

# Delphi: Self Assessment



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| Led by | Reflection Freenote                               |
| Title  | Self Awareness, Spirituality and Religious Belief |
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## INTRODUCTION

Our topic tonight is **Self-Awareness, Spirituality and Religious Belief**. Human beings have, as a species, a central survival trick. We are good at perceiving and understanding patterns in reality which allow us to make complex and generally pretty good predictions about cause and effect. In this sense we are essentially teleological creatures. That is, we are concerned with causes and outcomes. With stories, novels, plays, books, we want to know how it turned out. Where is this thing going? What is the point here? What is the purpose, where is this leading us? We are also keenly aware as creatures that we are quite small and very much at risk to the greater forces of the Cosmos which take many forms.

We begin our life as infants and immediately have a relationship with enormously powerful natural entities (parents) who respond to our pleadings and provide us with the necessities of life. We experience pleasure or pain at their hands and struggle to understand their minds, desires and nature and then define ourselves in terms of them. It seems natural that we should tend to perceive our place in the greater Cosmos in these same terms, and we do.

So across cultures and over historical time (and before) we have stories about how and why things are progressing the way they are, and we seek the approval and support of Cosmos as parent. Religions are the organized expression of this human tendency, and the various purposes and outcomes ascribed to our species and the cosmos is a bit different from religion to religion and from time to time. With the rise of science a new “story” is being written and integrated into our collective and progressively globalized psyche.

This is a story about physical processes and the manifestation of ideas into expressions of material power. It is a story about evolution and the enormous role of randomness in the progression, or perhaps meandering of the human story. In this multicultural, globalized, and now virally scientific collective psyche the role of spirituality and religion continues to loom large if chaotically in our consciousness.

On the one hand there are proponents of a Cosmos which is essentially without meaning and purpose, in itself, aside from whatever “fantasies” an individual might attach for their own narrow purposes. On the other are proponents of a Cosmos which is meaningful and purposeful, in itself, although we as individuals and as cultures may never be able to perceive this on anything other than a microscopically metaphoric level. Of course, neither contention is capable of proof or demonstration and remains in the arena of “faith”.

And yet this is a foundational faith difference between people and seems to create different sorts of existential challenges for those who adopt one perspective rather than the other.

So what do you think?

- ≈ Is spirituality/religiosity natural to homo-sapiens? If so why?
- ≈ Is the Cosmos purposeless or not?
- ≈ Does it make any difference if it is or isn't?
- ≈ And how do you think it effects a human being psychologically, if they think the Universe has intrinsic meaning or doesn't?



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## DISCUSSION:

- [16:39] Shorahmin Femto: Good intro Ref
- [16:39] Vivacious Voom: yes
- [16:40] Reflection Freenote: thanks Shor, Viv
- [16:40] Yanne Proudfoot: Its like throwing tons of bales out to us and saying, Find the needles! laughs
- [16:40] Reflection Freenote: yes!!! Or just play with the straw, even!!!
- [16:40] Yanne Proudfoot: that too...I'm all for that!
- [16:41] Marvin Macbain: I was actually intrigued by an earlier thing I think you said Ref, along the lines of whether religion spoils spirituality. Did you ask a question like that?
- [16:41] Shorahmin Femto: Well, I'll start, To me the universe probably has a transcending purpose. However, I think we sell ourselves short if we feel it is beyond us
- [16:42] Shorahmin Femto: also, I think we as a species can and will influence that purpose
- [16:42] Vivacious Voom: [16:38] Reflection Freenote: *Is spirituality/religiosity natural to homo sapiens? -- assuming one defines themselves as a human being, who is born, lives and dies -- one might say, they are consciousness projected forth into a temporal physical environment*
- [16:43] Reflection Freenote: yes, Marvin, that is something which will be mention in the evolutionary psychology discussion at 6PM, but, it has to do with how we get caught up in trying to control reality through religion, and in my opinion lose our connection to spirituality which is more about acceptance and awareness than control
- [16:43] Marvin Macbain: So the topic is actually different at 4:30 and 6 :) I tend to conflate the two.
- [16:43] Reflection Freenote: cool Shor, I agree about the purpose, I do wonder about us defining it thoroughly though
- [16:43] Reflection Freenote: yes about us influencing it also
- [16:44] Kev Uladstron: In religious settings, I have heard religious leaders say there is no spirituality without religion
- [16:44] Shorahmin Femto: not thoroughly, but contributing to it yes; we are not alone in this
- [16:44] Reflection Freenote: yes Viv about consciousness projected or associated with a material form
- [16:44] Reflection Freenote: yes, sorry Marvin, it would confuse \*me\* more if I made it about something totally different:))
- [16:44] Marvin Macbain: Well one of the things from a religious point of view, is that spirituality that is sort of free floating, and not anchored in any definite belief system, is highly suspect.
- [16:45] Reflection Freenote: well, Kev, religious leaders do tend to be selling "brand x" and so they also tend to say that you have to have their particular brand also, I think
- [16:45] Shorahmin Femto: agreed
- [16:45] Marvin Macbain: As religions become more ecumenical or inter-faith, it becomes more difficult for them to insist their brand is the only one that works :)
- [16:46] Reflection Freenote: yes Shor, we are \*one\* with all of this, I think
- [16:46] Vivacious Voom: sure same with most groups, politics, etc
- [16:46] Reflection Freenote: how so Marvin?
- [16:46] Shorahmin Femto: Marvin, yes they continue un dissuaded
- [16:46] Kev Uladstron: I don't disagree Ref, however, I think Marvin is onto something. It is easy to say that one is spiritual without it really meaning anything.
- [16:46] Shorahmin Femto: yet
- [16:47] Marvin Macbain: Well...
- [16:47] Reflection Freenote: yes, about ecumenism, Marvin, which is why they have come to it slowly and tentatively, I think
- [16:47] Shorahmin Femto: and reluctantly lol

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- [16:47] Marvin Macbain: take liberal christianity as an example.
- [16:47] Reflection Freenote: so, Kev, tell me about why unreligious spirituality, tends not to mean something
- [16:48] Marvin Macbain: go ahead first Kev... (it's hard to coordinate different threads)
- [16:48] Reflection Freenote: well it's fine with me if you make it complex Marvin :))
- [16:48] Kev Uladstron: I mean it as a reflection of who is saying it, not anti spirituality. As in it is politically correct to say.
- [16:49] Marvin Macbain: Ok I can elaborate if you want me to ... :)
- [16:49] Gahrns Piccard: Dalai Lama is non religious spiritual?
- [16:49] Reflection Freenote: sure Marvin, please
- [16:49] Reflection Freenote: well the Dalai Lama is pretty religious, I think, but radically ecumenical
- [16:49] Marvin Macbain: Well there is a tendency to talk about spirituality as divorced from definite belief.
- [16:50] Reflection Freenote: yes Marvin, it can be much more amorphous
- [16:50] Shorahmin Femto: there are many militant believers without any spirituality
- [16:50] Marvin Macbain: But in my opinion, spirituality without firm belief, is missing out on something very important.
- [16:50] Vivacious Voom: I would suggest - detached from religion but not void of defined belief
- [16:50] Reflection Freenote: religion tends to get into lots of detail by comparison
- [16:50] Marvin Macbain: from an experiential point of view
- [16:51] Reflection Freenote: so firm belief, as in a creed Marvin?
- [16:51] Marvin Macbain: Yeah, I guess so. Which I would define as... a belief in God, and a particular manifestation of God which makes his existence relevant to our lives and entails the possibility of an intimate relationship with God.
- [16:52] Reflection Freenote: sure, so something that really spells out why it should be important to us
- [16:52] Reflection Freenote: and defines the nature of the relationship, so you don't have to make it up for yourself?
- [16:53] Marvin Macbain: When I used to believe, I was irritated by "vague spirituality" :)
- [16:53] Vivacious Voom: if one were raised by wolves in the wild (like Jungle Book) would one experience God? Not having been taught what or who God is
- [16:53] Marvin Macbain: As it is now, I would feel more comfortable having dinner with a committed Christian, than with a new-age crystal gazer :)
- [16:53] Reflection Freenote: hahahahaha, that's fun Marvin. I love vague spirituality!!!
- [16:53] Shorahmin Femto: you probably would have asked "Why?" Viv
- [16:54] Marvin Macbain: ... even though I guess I'm neither myself.
- [16:54] Vivacious Voom: is God learned or experienced?
- [16:54] Marvin Macbain: very good question Viv
- [16:54] Shorahmin Femto: yes!
- [16:54] Marvin Macbain: you see from a Christian point of view it is both; a child is baptized
- [16:54] Shorahmin Femto: the questions that lead to the God concept are experienced
- [16:54] Reflection Freenote: I suppose, from my point of view, Marvin, while religiosity tends to package spirituality in a way that is user friendly, it tends to create "in-groups" and out-groups" and so also seems to make lots of conflict between people
- [16:54] Vivacious Voom: Is it possible each person's experience is different?
- [16:54] Marvin Macbain: brought up in the faith and led into the experience of God
- [16:55] Vivacious Voom: hence an all loving God versus a vengeful and angry God
- [16:55] Shorahmin Femto: I presume it is Viv
- [16:56] Reflection Freenote: actually Viv, I find nature to be profoundly spiritual, and most aboriginal peoples have a very deep sense of connection with the spiritual , I think
- [16:56] Vivacious Voom: and like everything else -- Is it possible that we each in our own way filter our experience through our model of reality / the world?

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- [16:56] Yanne Proudfoot smiles at Reflection
- [16:56] Vivacious Voom: filter God through
- [16:56] Shorahmin Femto: There is recipe spirituality and relational spirituality
- [16:56] Thoth Jantzen: do u think a connection to nature is the same as a connection to the spiritual?
- [16:56] Marvin Macbain: Ref, I was brought up as a Catholic, and the Catholic Church these days, while maintaining its creed, and clearly distinguishing itself from other religions, very much avoids getting into conflict with others.
- [16:56] Vivacious Voom: I agree about nature
- [16:57] Reflection Freenote: agreed Viv about being highly defined by culture, most people who are religious, have the religion that they were raised with
- [16:57] Vivacious Voom: Is it possible that we, nature, the cosmos and all are one?
- [16:57] Shorahmin Femto: don't know what that means
- [16:57] Marvin Macbain: ... does not deny that there are other paths to God, but believes in the primacy of itself, as arguably any religion must, in order to be coherent.
- [16:57] Vivacious Voom: meaning not separate
- [16:57] Thoth Jantzen: we are not only connected to nature, but a part of it, so it's not hard to see how 'feeling' such a connection can 'seem' spiritual, but it could be that we are simply using a wrong concept for an intuitive feeling of the deep connection we have with nature.
- [16:58] Reflection Freenote: yes Marvin about the RC faith becoming progressively ecumenical
- [16:58] Yanne Proudfoot: How can we be separate when we are all made out of the same primordial soup?
- [16:58] Shorahmin Femto: interconnected, relational is not unity but generally I think so
- [16:58] Reflection Freenote: Thoth, I think so, because connection with nature tends to be an awareness of the baseness of it, which is the essential element for me in connection with spirituality
- [16:58] Marvin Macbain: but not everything-goes like progressive protestant denominations.
- [16:58] Thoth Jantzen: it doesn't need to be spiritual to feel profound.
- [16:58] Yanne Proudfoot: it is mans religion that has separated us from nature and spirituality
- [16:58] Vivacious Voom: then why the disagreement in religion of we are indeed all one?
- [16:59] Reflection Freenote: yes, Viv, I think we are all one:))
- [16:59] Vivacious Voom: me too : )
- [16:59] Thoth Jantzen: but I think we often equate them...wrongly.
- [16:59] Yanne Proudfoot: and it is a Man's religion, not created by women
- [16:59] Shorahmin Femto: I objected to "One"
- [16:59] Yanne Proudfoot: Men looking for the benevolent Father
- [16:59] Shorahmin Femto: yet, oneness might be supportive of the "purpose"
- [17:01] Reflection Freenote: it does seem that the specific differences in relation often mirrors cultural and historical progressions. The "deep structure" of religion, to borrow a psycholinguistic term, seems to be the golden rule, and an awareness of connection with the rest of the cosmos
- [17:01] Vivacious Voom: Is it possible we are various points of consciousness projected forth into physical reality -- learning, expanding and yet each one a part of the larger whole?
- [17:01] Shorahmin Femto: That's very Christian Viv
- [17:02] Vivacious Voom: Is it?
- [17:02] Shorahmin Femto: most of them don't realize it though
- [17:02] Reflection Freenote: that is a very nice description and metaphor Viv
- [17:02] Vivacious Voom: : )
- [17:02] Yanne Proudfoot: First the Catholics came, and then the Protestants, they almost destroyed my people. They pitted them against each other, scalped, gave small pox blankets. Forced the children to go to their white schools, cut their hair, beat them if they spoke their native tongue...
- [17:02] Yanne Proudfoot: all in the name of religion!
- [17:03] Shorahmin Femto: Most/all christians profess that all creation is a manifestation of the mind of God

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- [17:03] Reflection Freenote: yes, Yanne, religion has always been used by all human groups to support cultural conquest and domination
- [17:03] Vivacious Voom: Is it possible that which we call God is that which we all are?
- [17:04] Shorahmin Femto: a piece of it , I think Viv
- [17:04] Reflection Freenote: sure, Shor, although any time we talk about particular relations we should always note that even the simplest one, is not simple and there are hundreds if not thousands of different versions of each of them
- [17:04] Vivacious Voom: a piece as in points of consciousness projected forth?
- [17:04] Shorahmin Femto: back and forth Viv
- [17:04] Piper Paliana: My husband often shares your view Yanne, but it's easy to blame religion rather than people and their lust for power.
- [17:04] Vivacious Voom: seeking clarification
- [17:05] Thoth Jantzen: what is religion without people?
- [17:05] Kev Uladstron: At the same time, religion is also very helpful. Tarakeshwar et al. (2003) found religiousness (specifically Hindi) to be related to well-being, both physical and mental, when studying practicing Hindus in the United States. Maddi et al. (2006) found religiousness to be negatively related to depression and anger.
- [17:06] Reflection Freenote: yes, it is the nature of religion to be institutionalized, and therefore is often an arm of the state, and plays roles in the power politics of nations through history, whereas it is more difficult for "spirituality" to be co-opted in that fashion, I think
- [17:06] Thoth Jantzen: it's like trying to 'blame the System' for problems, and not hold the individuals within it responsible for their parts in it, especially the leadership.
- [17:06] Vivacious Voom: I think as awareness expands, as consciousness expands, we find more and more 'human beings' are questioning 'religion'
- [17:06] Shorahmin Femto: so at last, it's a survival mechanism Kev
- [17:06] Yanne Proudfoot: That's a cop out, as the religious institutions allowed it in the name of God - to civilize the savages!
- [17:06] Vivacious Voom: so religion is a tool
- [17:07] Piper Paliana: That doesn't mean that whatever God there is out there would approve of it.
- [17:07] Vivacious Voom: it has an agenda, yes?
- [17:07] Reflection Freenote: yes, Kev, the social support alone which a member of a practicing religion has is very helpful to well-being, and social support is itself related to those dependent variables
- [17:07] Shorahmin Femto: Yanne, humanity did it to humanity, it has always been so. The suffering of the indigenous ppl of North America was not unique. Just added to our horrible record
- [17:07] Kev Uladstron: Viv - I think those agendas are often at odds with their scripture
- [17:07] Thoth Jantzen: I don't think 'religion' is inherently bad. It is the purposes people put it towards and how they conduct themselves....
- [17:07] Vivacious Voom: why is God 'out there'?
- [17:08] Yanne Proudfoot: It is unique to me Shora
- [17:08] Shorahmin Femto: it is personal to you; as it should be, never forget
- [17:08] Thoth Jantzen: I think it IS largely 'delusional' in that it is based on some misguided ideas, but that said, often the purpose and intent of the thing is not 'bad' - but is just used wrongly.
- [17:09] Reflection Freenote: Kev, the interesting thing about standard religious scriptures is that you can find support for a truly broad and often horrendous array of behaviors
- [17:09] Yanne Proudfoot: and to my people as it has been passed down orally for generations; it has not been forgotten, and cannot be forgotten. The Indigenous Peoples, what's left of them throughout the world, bear the scars to this day.

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- [17:09] Vivacious Voom: Scripture -- is a mix of universal truth for lack of a better way to put it, and the definitions of men trying to comprehend these truths -- and also, it has been corrupted by those seeking to control the masses
- [17:10] Vivacious Voom: one will resonate with each part of Scripture according to their beliefs
- [17:10] Shorahmin Femto: every ppl bears scars, some are just older
- [17:10] Kev Uladstron: Ref - I wonder if the support is really there though. I think it is often bent to justify action that are not spiritual at all.
- [17:10] Shorahmin Femto: the Irish at the hands of the English were as badly treated; almost at the same time; Armenians, Jews, Gypsies on and on
- [17:11] Reflection Freenote: well Viv, it seems as though scripture, like religion, because it is codified and used institutionally is the focus of power politics throughout history. So the council of Nicea was called by the Emperor Constantine for purposes having to do with the management of the Roman Empire (and they selected which books to put in the bible also)
- [17:12] Shorahmin Femto: it is personal to their ancestors to this day
- [17:12] Vivacious Voom: agreed
- [17:12] Shorahmin Femto: descendants he meant to say lol
- [17:12] Yanne Proudfoot: I feel the pain of all that experienced this, Shora...my people just got it sooner...and again this is all in the name of the religion that you the men of this world created
- [17:12] Reflection Freenote: well, Kev, support for slavery, for example is certainly in the old testament. So lots of ideas that we don't tend to approve of today certainly
- [17:13] Kev Uladstron: okay. I'll give you that.
- [17:13] Shorahmin Femto: actually, I wasn't there at the time so I don't carry any guilt, my guilt is more recent
- [17:13] Vivacious Voom: religion without followers is not going far
- [17:13] Vivacious Voom: people do love their sense of certainty, don't they?
- [17:14] Reflection Freenote: some believe that religious definition is important while others are more skeptical
- [17:15] Vivacious Voom: Some believe the Devil lives inside the Earth.....and God is somewhere up in the clouds
- [17:16] Reflection Freenote: yes, Viv, one of the helpful attributes of a defined religion is that it purports to "tell" people what the truth is, and that can be very comforting. There do seem to be some prices attached though
- [17:16] Chester Dickens: Wouldn't you say that religion is more of a group effort...while spirituality is more of an individual self reflection?
- [17:16] Reflection Freenote: that's a nice distinction Chester, I would agree
- [17:16] Reflection Freenote: where two or more are gathered, there is politics
- [17:16] Vivacious Voom: Yes and no Chester -- even in 'spirituality' many people will migrate back to being part of a collective
- [17:16] Kev Uladstron: lol
- [17:17] Reflection Freenote: yes, Viv, as soon as we get a group going we start to want to define ourselves, and therefore what our beliefs are
- [17:17] Vivacious Voom: agreed, Free
- [17:17] Chester Dickens: I caught the part about the old testament...and it's true if people today would practice those laws, they would be arrested.
- [17:19] Reflection Freenote: it seems as though the distinction between religion and spirituality, may be giving us an opportunity to strip away some of the cultural and historical acretia from religion, and allow it to serve again more general human purposes
- [17:20] Shorahmin Femto: Good religion is what spiritual people do when they get together?
- [17:20] Reflection Freenote: interesting Shor
- [17:20] Vivacious Voom: What people call, Heaven is a state of being, not a destination
- [17:20] Shorahmin Femto: Bad religion is self sufficient and recipe based

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- [17:21] Reflection Freenote: although having been a member of several unitarian churches, I can attest that even spiritual people when they get together start to create a political collective (don't seem to be able to help themselves)
- [17:21] Vivacious Voom: yeap
- [17:21] Shorahmin Femto: do this and this (you fill in the ingredients) and this () will happen
- [17:21] Vivacious Voom: and you know in grouping with those like minded people it validates what they believe
- [17:22] Vivacious Voom: so they don't feel so afraid of the unknown
- [17:22] Reflection Freenote: we do define ourselves collectively in terms of ideologies, it seems, so the very personal nature of spirituality does seem to be an important part of its importance
- [17:22] Shorahmin Femto: is that bad, it's really big out there
- [17:23] Yanne Proudfoot: what is big out there, Shora?
- [17:23] Chester Dickens: There are some values in religion which could be considered the spiritual life...such as do on to others as you would have them do to you. That's would be exteriorizing your particular level of beingness...It wouldn't work if say, you were a psychopath.
- [17:23] Reflection Freenote: it certainly has good elements Shor, although when we are defining spiritual things, the problems we get into is that we are often defining things very authoritatively but without very much validity (there is an old quip about lawyers "often wrong, but never in doubt")
- [17:24] Vivacious Voom: Yes, Chester but everyone has a different standard of what might be done unto them and many will rationalize why they're being 'bad' to another anyway -- The Golden Rule is often broken
- [17:25] Chester Dickens: Morality is not universal.
- [17:25] Vivacious Voom: no?
- [17:25] Reflection Freenote: If we could get the golden rule down, we probably wouldn't need religion:))
- [17:25] Kev Uladstron: Shouldn't the Golden rule be do unto others as they would do unto themselves?
- [17:25] Marvin Macbain: yeah except mind reading is hard
- [17:26] Vivacious Voom: I think all of it is just as it should be -- it inspires growth -- expansion of consciousness -- we don't want everyone to be the same
- [17:27] Vivacious Voom: there are various levels of awareness and we all bounce off one another and learn
- [17:27] Kev Uladstron: Agreed Viv - more than one of me would truly be scary
- [17:27] Reflection Freenote: although it is interesting that many people in the modern world (maybe many in this discussion) need to remember that the golden rule assumes that you treat yourself well. So we should also treat ourselves the way that we would like for others to treat us, perhaps
- [17:27] Vivacious Voom: lol Kev
- [17:27] Reflection Freenote: yes Viv, the cosmos is evolving as it should be perhaps;-)
- [17:27] Vivacious Voom: well said Free, exactly
- [17:29] Chester Dickens: That might be the whole crux of the problem, humans are not conscious of themselves or others as they can be. Would you say that people who are more conscious or aware are more spiritual?
- [17:29] Vivacious Voom: no, just more aware
- [17:29] Reflection Freenote: I think you have something there Chester
- [17:29] Chester Dickens: What makes a person Spiritual?
- [17:30] Reflection Freenote: certainly in Buddhism it is taught that to be aware is the path to compassion (getting out of the illusion of your own separateness or ego)
- [17:30] Chester Dickens: Is it your level of beingness...those qualities of how you are.
- [17:30] Chester Dickens: Yes...I was thinking of Buddha, the awoken one...which doesn't really rely upon some exterior deity
- [17:30] Vivacious Voom: Yes, at various levels of awareness / consciousness we 'see' and don't 'see'; the ah, ha! moments are soooooo yummy