Reality of Craziness

Get to know all the other people who you think you are not.

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"One person's craziness is another persons reality."
— **Tim Burton**, film director

Thoughts Aren't Reality

You are a musical instrument with a mind of its own, a resonator that can take action. Some primary actions are built into you. These are the urges that arise in you in the course of doing things. For simplicity, they are of four kinds: survival, maintenance, attraction, and indulgence. This is somewhat arbitrary—like Maslow's hierarchy of needs—but I want to build on them.

Survival is ever-present. Sometimes it dominates but mostly it just colors our perception. Maintenance compels us with click-like regularity: eating, sleeping, and busying ourselves. Attraction is our response to opportunity. Attractions are triggered by associations. Indulgence is what we want most of the time: relaxation, contentment, comfort, and happiness. Indulgence provides the lines on the roads we travel.

Within this context we have thoughts. Our thoughts resonate with our preferred actions. Our thoughts keep us in the neighborhood of what we would like to control, acquire, or secure, although this can extend quite far. Some of us experience the world widely and others narrowly. We may speak the same language but we don't share the same world. Our thoughts are not real, they are strategies.

What Isn't There

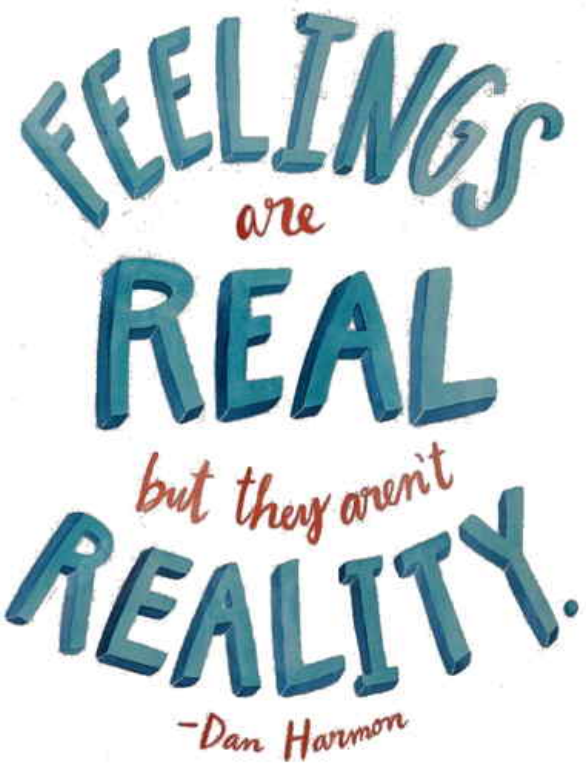
Many of our problems arise from the a lack of clarity or conclusion. When things are clear and conclusive we don't have many thoughts, and that's the way we like it. We reward ourselves with relaxation when all is going well, and we indulge. Humans like to think in the way that hamsters like exercise wheels.

Most people prefer inconsequential thoughts. Most people like to exist in a state of mental idling. In this state, the world is a haze of recreational good feeling. We need stimulation and feel the best when all our needs are met. In this state we are least engaged with reality. It is the state of comfortable illusion.

Reality is what's happening outside of your conceptual bubble. It is incomprehensibly complex. Reality is the changing, interconnected world, not the static world of separate events. This the basic source of human confusion: we want a static state that has no threats, but we languish in stasis. We are enervated by curiosity but threatened by novelty. As long as this prevails, we can never be satisfied.

What you ultimately want is a sense of emergence with a sense of safety, eternal youth, and you cannot have it. It's not that you have not found it. Fundamentally, it cannot exist.

What you can achieve is something that may not attract you: the threat of change, or the boredom of sameness. The spectrum from change to sameness is something you can measure. We measure our prospects and predict. The spectrum from threat to boredom is subjective, it exists in the realm of feeling and these feelings are inside you. To change what you feel, you have to change what you think. This is called reframing.



Beyond What You Think

Reframing is the foundation of changing one's mind. All stuckness requires a frame or boundary, a mindset. Opening, changing, or breaking out, requires thinking something new. Novelty can come in the form of new ideas, emotions, sensations, or rhythms.

You may think you know these territories, but I assure you that you do not. There is always a boundary to what's familiar. What's outside that boundary is shrouded in fog and is infinite.

Some limitations are a matter of deduction, as new deduction requires a new insight. Our greater limitations are matters of induction, situations where generalizing has gone wrong. These are situations where we're limited not so much by what we do think, but by what we can think. We are limited by what we think is possible.

Consider your thinking as having two parts: what you know or think you know, and what you don't know and don't think about. An easy way to see this boundary is to consider what you believe in versus what you don't, or what's reasonable versus what's outrageous. Contentment versus horror, or what's for dinner versus extra terrestrials. The boundary may be vague, but what lies to either side are clearly of a different nature.

Thinking consists either of connected thoughts—causes and effects or reasons and understandings—or disconnected thoughts—wonders, confusions, and unknowns. Connected thinking creates boxes, limitations, and constraints. Disconnected thoughts are shattered containers, their limitation is also their opportunity. Some of our greatest times of personal growth come result from disasters because they cause us to change our thinking.

Our thoughts must disconnect in order for us to have a new idea. They might reconnect afterwards, but it's better if your thoughts are disconnected and connections develop organically, which is to say free from your pressure and interference.

Imagine that every one of your problems has some kind of resolution outside of any thinking that you know. Imagine that none of your problems will be solved using your current approach. This is almost certainly true of any problem that has been long-standing. If your understanding of any problem has not led or is not leading to a resolution, then it most likely won't no matter how much time you give it.

Einstein's special and general theories of relativity came in a flash. They were some of his first papers and had no precedent. He spent the rest of his life trying to apply this same thinking to other field theories and got nowhere.

Give Rhythm a Try

On of the easiest forms of novelty comes from rhythm, it is also one of the most elusive. Most of us are unaware of our rhythms and how our rhythms determine our awareness. Consider whether it is what

you think that alters your heart rate, or whether you heart rate alters your thoughts. Does one come first?

Being in synchrony with your daily rhythms will have a greater effect on your moods than your moods will have on your daily rhythms. We operate on frequencies that range from fast radio frequencies to slow solar cycles. We hardly make an effort to control their effects or our response to them, if we're aware of them at all.

The main purpose of meditation is not to control your thoughts but to control your rhythms. You only become aware of your rhythms by first disengaging from your thoughts. You cannot stop thinking, but you can separate being from thinking. In this disengaged state you can begin to appreciate your different rhythms and their feelings, emotions, thoughts, and sensations.

Try this simple exercise. Seclude yourself for five or ten minutes. Find a quiet place where nothing is happening, nothing is changing, and there is no disturbance. Close your eyes, relax yourself as much as possible, and imagine yourself experiencing regular waves of thought, sensation, or image.

You might picture or recall yourself experiencing some rhythm in the past. Focus on a rhythm and recreate it in your imagination. Experience one rhythm for 30-seconds and then move on to another.

After 10 minutes, open your eyes and spend one more minute letting thoughts and sensations appear and disappear without attachment. Pay attention to the various rhythms without any attempt to constrain or control them. Notice moods that each frequency brings. Then, find a sense of calm and return to your normal affairs.

Obligations of Learning

There are parallels between developments in the current time and those of the Dark Ages and the Medieval periods of European history. With hindsight and using modern language, we can identify how this age now differs from those ages then. What stands out most is the limited transfers of power and knowledge that predominated in the Dark Ages and began to break in the Medieval period.

The Dark Ages—and it is argued that this period was not as dark as they seems to us now—was dominated by the feudal system. It was half a millennium of relative stability—between the years 500 and 1000 CE—not for lack of need, but for lack of opportunity. Wars were small, interests were local, transportation was nonexistent, and literacy was nil. The structure was horizontal, composed of local lords who bought their own armies and separate alliances. They were weakly allied to a sovereign, and they were all constrained by the regressive Roman Catholic Church.

Throughout this period, and well into the 19th century, state-sponsored terror and repression were the norm. Justice was nonexistent. Law, such as it was, was defined as whatever kept things in place at a low, functional level. Authority was preserved at all costs. As authority began to fail, the Church began 700 years of inquisitions, starting in the 12th and continuing until the 19th century.

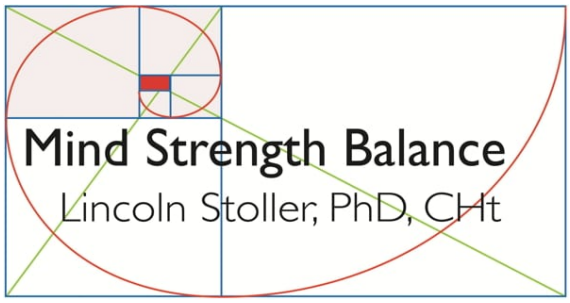
Although communication was limited, the structure was something like our internet in that the governing nodes were independent. You could take down one baron, duke, or lord, but this did not weaken the feudal system. The lack of any great opportunities within the system, and the rewards of keeping things small resulted in five centuries of stability, stasis, and suffering for most.

In the Medieval era literacy was still rare. Nation states began to build industries. Alliances between states became more consequential as did the rewards of conquest. Then, as now, there were great information wars.

With the invention of the printing press the continent became literate and, with that, ideas began to spread. Without writing, spreading ideas is a sort of telephone game that's only as effective as the weakest link. Writing birthed the grease of change: propaganda. And it was through written propaganda that Martin Luther—an otherwise unconvincing man—tipped the balance that loosened the strangle-hold of the Church of Rome.

What we call progress is really a system of feedback combined with instability. At times this has brought rapid improvement, but it has also brought insanity, chaos, and suffering.

We cannot talk about individual enlightenment outside of the context of cultural enlightenment. Today we recognize people like Dante Alighieri and Leonardo da Vinci as great agents of change, but in their time they fought a largely losing battle. The opportunities for change in the Modern Era, which started with Europe's expansion, were due to the acceptance of new ideas. Your change too will succeed or fail as a result of your new ideas.

"The thoughts that you hold most dear and are least willing to bring into question are often the most delusional thoughts of all."
— **Charlie Ambler**, Founder of @dailyzen

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