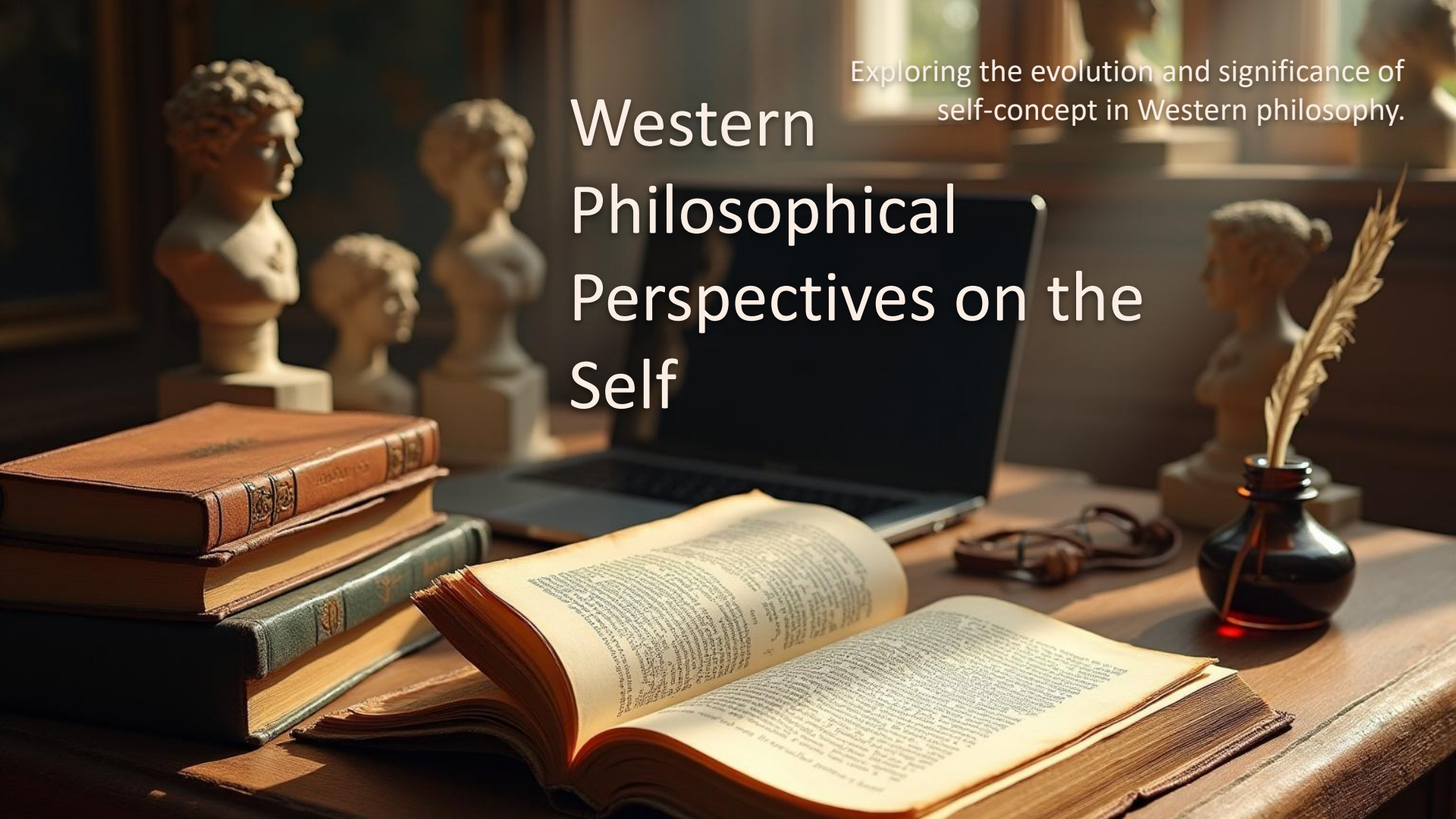


Exploring the evolution and significance of
self-concept in Western philosophy.

Western Philosophical Perspectives on the Self



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.

Introduction



This presentation examines the various perspectives on the self throughout Western philosophy. It traces the historical development from Ancient Greece to contemporary theories, highlighting key thinkers and their contributions.

Understanding these perspectives will provide insight into how concepts of identity and selfhood have evolved and continue to shape philosophical discussions today.

This lesson will introduce you to philosophy as an intellectual enterprise and relate it to the inquiry.

Historical Overview

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WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

Etymology: Philos (love) + Sophia (wisdom) = Love of wisdom

Definition: Philosophy is the rational investigation of truths about existence, knowledge, and ethics.

Another concept of Definition: The study of the basic/fundamental principles of life, knowledge, reality, existence, morality, human nature, etc., through the use of logic and reason



Ancient Greek Philosophy

In Ancient Greece, philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle laid the groundwork for self-understanding. **Socratic** introspection emphasized the importance of knowing oneself. **Plato's theory** of forms introduced an ideal self, while **Aristotle** focused on the relationship between the self and the body, contributing to notions of personal identity and moral agency.



Ancient Greek Philosophy

Some **pre-Socratic philosophers** tried to seek answers by relating the inquiry to the cosmos

Socrates' answer is "Know thyself" by examining your life.

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.

Aristotle, the self is known through experiences through the senses. The self (mind) is brought into the world as a tabula rasa.

Post-Aristotelians maintained the dualism of the soul and body as the composition of the self.



Medieval Philosophical Developments



During the **Medieval period**, thinkers like Augustine and Aquinas further explored the self, integrating religious dimensions. **Augustine** emphasized the inner self and its relationship with God, while **Aquinas** combined Aristotelian thought with Christian theology. This era marked a shift towards a more spiritual understanding of the self, **intertwining faith and reason** as paths to self-knowledge.

From the **scientific investigation** on nature and search for happiness to the question of life and salvation in another realm, in a better world

ST. AUGUSTINE



- Integrates Platonic ideas with the tenets of Christianity
- Platonic Realm of Idea/Forms: the Christian philosophy of a transcendent God: the self strives to Achieve union with God through faith and reason.
- The finite, temporary world of Plato becomes a proving ground for our eternal destinies: such that the human person becomes whole with both body and soul (more unified view).

Modern Philosophical Perspectives

The modern era introduced diverse views on the self, heavily influenced by the Enlightenment and rationalist thought. Period of radical social, political and intellectual developments

Genuine knowledge has to be based on independent rational inquiry and realworld experimentation, rather than dependent on knowledge handed down by authorities.

Thinkers such as Descartes posited the famous cogito, "I think, therefore I am," signifying a foundational aspect of self-awareness. Kant contributed to the understanding of the self in relation to experience and morality. The rise of empiricism further challenged traditional notions, emphasizing that self-knowledge arises through sensory experience and observation.



RENÉ DESCARTES: A RATIONALIST



- “Cogito ergo sum.” – “I think, therefore, I am.”
- Human identity: self-awareness
- Self: A thinking thing
- Dualism: thinking (spiritual) self vs. physical body
- The spiritual self (governed by the laws of reason and God’s will) surpasses the physical self (governed by the laws of nature).

JOHN LOCKE: AN EMPIRICIST



- Knowledge originates in our direct sense experience.
- Reason plays a subsequent role in figuring out the significance of our sense experience and in reaching intelligent conclusions.
- But the self endures because of memory.
- Conscious awareness and memory of previous experiences are the keys to understanding the self.

DAVID HUME: EMPIRICIST, SKEPTIC & NIHILIST



- There is no self!
- Empiricism
 - Impressions – basic sensations of experiences
 - Ideas – copies of our impressions
 - *Impressions form a fleeting stream of sensations
 - *No constant and invariable self that exists as a unified identity over the course of life.
- The self is a “bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other in an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement.”

IMMANUEL KANT



- **Contests Hume's idea by alluding to the primary experience of the world that is not a disconnected stream of sensations.**
- **A priori concepts: fundamental organizing rules or principles built into the architecture of the mind, which categorize, organize and synthesize sense data into the familiar fabric of our lives , bounded by space and time.**
 - **They are innate.**
 - **Unity of consciousness that makes the world intelligible**
- **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



- The SELF is multi-tiered/multi-layered:
 - Conscious (governed by the reality principle; at this level, behavior and experience are organized in ways that are rational, practical and appropriate to the social environment.)
 - Preconscious
 - Unconscious (contains the basic instinctual drives including sexuality, aggressiveness, and self-destruction; traumatic memories; unfulfilled wishes and childhood fantasies; thoughts and feelings that would be considered socially taboo.)

GILBERT RYLE: A PHYSICALIST



- **Behaviorism:** No more dichotomy by denying the inner selves, immortal souls, states of consciousness, or unconscious entities
- The self is defined in terms of behavior that is presented to the world.
- The self is a pattern of behavior, the tendency or disposition for a person to behave in a certain way in certain circumstances.

PAUL CHURCHLAND: A PHYSICALIST

- Eliminative Materialism: grounded in neuroscience
- The mind/self is the brain



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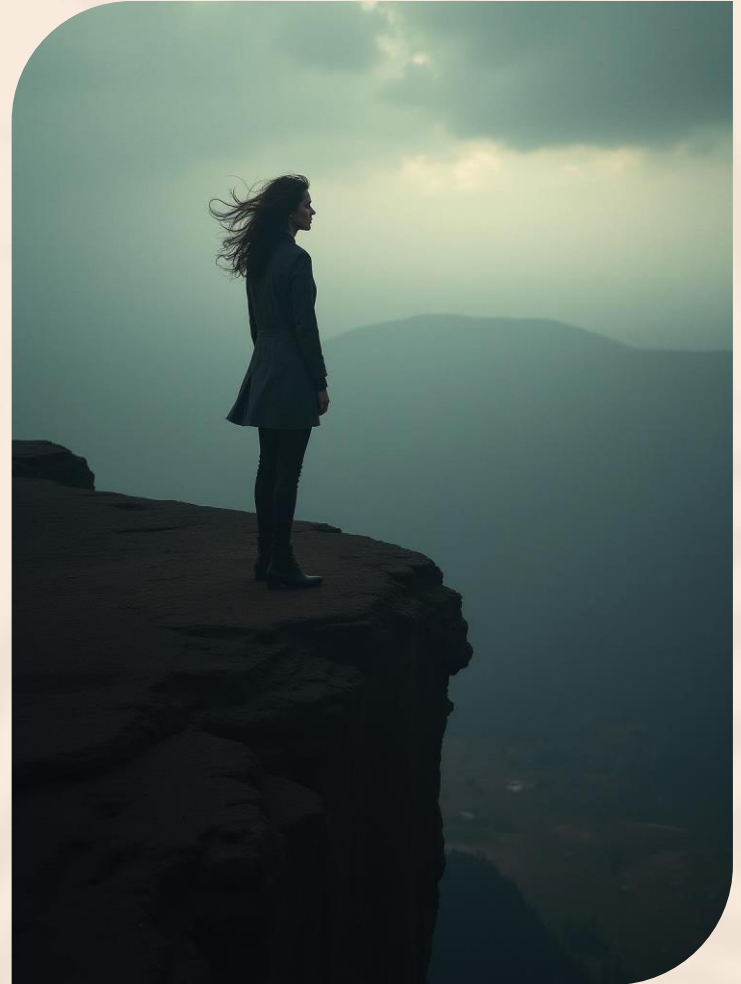
Contemporary Philosophy



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

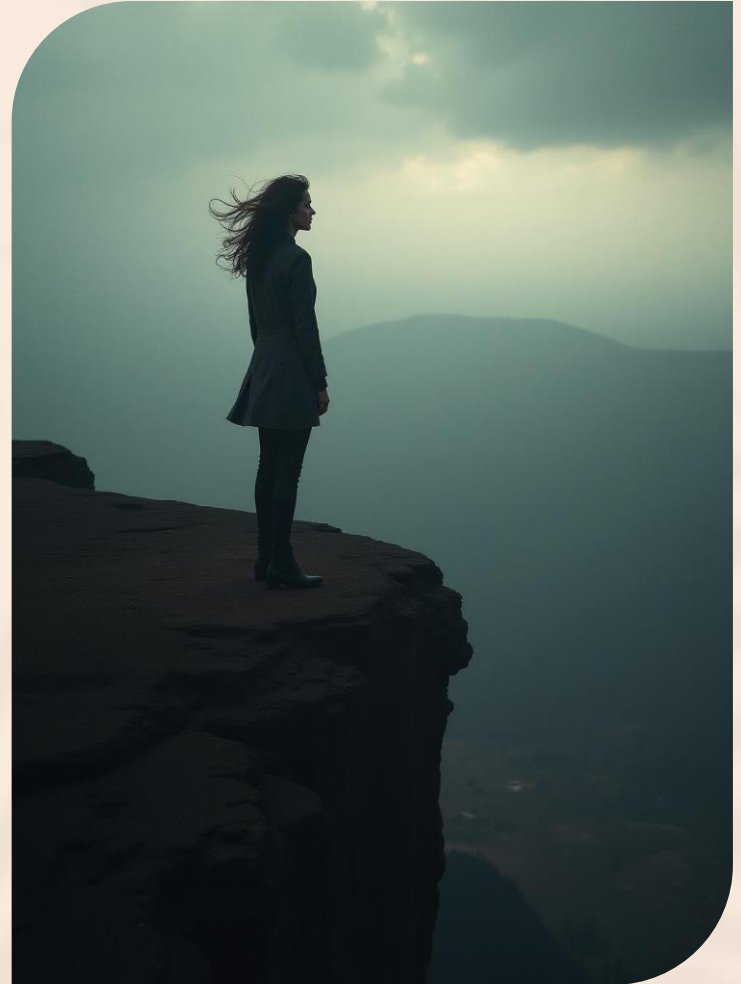
EDMUND HUSSERL

- The father of Phenomenology
- proposed the concepts of mental and physical as intertwined.



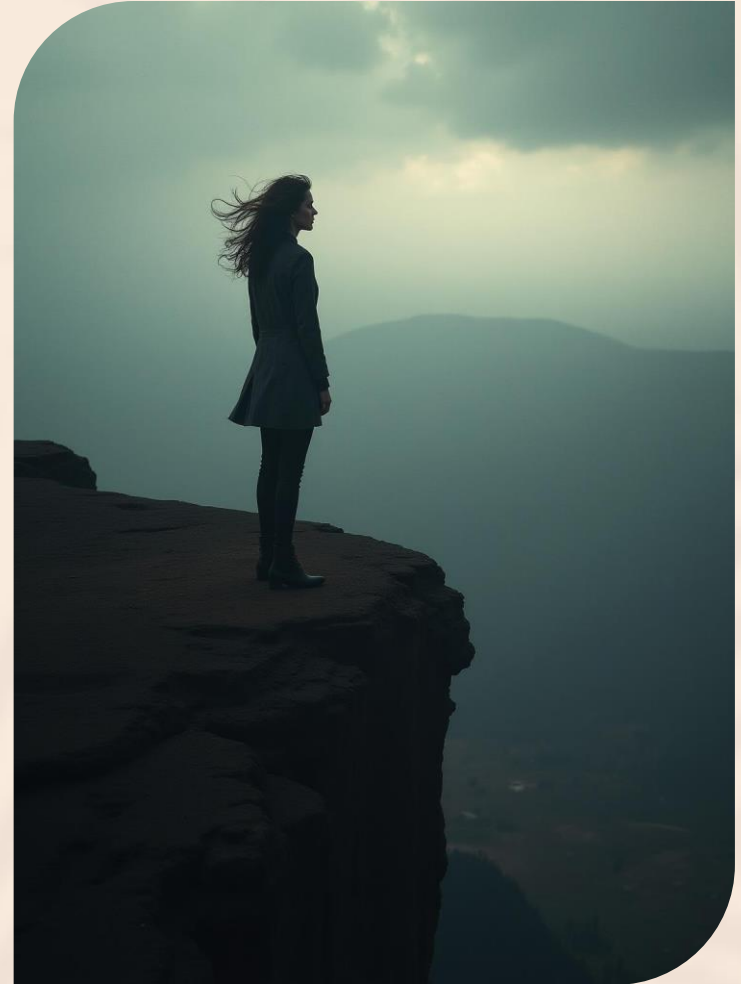
MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

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.



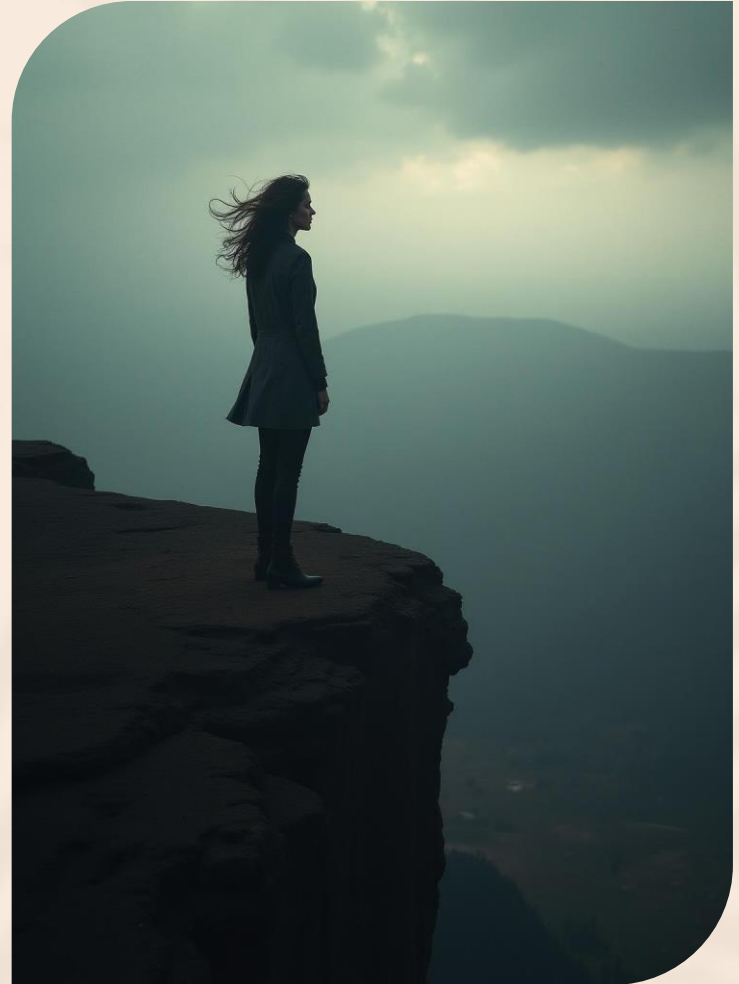
EMBODIED SUBJECTIVITY

- Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty agree that our living body is a natural synthesis of mind and biology.
- Phenomenological approach: describe the phenomena of the lived experience (reducing biases) by describing what your immediate responses are— physically, emotionally, cognitively.



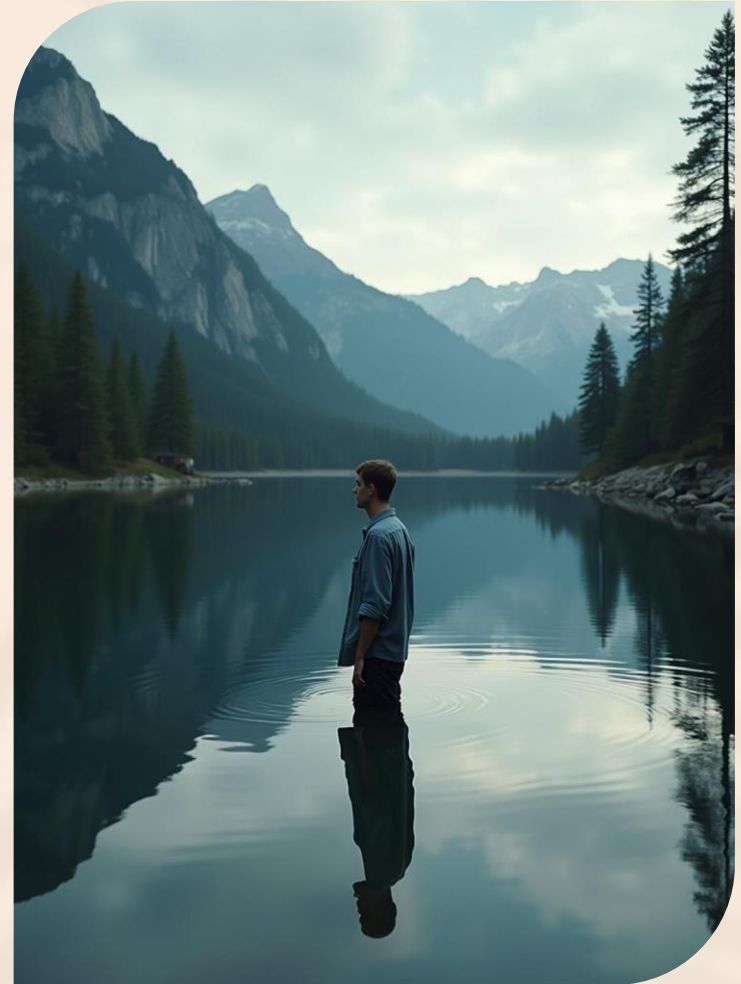
Existentialism and the Self

Existentialist philosophers like Sartre and Kierkegaard focused on individual existence and the authentic self. They posited that individuals are responsible for creating their essence through choices and actions. This perspective emphasized freedom, anxiety, and the search for meaning, viewing the self as a dynamic entity shaped by personal experiences and societal contexts.



CONCLUSIONS

The exploration of the self in Western philosophy reveals a complex evolution of thought from ancient to contemporary perspectives. Each philosophical era contributes unique insights into identity and selfhood, reflecting broader cultural and intellectual currents. By understanding these various viewpoints, we can deepen our comprehension of self in both personal and societal contexts, fostering a nuanced perspective on identity in the modern world.



Do you have any questions?



Thank you!

