

Editorial

Growing Awareness

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Homo sapiens, based on current evidence, evolved from its hominid predecessors about 320,000 years ago¹ and thence started mankind's search for new knowledge. The innate desire to seek, to learn, to experience, and to understand, have existed since time immemorial. Human understanding, however, made a great leap forward about 70,000 years ago when the early humans developed the ability to communicate and share knowledge through language, to build social bonds through storytelling, and to discuss abstract concepts such as love, beauty, and spirituality. These newfound abilities enabled us to learn from each other through teaching, imitation, and other forms of transmitting knowledge. Each recurring connection and event allowed the species to evolve over time.

Another surge in human understanding and awareness occurred about 12,000 years ago in the Neolithic Age with the first Agricultural Revolution, when humans transitioned from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to one of farming and settlement. As migrant human groups evolved into hierarchical societies, they could transmit their common knowledge from generation to generation through culture, common practices, and rituals that were unique to each group. This process changed how we as humans lived, ate, interacted, and reproduced, as knowledge of farming and animal husbandry was passed from generation to generation through cultural transmission, paving the way for our modern civilization².

The earliest efforts to record human knowledge led to cuneiform writing, by making marks in wet clay with a reed straw. Other uses of the common reed included its use as thatching or construction material, making baskets, rafts, boats, musical instruments, and even arrows for hunting. Early writings increased our ability to transmit knowledge from generation to generation, and even within the same generation, thus permitting the growth and structure of large, complex societies³. Human societies enabled academic learning and training of the young, with the free exchange of information leading to a growth in human awareness - thus fueling the agricultural, industrial, and technological revolutions. The recent Digital Revolution, it appears, may be having the opposite effects with declining human awareness - as we humans become more connected with our devices rather than with our natural and social environments^{4,5}.

"Awareness" is a unique human perception without which nothing else has any meaning, any value. The awareness of an ant or, for that matter, any other life form is limited to its natural environment and its functions. As the species evolve, the range and contents of their awareness also continue to

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grow and expand. Eventually, as humans we become aware of our 'animus', our sense of an animating presence, a perception of ourselves as conscious beings, without which we cannot know anything or enjoy anything. It is, literally, the core of our being! This most precious 'presence' manifests as consciousness in all embodied forms, which energizes all their senses, their sense perceptions, and their activities.... and each organism wants to protect it at any cost. Only when consciousness seeks its own source (only possible as humans) and recognizes that it is nothing except consciousness - a clear apperception of that truth becomes permanent and irrevocable. As this realization dawns, all the differences between 'self' and 'others' disappear, giving rise to an intense, unlimited, unconditional love for all. Such a realization cannot be diluted, or destroyed, or distracted by any 'thing' within the manifest universe - whether that's a place, person, or situation. This perception exists beyond Time and Space, and it has been labeled variously as 'liberation' or 'enlightenment' or some other terminology among all the world's religions and faith traditions. Gaining this apperception is verily the final goal of human consciousness, and of Creation itself!

Growing *Awareness* as a journal in the past year has followed pretty much the same trajectory as that of the spiritual seeker, a search in which the seeker becomes the sought. Just as the initial stages of any spiritual journey are fraught with innumerable hurdles and difficulties, this journal had to deal with its own share of snags and struggles. Following the muted success of its inaugural issue⁶, the main goals for *Awareness* were to: (a) grow its multidisciplinary Editorial Board, (b) launch an accessible and functional website, (c) create an online presence in scholarly or academic circles, as well as through social media, (d) apply for and obtain an ISSN number, and (e) encourage an increasing number of manuscript submissions.

Variable degrees of success were achieved on all of these fronts. Membership of the Editorial Board has doubled in the past year. A logo was created for the journal and a domain name purchased for the journal website, which is currently at its 3rd generation with the updates and modifications to enhance its functionality. An online presence in academic circles and on social media still remains an aspirational goal at present, given the journal's limited resources and the limited bandwidth and talents of its editorial team. Our search continues for dedicated volunteers who can serve as our webmaster and social media coordinator to take over these areas of responsibility.

This far we've come, and yet the journey has just begun. We resolve that the coming year will quadruple the number of manuscript submissions, with greater variety and range - particularly for the arts & humanities, as well as business & commerce sections. We also plan to start a Student's Corner in this journal, so that the upcoming generations are given the space to express themselves and they are also coached by our erudite Editorial Board Members into the intricate art of effective writing. From expanding the scope of this journal, to further building the breadth and depth of expertise available on its Editorial Board, to appointing Section Editors for each section, to countering the unique challenges of Artificial Intelligence (AI), fake scholarly submissions, and plagiarism - we are certain that growing *Awareness* will always remain a most enjoyable and fruitful journey. When one fathoms the extent of how far the human species has come and the exponential growth it has proven over the last millennium, it serves that we also examine our own inner self and bring ourselves back to the core roots of what makes us human. It is this goal that the journal proves to explore, one that shows that the many disciplines are more alike than they are different and one that proves to make us "aware" of the meaning of Life Itself.

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