idealism of Plato and was reemphasized with the claims of Descartes. Kant addressed the issue of scepticism but was unsuccessful in establishing a complementary connection between materialism and transcendentalism. However, Aristotle contributed to resolving the problems of scepticism and Dualism by proposing that the combination of matter and form (material actuality) exist in a state of potentiality (i.e. the possibility of being integrated in a way that, in the human case, can create Holistic well-being, the good life, improved mental abilities, and an increase in the possibility of experiencing one's most desired outcome) – with substance acting as a *mediating catalyst*. In this respect he considered actuality to be the particular form that matter is shaped into and, as mentioned earlier, he was concerned with the factors that determine whether the outcome is a move toward a more desirable and satisfactory state of being or an unfortunate movement toward disappointment.

Aristotle proposed that in the human case, the extent to which a person is able to shape matter and form into a more desirable state is determined by the extent to which a person is attuned to his/her inner-most being. In other words, Aristotle claimed that the extent to which individuals are able to tap into their psyche determines which life possibilities become reality. By attuning to one's inner guiding force the person draws from his/her full psychic potential to increase the likelihood of gaining a desired outcome. In this respect Aristotle proposed that the psyche potentially acts as a catalyst to shape the process by which possibilities are actualized in the form of one's highest good – which is also implied in what Aristotle meant by his conceptualizations of *Eudamonia* – εὐδαιμονία) (Aristotle, 1947, pp. 160-161).

There are several schools of perennial philosophy, contemporary philosophy, social psychology, and logical positivism that refer to both the semiotic nature of existence and human nature as triadic. In folk colloquial the three aspects are body, mind, and soul. The body is the point of contact with the outside world. In fact, Aristotle stressed that the body is composed of the same elements as the outside world (e.g. earth, air, water, and fire). The attraction or affection felt by the individual that urges the person to intermix or

engage in interchange with the environment is a consequence of the fact that life elements are in constant flux which means they demand constant integration or reintegration, constant interaction and intermixing, and constant interchange. Aristotle thought of Holistic well-being is the possibility to conceive of and experience one's interchange with the life elements as harmonious, beneficial, and satisfying – both in regards to how one experiences the elements interacting within his/her own personal being and in terms of how one experiences the life elements when engaging them in the environment.

Thus, he proposed the possibility of form and matter manifesting into a highly desirable state of being (i.e. the full manifestation of one's *potensia* – the potential, existing as part of one's deeper nature and the possibility of experiencing a heightened sense of peace and well-being). Aristotle described the outcome of the process as being fortunate. For Aristotle good fortune means that “all things [seem] to work for the good of those who” are attuned to their inner guiding force (i.e. attuned to the connecting link between one's inner-most being and the first cause of creation) – which urges the person to realize his/her highest good (Aristotle, 1935, p. 455; also see Romans 8: 28). To be fortunate means to be in tune with or attuned to the natural order of things which results in the person having harmonious interactions with others and with the forces of nature (Aristotle, 1984, p. 340; & Aristotle, 1984, p. 1557). Being fortunate is manifest as self-determination, being inner-directed, and self-direction or, in other words, fortunate individuals have faith in that guiding force at the core of their being and believe that it will direct them toward their highest good.

Although many aspects of Aristotle's philosophy are complicated he provided a simplified explanation for how individuals can experience well-being, develop their full potential, can achieve happiness, and the elevation of their life experience. For Aristotle, achieving one's full potential (i.e. realizing higher consciousness) is tantamount to being guided by one's psyche which urges the individual to integrate matter and form into highly desirable outcomes. Aristotle asserted that by attuning one's action to be in accord with the guiding force that is the essential aspect of one's psyche a person puts him/herself on a path where knowledge, action, and the forces that shape possibility into actuality are integrated to increase the likelihood of experiencing fulfilment as the outcome of one's engagement with reality (Aristotle, 1915, p. 2209). That is to say that the psyche awakens consciousness in a way that sparks discernment of how things hoped for (faith) can be realized as the actual facets of one's reality (Aristotle, 2005, pp. 9:5-7). He proclaimed that ‘By choosing the right means to achieve the End causes the [desired] End to be realized’ (Aristotle, 1935, p. 305; also see MacIntyre. 2007, p. 149). Aristotle first considered that there is a personal guiding spirit (*daimôn*) influencing such a fortunate person. He also thought that perhaps the person has some type of uncanny wisdom or intuitive power that inclines him/her to have good fortune. However, what he was most certain of is that there is something within the inner-most nature of the person that inclines him/her to be fortunate (Aristotle, 1935, pp. 455- 469).

In this respect it is easy to see why Aristotle's explanation of the psyche became the basis of the perennial wisdom tradition and the faith traditions that shaped Western Civilization. For he indeed was one of the first to propose the connection between the



substance of things hoped for [and] the evidence of things not seen, the connection between one's psychic potential and realizing one's ultimate hopes, and the connection between self-knowledge and achieving one's highest good. He stated that self-cultivation is the key to such intuitive insight, to becoming attuned to one's psyche (i.e. having faith in one's inner power), thus to being fortunate. He described self-knowledge as developing the ability to act in a way that fulfils intention by aligning desire and action in order to shape possibilities into outcomes one values most (Aristotle, 2005, p. 5:12). Thus, in keeping with Western perennial wisdom and the convictions upon which Western faith traditions are grounded Aristotle proclaimed that righteousness is not based on moral action but based on faith in the ground of one's being (i.e. whether or not one develops his or her character to be in line with the quality that is the essence of his/her being).

#### **4. Integral Being**

*Knowledge of the Divine science is the most honourable because it provides insight into the supreme good and the whole of nature* (Aristotle, 1947, pp. 247-248).

Aristotle proposed that individuals could establish a complementary alignment between themselves and the natural order – which would result in maximizing the chances for beneficial interaction with others and the environment; maximizing satisfaction and fulfilment; experiencing self-knowledge; plus enjoying greater freedom, self-reliance, and self-determination. In this respect Aristotle conceived of the possibility of a complementary connection between the self and the ontological forces shaping the nature of existence. That is to say that he conceived of the possibility of experiencing integral being. His theory of integral being starts with, or is based on, his claim that the relationship between the universal and its particular manifestation(s) can be described as homogenous – “The whole is homogenous with all its parts” (Aristotle, 1947, p. 169). In this sense Aristotle proposed that realizing one's full potential is tantamount to realizing the teleological prescriptions of the *first cause* of creation (Aristotle, 1947, p. 180).

He claimed that out of the soul arises a desire (what even can be called an irresistible passion) “To experience life and experience it more abundantly.” However, without realizing the connection between passion and what truly has intrinsic value a person will seek to satisfy natural human urges by means of instrumental pursuits. In fact, a sceptic would even argue that there is no basis for experience other than what can be generated by tangible, corporeal, and material forms. Sceptics doubt that there is a substantial basis to existence because – as stated by Kant – the noumenon (i.e. what Aristotle referred to as *ousia* – an essential underlying force driving creation) is not discernible. The separation of knowledge of phenomena and knowledge of the noumenon perpetuates a problem with Dualism that is evident as various forms of human fragmentation (i.e. especially the increasing inability to experience harmonious relations with the natural order which is resulting in environmental crisis and the climate change challenge).

The sceptic's claim is based on the fact that creation is manifest as matter and form that exist in a yin-yang type of dialectic process. In other words things that are manifest are in

a constant state of change – which is one of the issues that Aristotle recognized that needed to be addressed to understand the connection between what is manifest as distinct entities and what is perpetual. Without resolving the problem of scepticism individuals tend to emphasize that the material aspect of existence is the fundamental substance of nature – which ultimately leads to doubting that ethics have any empirical validity, doubting that there is any factual basis for claims regarding intrinsic values, and doubts concerning the existence of anything that cannot be empirically measured (thus doubting consciousness, higher consciousness, and the psyche). In addition, because sceptics doubt that it is possible to provide empirical validity of the noumenon they believe that concrete reality is only discernible on the basis of a quantitative analysis of the material aspect(s) of existence – which in fact, still does not satisfy their doubts since, as quantum physics points out, material reality is in a constant state of flux which at best can only be calculated with uncertainty.

The resurgence of interest in Aristotle was triggered by the recognition that civilization is increasingly suffering as a result of a moral crisis that needs an effective response (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 2). The crisis is most evident in the problem of human fragmentation which resulted from widespread acceptance of the Cartesian claim that only autonomous consciousness (absent of interference from the senses) is a reliable basis for what is epistemologically reliable thus the individual consciousness enjoys sovereignty. Dualism poses a problem for contemporary psychology and social psychology because, on the one hand, as any student of Psychology 101 knows, The Philosophy of Psychology is based on the claim that there is an essential connection between humanity's neurobiological make-up and human cognition. While, on the other hand, the notion of sovereignty of the individual consciousness poses a problem for mutuality, intersubjectivity, and the theory of the dialogical self all of which are important concepts and principles in social psychology

The recent turn to Aristotle Transcendental Psychology is prompted by the fact that his notion of entelechy is compatible with both Humanistic Psychology (in that it promotes the realization of one's true autonomous self) and cognitive psychology (i.e. it implies that the psyche is an organically-based motivational impulse that one is aware of by means of cognition). Aristotle acknowledges that phenomena are a composite of form and matter which are indeed in a constant state of change or flux. However, he argues that what appears as a compound of matter and form is simultaneously a combination of a distinct being (or an actual distinct entity) and the manifestation of Being (i.e. *ousia* – a primary substance that is discernible) (Aristotle, 1984, p. 656). However, he regards the compound of matter and form and their essential underlying substance as existing in Holistic unity (Aristotle, 1984, p. 650). In this respect Aristotle proposes that indeed every distinct thing that exist as a compound of matter and form is in a state of change while, at the same time, is superimposed on by a universal principle which is perpetual.

Aristotle explained how to integrate one's intentions and actions so as to realize and experience what has intrinsic value. In this respect Aristotle advised a person to avoid what could be conflicting aspects of one's social-economic reality by transcending the difference between superficial pursuits and one's own inherent sense of value. In this

respect Aristotle continues to be relevant for contemporary psychology because he prescribed a strategy by which one can remain true to the self while increasing the rewards society offers to a person who displays good character, magnanimity, integrity, and excellence.

Integral being is the ability to experience interactions as life enhancing, with less disturbance by phenomena that threaten human well-being, and with increased possibilities for enjoying beneficial outcomes from one's interactions (Miller, 2011, p. 129). Thus, integral being includes Holistic well-being but also involves adherence to principles that shape the natural order – what are generally referred to as the laws of nature. In other words adherence to natural principles has the benefit of providing the individual with a well-integrated sense of self where 'All parts of one's nature are brought into harmony with principle' (Aristotle, 1996, p. 24).

Integral being affords the possibility of achieving a desired state of being. Aristotle chose the term *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία) to describe this desired state. Aristotle defined the term *eudaimonia* as living in accordance with one's guiding *daimon* (i.e. one's inner guiding force/spirit). In this respect he proposed that achieving integral being provides the ability to maintain the integrity of one's being, avoid the problems of fragmentation and dissipation, and avoid disturbance from those aspects of reality that are threatening to well-being. In practical terms it means that one develops good relations with others in society, has a greater sense of being in harmony with the forces shaping the natural order and for an extensive period of time enjoys enhanced physical and mental well-being (i.e. longevity). That is to say that Aristotle's explanation for experiencing integral being (i.e. one's highest good or full potential) is a prescription for achieving at-one-ment (i.e. being in harmony or in concord with existence).

Thus, it is also easy to understand why Aristotle has not only become renowned for his views on philosophy, political economy, and ethics but, as well, because of his views regarding social psychology (i.e. for his prescription for success, happiness, and living well physically and mentally). He proposed that the crowning achievement of self-cultivation or self-knowledge is the realization of "the good life" (i.e. being fortunate). His works continue to be relevant because his starting point is that although people want to enjoy the best life possible they are often misdirected by confusing instrumental means (e.g. the things people believe are important *stepping stones* to establishing the foundation of lasting happiness) and intrinsic ends. Thus, he recognized that unless individuals understand how to exercise the freedom ordained by natural law they could be subject to a reality that is not of their own choosing (Aristotle, 2004, pp. 93-94).

## Conclusion

*"Whether it is divine or just the most divine element within us, its activity, in accordance with its own proper virtue, will be complete happiness"* (Aristotle, 2004, pp. 193-194).

Aristotle's conceived of integral being as resulting from achieving a desirable state of being. The desired state is to become Holistically well-integrated – which is accompanied by experiencing happiness, well-being, flourishing, and experiencing the most desired

outcome of or ultimate aim of one's actions. He thought of being able to achieve this desired state as simple because it is just a matter of learning to trust or have faith in one's inner-most self. The simplicity lies in the fact that it is a matter of trusting that spark of the creative force that is, indeed, the essence of one's own being. In other words by simply trusting in one's inner-most being a person could develop a faith strong enough *to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles*.

Integral being – which is the outcome of the process of self-cultivation, realizing the true self according to Carl Jung 1963, 70-74, or achieving self-actualization in terms of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory 1954, pp. 97-100 – is the realization of the connection between the distinct self and the essence of being. In other words integral being is the outcome of integrating the three aspects of one's being which results in realizing that the three are of a single nature (Aristotle, 1984, pp. 657-659). This is because the triune aspects of one's being are, in fact, a reflection of the triune nature of existence (Peirce, 1931, 6-8). According to the world's most cherished wisdom and faith traditions integral being actually enhances a person's physical and mental abilities and provides a fuller sense of what it means to be human.

However, there is a challenge involved in realizing integral being in that it demands some degree of self-cultivation. Self-cultivation enables one to realize the teleological significance of the connection between the self and the essence of being. Living in accord with the teleological significance of existence has the benefit of providing the individual with a well-integrated sense of self where the individual realizes how to satisfy what is urged by sensations in a way harmonious with the first principles of creation (Aristotle, 1996, p. 24). Thus, "When an individual acts with integrity the person is afforded the realization or the actualization of his or her innermost convictions. It is in this sense that human integrity is a manifestation of faith" (Miller, 2017, pp. 103-124).

Descartes sought to affirm faith by associating *cogitatio* with higher consciousness or the capability that individuals have – by means of the powers of self-reflection (i.e. *Meditation*) – to become aware of The Essence of Being (Descartes, 2008, pp. 3-5 & 25). "Descartes' impact on Enlightenment thought meant that he influenced the devaluation of the natural realm (which, like Plato, he thought is inferior to the realm of pure essence which he associated with higher consciousness). "If consciousness is independent and autonomous, as Descartes suggested, it enjoys the essence by turning in on itself [and becoming] cut off from raw existence" (Miller, 2014, p. 33). Ultimately Descartes' autonomous individual becomes an ethereal mind cut off from grounding (i.e. cut off from the aspects of the self that are related to the manifestations of creation thus from fully appreciating the essential human connection with the forces shaping the natural order which ultimately only resulted in intensifying skepticism (Miller, 2012, p. 8).

Immanuel Kant also sought to promote faith by addressing the problem of skepticism and, as well, sought to resolve the problem of human fragmentation/Dualism by affirming Aristotle's claim that there is a complementary interplay between the ontological ground

of Being and human understanding (Kant, 1996, pp. 39- 40). However, unfortunately, Kant failed to fully develop this claim and subsequently placed his emphasis on reason – thus failed to integrate the three aspects of human being. Without clarifying the complementary connection between the ontological nature of existence and the human experience we are left with a set of problems regarding the connection between the true nature of human being and the true nature of being which are otherwise unsolvable (Gardner, 2007, p. 87).

Because of repeated warnings that the dilemma regarding the increasing split between the nature of being and one's own being increasingly produces dire consequences there were increased intellectual efforts devoted to understanding how humanity can improve its relationship with the forces shaping the natural order, as well as, toward understanding how humanity can be better-integrated within the fabric of existence. In other words, "It became apparent that the depth of skepticism was hampering Western Civilization's effort to realize it's hoped for Enlightenment aims" (Miller, 2014, p. 36). Richard Rorty – noted for his attempts at reconciling the historical split in the Western intellectual tradition – claimed that the solution is a return to Greek conceptualizations of the complementary relationship between nature, the human body, and the human consciousness; their conception of the connection between the self and what perpetuates existence (i.e. the relationship between discrete entities and the universal); and the Greek notion of self-knowledge (Rorty, 1979, pp. 34-36, 41-42, & 168).

The warning regarding the unresolved problem of skepticism, the increased recognition of a crisis in the environment-humanity relationship, and the consequential problems related to human fragmentation prompted a resurgence of Aristotle's conception of the soul. Aristotle provided a viable solution to skepticism because he explained how the soul – the *first actuality* or *first principle* (i.e. the principle of life) – is the source of the capabilities one possesses as natural functions and the potential one has for self-knowledge (Aristotle, 2002, pp. 8-9 & 17-18). Self-knowledge – the outcome of the Holistic development of one's capabilities/potentiality – is the means by which one's natural propensities are transformed into higher order or higher level functionings. Thus, Aristotle made it clear that the soul is the manifestation of the triadic nature of existence: e.g. *the psyche* (the animating life force), *the logos* (cognitive functions), and *physis* (forces that are manifest as the elements that shape the natural order). In Aristotle's own words being is composed of spirit, intellect, and bodily sensations (Aristotle, 1935, p. 257). In this respect Aristotle makes it clear that the soul is the underlying essence of both the individual and of existence – which potentially establishes a complementary or harmonious relationship between the individual person and the underlying force shaping existence.

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