

The Effect of Redefining Self-Knowledge in Our Daily Lives

Examining and Redefining Self-Knowledge, a Concept with Contradictory Meanings

How well do you know yourself? Are you one of those people who are interested in knowing all aspects of your existence? Have you ever thought about the need for redefining self-knowledge? Certainly, this issue is not equally important to all of us. Some of us do not give much importance to this issue and believe that we know ourselves well enough, while many of us are determined to examine and understand ourselves from various aspects. Therefore, we study psychology books and websites and take various self-knowledge tests.

Now, we face the question, “Why do we want to know ourselves?” After gaining self-knowledge by reading all those psychology books and taking various tests, have we reached happiness and peace? In 2022, the World Health Organization(WHO) warned of an increase in mental disorders in societies and announced that one in eight people in the world suffers from mental disorders; this means that despite all the efforts of scientists and increasing awareness, the level of mental health and peace in individuals is decreasing day by day! In this case, more important questions arise, such as: Do we know ourselves properly? Is the definition of self-knowledge offered by scientists, philosophers, and psychologists correct and precise, or do we need to consider redefining self-knowledge? What is the true meaning of self-knowledge, and who can lead us to the right answer to this question?

The Importance of True Self-Knowledge

Despite many distractions in life, we do not pursue a subject or feel the need to solve a problem until we recognize its importance. But why is it necessary to truly understand ourselves?

When interacting with things like electrical appliances, houseplants, or aquarium fish, we strive to gather information and knowledge to ensure we behave appropriately and provide optimal conditions for them. Suppose a friend gives you a beautiful flower and you have no knowledge about how to take care of it in terms of the necessary amount of light, watering intervals, and appropriate fertilizer. If we do not acquire the necessary knowledge about the flower and treat it according to our personal preferences, our flower will soon wither and become sick, and we might lose it. The importance of acquiring knowledge about ourselves is much greater. Is it possible to create the best living conditions for an unknown self in various fields and find happiness and inner peace?

Lack of proper self-knowledge has caused many of us to feel unsatisfied and confused, despite having a healthy diet, an appropriate exercise program, a healthy body, college education, a good job, a suitable spouse, and healthy and smart children, and participating in psychology and mental health courses. Deep down, we perceive ourselves and the purpose of life as something greater than these things.

Surely, without proper knowledge of the structure of human existence, all human-related fields of knowledge, such as logic, philosophy, mysticism, sociology, or psychology, will not lead anywhere and will confuse and disorient people, leading them into a restless and hopeless dilemma.

Considering all these interpretations, we conclude that we need a correct and precise definition of ourselves, or in other words, redefining self-knowledge is what we need, a kind of knowledge that can bring peace to our restless souls.

Self-Knowledge in Psychology

Before redefining self-knowledge, it is better to start with how psychology defines self-knowledge and the common ways it suggests to achieve self-knowledge. The following statement can provide a simple definition of self-knowledge in psychology: “The actual information an individual has about himself/herself.” This information includes characteristics such as personality traits, emotional states, opinions, beliefs, behaviors, needs, values, preferences, social identity, and goals.

Types of self-knowledge include:

- Physical self-knowledge: having information about one’s physical features, such as weight, height, eye color, and general physical condition.
- Comparative self-knowledge: This occurs when we compare ourselves to others. These comparisons can be ascending or descending, that is, we compare ourselves to someone in a better or worse economic or cultural situation than ourselves.
- Self-knowledge through evaluation by others: This type of self-knowledge comes from evaluating ourselves based on how we appear to others and what they think about us.
- Self-observation: This type of self-knowledge comes from observing our inner thoughts, motivations, feelings, and tendencies.

- Self-consciousness: In this type of self-knowledge, we learn about ourselves by examining our behavior.
- Mindfulness techniques: These techniques allow us to know, assess, and strengthen our emotional intelligence skills and achieve self-knowledge.

Credible Authority on Self-Knowledge

In redefining self-knowledge, we must first understand what kind of being a human is. Is the human being a speaking animal? Does the intellect distinguish human beings from animals? These and many other questions have preoccupied the human mind for centuries, and many scientists, philosophers, and psychologists have addressed them. Here we will briefly discuss some examples of these theories.

- Charles Darwin, an English biologist, believed that the creation of living things was not independent and that modern animals evolved from earlier ones. In his view, humans and apes share a common ancestry.
- Nietzsche, a German philosopher, did not accept a fixed nature for anything and considered humans as a bridge between animals and Over-Man (Superman).
- Benjamin Franklin, an American scientist, saw the human being as a tool-making animal.
- Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher, believed that the human was a living body and criticized the immateriality of the soul.

- Aristotle considered the intellect as the distinguishing ability between humans and animals.

With all these different perspectives on the nature of the human being, how can we figure out the truth? Who can truly define this complex being, the human being, when redefining self-knowledge?

What Is the Human Being?

Given the abundance of false or incomplete definitions about the human being, in redefining self-knowledge, we must first understand what the human being is not before we can know what he is. Otherwise, non-human qualities will not be properly distinguished from human qualities, and we will mistakenly consider ourselves to be inanimate objects, plants, or animals.

Therefore, we will examine different types of inherent qualities, that is, inanimate, vegetative, animal, intellective, and supra-rational or human qualities. Inanimate objects have inanimate qualities such as weight, volume, size, and elemental properties. In addition to inanimate qualities, plants have vegetative qualities such as physical strength, beauty, delicacy and the ability to nourish, grow, and reproduce. In addition to inanimate and vegetative qualities, animals have qualities such as instinct, various sexual desires, attraction to the opposite sex, marriage, commitment, housing, sense of responsibility, working for oneself and the family, loyalty, modesty, kindness, recreation, and serving family and oneself. Angels also have rational qualities.

As humans, we possess five existential dimensions: inanimate, vegetative, animal, angelic, and human. This means that we share qualities with inanimate objects, plants, and animals. In addition, like angels, we have intellective qualities and are interested in learning, problem solving, and discovering the secrets of the world of creation. Obviously, the qualities we share with other beings do not make us human.

The only thing that distinguishes us from other beings is our supra-rational or human qualities, and because of these qualities, we are called humans. That is, our true self is our human or supra-rational aspect.

The main dimension of human existence, namely our supra-rational or human aspect, has not been considered or even mentioned in the aforementioned definitions of self-knowledge or the presentation of self-knowledge methods in psychology. In other words, only the non-human and shared dimensions of our existence with other creatures have been addressed! Therefore, it is not surprising that despite all efforts, psychology has not been able to bring us inner peace. Undoubtedly, redefining self-knowledge is a necessity; true self-knowledge focuses on our true self, that is, our human dimension.

Human or Supra-Rational Dimension

Knowing the human or supra-rational dimension is a significant and broad topic that we will touch upon briefly in this article and discuss in detail in another article.

The human being desires infinity, and this is a *fitri* inclination. Humans want the best of everything for themselves, and this desire never fades away. Immediately after achieving a desired goal, they become uninterested in it, and strive for a higher goal. This desire for novelty and perfection is seen in all aspects of the soul. For example, the desire for beauty is an inanimate quality; growth and body strength are vegetative qualities; social status and seeking power and fame are animal qualities; gaining knowledge is an intellectual quality, and the desire for infinity is a supra-rational quality.

A very important point is that the qualities of the lower dimensions of the human soul are generally limited. Therefore, they will never be able to fulfil the human desire for infinity. Humans lose interest in food as soon as they get full, but always try new tastes and flavors. As soon as they reach a certain level in the social hierarchy, they start thinking about reaching a higher level, and they never get tired of acquiring knowledge.

Our desires are endless, but the world is limited and finite. A limited container cannot hold something unlimited. The world is not a suitable platform for people's infinite desires, and the desire for infinity has not been given to the human being for his worldly life. The human desire for infinity can only be satisfied with infinity itself. No one is satisfied with limited perfections. Every human being finds the desire for infinity within himself with a little contemplation and moves toward it with his whole being: infinite love, beauty, wealth, knowledge, power, and everything else that exists in the world.

The human being seeks all perfections to an infinite extent, never turning away from any perfection; this desire never ceases in him. The human being is

constantly trying to make changes in the world to satisfy his innate desire for diversity and novelty with new ideas. There is no limit to this feeling. Achieving inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intellectual perfections never brings peace and stability to human beings. This is because it is never possible to satisfy all the desires related to these aspects. As a result, each person is drawn to one of these levels and tries to satisfy the needs of that aspect as much as possible, which in turn leads to his inability and suppressing other desires; this creates many psychological problems for him, and he spends his entire life pursuing the unattainable.

The desire for infinity in human beings is a reality that we all understand within ourselves and cannot deny. Therefore, no limited perfection can satisfy us. Those who have not attained true self-knowledge try to satisfy their desire for infinity by pursuing limited worldly perfections, for example, those who never get tired of accumulating wealth, or those who are obsessed with power and status. However, there is only one infinite perfection which satisfies this *fitri* desire, and any sound mind accepts it. There cannot be multiple infinite beings because they would limit each other and would no longer be infinite.

We love everything that exists. In a broader sense, we love Existence itself. Existence is what we desire and love. We seek the Absolute Existence. We seek perfection and perfection originates from Existence because all sensory, imaginary, estimative, intellectual, and supra-rational perfections originate from Existence.

For these reasons, human beings are not satisfied with the limitations of life on earth and always want more and more of everything. This is an intuitive matter,

and everyone accepts it with a little self-contemplation. Loving absolute and infinite perfection is not a matter of science or acquiring knowledge and information, but it is something innate. We love absolute perfection, and we are infinite beings because only an infinite being has the capacity for infinity, and a limited being cannot desire infinity. Therefore, infinity exists, and we are compatible with it. We know it, have the capacity for it, and have experienced it before. We are infinite, so we seek infinity. There must be compatibility between the desired thing and the one who desires. The desirer must have experienced the thing he desires. Therefore, now that we seek Existence, we cannot have a limited existence. Existence is infinite and cannot be limited. This Absolute Infinite Existence is God.

Allah, who is the Absolute and Infinite Perfection, is the beloved of our true self or the human dimension of our existence; He is the only one who satisfies us. All human beings, consciously or unconsciously, cry out the statement "There is no deity but Allah" within themselves and are willing to connect with Him and love Him; they want to become similar to God or the Infinite Perfection. If they do not satisfy this innate desire in this world, they will leave this world unsatisfied because they have not reached human maturity; they will have an animal inner self which will cause them much pain. This is why when redefining self-knowledge, we focus on the true self, or the human or supra-rational dimension, which makes the human being the noblest of creation.

As we have mentioned, our true self is the human or supra-rational aspect of our existence. Our human dimension or the soul seeks infinity, does not die, is

immortal, and loves the Infinite Perfection, which is God. It cannot be at peace without connecting with infinity.

The True Meaning of Self-Knowledge

Based on the above information, we learned that the part of our existence that distinguishes us from other beings is our human dimension or true self. Therefore, we can only be called humans, reach the ultimate purpose of our creation, and experience happiness and inner peace when our human dimension is activated and becomes mature. Therefore, when redefining self-knowledge, it must be said that self-knowledge is knowing our human dimension and accepting ourselves as a human being.

Do we have to be indifferent to what our inanimate, vegetative, and animal dimensions need? Of course not! These dimensions are all valuable, and their desires should be addressed and cared for, but the point is that they have nothing to do with human perfection; they are a means for us to achieve human perfection. They must be at the service of our human dimension or true self to help us reach human perfection.

For instance, a well-maintained garden with fertile soil, strong trees, and the right gardening tools is essential and beneficial to a gardener, as these elements contribute to the ultimate goal of producing healthy, high-quality fruit. If they do not serve this purpose, however, they become useless, leading to a waste of the gardener's time and effort.

If we do not know ourselves correctly, and the human part of our existence does not dominate over our lower dimensions, we will not achieve our goal as human beings and will not reach happiness and peace in this world and the hereafter. Redefining self-knowledge, which means knowing our true self, prevents us from wasting our precious lives and incurring irreparable costs.

In this article, we first discussed the importance and necessity of self-knowledge. We explained the common definition of self-knowledge in psychology and the ways to achieve self-knowledge. We stated that to achieve true self-knowledge, we must know what kind of being is the human, and we mentioned the viewpoints of some scientists and philosophers about the human being.

We discussed the five dimensions of our existence, namely the inanimate, vegetative, animal, intellective, and super-rational dimensions, and the qualities associated with each of them. We realized that in the various types of self-knowledge that are popular in the world, the only dimension that is not addressed is our human aspect, which distinguishes us from other beings!

We discussed the desire for infinity and love for the Infinite Perfection in ourselves. Finally, when redefining self-knowledge, we stated that self-knowledge is knowing our true self or humanology, and anyone who does not know his true self and does not have his human part dominating his lower parts of existence does not have a human inner self and will not reach lasting happiness and peace.

We look forward to your thoughts and questions about redefining self-knowledge and knowing the true self.