

Delphi: Self Assessment



Led by	Reflection Freenote
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INTRODUCTION

Personal Evolution is that process of ongoing change which all of us are subject to as we live our lives. We have many potential behaviors, thoughts and feelings, which interact with the world, and some of these work better than others. On average the ones that work better are rewarded and persist and further change and the ones that work poorly are punished and tend to drop out. For the most part this is not, however, a conscious process.

To be conscious and aware of our progressions requires an ability to step out of our habits of reflexive response to the environment. That is, when I am just reacting to my day, I am not being consciously aware, and most of the time (speaking personally), I am just reacting to my day. That is, we are designed to pretty much run on autopilot as creatures, and reflective self-awareness is a skill that must be cultivated.

In order to be consciously aware of my own progressions, I must first be able to step out of my routine habits, and take time to simply sit and reflect. That is, I must observe myself. Meditation is a very focused method of “observing the observer”. That is, most of the time, I am observing and reacting to the external world, or my own habitual thoughts.

In Meditation we learn to observe, consciously, the process which is us. So the simple way to start is to simply observe, and develop the skill of not being distracted from a simple process, like our breathing. From this we can move to observing consciously other aspects of actual moment-to-moment reality, involving other physical sensations, or sights, or sounds.

From this we can move to the practice of observing feelings in the moment so as to be aware of them, as opposed to simply having them. So, for example, in meditative awareness, I would become aware of my hunger (or desire to eat something) and examine with calm clarity the nature of this set of feelings, sensations, and thoughts. Rather than just run off and put some food in my mouth, which is the “normal” reactive response.

In practicing the skill of observing my own reality, I become better able to step out of my conditioned habits of perception of self and others. In this way I can better see myself and by extension, my patterns in living. In being actually aware of myself and my patterns, I am better able to recognize my evolutionary flux over time and even take some conscious role in this. In fact, it might well be that without this skill of being able to step out of my “reactive” habit formations, I cannot take a genuinely conscious role in my own transformations.

So, do you observe your feelings and thoughts, or do you just have them?

- ≈ What is the nature of this sort of reflection for you?
- ≈ Does it matter whether we call it meditation?
- ≈ Are there different ways of approaching the same awareness?



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DISCUSSION:

- [16:37] DanD Rau: We are all quietly meditating I think
- [16:37] William Gide: I am repeated struck, these days, by the degree to which some of these mental practices we consider "Eastern" were also present in ancient philosophy.
- [16:38] Ungo Azambuja: appropriate silence,
- [16:38] Reflection Freenote: I might add the question of whether you think personal evolution is a conscious process and whether it is different than setting goals in life:))
- [16:38] William Gide: IN particular, this facility to *observe our own mental processes* as a way to self-understanding and self-improvement.
- [16:38] Yanne Proudfoot: When I was younger I turned to drugs to find myself or the What Is, I just laughed a lot. Now I use the healthy more mind bending exercise of simple breathing and floating through space to achieve more of a goal besides laughing.
- [16:38] Sunshine Bernard: there are times when we have emotions, reactions and don't know where they come from...
- [16:38] Reflection Freenote: yes, William, our focus on science and technology in the west, has taken us away I think from the meditative traditions of the West
- [16:39] William Gide: As Epictetus says, "what other art exists which can contemplate *itself*?"
- [16:39] William Gide: Yes, science (once called natural philosophy) has cut loose from the philosophical concerns which started it.
- [16:39] Reflection Freenote: yes, Yanne, I think many of us have explored reality with the use of substances, and with pretty variable effects I would imagine
- [16:40] Yanne Proudfoot laughs softly...to say the least :P
- [16:40] Sunshine Bernard: many techniques in counselling starts with the client observing their own reactions and putting their emotions into words
- [16:41] Reflection Freenote: yes, sunshine, to verbalize feelings, and thereby be aware of them consciously may be the most powerful part of all counselling approaches
- [16:41] DanD Rau: So is poetry (emotions into words) personal evolution?
- [16:41] Sunshine Bernard: are they your emotions? If they are then it is learning and understanding of yourself...
- [16:41] Reflection Freenote: that's a fascinating point Dan
- [16:42] Ungo Azambuja: poets are often also mystics
- [16:42] Reflection Freenote: I think creative processes are all very verdant in terms of evolution, although much of it seems to come very purely from the unconscious
- [16:42] Marya Blaisdale: Wouldn't poetry be more about expression as opposed to analysis though?
- [16:43] Sunshine Bernard: analyzing thought is not always personal evolution
- [16:43] William Gide: But then one remembers "10% inspiration, 90% perspiration." It takes training, I think, to sort one's unconscious impulses.
- [16:43] Reflection Freenote: I think poetry is a working through of feeling, and so is emotional analysis. Seeing how different feelings fit together
- [16:43] Sunshine Bernard: analyzing feelings where they come from, understanding yourself in relation to those feeling, that's evolution and learning
- [16:44] Ungo Azambuja: we're often ambivalent about analysis--some see it as healing understanding. Others as destructive dissection
- [16:44] William Gide: It's not always clear to me that our emotions are as different from other sorts of thoughts as we might think.
- [16:44] DanD Rau: Emotions can drive conscious personal evolution. --- such as Wow I got kicked in the ass for doing that - so never again. Behavior alteration

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- [16:44] Reflection Freenote: yes Ungo, and it can be both, of course
- [16:44] Sunshine Bernard: smiles at the example
- [16:45] William Gide: We speak sometimes of the lizard brain, as though our emotions were somehow primitive, but our lizard brains are just as evolved as the rest of our brains. That is, not especially lizard-like. :)
- [16:45] Ungo Azambuja: agree with William about feeling/thinking as a spectrum, not opposites
- [16:45] Reflection Freenote: yes, Dan a good example
- [16:46] William Gide: Ungo, I know you do some Zen practice. Is this spectrum also a Buddhist conception, or your own?
- [16:46] Marvin Macbain: Well it's a lizard or reptilian brain in the sense that this feature of our neuroanatomy we share with reptiles.
- [16:47] William Gide: I understand that, Marvin, but when it's brought up there's a strong whiff of "anatomy is destiny" there that I suspect is a bit misleading about human emotion.
- [16:47] Ungo Azambuja: I don't know how Buddhist it is--I also speak from a western philosophical tradition, and that's where I was when I said spectrum
- [16:47] William Gide: Ok.
- [16:47] Reflection Freenote: well, William, I think the brain stem and midbrain, are very different sorts of processors, and do not do, language, semantic logic, etc. so there is a valid distinction between higher cortical processing of information, and more emotional processing (of course the emotional processing is dominant, although the "thinking" brain usually doesn't know that);-
- [16:47] William Gide: That would have been another "Stoicism like Buddhism" mark on the list. :)
- [16:47] Yanne Proudfoot: hehe
- [16:47] Ungo Azambuja: we should look further into that concordance, William
- [16:48] William Gide: Stoics distinguish "propathia" "pre-passions" which refer to, basically, reflexive emotional response (a hungry polar-bear, say). But they see our more enduring emotions as subject to rational inquiry, observation and control.
- [16:49] William Gide: Meditation, a way to step back and observe our emotional states, seems another technique in the same vein.
- [16:49] Reflection Freenote: it does seem that quieting the negative fear based emotions is very important in meditation, and in facilitating personal growth. Getting rid of that constant sense of danger and inadequacy that we are prone to. Rational analysis that serves the purpose of fear is usually destructive or example
- [16:49] William Gide: After all, most of us learn of meditation from a tradition that is just as preoccupied with calming the passions as the Stoics were.
- [16:50] Ungo Azambuja: I wonder whether advanced meditative discipline might affect emotional "set points," thus subjecting our gut reactions to a degree of conscious control--but it'd take a lot of cognitive research to prove that
- [16:50] Marya Blaisdale: do you mean autonomic system reactions, Ungo?
- [16:51] William Gide: Isn't K-Z's research about some of that?
- [16:51] Ungo Azambuja: I guess I do, Marya, thought the terminology is a bit outside my field
- [16:51] Reflection Freenote: well Ungo, actually there is a huge amount of research on that. All the clinical research on the use of relaxation procedures with anxiety conditions for example
- [16:51] DanD Rau: Is considering our dreams a form of understanding our subconscious?
- [16:52] William Gide: Ooh, anxiety seems different from, "it's going to eat me!"
- [16:52] Marya Blaisdale: that's interesting ... does the research show that you can control autonomic system functions to some degree, Ref?
- [16:52] Reflection Freenote: sure, Dan, I think dreams are very rich always, though consistently challenging to break open consciously:))
- [16:52] Reflection Freenote: how so, William (about anxiety)?
- [16:52] Marya Blaisdale: (I mean the sympathetic side of it, not parasympathetic, Ref)
- [16:53] Reflection Freenote: yes, Marya, very much so

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- [16:53] Marya Blaisdale: whoa; any links where we can find info on that, Ref?
- [16:53] Reflection Freenote: yes, mostly it is the sympathetic branch of the ANS that we are attempting to moderate
- [16:53] William Gide: Anxiety, as a regular mental state, is an ongoing, practically cultivated, response to certain situations. It goes on at some length, and can be, with training, altered by us.
- [16:53] Marya Blaisdale: fascinating stuff
- [16:53] Ungo Azambuja: Goleman reports studies on Buddhist monks that bear the thesis out too, Marya
- [16:54] William Gide: The alarm that causes one to jump out of the way of a careening car is different, sometimes circumventing most of the higher brain functions.
- [16:54] Marya Blaisdale: very interesting, thank you
- [16:54] William Gide: It's our later opinions about almost get hit by a car that the Stoics were obsessed with, not the brief, immediate propathic response.
- [16:55] William Gide: Like, cultivating hostility to the driver, etc.
- [16:55] Reflection Freenote: there are literally 10's of 1000's of research papers on the use of relaxation and biofeedback to moderate ANS arousal. A Google search of the terms should provide way too much stuff to wade through:))
- [16:55] Marya Blaisdale: ty :)
- [16:56] Reflection Freenote: yes, William "fear" is different than "anxiety" I think
- [16:56] Marvin Macbain: Fear is directed at something; anxiety is general.
- [16:56] Willful Guardian: anxiety can be directed at something, can't it?
- [16:56] William Gide: Modern life has given us so many low-grade insults (mostly social, from living on top of each other) that our poor brains haven't really evolved to cope.
- [16:57] Deoridhe Quandry: I often feel anxiety about things.
- [16:57] William Gide: Meditation, in whatever tradition, seems a way to reset that response to our strange life.
- [16:57] Reflection Freenote: fear is the accurate response of the body to clear and present danger, whereas, anxiety, is a feeling somewhat like fear, but misapplied to things that are not dangerous
- [16:58] Deoridhe Quandry: I don't know. Sometimes I feel anxiety about the possible death of a client; that seems pretty dangerous - just dangerous one step removed.
- [16:58] Reflection Freenote: yes, William, we all have misapplied fear responses (anxiety) everyday, I think
- [16:59] Ungo Azambuja: put it this way, then: anxiety is about things one can't do anything about--something like that
- [16:59] Reflection Freenote: possibilities in the future, are not clear and resent dangers Deo. That is the difference
- [16:59] Ungo Azambuja: ref said it better, yes
- [16:59] Reflection Freenote: yes, Ungo. We could problem solve a probabilistic risk, but it does no good to be fearful of it, which is not problem solving
- [17:00] Deoridhe Quandry: Not clear and present dangers, but still dangerous. And often still something that should be responded to in some manner.
- [17:00] William Gide: "We are not harmed by an insult, but allow ourselves to be harmed by consenting to the impression that it's bad." :)
- [17:00] Willful Guardian: it's more a possibility though
- [17:01] William Gide: Moving back to meditation a bit... K-Z speaks of a simple meditation by focusing on the breath.
- [17:01] Reflection Freenote: yes, it is fear of probabilities that is the problem. If we could calmly problem solve the risk we would always be better off, I think
- [17:01] Yanne Proudfoot: Is that like...."sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me?"
- [17:01] William Gide: What other techniques have people used?
- [17:01] Ungo Azambuja: the trouble arises when the body reacts as for fight or flight, but physical response is inappropriate

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- [17:01] William Gide: Ungo, yes.
- [17:01] Reflection Freenote: yes, William, it is good to get back to our awareness of meditation;-)
- [17:01] William Gide: lol
- [17:02] Reflection Freenote: like meditation itself, we can become momentarily distracted perhaps;-)
- [17:02] Ungo Azambuja: ~breathe~
- [17:02] Reflection Freenote: William, there do seem to be no end of meditative techniques
- [17:03] William Gide: (SL is all about conversational distraction!)
- [17:03] Reflection Freenote: I attend a RL group, once a week and we usually try a new one each time
- [17:03] William Gide: Wow.
- [17:03] Willful Guardian: what are others beside focussing on the breath?
- [17:03] Reflection Freenote: yes William!!!! And yet so much awareness can be found through these distractions
- [17:04] Reflection Freenote: you can focus the attention, on sound, or sight, or a particular thought
- [17:04] Yanne Proudfoot: and the visual distractions
- [17:04] Ungo Azambuja: some people chant to themselves a little phrase, even meaningless sounds
- [17:04] Yanne Proudfoot: incredible in SL
- [17:04] William Gide: I play with kombolói (Greek worry beads), but that's practically a martial art. But I know there are bead counting techniques.
- [17:04] Marya Blaisdale: I have never been able to focus well enough to do what I perceive to be meditation, but I think as Ref was inclining towards in the intro, that traditional means of meditation is not the only way to engage in self reflection - it could be anything relative to taking time out, stepping back from the reactivity of normal life, and thinking about things long enough to progress those thoughts and/or just letting thoughts flow, perhaps?
- [17:04] Yanne Proudfoot looks over at Deo and how lovely she is
- [17:04] DanD Rau: Flow of consciousness writing evokes some interesting observations
- [17:04] Reflection Freenote: I think pain and discomfort can be good foci of meditation actually. somewhat advanced, but enormously useful in living
- [17:04] Ungo Azambuja: bead counting usually goes along with chants or silent prayers
- [17:05] William Gide: I expected so.
- [17:05] Willful Guardian: you mean focussing on pain?
- [17:05] William Gide: I seem to recall counting meditation (just 1 to 10, with the breath, as perhaps training-wheels for breathing meditation).
- [17:06] Ungo Azambuja: one can make a meditative breakthrough sometimes by sitting through the pain, not ignoring it but letting it be
- [17:06] Reflection Freenote: yes, Marya, one of the most consistent blocks to meditation, is the tendency which some of us have to judge the adequacy of our process. This is why I like to demystify, meditation as a process.
- [17:06] Reflection Freenote: yes, will about pain
- [17:06] Ungo Azambuja: yes, William, that's a beginner's technique advanced practitioners often return to
- [17:07] William Gide: Ungo, to what end? For the advanced ones, I mean.
- [17:07] Deoridhe Quandry: I do fire-staring. Tradak.
- [17:07] Ungo Azambuja: I don't know, will, but I suspect that breaking the instinctual habit is the key to its effect
- [17:07] William Gide: Ah. That makes sense.
- [17:08] Reflection Freenote: yes, fire is a wonderful focus, I think
- [17:08] Ungo Azambuja: oh--confused there for a mo--it's good to regard oneself as always in some sense a beginner
- [17:08] Sumalee Capelo: That's good to know Ungo, because currently I have Pleurisy in RL and with it come so much pain
- [17:08] Deoridhe Quandry: Wave-staring, or fountain-staring could work, too, but Tradak is specifically supposed to stimulate the retinas.

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- [17:08] Reflection Freenote: also, if you are holding a little candle in your hands, it keeps you from falling asleep:))) then it becomes a pain meditation, too!!
- [17:08] William Gide: I have mild tinnitus — a maddening distraction when I finally quiet my mind more.
- [17:08] Yanne Proudfoot: hehe
- [17:09] Ungo Azambuja: in my experience, pain can overwhelm meditation--sometimes i feel like I'm in a race between pain and samadhi, sometimes one winning, sometimes the other
- [17:09] Sumalee Capelo: Yes, I can relate to that
- [17:10] Ungo Azambuja: have any meditators here experienced altered states of consciousness, hallucinatory episodes (visions) or anything of that sort meditating?
- [17:10] Reflection Freenote: William, psychological methods of pain management often use, meditative focus on pain (or ringing in the ears) as a way of taking control of the sensation. We unconsciously "run" from the pain, trying to get away, but this creates arousal and increases the pain.
- [17:10] William Gide: Interesting.
- [17:11] Marya Blaisdale: I've spent some time in between awake and asleep, but no hallucinations either way
- [17:11] Ungo Azambuja: Ref--my teacher always warns us that moving on account of pain is guaranteed to make it worse instead of better, and I think she's right
- [17:11] Reflection Freenote: so we want to accept and embrace the unacceptable and become aware of the feelings of fear which make us want to run from it
- [17:11] William Gide is about to make a strange comparison.... :)
- [17:11] Ungo Azambuja: go for it
- [17:12] William Gide: Like how our natural response to a charlie-horse is exactly wrong (to bend the leg). The correct response is to pay attention, then *straighten* the leg.
- [17:12] Ungo Azambuja: not so strange a comparison
- [17:12] Reflection Freenote: pain, removed from the fearful emotions which are attached, is merely a sensation. And most people actually seek pains of certain kinds (ones that have a positive emotion attached)
- [17:12] Ungo Azambuja: strange spelling, tho
- [17:12] William Gide: The instinctual response will guarantee days of pain.
- [17:12] Marya Blaisdale: sorry to be such an ignoramus, but what is a charlie horse?
- [17:13] William Gide: A muscle spasm in the calf of the leg.
- [17:13] Marya Blaisdale: thx
- [17:13] Reflection Freenote: yes, Lamaze, is training to relax and breath (meditate) through the contractions of labor
- [17:14] Reflection Freenote: yes, Ungo, I am aware of one person who had what would clinically be called a psychotic reaction
- [17:14] William Gide: Yikes.
- [17:14] Ungo Azambuja: it's uncommon but not exactly rare
- [17:15] Yanne Proudfoot: I was in an auto accident and suffered some nerve damage in my right leg sometimes it is very painful , during meditation, I try to categorize it...name it, give it a color, shape, definition...it seems to help relieve it
- [17:15] Reflection Freenote: although he was a very experienced meditator, and long time Buddhist, and he did not experience the sensation that way himself
- [17:15] Ungo Azambuja: and many meditators report visions that aren't accompanied by schizy thoughts
- [17:15] Reflection Freenote: he saw all boundaries between objects disappear and it seemed as though everything around him turned to energy
- [17:15] Reflection Freenote: this was in the midst of one of those long meditation sessions you were talking about in the previous discussion
- [17:16] Ungo Azambuja: I have had similar, albeit less spectacular experiences, Ref
- [17:16] Ungo Azambuja: ~crap, there goes my credibility~

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- [17:16] William Gide: Weren't there recent studies hinting that certain kinds of meditation inhibit frontal cortex (i.e., ego) activity, leading to some of that "all is one" sensation?
- [17:16] Ungo Azambuja: ;-)
- [17:16] Reflection Freenote: although Ungo, that is the only example, which I know of in having worked with many thousands of people personally in relaxation and meditative processes
- [17:16] Marya Blaisdale: mmm, so he said he thought it looked like energy, as opposed to it actually being energy - someone with a different belief system might call it something else?
- [17:17] Reflection Freenote: yes, Yanne, that is excellent about your approach to pain, that is exactly what I am talking about
- [17:17] Deoridhe Quandry: From some evidence on what happens when the left side of the cortex shuts down, the right does not perceive edges and differences very much and/or in the same way.
- [17:18] Reflection Freenote: yes William about inhibiting frontal cortex, and changing brain function
- [17:18] Reflection Freenote: yes, Marya, about the semantic frames of references which someone might use. It may be that many religious experiences are somewhat similar
- [17:19] William Gide: I wonder about the value of such a mental state. But I haven't a spiritual bone in my body (indeed, I rarely am certain what that word is even supposed to mean).
- [17:19] Reflection Freenote: interesting Deo about the left and right hemispheres
- [17:19] Ungo Azambuja: most who experience it take heart from it, will
- [17:19] Marya Blaisdale: I think if someone can explain the experience in non-spiritual terms, it would be a great deal more helpful to learn more about these experiences, William. Rather than saying 'everything turned into energy' - he could say something along the lines of 'boundaries seemed to disappear' for example
- [17:20] William Gide: Perhaps. But I'm trying to understand the benefits of the dissolution of the ego in this way. What is learned from such an experience?
- [17:20] Ungo Azambuja: I'm not particularly fond of mumbo-jumbo either, which is why I'm so glad to see confirmation coming from science
- [17:20] Reflection Freenote: well, William, it seems that such spiritual encounters, with the "oneness" of reality creates a sense of connection with all life, and people, and tends to be a very powerful and positive human emotional experience
- [17:21] Ungo Azambuja: more like being reminded than learning, I think, Will
- [17:21] William Gide: But what if this is merely a side-effect of frontal cortex inhibition, and has no further real significance, such as many of our dreams?
- [17:21] Marya Blaisdale: I think the benefits are also in gaining a clearer understanding of how different parts of the brain work, how they affect other parts of the brain, and how all of these things allow for the human experience
- [17:21] William Gide: (by dreams here I mean things we see in our sleep, not aspirations).
- [17:22] Ungo Azambuja: a flower is beautiful not because of some inherent virtue, right?
- [17:22] Reflection Freenote: well, William all thoughts and feelings and insights, are "merely" a side-effect of some sort of brain process. We are merely talking about one which makes us feel one with the Cosmos (which may be a more accurate perception, than the way we usually think and feel about it);-)
- [17:22] Marya Blaisdale: I believe so Ungo
- [17:23] William Gide: Er.
- [17:23] William Gide: Reflection, I'm specifically concerned about a mental state that's happening with a large chunk of the most human part of our brains shut down. :)
- [17:23] Ungo Azambuja: likewise, even if it happens by a sort of accident, we could still gain something from a visionary experience
- [17:23] William Gide: I mean, have people seen the Ted talk with the neurologist who had the stroke? I'm not sure I want to attain what was clearly for a very emotional and profound experience by way of brain damage!
- [17:24] Deoridhe Quandry: I find it disturbing that the left cortex is described as "most human."

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- [17:24] Marya Blaisdale: yes, William - it started off well, but she seemed not to be able to prevent herself from 'spiritual talk' after all
- [17:24] William Gide: I don't mean left cortex, I mean the entire frontal cortex.
- [17:24] Deoridhe Quandry: Except it wasn't her entire frontal cortex which shut down. It was her left cortex.
- [17:24] Reflection Freenote: well William, it seems that modernity badly warps the way the brain functions. Processes like meditation, seem to take the brain back to a more natural way of functioning actually (not being hyper aroused all the time, by illusions of danger, for example)
- [17:25] Ungo Azambuja: we have brain scans of very accomplished meditators that show patterns that look more like enhancement than impoverishment
- [17:25] Deoridhe Quandry: And I likewise find it disturbing that the frontal cortex is described as "most human."
- [17:25] William Gide: Deoridhe, there were studies on meditators (functional MRI perhaps) which saw full frontal cortex inhibition.
- [17:25] Reflection Freenote: oh, no worries, William, it will not "damage" your brain!!!
- [17:25] William Gide: I'm not worried about damage. :)
- [17:26] Deoridhe Quandry: And, William? How does that alter that /I/ find it disturbing that /you/ consider the frontal cortex and the left cortex of the brain "most human"?
- [17:26] William Gide: Deoridhe, I do think what distinguishes humans most is our abilities to reflect, to plan, to observe our own mental activities and to change them. This seems mostly to be a feature of our frontal cortex.
- [17:26] Ungo Azambuja: lol--we wouldn't want to think meditation is functionally equivalent to sniffing glue
- [17:26] Marya Blaisdale: lol
- [17:26] William Gide: Ungo — exactly! I don't either! But some aspects give me pause.
- [17:27] Deoridhe Quandry: I disagree, William. I think what distinguishes humans most is our ability to find meaning and patterns, which is both a left brained AND a right brained activity, rather than one which makes primary one over the other.
- [17:27] Ungo Azambuja: signs like MRI are tricky to interpret, though
- [17:27] William Gide: Very true, Ungo.
- [17:27] Ungo Azambuja: tricky to interpret, tricky to spell . . .
- [17:27] Reflection Freenote: William, I would imagine the frontal cortex findings have a lot to do with the chronic over arousal that gives us habits of thinking that we constantly have to be intending to do this or that. When sitting quietly and doing less might be both more beneficial and even more productive:)
- [17:28] William Gide: Perhaps. I'm still trying to understand the implications of the perception of the dissolution of the ego.
- [17:28] Ungo Azambuja: Taoists and Zeners often praise "not doing"
- [17:29] Reflection Freenote: basically, William, I often see people who suffer from too much anxiety, but I never see anyone suffer from having too much genuine tranquillity
- [17:29] William Gide: It's not the tranquillity that worries me. :) Perhaps worry is the wrong word.
- [17:29] Reflection Freenote: william, it might be that the ego is a useful fiction, but one that we become way to attached to at points (perhaps especially in the west)
- [17:29] Reflection Freenote: so long rossie thanks for coming
- [17:30] Ungo Azambuja: when I felt the boundaries of my self expand to include more and more, it had no deleterious effect on my functioning--quite the contrary, in the long run
- [17:30] William Gide: Reflection, I'm inclined to see that as a Buddhist encrustation on meditation. :)
- [17:30] Marya Blaisdale: well, the ego is what makes the human animal perceive itself as an individual in a sense, so when that is compromised, I guess it seems to follow that a human will see the bigger picture, ie: that we are not separate per se from the world (hope that makes sense)
- [17:31] Ungo Azambuja: I confess to Buddhist encrustation--not much i can do about that anymore
- [17:31] William Gide: :)

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- [17:32] William Gide: Ungo, perhaps we need a "Comparative Virtue Traditions: Stoics and Buddhists" talk some time.
- [17:32] William Gide: Traditions! I've contracted the spelling disease! lol
- [17:32] Reflection Freenote: I would tend to see the ego as a synthetic, creative function of the brain to attempt to manage the increasing conflict between mid brain and neocortex, as civilization moves further and further from the evolved conditions in which the brain developed
- [17:32] Ungo Azambuja: lol
- [17:33] William Gide: An epiphenomenon? Huh.
- [17:33] Marya Blaisdale: aye Ref, something that encourages thinking about a self so to speak
- [17:34] William Gide: I don't know. Cats seem proof that ego is fairly common. lol
- [17:34] Marya Blaisdale: lol
- [17:34] William Gide: And not a purely human matter.
- [17:34] Reflection Freenote: not an epiphenomenon, William as it does a lot of important and very hard work, so a real functioning set of programs. But also something that requires balancing, perhaps
- [17:34] Reflection Freenote: yes, Marya
- [17:34] William Gide: Ok.
- [17:34] Marya Blaisdale: yes, but cats all have a neocortex :]
- [17:34] Reflection Freenote: hahaha about cats, William
- [17:34] William Gide is pleased that using the word epiphenomenon didn't make anyone's head explode.
- [17:35] Marya Blaisdale: lol
- [17:35] William Gide: Ooh. Marya, good point.
- [17:35] Reflection Freenote: well, cats are all just Narcissists!!!
- [17:35] Marya Blaisdale: lol, so true ... and we love them still
- [17:35] Ungo Azambuja: maybe we should distinguish a cat's robust and immediate sense of self from "ego" as the central character in the story we try to make of our lives
- [17:35] William Gide: I would love them more if they didn't make me sneeze.
- [17:35] Reflection Freenote: we have co-dependent and abusive relationships with our cats:(((
- [17:36] Marya Blaisdale: awwww - they abuse you and you feed them for it ;D
- [17:36] Reflection Freenote: yes, maybe cats are just fully actualized, like the dolphins and whales in the hitch hikers guide to the universe
- [17:36] William Gide: Ah. A subtle point Ungo. I confess I don't really get how some eastern traditions use the word "ego."