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The Reality of Self Awareness

Divine Matey*
General Manager, Department of Administration, Accra City Hotel, Accra, Ghana

***Abstract*: Self-reflection plays a vital role in the delineation of one's personal existence. Through self-reflection, individuals can attain a more profound comprehension of life and its significance. Whether it involves contemplating one's purpose, unraveling the intricacies of existence, pondering the course of the future, or assessing the potential outcomes of past choices, all types of introspection about the past, present, and future rely on an awareness of oneself. The methodologies utilized to attain self-understanding and uncover the truth of reality vary in their impact according to the era and cultural backdrop in which they were or are being employed. The four primary approaches to self-reflection are The Questioning Life, The Study in Learning and Virtue, The Method of Purification, and The Method of Recollection. These approaches have significantly influenced both Western and Eastern societies. Without the intention to search for one's true identity and grasp the essence of being, the exploration of self-awareness remains unattainable.**

***Keywords*: Reality, Self-awareness.**

1. Introduction

Self-awareness is defined as understanding the different aspects of our identity, which include thoughts, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and values, and understanding how other people view us. However, it is not possible to ever have a complete understanding of our identity. The aim should be to gather a stable sense of self that can be easily modified when we become aware of something that does not fit with our self-image. This study takes a stand on the question of whether the reality of self-awareness has positive or negative consequences. It argues that self-awareness is a good thing but that a clear understanding of ourselves can result in many adverse implications. The study will consider alternative explanations of the reality of self-awareness and discuss the potential negative and positive consequences, drawing evidence from empirical studies that show how people have changed their behavior after increasing self-awareness. This is an interesting and important topic to research as self-awareness is a major contributor to success in the modern world, so it is important to have a clear understanding of its implications. (Geary & Xu, 2022)

A. Definition of Self Awareness

Self-awareness is a pivotal point in one's personal development. It involves recognition of personality and other individual characteristics that ultimately define who we are. When we are self-aware, we are able to improve our judgment and internal thoughts and therefore our behavior. Learning self-awareness is fundamental in changing dysfunctional behavior because we can't act differently unless we first recognize what we are doing and why. For example, an alcoholic can't stop drinking unless he recognizes what makes him drink. A person who is highly emotional needs to understand why they are feeling this way before they can deal with it. We can't change and make our lives better unless we are able to change our habits. Often times, we will do something without even realizing that we are actually doing it. Let's say for instance, you have a really bad habit of biting your nails. There are times where you will do it and not even realize you are doing it. Only with self-awareness can you change this behavior. Here, self-awareness helps us to break those bad habits. Becoming aware of situations and circumstances that make your habit worse is essential to be able to avoid them. (Snoek et al., 2021)

B. Importance of Self Awareness

A part of the importance of self-awareness in bringing about change is in its vast application to behavior. This can be explained by its cyclical nature, in that greater self-awareness can lead to an easier identification of behavioral patterns, and an easier identification of behavioral patterns can lead to greater self-awareness. Without getting stuck in the intricacies of what may be an undesirable behavior, an individual will find the motivation to apply a change if they are aware of its inconsistency with their ideal self. Awareness of thoughts and feelings can also influence behavior by making a certain thought linked to the desired self more accessible, so that it can have an impact on the way the individual acts in a given situation (Loy, 1976). Whether the desired change is in the thoughts/feelings or external behavior of an individual, the strength of motivation for change will depend on the extent of the inconsistency between the actual and desired self and the belief that a change is feasible. It also stands to reason that the previously mentioned effects of self-awareness would make the identification of an undesired behavior of thought or feeling more poignant to an individual. (Lage et al., 2022)

An important feature of self-awareness is that it is a prerequisite for change. Only when an individual has a sense of who they are can they set about changing themselves in a conscious manner. This may involve acting on something about themselves that they have noticed and would like to change, or it may involve changing the way they see themselves. In trying to bring about a change in an aspect of themselves, an individual may use self-observation over a period of time to identify a

*Corresponding author: divine.matey@live.com

trend in their behavior which they can then focus on changing. Similarly, continual self-monitoring may lead an individual to change the way they see themselves in a positive or negative light, contingent on the desirability of a particular aspect of their character. An individual who perceives themselves in a negative light, having noticed something about themselves they do not like, may spoil their opinion of themselves overall. Conversely, a more favorable view of themselves may be reached after a particular success in aligning the perceived and ideal self. (Carden et al. 2022)

C. The Role of Self-Awareness in Personal Growth

Self-awareness is the knowledge of the conscious self and the perception of one's own qualities and limitations. It is not about being self-conscious, but rather the ability to evaluate oneself relative to an ideal that one learns about from the external environment. A person whose self-assessment is close to this identified ideal will experience positive feelings of self-worth and self-enhancement. On the other hand, a person whose self-assessment is far below the ideal will experience negative self-feelings, dissatisfaction, and self-degradation. It is actually a self-evaluation process that can cause an individual to change their programmed behavior and become more self-aware or tolerant of their behavior, as it questions whether the behavior is aligned with the ideal. (Peacocke, 2023)

Self-awareness is a psychological state of being wherein an individual is able to identify his or her own existing and potential future situations. Self-awareness is one of the attributes of emotional intelligence and an important factor in achievement. In general, it is a positive aspect that contributes to personal and professional life. According to various research, it has been found that human beings have the capacity for self-deception and self-denial, escaping from their own existing situations. Self-deception is a process of denying or rationalizing away the relevance or importance of opposing evidence and logical arguments. An important strategy that people use to make sense of the world and avoid threatening self-acknowledgement is through self-serving tendencies. (Carden et al. 2022)

2. Factors Influencing Self Awareness

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a well-organized system of emotional knowledge that influences thought and action. It is measured as a mixture of perceiving information and its retention, the ability to cause emotion with it, by using it in cognitive processes and problem-solving, varying cognitive processes, and using emotional processes to enhance these. It can affect any individual who is engaging in the above tasks by influencing the general mood and then the energy and effectiveness that individuals bring to them. EI may be viewed as a mechanism that changes the input of an emotion-eliciting event through various cognitive and emotional processes and eventually changing the quality of that event. A primary reason people with higher EI are those who are more self-reflective. These individuals make stronger affective and cognitive links about their past behavior, better recollect it, and through this can monitor what the current behavior has the desired effect. They also pay close attention to their own moods and emotions, learning from them as well as regulating them. This constant monitoring and regulation of their own and others' emotions and the understanding of the function of emotions, the ability to label emotions, and the know-how about changes in emotion are all facets of EI.

According to the above model, the relative success of an emotionally intelligent individual would depend on the self-awareness and understanding of their own emotions. Self-reflection is the process by which people can understand their own input in a given event, which has emerged as an intrapersonal way of knowing if that input has been beneficial or detrimental. Self-reflection involves asking oneself the what, why, and how of a given event. In comparing the above to the factors in change in behavior shown by schizophrenic and non-psychotic patients, it is evident that self-reflection is an attempt to gain a better understanding of one's behavior and its situational determinants for a more effective and adaptive future behavioral strategy. This process depends on a high availability of information about that behavior, an information search of sorts, looking for concrete and specific information, and is inhibited by defensive mechanisms and low mood. The nature of the information about that behavior is dependent on the complexity of the individual's cognitive representation of the behavior in question, particularly the perceived causes and/or consequences of that behavior. This above process can be looked at from a global standpoint, at how much an individual is reflecting in general, or at specific situations, or can be studied in a particular instance of behavior. Self-reflection is a concept akin to self-monitoring. It is proposed that the above process reflects one monitoring their own behavior from past or present situations and comparing it to internal standards or external sources of information. This, in turn, leads to clearer identification of behavioral/intention-behavior discrepancies and a more effective/adaptive behavioral strategy. (Eikey et al. 2021)

A. Emotional Intelligence and Self-Awareness

The model then goes on to hypothesize that different forms of self-awareness are involved in a wide range of psychological and behavioral phenomena ranging from typical and atypical social behavior, to psychopathology and its different forms of treatment. This is a facet of our approach, which gives it discriminating power. A number of theories discussed in the following sections represent our attempts to ascertain the role of self-awareness in various phenomena. (Lage et al., 2022)

However, we suggest that the state and conscious level of self-awareness have differential impacts. For example, sometimes one can provide an accurate self-report of a previously unconscious behavior (state-detection) and this subsequently leads to behavior change. Other times, conscious processing of the self is involved in complex deliberation and decision-making. The latter may be a relatively recent innovation in the evolution of human cognitive abilities and has received little attention in previous literature. (Liljenström, 2022)

Our approach successfully combines a theoretical model

about which little is known with an extensive research program. By focusing solely on self-awareness, our model aims to integrate those myriad of different and often unrelated theories in which self-awareness has played a part. It suggests that self-awareness is not a unidimensional concept but can differ in its state of occurrence and in its level of conscious processing. This idea is not new. (Kreibich et al. 2020)

B. Self-Reflection and Self-Awareness

Self-reflection is a key factor in being self-aware. It enables us to reassess the situations we've encountered on a day-to-day basis and, given these situations, how we have changed as a person over that period of time. There are various ways of coming to an understanding of who we are. One of the most powerful and intriguing is through self-awareness and change. This requires education and openness to new ideas and experiences. It is often said that we learn most about ourselves when we are placed in a situation that causes change. This was supported by Strecher and McEvoy (2004); they claimed that change was an important self-regulatory mechanism that could stimulate learning about oneself, with learning being the main catalyst for change. If people have a greater understanding of who they are, it is possible that they can be more specific in targeting behavioral changes they perceive as necessary. However, self-reflection and self-awareness are strong tools in their ability to help people push their own boundaries. An explanation for this is that in order to understand the self, people can dabble in different identities to test which ones fit them best. This can help generate multiple perspective-taking and monitoring instances and can result in an identity achievement by reinforcing certain behaviors or attitudes. This mode is often employed by athletes striving to follow their sporting idols. In the end, the use of reflective thought and the exploration of varied identities should help people work up and down the self-regulatory feedback loop, making adjustments when the actual results don't match the desired results. A stronger discrepancy here would provide a more uncomfortable state and would trigger more reflective thoughts. Though this process is rife with cognitive effort and is often mentally taxing, it proves to be a very effective method for learning about the self. (Jaakkola et al. 2022)

C. Social Interactions and Self-Awareness

Mead and Cooley believed that the self is formed through social interactions, causing individuals to adopt the perspectives of others and perceive themselves as they are perceived by others. Consequently, individuals develop their attitudes and emotions by objectively assessing themselves, envisioning how they are seen by others, and contemplating their future actions. To illustrate, a child might internalize the notion that being aggressive is unacceptable due to consistent criticism from their parents. This process, known as reflected appraisals, contributes to the formation of the self-concept by providing additional insights into oneself. The concept of self serves as a tool for individuals to assume the roles of others, with these roles serving as the fundamental elements of human behavior. For instance, an individual may take on roles such as a teacher, parent, or student, each resulting in different behavioral patterns. (Morrison et al. 2020)

The self pertains to the individual's awareness of his own identity as an object of knowledge. The individual is an object of knowledge in the sense that he can learn and better understand himself. Human beings are aware of themselves from an early age, such as the child who is aware that he is shy or good at sports. Self-awareness is a vitally important factor in human behaviour and adjustment. It has been argued that the self-concept is a crucial factor in understanding personality and its disorders. People who have a distorted self-image may act in a way that is inconsistent with their true selves and then feel anxiety because of this. (Carden et al. 2022)

3. Benefits of Self-Awareness

Awareness helps people make better decisions as they are more aware of their situation and the consequences of their actions. Ruth Blatt pointed out that self-awareness leads to a more accurate perception of situations and to greater clarity in decision-making (Blatt, 1974). The exact correlation is not clearly understood between self-awareness and decision-making, although it is generally believed that a situational appraisal and the ability to self-reference are important factors. Evidence shows that self-aware people make more well-informed decisions and are better able to take the perspective of others. This was supported by a study which showed that self-awareness led to a decrease in egocentric biases and better ability to take the perspective of another person (Ames et al., 2004). Schmit and Ryan conducted a study to find that self-awareness would enhance hardiness in job security and decision-making (Schmit and Ryan, 1993). They were proved correct in that self-aware individuals exhibit more adaptability and psychological hardiness in that they can handle and perform better under stressful conditions and have the ability to learn from past mistakes. So it is clear that self-awareness does indeed improve people's ability to process and understand the events surrounding them and make decisions that will have far less negative repercussions. (Fleming, 2021)

A. Improved Decision Making

In this modern world, mentoring has taken a great pride and a very critical tool in shaping the future of a person. Mentoring is a professional relationship in which an experienced person, the mentor, assists another, the mentee, in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth. A mentor might share with a mentoree information about his or her own career path, as well as provide guidance, motivation, emotional support, and role modeling. Mentoring relationships can be broad, encompassing multiple skills and objectives, or specific, focusing on a particular skill or job competency. Mentoring relationships can last for many years, or they can have very short durations.

Mentoring on a self-awareness is highly rewarding as there are many tools a mentor can use to assist in increasing the awareness of the person being mentored. One highly effective tool is an open discussion in which a mentee explores himself

or herself through responding to personality and/or psychological assessments. By sharing the assessments, the mentor can help interpret the results and explore areas in which the person being mentored would like to change. Another tool is to have the mentoree keep a journal of self-reflection. The journal can be used as a discussion point in later mentoring sessions. In using a journal, the person being mentored is able to develop greater levels of self-understanding. This heightened level of self-awareness can lead to greater personal success and also issues a challenge for a person to strive towards reaching their full potential. Through sharing insights, giving evaluation, and mapping a direction forwards, a mentor can greatly assist in this process. (Blake-Beard et al. 2021)

B. Enhanced Interpersonal Relationships

The self-aware individual possesses knowledge of self, awareness of their own preferences, and an understanding of their own interests. Thus, they are more likely to choose environments that are more compatible with their own personalities. Here, they will tend to interact with others who share their attitudes and values. Because of similarity, it is more likely that there will be an attraction between those involved in the similar activities. Thus, in many cases, the enhanced interpersonal relationships formed will continue to be positive as individuals continue to be drawn to others who are like-minded. As self-awareness is increased through other cognitive processes, it is likely that the individual will be able to make a more realistic assessment of strengths and weaknesses. This will lead to the individual relying on their strengths to effectively communicate and influence others, while avoiding situations that challenge their self-concept. Because of their ability to monitor their own behavior and how it affects others, self-aware individuals are more likely to be effective in their communication, as they can change their behavior to ensure a positive social outcome. Finally, it is likely that the previous factors will result in self-aware individuals having a more balanced social identity and an increased sense of social belonging. (Lent & Brown, 2020)

C. Increased Self-Confidence

Self and attribution theory set the stage for the wealth of empirical investigation on the cognitive behavioural techniques for enhancing self-confidence. These involve changing persons' belief in their ability (the strength and generality of the belief), and past and future performance expectations. The relationship of these things to self-confidence, and the forces for change on them, are now well documented. In sum, there are a great many definite ways in which increased self-awareness leads to increased self-confidence, and a good understanding of how to help people in this area. (London et al. 2023)

Self-awareness theory (Duval & Wickland, 1972) states that when we focus attention on ourselves, we evaluate and compare our behaviour to internal standards and values. In some cases, self-focus will damage performance because our self-standards are too high. This is known as the 'affective forecasting' form of self-awareness, where still considering future actions, we lament on the unhappiness that short term self-discrepancy will evoke. It is often the case that negative affect is seen as a sign for self-incompatibility and a cue for self enhancement. The individual working out how the 'bad' performance came about, may seek information and subsequently change their self-perception. This has not only a short term effect of increasing attributions to the task, in turn proffering success of failure outcomes, but also a long term one by revision of the original self-perception. This would be particularly relevant to individuals with low self-confidence who fail a task and become discouraged at their lack of ability, thus in order to break the cycle of affect and subsequent task avoidance, need revision of self-perception and increased belief in ability. Attribute reassignment is easier said than done, but even the recognition that it is possible to change through increased insight is a step forward for many people. (Alicke et al. 2020)

Increased self-confidence is a key pay-off from embracing self-awareness and is defined as a realistic belief in one's abilities and the enjoyment of the feeling that comes from success (Mruk, 1995). In their theory on the self, Bandura et al (1999) proposed that in order for a person to be motivated to complete a task, they must believe they are able to do so. If the task is completed successfully, the person's belief in their ability is strengthened, however if they do not succeed, their belief is weakened. Thus, one's perception of their ability directly affects whether they will initiate a task and their persistence in completing it. Bandura proposed that the best predictor of one's future behaviour is past behaviour, because it is not only a demonstration of ability, but allows for one to persuade themselves through successfully completing the task. This would account for the common knowledge of trial and error being a good learning process and its role in boosting self-confidence through affirming one’s ability. (McADAM, 2020)

4. Mindfulness Practices for Self-Awareness

Whenever we see people who are calm, alert, and cheerful, especially in the face of personal and significant adversity, it is likely that they are mindful. The capacity to be mindful is probably the most powerful and effective tool a person has to climb out of his/her personal rock bottom. Mindfulness is paying attention to present moment experiences with openness, curiosity, and a willingness to be with what is. It is an excellent antidote to the automatic pilot mode people often find themselves in, especially when it comes to escaping aversive mood states and ruminative thought patterns. Automatic pilot is when people are "there" but not there, the times when we find ourselves staring blankly at something without really seeing it, or driving somewhere and not being able to recollect the details of the trip. Unfortunately, people often use maladaptive behaviors, such as substance abuse and staying in bed all day, to try to escape aversive mood states and thought patterns, but all this does is create time and opportunity for these depressive and anxious thoughts to proliferate.

There are many ways to cultivate mindfulness, one of the best ways is a meditation practice. One can start by lightly focusing on their breath, paying attention to the sensations of the breath as it enters and leaves the body. When a person notices their mind has wandered, which it is almost guaranteed to do, they

acknowledge the wandering and without judgment return their attention to the breath. This process strengthens the ability to decenter, or step back from thought and emotion and see them for what they are. If a person becomes skilled at meditation, it is possible to practice mindfulness during any activity. Another method of cultivating mindfulness is the mindful observation and awareness of unpleasant experiences. This is a surefire way to cause an increase in depressive and anxious symptoms, so it is often best to practice this with the help of a therapist, especially if this is to alleviate the symptoms of depression and anxiety. (Klein, 2023)

A. Journaling and Self-Awareness

Given the importance of self-reflection as a way of gaining insight into one's behavior, thoughts, and emotions, and the congruence between one's behavior and values, journaling on a regular basis is another way of developing self-awareness. Keeping a journal requires the individual to record daily events and thoughts pertaining to them. This process serves two-fold. Firstly, the act of recording events and thoughts forces the individual to slow down and carefully think about the event and their reaction. It is this revisiting of the event that is often the catalyst for new insight as the individual begins to recognize behavioral patterns or triggers. An in-depth analysis of journaling studies by Smyth (1999) supports this assertion. Smyth found that the more the individual focused on their emotions within the journal, the greater the reduction in emotional distress. This finding held true for both the short term and long term and indicates that increased self-awareness through the understanding of emotions was a key factor in distress reduction. The second function of a journal is to provide concrete behavioral evidence of the thoughts an individual has. Once a sufficient amount has been written, the individual can then review the journal as a whole and use it as a tool to make generalizations about themselves. This is the first step in changing maladaptive thought patterns and an important factor in behavioral change. (Alt & Raichel, 2020)

B. Seeking Feedback for Self-Awareness

Getting feedback is a very important part of self-awareness. Feedback can be given informally, for example through interactions with others, or formally, through appraisal at work. Feedback is important because it represents a mirror to those aspects of the self that are not readily known. It prompts individuals to learn how others experience them and consider whether there is a discrepancy with their self-views. It's an opportunity to understand how others perceive you and assess whether you want to make changes in areas others see as a problem. Negative feedback is hard to take, but it is a very useful tool for learning about yourself, in particular it can test the solidity of high self-esteem which is often threatened by the behaviors and views of others - if it is based on an unrealistic view of the self it may be eroded through defensiveness or hurt, if it is secure it may be reappraised and only certain aspects of the self will be changed.

Giving and getting feedback on our personality and performance is such a sensitive area that it often goes wrong and has very negative repercussions. Research has shown that feedback can cause serious damage to self-esteem and can be very threatening to the self if it is given in the wrong way or about the wrong things. People will often react defensively in order to protect their self-views and one way of doing this is to avoid situations where feedback is likely. Avoidance of feedback is clearly detrimental to self-awareness, hence the person giving feedback needs to create a supportive, trusting and respectful environment where negative feedback can be given and taken. Reductions in discrepancies between the standard and the viewed self have been shown to be a consequence of feedback, thus those who are giving feedback may need to help in identifying and clarifying discrepancies. It may also be useful to follow up feedback at a later point in time, to see how the person receiving it has digested it and what effect it has had. (Madaan et al. 2024)

5. Conclusion

Prioritizing the development of self-awareness is crucial for individuals who are pursuing personal progress and a satisfying existence. Through comprehending and contemplating our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, we can enhance our decision-making abilities and cultivate more profound relationships with ourselves and others. Self-awareness can be cultivated by practices such as journaling, undergoing psychological exams, and engaging in self-reflection. The most intriguing component of this research undoubtedly resides in the indisputable influence that self-awareness has on our psychological state of being. Individuals experiencing various ailments or conditions can enhance their circumstances by fostering a heightened level of self-awareness. This study offered an occasion to establish connections between various psychological concepts, allowing us to apply the knowledge acquired in the social psychology chapter to almost every aspect. Hence, the inherent essence of self-awareness remains enigmatic, as it is a notion that may perpetually elude complete comprehension. Adopting a more comprehensive viewpoint, It will be prudent to contemplate the notion of assessing personal self-awareness in order to obtain understanding of how others perceive me. It is important to recognize that we are the most reliable source of information about ourselves. (Jaakkola et al. 2022)

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