

Introduction

Change Your Perspective—Change Your Experience

Over forty years ago I received some sage advice that, at the time, seemed of little value. But as my meditation practice deepened, and my ability to “see” and understand grew, that counsel proved to be profound. “Nothing is as it appears,” I was told. It was exactly the same observation made by German philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832): “We don’t know what we see; we see what we know.” In other words, our unconscious concepts determine our conscious perceptions. In everyday life we don’t really experience the world, we experience our mind. And because so many of our stored, unconscious concepts are neither true nor valid, the perceptions the mind forms and actions the body takes often lead to dis-ease, burnout and pain.

The importance of our concepts has been recognized since ancient times. In the Book of Genesis the Hebrew Torah points out that, “God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.” In the first century AD the Greek philosopher Epictetus observed, “Men are not disturbed by things, but by the views they take of them.” In the play *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare (circa 1602) made the bold observation, “There’s nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.”

The Power of Concepts

Just as a puppeteer (called a manipulator) controls a marionette from above the stage using wires or strings, our unconscious habits and concepts enslave each of us to certain habitual thoughts, words and deeds. In fact, according to stem cell biologist and bestselling author of *The Biology of Belief* Bruce Lipton, PhD, human beings operate 95 percent of the time from unconscious programming! And this unconscious programming, *samskaras* in Sanskrit, is, in Lipton's estimation, "a million times more powerful than good intentions."

To understand how concepts and habits are formed, it's helpful to know that the conscious, discriminating portion of the human mind doesn't become fully functional until the age of six. Newborns and young children are observing their environment just like a video camera—and recording everything in the unconscious portion of the mind. In this way children enlist their parents as teachers and software programmers, gathering unconscious, conceptual data in their attempt to find happiness, health, security and joy in this new, strange and wondrous world in which they find themselves.

Lipton explains that, "Within a couple of days after birth, children begin to recognize their parents' faces. Within the first couple of weeks, they learn if a parent's face is happy and secure or unsure and afraid. Ever after, any time children have an issue of concern or come across something new in the environment, they instinctively look at mother or father to observe the expression chiseled on their face. If a child is presented with some potential danger and the parent's face reflects worry or fright, the child will likely avoid the encounter. If the parent's facial expression appears relaxed and smiling—conveying safety—the child will be more inclined to experiment; to play with the new relationship at hand."

This process leads children to observe, gauge and ultimately perceive the world according to their parents' conceptual lenses. Prenatally, and to age six, we acquire basic concepts and build habits of what to do and what not to do—not from personal experience, but rather from observing and downloading, for better or worse, the habits and experiences (the "sins of the father") modeled by our parents. Relying on that installed

software, we begin to adopt a variety of concepts modeled for us by individual and cultural authority figures including friends, clergy, teachers and celebrities. Every concept that we believe is important to our self-preservation is ultimately stored in the unconscious mind.

All concepts are forms of shorthand—representing complex mental combinations of objects, events and people. We consult them in order to remember and understand what things are, what categories or groups they belong to, and what they mean to our own happiness. For example, if someone instructs you to “think of a car,” the concept, “car” will evoke specific ideas and memories about what a car is, what its characteristics are, and how you feel about that car. Does your concept of a car have black tires or white walls, two doors or four doors? Is it red, white, black, or some other color?

Some of our concepts are accurate and helpful, while others can be faulty or completely invalid. If our mind’s inaccurate concepts remain unexamined and unaltered, they will ultimately motivate actions that cause us pain. To illustrate, I’m borrowing the flashcard technique that my first grade teacher employed to teach arithmetic. You may remember from your own experience that the student was shown the front of the card displaying the problem—in this case: $1+2$. On the reverse side of the card, the teacher could see both the problem and the answer. In the examples below, Teacher #1 is teaching the correct answer: $1+2=3$. But Teacher #2 is teaching the wrong answer: $1+2=4$. The point is that throughout our lives some of our teachers (mom, dad, brother, sister, priest, rabbi, imam, friend, politicians and celebrities) have taught us incorrect, faulty concepts and we now have them stored on the hard drive of our unconscious mind.

Student	Teacher #1	Teacher #2
1	1	1
+ 2	+ 2	+ 2
—	—	—
	3	4

Many other culturally accepted concepts are incomplete, and yet, for the sake of convenience, we inappropriately apply them in all sorts of relationships. Even though we are all familiar with the slogan I ♥ NY, does it really provide us a thorough understanding of what “love” is? No, it doesn’t. And yet by not examining the concept, we become attached to it and feel totally comfortable telling our husband or wife, “I ♥ you,” without knowing its true meaning, value and potential consequence.

Other erroneous concepts we use in everyday language may not be true, but they are also not really injurious. They are merely innocent societal conveniences for the sake of conversation. For instance, we all say that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. But once we critically examine such a concept, we realize that the sun neither rises in the east nor sets in the west. Why? Because the sun never rises nor sets at all. The rotation of the earth produces the illusion of sunrise and sunset.

In the decision making process, even before we take an action or speak a word, our concepts help us define what is relevant and irrelevant. When a concept reprises a memory of pleasure and security, we tend to like it and feel comfortable using it. When a concept reprises a memory of pain and insecurity, we most often dislike it enough that we seek to avoid serving it. To be beneficial, a concept must be relevant to our unique personal needs and purpose in life. For someone who doesn’t know how to read music, the concepts represented in a sheet of music would be useless. They would only register as a bunch of lines, dots, dashes and odd symbols that have no real meaning. But a musician, seeing the same sheet, would hear notes, chords, tempos, melodies and harmonies. Similarly, if someone placed a car part in front of you, you might only see “a car part,” whereas a mechanic would see an intake manifold, a water pump or a ball joint. You would “see” what you know: a car part, while the mechanic would see what he knows: a water pump. A very experienced mechanic would see something even more specific, like a water pump from a particular make, model and year of car.

Whenever we blindly accept, adopt and employ concepts offered to us by other people and the prevailing culture, without our own critical examination, those concepts can become

dangerous to our health, our personal well being and all our relationships. When we depend on faulty concepts to perceive a world that is constantly changing (including our own body and mind), it becomes impossible to make reliable, health-affirming choices.

Lower Knowledge—Higher Knowledge

All knowledge falls into one of two categories.

Lower knowledge is obtained through the process of reasoning and from the contact of the mind and senses with objects in the material world. It is received indirectly, as hearsay, from outside sources such as lectures, books, television, the internet and search engines like Google. Lower knowledge includes philosophy, medicine, commerce, technology, the arts, and all the sciences (including political science).

Higher knowledge, considered to be the “highest form of knowledge,” represents the changeless, eternal Truth that lies beyond the relativity of the senses, conscious mind and unconscious mind. Higher knowledge is always healing and creatively supportive in all relationships. Without the guidance of higher knowledge, lower knowledge inevitably leads to pain and destruction.

When you adopt a philosophy of life that encourages you to rely on higher knowledge in determining how to best use lower knowledge, all your challenges can be viewed as means, rather than as overwhelmingly stressful problems to control, manipulate or obliterate. Albert Einstein saw it this way, “A problem cannot be solved on the level at which it appears. It must be solved on a higher level.” And Einstein’s concept is not as mysterious as you might think, for when you change your perspective, you change your experience.

Today’s Challenge

Today, for example, the United States is suffering from an historic crisis in healthcare. It’s true that we are living longer lives, yet suicides, heroin addictions, diabetes and burnout are all increasing at alarming rates. Growing numbers of people feel emotionally unbalanced, angry, depressed, fearful and dissatisfied—all of which will eventually impact their health

and well being. And these issues are affecting all facets of the population, including our healthcare providers. In fact, burnout among U. S. physicians has now reached an alarming, epidemic level.

In such instances we tend to blame the deteriorating state of our health on faulty lower knowledge rather than our own inability to use higher knowledge to shepherd our use of lower knowledge more skillfully. External factors like family, overwork, economic uncertainty, terrorism, the government, cumbersome regulations, and the many unresolved, complex cultural divisions in social and racial relationships are pointed to as the cause of our pain. But unless we can regularly access a higher state of consciousness, our conceptual conditioning cannot be overcome. Twentieth century psychologist Abraham Maslow famously stated that if the only tool you have is a hammer, you'll treat every problem as if it were a nail. That's what we're doing, for instance, when we try to deal with every human challenge from within a strictly physical orientation. We're seeing only physical solutions—which cannot be effective, because our problems are not physical in origin. And to make matters worse, many of our misguided attempts can have dangerous consequences.

Five to six thousand years ago, the pioneers of modern Yoga Science dealt with similar stressors of their own. But instead of seeking solutions outside themselves, certain women and men embarked on a journey of self-inquiry and self-discovery. By experimenting with scientific meditation techniques, they learned how to unify the wisdom potential of the mind with the skillfully dynamic capacities of the body. Through their process of internal research, pioneering meditators of long ago received a priceless, practical treasure that can serve us well today—if we are motivated to follow in their footsteps.

An ancient yogic story, similar to the Greek myth of “Ariadne's Thread,” provides instruction on how you too can discover life's greatest hidden treasure. The story tells of a cave explorer who, as she enters the mouth of a dark cavern, begins unraveling a ball of golden thread she carries with her. Her exploration leads her through many narrow, twisting passages, vertical cavities, past waterfalls and pillars of bedrock

reaching from floor to ceiling, until at last she enters a vast hall filled with treasure of unimaginable worth. Fascinated, she lingers there gathering treasure, but recalls the needs of the world she left behind. On her return trip she follows the thread back to the mouth of the cave and lovingly hands the end of that thread to a friend, saying, “Follow this into the cave and keep following it through many passageways, and you will arrive at an enormous hall filled with limitless treasure.” The friend is dubious, but the promise of a treasure encourages him. He looks in, but he is afraid of the dark and looks out again. The promise of the treasure is repeated, so he enters and goes a few steps but then retreats again. Gradually, he gathers the courage to follow the golden thread deeper and deeper, until at last he too arrives at the shining, precious treasure.

In 1975, my wife Jenness and I began our study of Yoga Science. Over these many years, through the daily practice of meditation and its allied disciplines, we have explored the spiritual passageways that lead to the riches hidden within all of us. Meditation is a profound journey without movement. When you learn to concentrate exclusively on the *mantra*, the *mantra* can guide your mind beyond the boundaries of transitory concepts, thoughts and feelings. As the mind becomes increasingly more still, you’ll inherit the rarest of all human treasures—a profound awareness of the ocean of peace, happiness, bliss, wisdom and love within you—that *is* you—having a human experience. This profound encounter of consciousness observing consciousness, free of uninvited concepts, will provide you the impetus and courage to examine, question, refine and consciously change the concepts you employ in your daily life.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna (who represents the personality enslaved to unexamined and inappropriate concepts) asks this penetrating question of Krishna (who represents Supreme Wisdom): “Why do we take actions that cause us so much pain and suffering? What power moves us, even against our will, as if forcing us?” As Arjuna broods on his own inability to take skillful action, Krishna answers the poignant question with words that are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago. “Just as marionettes are manipulated by the

puppeteer,” he says, “every human being sometimes feels like a puppet whose strings are pulled by powerful concepts hidden below the surface level of the conscious mind.”

Philosopher and poet William Blake wrote in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, “If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is—Infinite. But since man has closed himself up, he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern.” The pain you’ve already experienced while serving ill-suited concepts is a messenger inviting you to embark on your own personal hero’s journey. If you accept this invitation, you can recognize and correct all those unexamined concepts that once skewed your perceptions, diminished your problem-solving capacity, restricted your freedom and weakened the body’s immune system.

To support your personal effort, I offer you *The Heart and Science of Yoga*. The book is both the record of our personal journey and a transformational teaching. In its pages you’ll find easy-to-learn meditations, prayers, teaching stories from the world’s great spiritual traditions, breathing practices, a user’s guide for the mind, techniques for accessing intuitive wisdom, an holistic program of easy-gentle exercise and a practical understanding of ancient Ayurvedic health principles.

As modern medicine rediscovers and systematically documents the physical, mental and emotional benefits of meditation and easy-gentle yoga, millions of Americans from all walks of life are incorporating the timeless practices of this ancient science into their lives. Whether you are a beginner or a long-time student, this book can provide loving support and valuable insights to advance your understanding, deepen and sustain your practice and nurture your Self-transformation. I promise that through the process of personal experimentation you too can access an inner reservoir of creativity to make every relationship rewarding—no matter what.

But before you begin, remember that meditation concepts are not offered as dogma or tenets of faith. They are part of a scientific hypothesis that you can test yourself—if you have the daring and determination needed to pursue this course of investigation. For thousands of years, meditation has been the go-to science for knowing, understanding and analyzing our

internal states and for optimizing our personal relationships in the world. A daily meditation practice is both the gateway and a golden thread that safely and effectively lead to a new universe of thinking and experience. By examining your concepts, which will present themselves one by one when you begin to meditate, you too can effectively cleanse the windows of your perception. It is an experience that has the power to revolutionize your vision of the universe and bring profound changes in your character, conduct, and consciousness. In turn, these changes will bring you the happy, healthy, secure and joyful life you deeply desire—leaving a positive mark on everything you do, and deeply influencing everyone you come in contact with.

Leonard Perlmutter (Ram Lev)



Calling Balls and Strikes

Before you begin to read and practice in earnest, I'd like to share a helpful anecdote. As the old story goes, three baseball umpires were discussing how they determine balls and strikes. The rookie ump confidently claimed, "I call 'em as I see 'em." The umpire who had been calling games for ten years emphatically countered, "I call them as they are." The third umpire, a veteran of over 25 years, smiled knowingly and sagely stated, "They are what I call 'em!"

It is the veteran who knows the truth of our situation. We all live in the "reality" of our own perceptions. And our conceptions skew our perceptions. We see what we already know, projecting our mind's limitations onto each new relationship. Only when we purify the lenses of the mind, can we overcome our attachments and see things clearly.