

"Awareness" vs. "Knowledge"

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Oh language, standing like a high tree, you are also the mumbling whisper of one, blind from birth, wandering through the labyrinth of knowledge.

Saint John Perse – French poet

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With an infantile grasp of the language of our universe, it is almost unnerving how easily we spin convoluted distortions of the languages we claim to master. No blame is placed against our character for not possessing fluency in the mathematics and physics of our inner and exterior environment. The truth is that no earthly language exists that can sufficiently describe much of what these disciplines are screaming, thus creating a void in understanding – and more importantly – acceptance.

Still there is substance in our measurements as we continue to use the simpler formulas in order to describe our lives and the meaning of our existences. For all of our efforts we stake a claim on “mastery”. But even with the solid foundation from which our conquered linguistic talents draw their strength, it is easy to witness just how fragile and incomplete our words can be – lovers dismissed, friends alienated, paths adjusted or destroyed, and wars waged. All due to our “mastery” of words.

We can “know” the meaning of a spoken sentiment without being “aware” of its potential impact. Even the words “knowledge” and “awareness” are tossed around in a tumbler and used interchangeably. Though I don’t proclaim these two particular words as most important or pivotal to our understanding of each other, they are a pair of words that have helped to influence how I filter data – not by gluing myself to their similarities, but by understanding their differences. The subtleties that divide the definition of the words “knowledge” and “awareness” are, in my opinion, of greater importance than their common grounds. I would like to spend my own words for this month’s post on the topic, with a desire to not dismiss, alienate, or destroy.

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On a recent Autumn morn my mind swarmed with thoughts of a million genres relating to the spiritual realm as applied to the sciences. The most active time is during my walks with the dogs, and the dawn of this particular day provided no exception.

Letting my synaptic activity increase their firing sequence during such times, so much of what I conceive winds up becoming a mush of disjointed information that makes me sleepy well before breakfast. But every now and then a thought will cross my vision, just out of view of my eyes, that will have me fated for a sleepless search for answers.

For more time than I can recall I've been in a battle of thoughts that have both blessed and cursed me. My search for spirit, guidance, and who my soul wishes me to be has left me with more questions than answers. During a visit with my mother a couple of years ago, she advised me that I should broaden my "awareness". Interpreting her words as a challenge for me to become more intellectually rounded, I've spent much of the time since striving for "knowledge".

Loved ones in my life who seek the same spiritual enlightenment have often heard me say that I wish I could be in the "knowing" as they are. I wish that I could be certain of the things they claim to "know". Instead I've based my views on "faith" and have tried to combine them with recent "knowledge" of universal working. I've done this by reading through the disciplines of Quantum Mechanics, Chaos Theory, Self Organizing systems, and Small World Networks. I've also browsed through some of the research done by the Institute of Noetic Sciences, and have enjoyed programs such as Morgan Freeman's "Through the Wormhole" and "What the Bleep Do We Know?". I was blown away during a recent viewing of the movie "Cloud Atlas" as it sang a familiar song – one I've never heard yet always known.

These "beliefs" of mine have needed to be soft enough to engage in the continuous metamorphosis that new information demands of them. And boy oh boy, does new information seem to expand as fast as our universe with each passing moment! Both science and the "unexplained phenomenon" that regularly occurs around us requires our attention else we leave any chance of obtaining the truth well behind.

Yet each time I've felt that I possessed an answer to the question of our soul's journey, a logical and pragmatic argument would turn my peg into a "square" when the puzzle demanded a "round" one. So back to the beginning I go, round and round, where I stop nobody knows.

This battlefield in my mind has provided both beauty and anguish....both enlightenment and self doubt....both light and darkness. As I look back, I discover that I've cherished this fight. All that I've allowed my mind to engage in over the past couple of years has plowed the ground for understanding the fundamental differences between my quest for knowledge and my need for awareness. No, they are not quite the same animal.

I won't bore you with Webster's definitions, nor will I engage in a professorship of English that I do not possess. Instead I'll pass along thoughts, conjecture, and faith-filled commentary that applies to these concepts. The reason I do this is because on this particular Autumn morning as I allowed my dogs to drag me along our routine route like Iditarod sled dogs – I imagined a whisper in my mind's ear.

The crazy echoing in the confines of my skull bore all the proof necessary to have me diagnosed as insane. Regardless of the implications that come along with hearing voices in your head, what I heard was that "Awareness" does not require the cooperation of "Knowledge" to exist.....that everything we perceive to "know" is as much an obstacle to the truth as it is an enabler.

"Awareness" is an attempt to focus on our environment. There is touch of "flow" that exists in everything we see, touch, smell, and feel.....to become "aware" that all of the energy that exists in all things – animate or not – possesses the exact same elements as every soul that walks this earthly realm. "Awareness" is to acknowledge that our hearts

are heard, whether we speak their intent or only think them. "Awareness" is the realization that we are everything, and everything is who we are.

"Awareness" is not the collection of "real" information that stimulates our thoughts. Though "real" information is necessary for us to survive in this world, there is a far greater source of reality that moves us through our journeys.

"Awareness" is spiritual information that flows through us all. This flow of data is endless and flawless, unlike the limited and often errant data that we find in books, magazines, television, and now the internet.

"Awareness" is the truth of our existence. But to quantify it is not something we are capable of doing using any of our spoken languages. It is a string of feelings inside our hearts that, though we don't understand the syntax, we comprehend the light it brings.

"Awareness", when we focus on that concept alone, finds our wings and births us into rarified air, so that we become conscious of both realms... our earthly classroom and our spirited home.

All right, enough of the spiritual sentiment and let me translate into more practical terms. *(Also, I would like to take this opportunity and reassure my readers that voices in my head are not a common occurrence.)*

It's a warming thought that all one need do is learn how to become "aware" in order to survive the challenges of this world. But absent of "knowledge", that and a dollar won't buy you a Snickers Bar (because you aren't really 'you' when you're hungry). I've since decided that a marriage of the two is absolutely necessary to move through this journey with confidence. To be aware of your hand is not the same thing as knowing what to do with it.

Words can both define us and they can confuse us. My greatest flaw has been to keep both words... that is, both "Knowledge" and "Awareness"... synonymous of one another. This has been my biggest obstacle over these last years of self discovery. Allowing myself to understand the fundamental differences of these two concepts with respect to my search for hidden answers means that I will no longer need to rewind and start over. I am much more aware of how much knowledge I do not possess – and I have become far more knowledgeable of things that cry out for our awareness.

A poem that just came to me as I sit here writing best surmises my thoughts on this subject:

*I know that what I mean to say may not be what you hear,
Unless you've learned to listen with a soulful inner ear.
So when I say "I love you", don't wilt and turn away,
Be aware that time is endless...
... and we'll love another day.*

Sean Yeterian