

Greater Manchester Humanists

Humanist Discussion Group

14 September 2021

(Zoom meeting 7.30-9.00pm)

How can we know ourselves?

(Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom – Aristotle)

We think we know ourselves, our strengths, weaknesses, values, and personality traits. However research suggests this is misguided and we may come across to others in ways that we did not imagine. For example, if we think of ourselves as generous we may actually make less effort to be generous, to be more complacent about it. A chasm may open up between the self that we imagine and the self that is real.

Our discussion could usefully be centred around the Scientific American paper : '[10 things You Don't Know about Yourself](#)'. It covers several strands of research under each heading which may offer opportunities for reflection and relating to our own experience. The '10 things' are:

- Your perspective on yourself is distorted.
- Your motives are often a complete mystery to you.
- Outward appearances tell people a lot about you.
- Gaining some distance can help you know yourself better.
- We too often think we are better at something than we are.
- People who tear themselves down experience setbacks more frequently.
- You deceive yourself without realising it.
- The 'true-self' is good for you.
- Insecure people tend to behave more morally.
- If you think of yourself as flexible, you will do much better.

For an overview of personality tests, see <https://www.workstyle.io/best-personality-test>

You might like to have a go at some personality tests before the session, here are two suggestions:

[The 16 personalities test](#) is worth doing. It is an alternative to the Myers-Briggs assessment (which costs \$49 on line). It scores you on Extroversion/Introversion, Intuitive/Observant, Thinking/Feeling, Judging/ Prospecting, Assertive/Turbulent.

[This personality quiz](#) uses only pictures - says this is more accurate than words/completing boxes. It is based on the Big 5 Personality model, (I tried it, seems quite accurate).

For a useful acronym (VITALS) to know yourself, see

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/changepower/201603/know-yourself-6-specific-ways-know-who-you-are>

The [Johari Window](#) - is an old model that is still very useful to make us aware that parts of ourselves are known to us and others, parts are hidden, we are blind to some parts, and other parts are unknown to ourselves and others. (Note: This link provides a series of 'slide shows' about the Johari Window - after clicking through one slide show, click once more for the next one. There may be a limit on how many times this can be done.)

I don't think we need to get into definitions, though psychologists do make distinctions between personality types and traits, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personality_type

RS

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