

Aristotle's Understanding on "Existence of Life"

Gaofeng Zhang

School of Philosophy, Beijing Normal University, Beijing 100875, China

Abstract: *The "Existence of Life" to some extent implies the "soul", but the concept of the "soul" cannot fully encompass all the meanings of "existence of life" in Aristotle's philosophy, as it holds a broader connotation in his works. The paper first examines the understanding of the soul and life from the time of Homer to Plato and establishes the conditions for the existence of life in Aristotle's sense. It then elucidates the notion of "existence of life" from three dimensions: biology, physics, and politics, encompassing plants, animals, humans, and celestial bodies as various forms of "existence of life". Notably, "human" denotes not only a biological life form but also a political entity. This comprehensive perspective sheds profound insights on Aristotle's metaphysics, biology, political science, and ethics.*

Keywords: Existence of life, Soul, Animals, Plants, Humans, Celestial bodies.

1. INTRODUCTION

In ancient Greek, ψυχή, equivalent to the Latin word psychē, originally meant "breath" or "blowing", signifying the essence of life as breath and respiration. In a general sense, ψυχή refers to the principle of life, as "ψυχή is the origin of life"; nature and breath both belong to living beings, which is a common understanding in ancient wisdom. As an explanation of the phenomenon of life, ψυχή appears extensively in various ancient mythological stories. There is evidence suggesting that the concept of ψυχή can be traced back to Semitic and Indo-European languages. Aristotle considered life as the primary characteristic of ψυχή. The term ψυχή is often translated into English as "mind", "soul", "heart", "ghost", or "spirit". Therefore, "soul" encompasses various philosophical reflections of that time on the essence and characteristics of life. It represents the source of life or signifies a vital capacity, being the most fundamental category of life. In this sense, the analysis and investigation of the existence of life transform into the understanding and exposition of the concept of the soul. Tracing the concept of "soul/life" from Homer to Plato lays the foundation for Aristotle's proposition of the "existence of life".

2. UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE BEFORE ARISTOTLE

In early Greece, the soul, as the source of life within the body, concentrated the capacity for thought, desire, and will, providing the power of breath and regeneration, and signifying the vitality of life. Homer believed that the soul in the realm of life was an inner consciousness of life, not an external independent existence, but an organic component of the body. Homer not only regarded the soul as a fundamental characteristic of life but also considered the "heart" as the organ governing thought, where the state of the heart determines the quality of thinking, which can be seen as one of the important sources of Aristotle's idea of the rational soul. Following Homer, Orphism paid considerable attention to the issue of the soul. According to Orphism, the soul was a spirit residing within the body, immortal and imperishable, capable of transmigrating between different bodies, which had a direct influence on Plato's discussion of the soul in his work *Phaedo*. Thus, whether in epic mythology or early religion, the soul was regarded as the essential existence that constitutes life, and the understanding and interpretation of life existence cannot be separated from the interpretation of the soul.

As early myths and religions shed their mysterious veils, natural philosophy emerged to explore the fundamental principles of the world and provide explanations for the phenomenal world. Natural philosophers generally believed that there must be some "spirit" as the driving force to grasp the ultimate principles, often attributed to the soul. As a result, discussions on the soul were frequently intertwined with the inquiries into the origin of the world among natural philosophers. As early philosophy evolved into classical philosophy, the understanding of life and soul became increasingly enriched and profound.

During his studies of mathematics in Egypt, Thales embraced the idea of the immortality of the soul, considering the soul to be universally present in all things, implying that everything possesses a soul and is capable of motion. He believed that matter and soul were not separate, but rather intertwined, laying the groundwork for Aristotle's important notion that the soul is the principle of motion and inseparable from the body. Anaximenes viewed the soul as air, which binds us together, just as air and breath surround the entire world, as if the world itself were breathing. Compared to "water", "air" possessed a higher level of invisibility, but for the Milesian school, "air" remained a material existence, making the soul, as air, also a material existence. Heraclitus saw the soul as a "warm dispersion", with the driest "fire" being the superior soul, and all other things arising from the soul as the primary origin. However, the soul was also perishable, as "fire" turning into "moisture" signified death, giving the soul its sense of life. Similarly, the soul possessed thought and was the essence of reason itself, with "the soul itself having λόγος, and this λόγος is self-growing". In contrast to Heraclitus, Pythagoras and his school, influenced by religion, believed that the soul was immortal and subject to reincarnation. However, the soul was composed of substances such as blood and had the capability of sensation and thinking. Here, there existed a tension: the soul could be abstractly "number" and immortal existence, yet it was also composed of bodily material with a perishable tendency. Additionally, Pythagoras distinguished three parts - appearance, impulse, and intellect - as the internal mechanisms of the soul, providing insights and inspirations for Aristotle's

distinction of the vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual souls. The elementalists believed that the world's essence lay in some indivisible units, and the soul represented the essence of these units. Empedocles argued that the soul was composed of all elements, with each element being a soul itself. He said, "Through earth, we see earth... through strife, we know strife", and "like is known by like", thus explaining the composition of the soul itself. This theory of the elemental soul was inherited by Plato in the *Timaeus*. Anaxagoras proposed the "heterogeneous cognition" theory, suggesting that sensation could only arise from the opposite, for example, cold sensing heat. He did not question the significance of the soul, considering it identical to the mind, as a moving force, playing an important role in the process of understanding and grasping the world, though not everyone possessed a rational mind in the philosophical sense. As a representative of atomism, Democritus posited the soul as a kind of dynamic entity, a sort of fire and heat composed of the finest atoms. Atoms, as the fundamental building blocks of the world, were immortal, but the soul composed of these atoms was perishable, as it was made up of the most minute and active particles, being a material existence. When atoms separated and material vanished, the soul naturally ceased to exist.

Natural philosophy broke free from the confines of early mythology and religion and, in the form of teleology, made the soul the object of philosophical inquiry, capturing the attention and discussion of numerous early Greek natural philosophers. In a sense, the soul also became another form of the "world's principle", and "soul" became the vessel for comprehending all things in the world. It constituted the "that which is", forming the rational knowledge tradition since Thales. As philosophy "descended from the heavens to the earth", in classical Greece, discussions concerning life and the soul, while still following the paradigm of rationalism, shifted focus away from cosmological explanations. Instead, attention turned towards the human spirit.

Socrates' style of discourse, characterized by his emphasis on discussion rather than action, allows him to "live on" in Plato's dialogues. His ideas about life and the soul are preserved in Plato's early and middle dialogues, forming the "Socrates-Plato" tradition. In the concluding part of the *Phaedo*, Socrates mentions two possibilities after death: "either it is an extinction, an unconsciousness, or it is a real migration of the soul from one place to another". The idea of non-existence after life might naturally evoke fear of death, but Socrates continues, saying, "I am going to die, and you are going to live, but which of us has the happier prospect, God only knows". This suggests that Socrates leans toward the belief that the soul does not perish with the body's death but rather moves from the world of the living to the otherworldly realm. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates also maintains that "death is merely the separation of the soul and the body, and after their separation, they each retain their previous condition". This dual separation of soul and body not only reflects the immortality of the soul but also underscores Socrates' emphasis on the significance of the soul's life, as the soul is a nobler existence compared to the body.

In the metaphysical system centered around "Theory of Forms", Plato constructs and explains the concept of the "soul" in multiple dimensions and levels, giving it a more significant position in his philosophy. Firstly, Plato incorporates ideas from certain natural philosophers and Socrates regarding the soul's separability from the body and its capacity for independent existence. In the *Phaedo*, "Socrates" provides two arguments to prove the soul's existence and immortality. He posits that death is the separation of the soul from the body, implying that the soul and body can be absolutely disconnected. As the noble part of a person, possessing certain abilities and wisdom, the soul can continue to exist even after death. "Socrates" offers two lines of reasoning to demonstrate the soul's existence convincingly. Moreover, in response to the challenges from Cebes and Simmias, "Socrates" continues to argue for the immortality of the soul. Through this argument, he concludes that as death approaches, the mortal part, which is the body, naturally perishes, while the immortal part, the soul, separates from the body and avoids death. Thus, "Socrates" completes the argument for the soul's immortality and makes it a perpetually existing and immortal life form. Secondly, based on the idea of the immortal and indestructible soul, Plato introduces the concepts of soul reincarnation and soul recollection. In Book X of *The Republic*, "Socrates" tells the "Myth of Er", suggesting that souls will undergo judgment and experience reincarnation. This belief in soul reincarnation and the idea of cosmic justice aim to use the fear of reward and punishment as incentives for people to pursue goodness, justice, and the realization of an ideal city in the real world. Concerning soul recollection, Plato argues that learning is nothing but recollection, a reproduction of knowledge already within the soul. As the soul is immortal and everlasting, having undergone reincarnations, it has experienced all things and gained knowledge of them. Learning and exploration are merely the soul recalling what it already knows. Lastly, Plato identifies reason, spiritedness, and desire as the three components that constitute the soul. In *The Republic*, "Socrates" uses an analogy between the individual soul and the soul of the city-state to illustrate the roles of these three parts. In the *Phaedrus*, he employs the "Allegory of the Chariot" to explain these three parts of the soul—the soul's movement is a collective force consisting of a charioteer (representing reason), a noble horse (representing spiritedness), and a base horse (representing desire). As the gods possess the highest virtues, their charioteer and horses are virtuous, leading their soul-chariots upwards. In contrast, when the soul-chariot of a person moves, the base horse (desire) may disobey and rush towards indulgence. However, if the noble horse (spiritedness) and charioteer (reason) promptly call forth memories of beauty and goodness, the base horse (desire) can eventually be tamed, and the power of goodness will be liberated. This represents the soul's state as a result of the interaction of these three parts, reflecting internal conflicts and harmonies within the soul. Only when reason triumphs over desire can the soul be noble and achieve harmony and virtue. Consequently, Plato establishes a hierarchy of the soul's parts, with reason being the best and noblest, spiritedness occupying a middle ground with fluctuating characteristics, and desire being the worst and requiring suppression. It is from here that Plato distinguishes between the rational and non-rational parts of the soul. Thus, Plato's theory of the soul's hierarchy becomes a direct source for Aristotle's distinction between the nutritive, sensitive, and rational souls. In summary, from early myths and religions to early natural philosophers, the concept of the "soul" gradually sheds its mystical cloak. From early natural philosophers to the Socratic-Platonic tradition, the examination of the "soul" becomes increasingly rational in nature. The evolution of the understanding of the "soul" can be observed from its initial role as an external explanation

for the breath of life to becoming the embodiment of various forms of the world's origin. It further reveals its internal structure and the various implications attributed to it. All of these demonstrate the continuous advancement and enriched understanding of the concept of the "soul" by ancient Greek philosophers. It is precisely this profound analysis and deep comprehension of life and the soul, along with its components, by the preceding philosophers, that serves as a significant source for Aristotle's ideas on the concept of life and ethical considerations in his philosophy.

3. THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE EXISTENCE

The use of "soul" as a criterion for determining the presence of life existence is a crucial starting point in the discussion of Aristotle's concept of the soul. It involves a purely metaphysical realm with abundant related discussions on "potentiality-actuality", "matter-form", "four causes", and the relationship between entelechy and thought. However, delving too early into Aristotle's metaphysical discussions on the concept of the soul may lead us to overlook important concepts and content. Therefore, our current discussion on the "conditions of life existence" will primarily focus on Aristotle's biological analyses. Nevertheless, this approach also faces challenges, as Aristotle's discussions on metaphysics, physics, psychology, biology, and ethics are often intertwined. For now, we will try to avoid metaphysical discussions and instead concentrate on the biological perspective in exploring the "conditions of life existence".

Compared to earlier philosophers, especially Plato or those who approached the world with a naive or metaphysical perspective, Aristotle relied more on empirical observations and based his understanding and explanations of existence on the real world. His extensive studies in biology serve as the best example in this regard. Aristotle firmly recognized the significance of conducting research in biology and believed that acquiring knowledge about different plants and animals could bring immense pleasure to individuals. Aristotle not only authored specialized books such as *Historia Animalium*, which discussed the lifestyles and physical structures of hundreds of animals, but he also wrote works on animal dissection and physiology in *On the Parts of Animals*, on animal locomotion in *On the Movement of Animals*, on animal behavior in *On the Behavior of Animals*, and on animal generation and development in *On the Generation of Animals*. These works are based on Aristotle's long-term observations, practical dissections, and first-hand experiences, providing a wealth of empirical knowledge. Although many of Aristotle's biological assertions are considered erroneous from the perspective of modern biology, these biological insights still hold significant value in revealing Aristotle's understanding of life existence. Therefore, the present exploration of the conditions of life existence from a biological perspective serves as both preparatory groundwork and a crucial starting point for the later detailed elaboration of his concept of the soul.

Aristotle classified living beings into three major categories: plants, animals, and humans, each of which can be further subdivided into different genera. For example, within the category of plants, there are distinctions between flowering and non-flowering plants, evergreen and deciduous plants, and so on. Animals, being more advanced than plants, exhibit a greater diversity in their forms of existence. Aristotle classified animals based on their external morphology, internal organs, lifestyles, and habits, among other criteria, but a detailed discussion of these classifications is beyond the scope of this analysis. Noteworthy is Aristotle's classification based on "sociality" or "political nature". For instance, ants are classified as insects based on their intellectual capabilities, but when using sociality as a criterion, ants are elevated to a status almost equivalent to humans. Nevertheless, humans are considered to be of a higher order of existence, not due to unique bodily features, but due to their distinctive attribute of having a rational and intellectual soul. Regarding the definition of life, Aristotle believed that life could be described in several ways. Anything that fulfills any of the following conditions can be considered as having life: possessing reason, sensation, motion or rest in place, or the ability to take in nutrition and undergo growth and decay. All living entities are presumed to possess a soul as the potentiality for their living bodies. This implies that all living beings must have a soul to actualize their inherent characteristics and fulfill their existence. Without a soul, a body can never achieve its potential and will remain in a state of mere potentiality. Hence, the soul becomes the essence of life existence, and the two are closely intertwined. Furthermore, Aristotle assigned a fundamental role to the heart in the understanding of life. The heart holds a primary position in the formation of life, being one of the earliest organs to develop. In terms of sensation and perception, the heart is regarded as the source of sensation. Therefore, the heart plays a significant role in Aristotle's biology. On the other hand, the brain is seen as complementary to the heart in the body's structure. The brain, being watery, is considered the coldest part of the body, while the heart, being solid and rich in earth element, is the warmest. The brain's function is to balance the heat generated by the heart and maintain the body's temperature equilibrium. Nevertheless, the heart's function surpasses that of the brain since it not only serves as the center of blood circulation but also supplies blood to the brain. Consequently, Aristotle places greater emphasis on the heart as the source of motion and sensation, underscoring its vital role in life existence. Finally, in Aristotle's "Ladder of Nature", he views nature as a progressive sequence from the lowest inanimate natural entities to the highest and most divine. The development of nature is an orderly progression from lifeless entities to living plants, then to animals, humans, and finally to even more divine entities. All existing beings adhere to an inherent teleological order.

The above is a discussion of the "conditions for the existence of life" from a biological perspective. In this discussion, we have observed that plants, animals, and certain divine entities either possess souls or have certain parts of the soul. This implies that plants, animals, and these divine entities have the capacity and essence to be living beings. Therefore, delving into a detailed examination of them is equally constructive for advancing our subsequent work.

4. LIFE EXISTENCE OF ANIMALS, PLANTS, AND CELESTIAL BODIES

In Aristotle's *On the Soul*, in discussing the opinions of the pre-philosophers, he points out that there might not be just one definition of the soul. This question arises after he proposes that "the soul is the principle of life" - a general grasp of the essence of the soul. Using the method of "genus and species differences" as a definition model is an important aspect of Aristotle's metaphysics, allowing him to define a particular thing by grasping its specific characteristics. Thus, he believes that "in no case should one try to find a common definition", as such a definition would discard the unique properties of individual things. Therefore, the understanding and exploration of the soul cannot be confined to a general grasp, but should delve into more specific aspects of the soul, that is, to interpret different forms of life and hierarchical orders based on the differences in the soul's capacities - the nutritive capacity (soul), the sensory capacity (soul), and the intellectual capacity (soul). This construct of soul differences and hierarchical sequences, ranging from the lowest to the highest, corresponds respectively to the vegetative soul of plant life, the sensitive soul of animal life, and the intellectual soul possessed by higher beings. It is based on Aristotle's consistent logical inference and rigorous empirical practice that the description of each level of soul breaks free from the constraints of primitive religious and mythical "animism", portraying a soul panorama in the form of a pyramid with a rich hierarchical order.

First, let's discuss plants as a form of life with a vegetative soul. The reason for starting with plants is not only because "life in plants is hidden and not evident", which requires diligent exploration to observe whether "plants have souls, desires, pains, pleasures, and the ability to discriminate". It is also because the vegetative life of plants is the most fundamental, and the nutritive soul exists in all other soul capacities, as "anything that is nourished has a soul". The vegetative soul, being the most primary and universal soul, exists in all forms of life; all life forms have life because they possess the nutritive capacity. From the fact that life possesses the nutritive capacity, non-living entities are referred to as "lifeless", the key being the absence of the ability to absorb nutrients, which means they lack the soul as the form of life. All living beings with nutritive capacity have three abilities: nutrition, growth, and reproduction - nutrition being the most basic ability of life, and without the ability to absorb nutrients, no life can exist; growth represents the process of life with birth and death, demonstrating the ability of life to undergo changes; reproduction is the manifestation of life's continuity and is the shared goal of all living beings, it is also the goal of nutrition and self-growth, and the highest expression of the vegetative soul. From nutrition to growth and then to reproduction, it shows the crucial process by which the vegetative soul manifests itself. However, as an imperfect entity, in terms of the soul as a whole, the vegetative soul and its body are one and the same; plants only possess a partial soul and exist merely as potential entities.

Next is the sensitive soul of animals. As a higher level of soul compared to the vegetative soul, the sensitive soul distinguishes animals from plants as forms of life. "Plants are not animals because they lack sensation". Sensation is the reason why animals can exist as living beings. "Bivalves are animals... the only reason they are called animals is because of their sensation". Sensation is what creates the distinction between life and death. Animals can survive not only because of their bodies' sensation and movement but also because of the nutritive soul's ability to absorb nutrients, grow, and reproduce, which are essential for their survival and continuation. In this sense, the soul activities of animals and their body's nutritive functions are inseparable. The sensation capacity of animals allows them to analyze the nutrients they obtain, rather than passively and automatically absorbing them like plants. Sensation includes touch, vision, hearing, taste, and smell, with touch being the most fundamental. All animals with a soul and body have the capacity for touch, as all physical bodies are touchable. "If an animal is alive, its body must have the sense of touch". Other senses are perceived through other objects. Therefore, some animals may lack one of the senses like vision, hearing, taste, or smell, but they cannot lack touch since it is related to the existence of their life. Other senses are related to whether they "live well", which is also part of the natural teleology. However, when it comes to the characteristics of the animal soul, we cannot solely judge it based on its capacity for thought and sensation. We also need to examine the capacity for locomotion, referred to as desire in the soul. The animal soul not only possesses nutritive and sensory capacities but also the capacity for imagination. So, animals usually act according to their imagination, but since their souls lack reason and rational activity as the primary function, their imagination can only arouse desire. For beings with a complete soul, animals and plants are the same; although they are both forms of life, they only potentially possess a soul.

Lastly, there is the intellectual soul, which represents a higher level of existence. According to Aristotle's theory of natural development, the intellectual soul possesses not only the capacities for nutrition, respiration, sensation, and movement but also the capacity for rational thought, as seen in humans. As beings with intellectual souls, humans, as the higher species, govern all other forms of life, including animals and plants, in the pyramid of souls described by Aristotle. However, according to Aristotle's teleological view of nature, everything exists for a purpose, and humans are no exception. Just as non-living beings serve as the purpose for living beings, animals are the purpose for plants, and humans are the purpose for animals. Therefore, what serves as the purpose for humans, and what is the ultimate end of their existence? Aristotle suggests that, besides humans, there may be other entities even nobler than humans, and these entities are celestial bodies, the heavens. Celestial bodies possess a more noble and superior structure than our earthly systems, and they should be understood as possessing behavior and life because they also have rationality. These celestial bodies are composed of the fifth element, ether, and they possess eternal attributes that are higher and nobler than sensory entities. They rule and govern the sensory entities that undergo birth and destruction, and the higher the celestial body, the more divine it is considered to be. The most divine, the primary mover that drives the motion of all celestial bodies and serves as the ultimate purpose of the universe, is called "God". If rationality is the realization of life, then God represents the realization of rationality in its purest form, existing in its own essence. God is the

eternal entity and pure thought, embodying supreme goodness and beauty. God's existence is eternal and characterized by the realization of thought. In this sense, all celestial bodies, along with the primary mover, are considered as beings endowed with life.

5. MAN IS BY NATURE A POLITICAL ANIMAL

Since Socrates brought philosophy back from the heavens to the realm of human existence, people's contemplation of the origin of the world shifted from celestial realms to the real world of practical existence. Even though Plato proposed the theory of Forms, focusing on the otherworldly realm, he did not negate the significance of the real world. This is even more evident in his later works, as seen in his emphasis on the role of "law" in communal living and his requirements for the education and qualities of legislators. Plato's emphasis on the importance of "law" in communal living is grounded in the reality. Moving on to Aristotle, he was even more rooted in the practical aspects of life. He investigated the natural world and human society from a practical standpoint, emphasizing the centrality of "man" as a subject. This is evident not only in his works on physics, biology, psychology, and ethics but also, according to Heidegger, in his use of phenomenological methods.

From the discussions above, we have learned that the existence of life requires a necessary condition, the soul. Given that plants, animals, humans, and even the more divine celestial bodies possess some form of soul, they naturally qualify as certain forms of life. However, Aristotle, in the opening of Chapter 2 of Politics, points out that "man is by nature a political animal", which challenges our previous definition of life's boundaries. Here, the limits of life's existence are broken. But can this be understood as humans being a form of life (as animals) in the realm of politics, implying that humans possess political life? Yet, new questions arise: Why do humans have political life? What qualifies as political life for humans? Who can have political life, and in what sense can we understand humans as political beings? Even if we accept that humans can have political life, what about economic and cultural aspects, and how should such issues be addressed?

Firstly, in the final chapter of the last book of Nicomachean Ethics, titled "The Need for Political Science: An Introduction to Politics", it indicates that Aristotle's discussion of virtue is not solely focused on individual attaining the most complete happiness. Even if an individual possesses abundant virtues and happiness, they cannot live in isolation, and individual happiness cannot be achieved without external goods. This is because individuals live within the city-state, as members of a political community. Aristotle's ethics is constructed for the pursuit of "the supreme good" of the political community. The explanation of the best way of life for human beings requires discussions in politics, and "human beings can only lead a happy life as part of a political society". As social beings, humans rely on interactions with others to fulfill their needs, such as emotional, material, and reproductive needs. Here, Aristotle suggests the imperfection of individual life as human beings need the life of the community; their life remains incomplete until they participate in the affairs of the city-state.

Secondly, "Man is by nature a political animal". However, in this context, "man" refers to adult males who are citizens of the city-state, excluding women, children, foreigners, and slaves. According to Aristotle, men and women have different soul structures, where men are considered "rulers", and women are "ruled". Women are deemed ineligible to participate in political life. Children, due to their immature intellect, require education within the city-state. Slaves, as property of their masters, are regarded as "living tools", and their relationship is confined to domestic management, not involving politics. Foreigners also lack the right to participate in the public affairs of the city-state. Consequently, women, children, foreigners, and slaves are excluded from the political life of the city-state, significantly limiting the number of participants. Only adult males with citizenship, i.e., those possessing civic qualifications, can be part of the city-state community and engage in the management of public affairs. In this sense, citizens are the true subjects of city-state politics, and only citizens possess political life, making them "political animals".

Moreover, "by nature" confers the logical inevitability of man being a political animal. "By nature" refers to being innate, intrinsic, or in accordance with the teleological view of nature, where this purpose unfolds gradually. As we discussed earlier, living beings exist to fulfill the purpose of non-living entities, and higher forms of life exist to serve as the purpose for lower forms of life. Similarly, when examining individual existence and development, the same teleological path applies. Initially, as solitary individuals, it is challenging to achieve a "good life" solely through self-sufficiency, thus making the natural purpose unattainable. For this reason, nature endows individuals with an inherent "social disposition", and only by living in a community and sharing life can individuals progressively unfold their natural essence. Consequently, individuals begin to form connections based on "biological necessity", leading to procreation and the emergence of a master-slave relationship, delineated by physical and intellectual differences. This marks the inception of basic social organization represented by the family. With population growth, an increase in the number of families, and the consolidation of families in close proximity, more advanced forms of social organization represented by small-scale communities come into existence. As these small communities continuously unite, they give rise to the city-state, the most sophisticated and complete form of social organization. Therefore, "the city-state is clearly a product of nature, and man is by nature a political animal". All of this unfolds according to nature's purposes, and man's natural essence determines his inevitable possession of political life and his status as a political animal within the city-state. This alignment with nature's purposes means that individuals, as natural beings, inherently possess the potential to be city-state residents, to lead political lives, to have political life, and to be political animals. In this context, citizens, as the main subjects of city-state political life, represent the realization of individuals' natural essence as natural beings. Here, the individual's life flourishes greatly, achieving true self-actualization.

Finally, since we acknowledge that man can be a political animal and can exist as a political life within the city-state, why not further explore man's existence in other social domains? The reason lies in the fact that "since political science lays down the laws of what we should and should not do, its purpose encompasses the purposes of other disciplines". By taking political science as the starting point and grasping this fundamental and enlightening discipline, we can gain profound insights into other levels of discussion that follow. Exploring these other dimensions may not contribute significantly to our progress because political science already encompasses the essence of those domains.

REFERENCES

- [1] Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, Princeton University Press, 1984.
- [2] Plato, *Plato Complete Works*, trans by John Madison Cooper, Hackett Publishing, 1997.
- [3] Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1993.
- [4] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, Touchstone Press, 1967.
- [5] G. E. R. Lloyd, *Early Greek Science, Thales to Aristotle*, Chatto and Windus, 1970.
- [6] Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Soul and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, Harper Torchbooks, 1966.
- [7] Anthony Preus, *Science and Philosophy in Aristotle's Biological Works*, Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 1975.
- [8] Clarke, M., *Flesh and Spirit in the Songs of Homer: A Study of Words and Myths*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
- [9] Chuan-gen Huang, *Capacity and Cognition: Study on Aristotle's Theory of Soul* (Ph.D., Beijing Normal University, China, 2016).