

# Prayer and Self Knowledge: A Religious Exploration of Descartes Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

There is an undeniable innate quest for self-knowledge in man as a rational being. Yet the question is as to how one can embark on such a search and arrive at a satisfying destination remains as one of life's philosophical disputes. Such scenario of everyone's inherent search leads this paper to assert the importance of prayer toward self-knowledge, and consequently the relevance of integrating Christian spirituality in a holistic education. Reflecting on Descartes' philosophical view as an entry point, this paper shows that in times of arising doubts, a clear and distinct idea of God arises. Moreover, a brief discussion of the differing views from recent researches exploring different aspects of self-knowledge, which mainly argue on how to gain knowledge of self without falsity, is presented. Support for the thesis that prayer is integral to self-knowledge is taken from the insights and inspired meditations of some classical spiritual figures in the Catholic Church. In recognizing prayer as an integral means to self-knowledge since it is communion with God, the One for whom every man's heart is created, educators are encouraged to become instruments in leading every person to the path of true self-knowledge through integrated spiritual and religious education.

**Keywords:** Practice of prayer, Self-knowledge, Knowledge of God, All-knowing God, Self-awareness, Introspection, Transparency

## INTRODUCTION

“Who am I”? Since the dawn of human history this single question has probed the mind and heart of every man for himself. No man can or has escaped it. Even though this present century provides man with data, facts, and other information by just a click of the mouse and by simply browsing over the net, it cannot be denied that, man, as part of his rational nature, is in a continuous innate quest of knowing himself. While he is on life’s journey, he is in a constant search, which includes the ceaseless and sometimes resolute looking through the very self. The sad point is, not all seeking could bring the desired result. This is another reality man needs to confront. Along the way, the possibility of committing mistakes becomes his companion and in wanting to know self deeper for a better purpose man rather meets with a failure that leads to another failure and so on. Craven (2011), explained in his column that

*“Socrates was famous for arguing that in order to be wise, one must know oneself. When the ancient philosopher Thales of Miletus was asked what the most difficult thing to know was, he answered, Thyself. Likewise, Jean-Jacques Rousseau acknowledged that it was not nearly as easy as he had assumed to know himself. Near the end of his life, he conceded that it was arrogant and rash to profess virtues that you cannot live up to, and retreated into seclusion. John Calvin underscored the absolute necessity of accurate self-knowledge to knowing God in the opening pages of his monumental work, Institutes of the Christian Religion. He wrote that nearly all wisdom man possesses, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists in two parts: the knowledge of God and oneself arguing that one could not truly know God without knowing oneself and that one could not truly know oneself without knowing God. In the words of Calvin, “As long as we do not look beyond the earth, being quite content with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue, we flatter ourselves most sweetly, and fancy ourselves all but demigods.”*

Self-awareness as a tool to self-knowledge is always a big matter, which we have to consider in analyzing self. It is the greatest tool to find out the incapability and to find the solutions that deal with them. Once a weakness is identified, one has still a very important decision to make. The more common path is to spend a lot of time trying to shore up the weakness. The less common – but ultimately more satisfying – path is to ignore the weakness and build a framework that enables to make the most of one’s strengths. According to Papalia (2015), ideally, people are able to achieve identity balance and maintain a stable sense of self while adjusting

their self-schemas to incorporate new information, such as the effects of aging. People who achieve identity balance recognize changes and respond flexibly; they seek to control what can be controlled and accept what cannot. A strong identity helps people resist negative self-stereotyping, seek help when needed, and face the future without panic or undue anxiety.

In an excerpt from *How To Become a Better Leader*, the authors examine the role of self-awareness, which they deem crucial for evolving and finding coping strategies for weaknesses (Brokaw, 2012). A survey of 75 members of the Stanford Graduate School of Business Advisory Council rated self-awareness as the most important capability for leaders to develop. Executives need to know where their natural inclinations lie in order to boost them or compensate for them. Self-awareness is about identifying personal idiosyncrasies — the characteristics that executives take to be the norm but actually represent the exception (Brakow, 2012). Mindfulness — paying attention to one's current experience in a non-judgmental way — might help one to learn more about his/her own personalities, according to a new article published in the March 2013 issue of *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science. Recent research has highlighted the fact that there are many blind spots when it comes to understanding the patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Despite the intuition that one knows self the best, other people have a more accurate view of some traits (e.g., intellect) than the person concerned. In some cases, blind spots in self-knowledge can have negative consequences, such as poor decision-making, poor academic achievement, emotional and interpersonal problems, and lower life satisfaction.

From one angle, it is bizarre that it should be such a big deal to look at oneself. Based on experience, Hersh (2016) relates two related reasons why people begin to take a genuine and passionate interest in studying themselves. The first is that they have come to believe that they can decrease their pain and increase their happiness by learning about themselves. And the second is that they have had some sort of experience that they don't understand and that fascinates and maybe scares them and makes them wonder about who they are and what they are and that they want to understand. Often these two reasons are intertwined.

Furthermore, he said there are some important points to consider. In all studies of natural objects, studying the self is an open-ended process. The self changes and there are always surprises, so that no one can say that, once and for all, "I know who I am." Risking the danger of sounding overly dramatic, the process of self-examination can be compared to a journey, but this can be said of

all serious commitments to learning in any field. On all journeys, including this one, there are stages, there are dangers, there are temptations and diversions and by-paths, and obstacles, and victories. And there are dropouts.

The process of self-examination has stages so it can be seen as a kind of development. There is a stage of self-examination where people have to face how they look at and treat other people including people they love. This is a stage in which self-knowledge becomes valuable in one's relationship to others.

What starts out as self-examination, a turning of one's attention inward towards the minutiae of the inner life winds up as a discovery of how one is and has been in the world. If the process does not stall here, it will lead to a re-evaluation and re-understanding of one's moral worth. And this should lead to a new way of looking at and of understanding and of evaluating and of acting towards other people including loved ones. It can be sobering that, from the point of view of others, this will be no big deal, as it is what they hoped for from you and expected from you all along. It is only at this point that people can be said to know others, and it is because they have made a radical advance in knowing themselves. There has been a radical turning point that Jung called a transformation. A transformation point is where the self enters a new stage of development. So, if all goes well, what starts out as an isolating experience, a self-centered and alienating activity, leads to a transformation where the person becomes a plus to him or herself and others (Hersh, 2016).

## FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the philosophical view of Descartes on Seeking True Knowledge of Self. Why does man commit mistakes even when it comes to seeking knowledge of himself? In response to this, Rene Descartes, in his philosophical writings translated by Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch (1984), wrote "the source of my mistakes? It must be simply this: the scope of the will is wider than that of the intellect; but instead of restricting it within the same limits, I extend its use to matters, which I do not understand. Since the will is indifferent in such cases, it easily turns aside from what is true and good, and this is the source of my error and sin." He furthers says, "...I am not using my free will correctly. If I go for the alternative which is false, then obviously I shall be in error; if I take the other side, then it is by pure chance that I arrive at the truth, and I shall still be at fault since it is clear by the natural light that the perception of the intellect should always precede the determination of the will.

In this incorrect use of free will may be found the privation which constitutes the essence of error”(Cottingham et al., 1984). In this case, Descartes expressed the idea of failing to think before acting as the cause of the error. In the everyday language, this same idea could be expressed with the common phrase that warns one to “think before you act.” At times man makes decisions or acts without reflecting or understanding the full scope of the situation in which he acts and thus making him prone to mistakes. In relation to knowledge of oneself, perhaps a failure to reflect deeply could likewise present errors in one’s self-image, leading one to see self as he wills or desires rather than in truth.

Descartes endorsed a limited infallibility thesis of this sort. He said: “There remain sensations, emotions, and appetites. These may be clearly perceived provided we take great care in our judgments concerning them to include no more than what is strictly contained in our perception—no more than that of which we have inner awareness” (Cottingham et al., 1984). If this is so, then it must be concluded that oneself has the greater capacity to know the self since no other person can perceive the sensations, emotions, and appetites that are interior.

On another level, Descartes acknowledged the idea and existence of God on whom one could entirely depend on while recognizing with confidence that human intellect cannot know anything unmistakable and reliable when he remarks, “when I consider the fact that I have doubts, or that I am a thing that is incomplete and dependent, then there arises in me a clear and distinct idea of a being who is independent and complete”(Descartes, 37). He arrives at the notion of the “true God, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and the sciences lie hidden” (Descartes, 37). Descartes further pronounced with much confidence that, “It is impossible that God should ever deceive me. For in every case of trickery or deception some imperfection is to be found; and although the ability to deceive appears to be an indication of cleverness or power, the will to deceive is undoubtedly evidence of malice or weakness, and so cannot apply to God...I know by experience that there is in me a faculty of judgment which...I certainly received from God, and since God does not wish to deceive me, he surely did not give me the kind of faculty, which would ever enable me to go wrong while using it correctly. Thus, while acknowledging man’s intellectual capacity and unavoidably experiencing man’s limitations, Descartes recognized the need for the highest and perfect source of human’s intellect – God.

Beyond question, Descartes claimed that as long as humans think only of God and turn their whole attention to God, falsity can be avoided unless one

will just easily turn back to self which, undoubtedly, is prone to countless errors. Certainly, Descartes' convictions gave evidence that man should regard prayer as integral to a deeper and better knowledge of self as man is in continuous search of who he is, why he exists, and what he should do to contribute to his and his neighbors' growth and live a fulfilled life.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This paper looked into a deeper understanding of the importance of prayer towards self-knowledge. By reflecting on Descartes' philosophical views, this paper showed that when a man experiences doubts, a clear and distinct idea of God arises. It sought to 1) determine the differing views on self-knowledge through an evaluation of the different arguments of beliefs on self-knowledge and how to attain it without falsity and 2) identify the implications of the results for educators and learners alike.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive method involved in this paper was a review of vast philosophical and religious education literature. This research also used reviews of document and reports in order to have a deeper understanding of the self-knowledge. The philosophical writing of Rene Descartes is one of the primary sources in the study. It is library-based research to explore the different psychological, philosophical and theological viewpoints.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Much of the recent literature in the philosophy of self-knowledge has concentrated on two areas, that of knowledge of one's particular mental states and knowledge of one's own nature. To have self-knowledge in the first of these senses is to know one's particular sensations, experiences, and propositional attitudes (beliefs, desires, and so on) while to have self-knowledge in the second sense is to know one's own ontological nature, or less abstract characteristics, such as one's own character, abilities, or values. There are several different questions which can be asked about self-knowledge: (1) what is its character, and what, if anything, distinguishes self-knowledge from other kinds of knowledge? (2) What are the sources of self-knowledge, and, if we have it, how do we get it?

(3) What is the scope of self-knowledge, and what are its limits? (4) What is the value, or importance, of self-knowledge? It is helpful to think about work on self-knowledge as addressing one or more of these questions. Responses to (1) have focused on the idea that some self-knowledge is epistemically privileged. Responses to (2) include different versions of the following ideas: (a) self-knowledge is acquired by some kind of inner observation, or self-scanning; (b) self-knowledge is acquired by inference or self-interpretation; (c) self-knowledge is acquired by asking and answering the appropriate questions about the world at large. This is the “transparency” approach to self-knowledge, which can be seen as a version of or an alternative to inferentialism. Some responses to (3) discuss the obstacles to self-knowledge and identify varieties of self-knowledge that are difficult or impossible to acquire. Others seek to rule out certain forms of self-ignorance. With regard to (4), the issue is, what good does it do us to have self-knowledge, and what kinds of self-knowledge are valuable to us? (Cassam, 2016).

### **Self-knowledge and its Distinctiveness**

Philosophy normally signifies self-knowledge as the knowledge of one’s own sensations, thoughts, beliefs, and other mental states (Cassam, 2016). It has its distinctiveness and, perhaps, the most widely accepted view about self-knowledge as being distinct is that even if it is not certain, it is especially secure for it has immunity to some types of error, which other kinds of empirical knowledge are vulnerable to. Opposing this view are theorists like Gertler, Horgan, and Siewert who maintain that there is a causal gap between a perceptual state and its object, and this gap introduces sources of error that are absent in direct introspective apprehension of a sensation (Cassam, 2016).

### **Introspection and Transparency**

In the world of self-knowledge literature, “introspection” is a popular term, which has been used in various ways and the most common usage suggested by its literal meaning is “inner observation” or “inwardly directed attention” popularized by Goldman in year the 2006 that yields awareness of a mental state. (Cassam, 2016) Introspection is considered a special means of learning about one’s own current ongoing, or perhaps very recent past, mental states or processes. One can learn about one’s own mind in the same way one learns about others’ minds like reading psychology texts, observing facial expressions (in a mirror), examining readouts of brain activity or noting patterns of past behavior (Cassam, 2016). Another unique method, as opposite to introspection, which

ascertains one's thoughts of self by looking outward has gained prominence. This is the "transparency" method, which takes self-knowledge to involve looking "through" the transparent mental state, directly to the state of the world it represents (Cassam, 2016).

Matthew Boyle (2011), one proponent of transparency distinguishes two ways to explain the capacity for 'transparent' knowledge of one's own present beliefs, perceptions, and intentions. It is either through an inferential or reflective approach. He presents that inferential approach faces a basic difficulty and that reflective approach avoids the difficulty.

### **Differing Views from Recent Research: Arguments on how to acquire knowledge without falsity**

Perhaps one of the most interesting viewpoints to discuss self-knowledge is the one of Coliva's (2008) "Peacock's of Self-knowledge." Coliva objects that judgments cannot rationalize self-attributions of belief in the way the reasons theorist contends because they are not suitably accessible. Her argument rests, in part, on the claim that the phenomenology of a conscious thought—such as "things will look up"—does not indicate whether this is the content of a judgment or, instead, of a wish.

Another is of Carruthers (2011) who asserts that one's access to one's own thoughts is no different in principle from our access to the thoughts of other people, utilizing the conceptual and inferential resources of the same "mindreading" faculty, and relying on many of the same sources of evidence. He proposes and defends the Interpretive Sensory-Access (ISA) theory of self-knowledge.

Smithies (2016) noted that the simple theory of introspection could be extended to account for one's introspective knowledge of what one believes as well as what he consciously experiences. He presents the simple theory of introspection and motivates the extension from experience to belief.

Our ability to tell stories about ourselves has captivated many theorists, and some have taken these developments for an opportunity to answer long-standing questions about the nature of personhood. Harrelson (2016) employs two skeptical arguments to show that this move was a mistake. The first argument rests on the observation that storytelling is revisionary. The second implies that our stories about ourselves are biased in regard to our existing self-image.

There is widely assumed to be a fundamental epistemological asymmetry between self-knowledge and knowledge of others. They are said to be categorically



different in kind and manner, and the existence of such an asymmetry is taken to be a primitive datum in accounts of the two kinds of knowledge. However, Cassam (2015) argues that standard accounts of the differences between self-knowledge and knowledge of others exaggerate and misstate the asymmetry.

How does one know when she/he has imagined something? How does she distinguish the imaginings from other kinds of mental states she might have? These questions present serious, if often overlooked, challenges for theories of introspection and self-knowledge. Langland-Hassan (2015) looks specifically at the difficulties imagination creates for Neo-Expressivity, outward-looking and inner sense theories of self-knowledge. A path forward is then charted, by considering the connection between the kinds of situations in which one can reliably say one from the other.

Dos Santos (2015) tells about the role of self-knowledge in the cognitive life of a virtuous knower. The main idea is that it is hard to know the self because introspection is an unreliable epistemic source, and reason can be a source of insidious forms of self-deception. Nevertheless, the epistemic situation is such that an epistemically responsible agent must constantly be looking for a better understanding of her own character traits and beliefs, under the risk of jeopardizing her own status.

Widely accepted, Macdonald (2014) asserts that knowledge of one's own mental states is authoritative in being epistemically more secure than knowledge of the mental states of others, and theories of self-knowledge have largely appealed to one or the other of two sources to explain this special epistemic status. The first, 'detectivist,' position, appeals to an inner perception-like basis, whereas the second, 'constitutivist,' appeals to the view that the special security awarded to certain self-knowledge is conceptual.

Being one of the recently influential "rationalists," Knappik (2015) holds that such self-knowledge is essentially connected to the rational agency, and therefore has to be particularly reliable, immediate, and distinct from third-personal access. This approach has been challenged by "theory or interpretationist" views of self-knowledge: on such views, self-knowledge is based on the interpretation of information about ourselves, and this interpretation involves the same mindreading mechanisms that we use to access other persons' mental states.

Addressing the question of a subject's knowledge of his or her own mental states, Gallegos (2015) placed his interest, in particular, to the concepts of mode and activity when explaining our ability to self-ascribe beliefs. Ultimately, he sketches an agency account of self-knowledge that avoids the excessive rationalism

of positions such as Moran's and Boyle's.

In a 'slow-switching' argument, which was originally put forth by Paul Boghossian, Golob (2015) aims to show that there is no satisfactory account of how one can have privileged knowledge about her or his own thoughts given content externalism. Though many philosophers have found ways to block the argument, no one has worried to address a major worry that Boghossian had.

Fernández (2013) provides an account of a certain variety of self-deception based on a model of self-knowledge. According to this model, one thinks that one has a belief on the basis of one's grounds for that belief. If this model is correct, then our thoughts about which beliefs we have should be in accordance with our grounds for those beliefs. He infers that the relevant variety of self-deception is a failure of self-knowledge.

Doucet (2012) considers the question of whether it is possible to be mistaken about the content of our first-order intentional states. For proponents of the rational agency model of self-knowledge, such failures might seem very difficult to explain. On this model, the authority of self-knowledge is not based on inference from evidence, but rather originates in our capacity, as rational agents, to shape our beliefs and other intentional states.

Several authors have claimed that assuming we have apriori knowledge of our own thought-contents, semantic externalism implies that we can know apriori contingent facts about the empirical world. After presenting the argument, Parent (2015) responds by resisting the premise that an externalist can know apriori: If one has the concept of water, then water exists. In particular, Boghossian's Dry Earth example suggests that such thought-experiments do not provide such apriori knowledge.

According to Carlson (2013) of Washington University in St. Louis Carlson, these two components of mindfulness, attention and nonjudgmental observation, can overcome the major barriers to knowing the self. She argues that the motivation to see the self desirably is one of the main obstacles to self-knowledge. For instance, people may overestimate their virtuous qualities to ward off negative feelings or boost self-esteem. However, non-judgmental observation of one's thoughts, feelings, and behavior, might reduce emotional reactivity — such as feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem — that typically interferes with people seeing the truth about selves.

Lack of information can be a barrier to self-knowledge — in some situations, people might not have the information they would need to assess themselves accurately. For instance, we have a hard time observing much of our nonverbal

behavior, so we may not know that we're grimacing or fidgeting during a serious conversation. Mindfulness could also help in this domain, as research has shown that mindfulness training is associated with greater bodily awareness. Drawing from cognitive, clinical, and social psychology, Carlson (2013) outlines a theoretical link between mindfulness and self-knowledge that suggests focusing one's attention on our current experiences in a nonjudgmental way could be an effective tool for getting to know ourselves better.

### **Knowing Self in Prayer**

With all these present arguments rooted from the past clash of beliefs, this paper will now evaluate if prayer can result in self-knowledge. Critchley (2011) recalled the arguments between rationalist and empiricists. The rationalist argues that acquisition of knowledge comes primarily through the use of reason while empiricists contend that knowledge is acquired mainly as a result of experience gained through the senses. He enumerated the three key distinctions, namely: a priori vs. a posteriori, analytic vs. synthetic, necessary vs. contingent. To distinguish, a priori knowledge refers to something that is knowable without reference to experience. Therefore, there is no need to investigate the world to establish its truth while a posteriori knowledge requires empirical investigation. In the same manner, an analytic proposition does not require any more information than is contained in the meanings of the terms involved while a synthetic statement requires more information than is contained in the statement. Similarly, the necessary truth is one that could be true in any circumstances and all possible worlds while a contingent truth is true but might not have been true if circumstances had been different. The analytic/synthetic distinction originates in the work of Immanuel Kant in his work "The Critique of Pure Reason" where Kant is concerned to demonstrate that there are certain concepts or categories of thought - substance and causation, for instance - which cannot be discovered empirically from the world but which are required in order to make sense of the world (Critchley, 2011). Indeed these distinctions could serve as the foundation to claim that prayer can result in the knowledge of self.

To contend this is to inquire first if prayer can result in knowable knowledge or if it can be associated with an experience. To analyze, prayer is an activity of the heart and mind where the one is praying is communicating to a Supreme Being and therefore opinions can be raised that prayer is an experience that brings something that is knowable. A Christian, who prays, talks to his God to give praise and adoration, to ask forgiveness for whatever transgression, to give

thanksgiving for any favorable blessings, and to continually seek for guidance, inspiration, and more graces as needed. The same is true with a Buddhist, a Muslim, a Jew, a Hindu, a Taoist, a Confucianist and anyone who practices any kind of religion throughout the world. Even indigenous peoples showed ways in which they communicated with the deities (del Castillo, 2015). They too surely have communication with whoever is the god they acknowledge.

Prayer is communion with God. God the Initiator of this communion dwells in one's hearts and draw to an ever deeper intimacy with Himself. As prayer deepens, the real, living God will be revealed to the one praying. As the love-communion deepens, the one praying will come to know the interiority of self more truthfully. The fruit of prayer sees the self the way God sees the person. God is the Author of all that we have, and we are. He knows everyone by name. Nothing is hidden in Him even the smallest detail about anyone. He is God. He is all-knowing. Through prayer and observing the ordinary, man can find God (Cueto and del Castillo, 2017).

Anyone is capable of deceiving self. False assumptions can arise. One can be swept along by some trendy opinion. One may be elated by all the good presumptions, can be discouraged by false perceptions, but if all these are not of God, then one has just an unreal picture of self which can result to unreal expectations living within unreal limitations because there has been no real touch with the real Source who could reveal the real self. How essential then that self-knowledge be true.

Newman (2007) stressed important points in a sermon entitled "Secret Faults", a reflection on "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." Many are content with such accidental information about themselves as the events of life forced upon them and neglect the duty of self-examination. Others have only a slight acquaintance with one's heart and have a superficial faith. He reminds one to be suspicious of untested virtue and urges one to remember that anyone can fail even in areas where one is found faithful and that there is a danger of living a life of self-deceit; thus, he persuades one to think far more comfortably of the spiritual state. Most of the time, being content is mistaken for having peace, especially with God; natural affection is mistaken for Christian love, natural energy for zeal. Anyone must be on guard for there are times, not just a few when self-love inclines to hope and presumes the best. He then commands one to pray to God that He, in turn, will reveal the real image of one's heart is putting stress on the idea that self-knowledge is the fruit of ascetical practice, which includes prayer.

St. Teresa of Avila, a great Doctor of the Church endorses and inspires many to pray, commending that self-knowledge, while it could be a tough thing to face for it is like seeing in the mirror all the flaws when one is in prayer, could help one become aware of God which results in a genuine realization of who the self is, the strength that could lead to success and weakness that could cause one too many failures (Avila, 1979). In prayer, the self looking to God, the Supreme Being, who is willing to be filled from emptiness to grace and is willing to be led from darkness to light would be filled with blessings and inner light and fire within. The self will experience illumination and acquire the supernatural power to do better things for self and others. This is taking hold of one's responsibility to self and to others (Bich Pham and del Castillo, 2017) To know the self is to converse with and gaze upon God, which is prayer itself. She asserts that "we shall never succeed in knowing ourselves unless we seek to know God: let us think of His greatness and then come back to our own baseness; by looking at His purity we shall see our foulness; by meditating upon His humility, we shall see how far we are from being humble" (Avila, 1979). Knowledge of God brings self-knowledge. "If we turn from self towards God, our understanding and our will become nobler and more ready to embrace all that is good: if we never rise above the slough of our own miseries, we do ourselves a great disservice" (Avila, 1979).

St. Teresa of Avila speaks of how we get stuck in thinking solely of ourselves, ironically suffering from a lack of self-knowledge. To have a fixed idea of self can prevent one to the path of knowing self through knowing God. Knowing self in prayer will bring one to a wholesome perspective and make better decisions.

St. Teresa of Avila also emphasizes the value of self-knowledge expressing that, "However high a state the soul may have attained, self-knowledge is incumbent upon it, and it will never be able to neglect even if it should so desire ... Self-knowledge is so important that, even if you were raised right up to the heavens, you should never relax your cultivation of it" (Avila, 1979).

Similarly, Catherine of Siena writes (McDermott, 2007), "As the soul comes to know herself she also knows God better, for she sees how good He has been to her. In the gentle mirror of God she sees her own dignity: that through no merit of hers but by His creation, she is the image of God. And in the mirror of God's goodness, she sees as well her own unworthiness, the work of her own sin. For just as you can see better the blemish on your face when you look at yourself in a mirror, so that soul who in true self-knowledge rises up with a desire to look at herself in the gentle mirror of God with the eye of understanding seeing all the more clearly her own defects because of the purity she sees in Him."

And Julian of Norwich expresses (Moye, 1986), I saw most surely that it is quicker for us and easier to come to the knowledge of God than it is to know our own soul. For our soul is so deeply grounded in God and so endlessly treasured that we cannot come to the knowledge of it until we first know God, who is the Creator to whom it is united. However, nevertheless, I saw that we have, naturally from our fullness, to desire wisely and truly to know our own soul, through which we are taught to seek it where it is. Nicholas of Cusa makes the same point: Make certain that you find yourself in God (Fallon, 2012). Indeed, if one fails to see himself through the compassionate eyes of a God who loves; he will get only a distorted view of self.

Kreeft (2016) outlines ways to know God. Aside from the person of Christ, God Himself in human flesh (for Christians), one can know God through the Church, the Scriptures, even in arts, man's own conscience being the voice of God inside him, man's reasoning which include the power to reflect on nature, life's experience, and other related things including good philosophical arguments. God is also known through others' stories and literature including the lives of saints, and lastly, he recommends that in "prayer" one "meets God" and "learns more of God from a few minutes of prayerful repentance than through a lifetime in a library."

In the light of all these, it is clear that one can learn about self from being in communion with God, which is prayer. With prayer, one would never lose sight of his own mystery. One will avoid being a person digging to find the source of spring, the point where the water begins, the point just before which there is no water. In this case, it is possible only to destroy not to discover. The knowledge of self is no less precious and no less necessary to sanctity than the knowledge of God. To know the self is to render justice. It is to know the self exactly and to see as God sees (Maxim, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

This paper desired to impart to every reader knows that is not new but is just hidden in the inner self of everyone that is to pray, to talk to God, to walk with Him, to express self and seek Him. Descartes acknowledged the weakness of himself as a being who exists, the presence of a deceiver who could mislead him to know self, and the presence of a God who will never give faulty knowledge of self as the person who was created after His image.

To pray is to respond to grace, or to an invitation from the Transcendent to enter into a loving personal relationship. One of the reasons too often find close relationships beautiful, and yet unable to take away a certain level of aloneness and inner restlessness, is because every man's heart is made for a loving relationship with the Transcendent, the Infinite. Intimacy with another can awaken a hunger for something deeper. Therefore prayer, which seeks a deep intimacy with the Infinite, is an end in itself. To sit before the mystery is perhaps one of the most important practices man can do. Knowing self in prayer will bring one to a wholesome perspective and make better decisions. Indeed prayer is integral to knowing the self. As discovered, let it be continually known that the spiritual dimension of education is an inner way towards the truth. It is a constant process of a person's inner development and growth, of the rediscovery of spirituality following the inborn drive to learn and rise above everyday reality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. This paper recommends to educators to acknowledge the value of providing a continuous opportunity for learners to know themselves better through prayer, through knowing God first.
2. There's a need to educate every "person to be religious and spiritual in a particular way of life."
3. This paper hopes then that education and educators may steadily help immerse every person to the path of self-knowledge and self-realization and fruitfully gain communal experience, and that it may holistically participate in every aspect of man's endeavor as a being who exists and satisfy the ends of his ceaseless search to know his self fully.

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