

Breathing is one of the most common things we all do. However, most of the time we are not even aware of it happening. We take it for granted; but breathing goes to the core of our existence. No breathe ↔ no life. The breath of life is more than just a metaphor. Breathing is a vehicle we travel on in a physical sense; but we can also use it as a metaphysical transporter. If we pay attention to our breathing, we can become aware of our consciousness. Consciousness is the most common, pervasive, and powerful phenomenon we all have and yet we are seldom aware of its existence. Breathing and consciousness are background experiences, most of the time, we seldom notice for most of us. Why does breathing and consciousness fade into the background?

Well, this is actually a very deep question. Both happen whether we notice it or not. Perhaps being aware of breathing and consciousness is too much information? Or perhaps breathing and consciousness are overwhelming events? We ignore the obvious, it seems, most of the time. Or perhaps we don't feel they are important enough to pay attention to? Perhaps we just like “distractions” better? Maybe we need a break from breathing and consciousness, so we can explore other, new things? I do not think there is an easy answer to this question.

Forgetting things also seems to be important for humans. We need, it seems, to forget things. Why is that? This is a very serious question. How often do humans forget things? Research on forgetting shows that within one hour, people will have

forgotten an average of 50 percent of the information presented. Within 24 hours, they have forgotten an average of 70 percent of new information, and within a week, forgetting claims an average of 90 percent.

We are aware of some things; but not usually aware of being aware? Well, what does that mean? It means we are aware of doing something, but we don't pay attention to it, we ignore it. Most of the time we are aware of what we are doing - immediately; like brushing our teeth, drinking coffee, watching TV, etc. However, we are not always aware of the mechanics of being aware. What I mean is watching the watcher. Brushing our teeth is usually done on auto pilot and while doing it we are thinking about breakfast, chores, work, people-problems, or other things – like telling ourselves stories. We are not really in sync with brushing teeth – we are doing other things at the same time. Being distracted while brushing teeth is a symptom of not really paying attention to what we are doing. We halfheartedly engage in brushing our teeth. When we brush our teeth - it is no big deal. However, this is a kind of a common habit, Actually, I would call this a non-awareness habit – we do it frequently, but we are not aware of it. We ramble in our focus, in most everything we do. Most of us think it is not a big deal. However, it is a big deal when we have interpersonal conflict or working with dangerous tools. Not being in sync with what we are doing is a common experience of being lost in the mundane.

We can call this autopilot or rambling focus or mindlessness or defused awareness; but it is not such a great characteristic. Not being aware of what we are doing is, almost – kinda, a waste of time. Wasting time is not desirable, because that is all we have - time. Time is a gift. Do one thing - if - you want to do it well. However, diffusion is beneficial sometimes because we just need a rest - a reprieve from our daily concerns. Chilling out mindlessly can be a mini vacation. A time to recharge and recuperate. Isn't that what we do when we sleep? We go to the land of forgetting and we play around. However too much sleep is not good. Too much waking mindlessness is also not good. However, forgetting is important and allows us to try something new.

So, back to the question of why it is advantageous to pay attention to breathing. The simple answer is to increase our ability to focus. Paying attention to breathing is probably the most common form of meditation. It is quite simple to do. However, to maintain that breathing focus is not that easy. We slip away easily into thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, sounds, environmental distractions, and boredom - among other things. Learning to command our attention is a lifelong struggle in meditation and throughout our days on this planet. Why is this a fact for almost all of us - perhaps all of us - the difficulty of being focused? Staying focused is a discipline and it involves organization. Organization usually requires a purpose. Purpose gives us a direction, a vision. Organization is desired, but can be elusive.

Breathing is simple and organized in four parts – inhale – pause – exhale - pause. Breathing repeats from the moment of birth to the

moment of our death. The universe created breathing beings - like us. In breathing we can see a small part of the organization of the universe. Breathing beings are incomprehensibly complex and organized. We cannot comprehend the entire universe; but we can experience part of it and see organization everywhere we turn or look. Consciousness is experienced in synchronization with the organization of the entire universe - although most of the time we cannot make sense of the patterns we see. From Atoms which are not simple - to galaxies - organization is everywhere. Nothing is not organized. Even the concept of nothing is organized. Consciousness is organized, but not that easy to always see. All matter in the universe is made of atoms in various combinations. Atoms are the building blocks of every physical thing. Atoms are organized beyond our comprehension. All other phenomena which have no atoms, like energy, light, time and gravitation still have organization. Consciousness - awareness have no atoms. However, consciousness has organization. Nothing is not organized. In reality there is no such thing as randomness - everything is connected. The universe is organized from top to bottom and it is - moving. Consciousness is moving and so do all atoms – constantly. Electrons spin and move - No one has any idea why or where their energy comes from. We humans organize things because we are part of the universe. Organization implies function and purpose. Function and purpose are attributes of design. Can you name one thing that is not organized? I would love to hear from you - tell me, one thing that is not organized? Anything – one thing – that is not organized? This cabinet is my latest creation of something I use for bathroom organization:



The above cabinet has primary woods of cherry and walnut. What we had in the bathroom before for organization was a plastic cabinet. It was actually a very functional cabinet, and we used it for decades. We will still use it in another location for things.



This cabinet is useful for its storage capacity, but it also stores items for future evaluation, because it also functions as a time capsule:



In this compartment at the top of the cabinet, I have copies of my writing, pictures, news stories, personal family documents and other things of this era. I hope my descendants get a picture of what life is like in my time. I wish my ancestors had done this for me.

Time is another curious aspect of consciousness. Is time an aspect of consciousness? I would think so, but does it also exist

in the physical universe outside of our consciousness? If we look at an atom – an electron will move from one point to another. That movement takes time. Atoms demonstrate time. Is the atom and/or electron conscious? I don't know, but movement and structure demonstrate purpose. Consciousness is associated with our bodies and particularly our brains. However, we do not understand how consciousness works in our brains. Slime mold has no brain and yet it performs complex decision making. We do not understand the dimensions of consciousness; no more than what time is. Is consciousness one type? Waking consciousness is what we are mostly aware of and talk about. However, there is a much larger aspect of consciousness that we all experience but know little about. The sub-conscious and/or unconscious is always with us; but we mostly don't see it or even acknowledge it.

Breathing can be a focus mechanism - if - we pay attention to it. Breathing can become a kind of tool of examination; much like a microscope. If we focus, we go into a kind of tunnel in which sensation narrows and awareness of consciousness becomes more raw, elemental, and focused on smaller events. We can hear our breath, or we can feel and hear our heartbeat. We notice an itch or body sensation like pain or pressure.

Breathing in gratitude and noticing the smallest, most insignificant things is beneficial – heartbeat - headache - the sound of breathing – itch. Paying attention to the littlest of things draws me closer to real awareness or the essence of consciousness. It is fine and important to be grateful for the big things in life – love – home – skills – health - etc. However, being grateful for the smallest, most insignificant events is a key to real gratitude and appreciation of one's own consciousness.



Breathing is like watching a river flow from the bank. Things move down the river, sticks, leaves, fish, rocks, water and more. When focused on breathing I have thoughts, feelings, visions, sensations, and other mental activities. Breathing is like a river which is observed in consciousness. Consciousness itself is a river that never stops. Breathing is real, just like a river. Consciousness is real too; but does not have a physical form like breathing or a water river. The river of consciousness is metaphysical. Another thing that is real but does not have a physical form is time. Time flows just like a river and breathing; but it does not occupy a physical space. Where does time live? For humans it exists in consciousness and nowhere else. Time surrounds physical things and consciousness itself; it is a force within and without consciousness. Galaxy's, we are not aware of, still age. Everything ages whether we are aware of it or not.

Breathing can be a tool to grasp time in a powerful way. If we quiet our mind by paying attention to our breath and notice the pause between an inhale and exhale; we capture an instance of time. This pause, transition, is ever so brief; but it holds stillness. This stillness is a static picture of time, but it is alive/aware. Stillness touches everything and nothing at the same point in time.

Time is linked in the sub-conscious of all things. Time permeates all things. We live in the past or future a lot of the time. Fantasy is a big part of our lives. Most of us are good at not paying attention to what we are doing right now. Why is that? Maybe we are looking for something. Maybe right now is not very attractive? What are we looking for? What is the most important thing to be at any given time? I would say it is to be happy. What is happiness? I would say happiness is being content with what we have in the moment. However, if we are not paying attention to most “moments” we have – how can we be happy? Well, we could be brushing our teeth, but thinking about a pleasant experience from yesterday and that makes us happy? So, are we chasing happiness in fantasy? I would say that is exactly what we do a lot of the time. The trick is to find happiness in brushing our teeth. That is not as easy as it may seem. The past and future are illusions, they do not really exist - everything happens in the present. The past and future are just part of the present. Everything moves in the present and that gives us an illusion of the past and future.

Time demonstrates superposition which is an attribute of quantum mechanics. An electron can be in two places at one time. Free will is mistakenly conflated with time. Free will is not the right term; it is more a matter of focus and preference. Preference is a composite disposition that the universe arrives at because of an infinite number of variables.

In meditation breathing has a purpose. Sharpening my focus on the breath brings me closer to noticing clear awareness. It is a simplification process of clearing away the clutter in my vision of consciousness. It is analogous to cleaning a window so that my

view is much clearer. The view does not change but its appearance is much more vivid - real. In the process of cleaning the window the distinction between the view and viewer is absorbed. In meditation circles this is called nonduality. This is one of the many goals of meditation.

So, why do we organize? The easy answer is because we just follow the universe. Can we be unorganized? I think we can be sloppy but not unorganized. I like to be organized, most of the time, that's why I built this cabinet:



One thing is abundantly clear - human consciousness is not the apotheosis of awareness. The fact that everything is organized and moving in the universe means there is something way beyond human capability to perceive and understand. We are so small in this universe, and we do not like it. I think it is important to accept our stature in the cosmos. This is a pill that does not go down well for most people. It could very well be that we are no more significant than an amoeba.

I think consciousness is fundamental to existence. All existence flows from consciousness. The famous existential maxim - "existence precedes essence" - is essentially a materialistic point of view. Most scientists today are materialists, they believe the physical world came first and then consciousness emerged from the physical world. However, there are some logical inconsistencies in this thinking. The Big Bang theory is one example. The theory states the universe started 13.8 billion years ago from a singularity. Essentially a singularity is - everything came from a fantastically infinitely small space - nothing. What created nothingness? I contend that consciousness precedes physical existence or essence precedes existence. This is what The Big Bang theory – a singularity - really - states.

Breathing is like a wave, continually going in and out, touching consciousness. The ocean of consciousness is constantly touched by breathing. Breathing is a link to the ocean of consciousness.

I don't feel I own things, but I experienced things that are unique to me. To say I own them is not accurate. I don't own sounds, my breathing, my thoughts, my feelings, and other sensations - I experienced them in a stream of consciousness. The consciousness just is - I flow with it and I have preferences, but the preferences ebb and flow and fade away. I would not say I own my preferences, but that I experience them. The experience of focus gives one the feeling of possession. However, possession is not quite accurate. There is a distinction between experiencing my focus/direction and my desire to do something. I am not responsible for the universe; however, I do dance with it. The dance is a combination of both desire and design. The mechanism of consciousness is designed and/or programmed - beyond my comprehension. To say who or what put consciousness in motion, is not possible to answer. However, consciousness is in motion and from all appearances has always existed. Whether consciousness will continue to exist is not within our capability to answer. One thing seems quite certain about consciousness - it is much larger than we can possibly imagine.

I use the term cooking as a metaphor for what happens in the creative process. When I cook a meal in a pot on the stove, I alter the molecular structure of the ingredients I use. I destroy and alter things (ingredients) in order to create new things. The same is true in carpentry - it is a form of cooking. When two galaxies collide, they destroy each other and create new things - this is cooking on a cosmic scale. I am a cook and I cook with a purpose because I organize. The universe is being cooked and as far as we can tell always has been – and - continues to be cooked now.

As the old saying goes - no job is done until the paperwork is finished. So, I am finishing up this essay which reflects my current point of view. I hope you appreciate my woodworking and thoughts. Let me know if you do - love and best regards.

