

KNOW YOUR SELF. This phrase was a doctrine in ancient Greece, Egypt, the Orient - it is a spiritual lesson. It advises the Kingdom of Heaven / God is within - if you go inside (in meditation) you'll find the Kingdom of God and know it as your self. **A**nother aspect of the phrase is the notion to know our mind. What makes us think? Are we what we think? The sages tell us, inherent in our mind is not only the ability to differentiate between good and evil - but mind comprises good and evil. **A**lternatively the saying refers to the ideal of understanding the human condition. But the ancient Greek philosophers thought no man could ever comprehend the human spirit or mind wholly* - thus it is inconceivable to fully know oneself. **T**herefore the saying may well relate to a less ambitious ideal, namely knowing one's own habits, morals, temperament and ability to control anger and fear - as well as other aspects of human behaviour that we struggle with on a daily basis. **W**hen life is a struggle, meditation helps us to find ourselves. And while I promote the belief in soul - the belief in an inner life, a true self or spirit - this is not crucial. As long as a belief is tolerant, ethical and brings us peace, any belief will do.

*One of the hardest lessons in life - as regards knowing oneself - is knowing one's own potential for evil and wrongdoing. The human mind is dualistic; it comprises good (we routinely say we believe in the good in people) but it has the potential for evil (evil springs from the mind, it exists nowhere else)**.*

If we acknowledged our own potential for evil, our world would be a different place. In private as in public life we are deluded - we see others going astray, but we are never amiss ourselves; and since we never see ourselves doing wrong, we will forever lay blame on others - hence all our conflicts and wars.

Were we to know ourselves to the extent that we could acknowledge we too are mistaken at times (but this would require for us to subdue our ego), we would tackle the world's conflicts with understanding and contrition. Then we would be able to compromise and find solutions that suit both sides.

self, soul, inner life, higher consciousness, inner God, spirit, universal consciousness

*Personally, I believe in a soul, spirit and inner life; I do fear without spiritual beliefs our world would lack compassion***. But I acknowledge that this belief - like indeed all beliefs, religions and philosophies - is constructed by the mind; these are concepts we develop to make sense of the world around us.*

The self is an enigma dealt with by Sam Harris in his book Waking Up. He refers to Buddhist teachings, where the self is an illusion; be that as it may - in the context of this book knowledge of the self is practical. While neither assigning it mythical propensities nor viewing it scientifically, I observe the self/mind as the conscious, thinking entity that is separate from the body, the material (see my blogs 855, 411).

German philosophy professor Thomas Metzinger says: "As regards the self, the illusion-talk in popular writings is conceptual nonsense and counter intuitive. While there obviously is not a space in the brain with a scientific and biologic immortal soul or self, then how does this robust sense of selfhood emerge? Imagine people would try to believe there is no such thing as a self ... you cannot believe this if you tried." Thus I deem the self not 'entity', but 'ongoing process'.

*see Harris' response, blog 855
see also BUDDHISM, KARMA, *UNDERSTANDING, ** MIND 1 & EVIL, *** BELIEF*