

Seeing the Obvious, or When Did the Earth Turn Round?

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Michael Cheikin MD
Holistic Medicine and Physiatry
www.cheikin.com 610-239-9901

Intelligence and learning involve recognizing associations between elements of life. Some things we learn easily and early—that a hot stove hurts; other concepts can take a lifetime (or several!). These concepts structure our reality, and provide a stability that enhances survival. The nervous system seeks stability; both our cognitive (thinking) and emotional systems reward stability and create negative cues (emotions) when there is instability. This is evident when we hold onto a sub-optimal but stable lifestyle rather than risk the instability of change that would improve things. The dark side of “stability”, and the “conclusions” it is based upon is the closing of possibilities.

In less evolved creatures, information is hard-wired (like a spider making a web); the human ability to receive updated “software” from our parents and communities enables a greater adaptability (flexibility) for different environments. This new information and the associated newer part of our brain allows us to over-ride our hardware; which, while enhancing adaptation, can enable us to distort or ignore important survival clues—hence our dogs and cats do a better job staying healthy than we do!

Every information-processing system, whether human or machine must encode information. This requires filtering and distortion--i.e. certain information is prioritized or magnified (such as the color red). Even identical twins quickly become different due to different experiences. As the saying goes, “perception is reality”, each of us experiences a different world, not just because of our culture and education, but inherently because of our nervous systems. The psychology of groups further distorts perception and emotion to unify behavior and survival. Perception and memory can also be distorted or altered by context. There is forward and backward “masking”--past experience and future experience can be blocked or distorted through this mechanism.

Artists and Scientists, and New Perceptions

Great art like the Mona Lisa, and great discoveries such as bacteria challenge our perceptions of reality. While we pay artists and scientists to challenge our perceptions, history has demonstrated time and again that innovations are initially rejected. Galileo was confined by the Church for the second half of his life and was not exonerated until the 1900's. Scientific information can take decades to get from discovery to mainstream. Recently, Marshall and Warren's discovery of H Pylori causing stomach ulcers in the 1980's was not recognized by the Nobel prize until 2005. Since information now moves around the world at the speed of the electron (i.e. the internet), we are in the best and worst of times with information dissemination.

Training the Obvious

As children, we have vivid imaginations that give us a different take on reality. Unfortunately, most of us are discouraged from attending to these impressions from our

inner selves. Other than the rare talented artist, we are not taught how to operate or utilize our super-computers. We are also not taught how to deal with change; stepping out of our comfort zones, when and how (except under peer pressure as teens!) We are not taught how to evaluate information; and our reactions to that information.

The word “dis-cover“ implies that It was already there. Many philosophies believe that “oneness” implies that nothing can be created or destroyed--all is already known. If this is true, it implies that those who create are simply tapping into a source of information that is available to all.

Dreams and consciousness-altering substances provide additional paradigms. Some “primitive” cultures believe that daydreams are reality and “normal” experience the dream!

Yoga and similar practices have evolved to

- 1) teach us about how our nervous systems process information (for the good and bad) and
- 2) to give us access to non-sensory, non-cognitive, non-linguistic, non-material information. Like any skill, these practices must be learned and practiced in three dimensions. Reading a book or crowding into fast class at the local gym does not foster the development of this skill set. It cannot be done while driving our lives at 75 miles per hour.

Traditionally, these practices were taught one-on-one; and that requirement still exists at a certain level. A talented musician, artist, or scientist does best with a coach or mentor. Trust is crucial when change is required—trust of the teacher and of the process.

Health, Healing and Listening to the Body

Though not articulated, as a society we are turning to yoga and meditation in part for this reason. Our pets know how to keep healthy; why can't we? Why do we hold onto patterns of thought, emotion and behavior that we know harm us? What enables us to not see the obvious? Why do we escape the herd when it says the world is flat?

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. **This educational material may not be used to influence medical care without supervision by a licensed practitioner.**

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3. Dr. Cheikin's website has related articles and references such as “Yoga and Truth”, “Listening to Your Pain“ and others.

Michael Cheikin MD is a holistic physician, Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (“Physiatry”), Pain Management, Spinal Cord Medicine and Electrodiagnostic Medicine and licensed in Medical Acupuncture. Dr. Cheikin has extensively studied yoga, diet and metabolism, Ayurvedic, Chinese and energy medicine and other alternative modalities for over 30 years. He specializes in obscure, chronic and severe problems that have not responded satisfactorily to other methods of healing.

www.cheikin.com

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Obvious Observations
The world is round (1400's)
The earth goes around the sun (1500's)
Washing hands saves new mothers (1800's)
Time and space are relative (early 1900's)
Breast feeding is better than bottle feeding (1960's)
H Pylori can cause stomach ulcers (1980's)
Humans are altering the earth's ecology (2000's)
Our healthcare system needs to incentivize wellness, not sickness (2014?)
Lifestyle is the major determinant of health
Altering genetic codes without sufficient understanding will cause harm to future generations
Diet and exercise are not sufficient for weight management
Injecting newborns with multiple chemicals on the first day of life can cause long-term negative effects
Pending dis-coveries that will advance humanity...