

The Complete Psychological Writings of Mark Pettinelli

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C O N N E X I O N S

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Chapter 1

What Makes Humans Conscious?¹

Information processing can occur in computers and in life forms less advanced than humans (other animals), so therefore what makes humans conscious is advanced information processing. What consists of advanced information processing is primarily the ability to reflect and from this reflection, experience deep emotions. Dogs seem to experience deep emotions, they are known to be emotionally sensitive, and from that observation comes the conclusion that it takes more than emotion to be conscious. Simply experiencing deep emotions doesn't make someone conscious. If you understand the place each experience you have has relative to your life as a whole then you enrich the emotional and cognitive processing of each experience. A dog will also be able to reflect on each experience and its place in their life as a whole, but it doesn't seem like the dog really understands as well how important it is. The dog will not be able to describe with words different aspects of his experience, how it made the dog feel, why that experience was important to it. However, not all of experience can be defined by your ability to describe it with words, there can be very subtle levels of emotional learning involved, that even if you can't describe it with words can change who you are. When you process an experience, learning is going to be involved. You reflect on the experience on many levels, there is the actual experience, and then there is going to be what you think about it in your mind. You think about it in many ways, and how it relates to many aspects of your life. This reflection is a representation of the actual event in your mind. The nature of the experience becomes changed based on how it relates to your life. For example, you may say, "that event wasn't that serious because I have done that before and don't care", or you could say, "that experience was serious because I learned something new".

Those examples show how you can reflect on an experience on many levels. All those levels are processed unconsciously. If you think about them with words and describe them, it only makes them conscious and might change how you process them a little, but you still would process them and be changed by the experience if you don't reflect on it with words. The point is that high level thinking occurs by any simple experience. This is what makes humans conscious because it shows how we understand a situation and its place in our life. That type of higher level thinking shows that it is also possible that you learn from every situation in life. If you can process it on so many levels, and ask so many questions about it, then part of consciousness is learning. Sometimes people note how they are unconsciously pondering about something or worrying about something. Higher order thinking and conscious processing of events is similar. You unconsciously process events and they have a certain level of clarity and distinctiveness in your mind, or lack thereof. A micro level example of this would be that you might only process a certain event fully and gain a high quality understanding of it after a certain amount of time has passed. After certain periods of time the experience might be subject to different levels of thinking about it. So it might take time before you realize something in specific about an experience. The time processing it without words is a part of a higher order network of thinking and associations relating to each other in your mind that helps make us reflective and conscious.

After pointing out the importance of unconscious learning and knowledge, the next observation to make

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m26962/1.2/>>.

from that is how much unconscious knowledge influences our conscious understanding without our consciously understanding what it is that lead to your conscious understanding. For instance, real events are going to make you learn something, but you aren't going to necessarily know what exactly caused that learning, or even be aware that you learned something. Also, how is it so certain that people always learn from experiences? Just because you have more experiences does that necessarily mean that you are learning? Is it possible to have such a high order processing system without using words, that is independent and functions by itself and learns progressively?

Chapter 2

How Emotion is Processed¹

The idea that the mind processes positive things better than neutral and negative ones is not new. However, this idea is much more significant, and it applies in many more circumstances than it would be assumed from just this singular idea alone. For instance, this idea could mean that people are simply more open to positive, happier emotions than negative ones. That things which cause pleasure are better and clearer understood than something which is painful. However, something painful may cause you to become more awake, and this in turn would lead you to process information better. This information itself might be pleasurable, even though the original stimulus was painful. If the stimulus is negative, you would still process it better because of the original negative stimulus which “woke” you up. There are examples of negative things which cause people to pay attention, something like spanking, any loud noise (scratching a fingernail on a chalkboard for one), or even a painful emotional experience could cause you to take life more seriously temporarily, and this might cause you to be more awake, active, or intellectual. However, those negative things just make someone better able to receive or understand positive stimulus more so than negative, because someone is still probably going to ignore negative information more than positive information, even though they are in a more alert state. Negative things are ignored because, simply, people tend to believe what they want to believe. It is almost as if for every emotion someone says, “do I want that?” and if the answer is yes, they are much more responsive to it. So someone might ignore someone they don’t like, and pay attention to someone they do. Or, if someone doesn’t like someone, then that person doesn’t cause as much pleasure because the other person has decided to ignore them. It is pre-conceived notions and conceptions of the person, or even an understanding of who that person is, that determines what emotions that person causes. It is like real facts about that person are being stored unconsciously, and then those facts are brought up in the future to determine how much pleasure that person is going to cause. This ties into the idea that positive things are processed better than negative ones because if something is positive, or if you “think” something is positive (which might mean having preconceived notions about someone) then that person is going to generate less pleasure for you because you think they are not positive. What then is the difference between thinking if they are positive and them actually being positive? The difference is at some level (unconsciously) you are thinking that they are positive, you just might not be consciously aware that you are thinking those things. You probably also don’t have control over those thoughts. Conscious awareness of as much of what is going on unconsciously with those thoughts will enable someone to understand what is going on, and possibly change what those thoughts are.

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m16292/1.4/>>.

Chapter 3

Problems with Your Life You Might not be Aware of: A Guide for Self Improvement¹

These are some questions to ask someone with a psychological problem, or someone looking to improve their life (only it isn't a certain order).

What is the exact extent and scope of your problem?

What is the origin of your problem? Is it from:

1. Social interactions
2. Fear of social interactions
3. Fear of the world
4. If 3) what are all your fears?
5. Could your fears be contributing to a deeper psychological problem?
6. Do those fears cause anxiety only in the presence of the danger, or does it cause long term anxiety?
7. Do you have any conflicts with the world, and are you at peace and confident enough?
8. Being confident alone does not correlate with happiness, especially if your confidence is mis-guided (for instance, if there is a way in which you are being hurt that you are ignorant of, you may be confident, but are still being hurt). If you are in pain or suffering from anxiety, maybe you need to question who you are or what is going on with your life, instead of being confident and continuing with your current behavior.
9. Does your personality have conflicts with other peoples' personalities fundamentally? Although it seems that you may be socially getting along with other people, there may be a fundamental dislike that exists between you and some other people that is being overlooked. A way to look further into this is to ask, if me and such and such a person were to be friends, how would that interaction go? If we were to interact for a very long time (if we just were together not necessarily as friends) how would they feel about me then? Looking at it that way would enhance whatever is going on between the two people, possibly uncovering a potential conflict.
10. Your problem probably is going to originate from some combination of the three following sources A) a social problem with other people, or a deeper issue with who other people are vs. yourself B) a problem with the rest of the world (not social) like work or ordinary things and C) an internal problem resulting from how your process the world, the specific way in which your thinking occurs or how your feelings occur, if they occur as a disruptive process or a helpful one.
11. If your problem doesn't originate from a social source, maybe it is from a logic problem, things in your brain aren't being processed in a clear, logical manner and the resulting confusion (say from a number

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m16197/1.4/>>.

of problems that you can't resolve, culminating in a lot of frustration) is devastating, yet could be resolved by simple clear thinking.

12. If the anxiety is from something in specific which you can identify, then how is this anxiety being produced exactly (what combination of thoughts, feelings, emotions and real world events lead to this happening) and how can you interrupt that process?
13. Is there a relationship between your individual instances of short term anxiety? Do they all stem from a deeper psychological problem? (Something like, problems with social interactions, deeper issues with other people, issues with the world, issues with yourself)
14. Are you getting what you want out of life? Does your problem come from frustration?
15. Are you letting yourself suffer in your own pain, or is your attitude one which shows you are open to improving your life?
16. Are you confident in yourself, but not being confident in a way that would cause psychological problems (such as hating other people or the world, but still being confident in that)? To live a peaceful, happy life only confidence isn't going to make you be in harmony with the world. Confidence is necessary for happiness, but if there are deep problems you are ignoring, those problems could cause pain. If those problems aren't internal problems with how you process the world, or a dislike of non social aspects of the world (such as work) then you could have an even violent disconnection or tension with other people, which could result from you being confident, only in the wrong way. Your confidence needs to be one which is compatible with the world.
17. If you are not confident with yourself, you would have no reason to be happy or to overcome your problems, because you would have no motivation to do so. Being confident and motivated is necessary to overcome your problems, as long as you are not confident in an aggressive way which might cause problems with you and other people, or even mess up your own internal thought process and emotional processing. Being at peace might lead to more logical thinking, since peace is slower and more thoughtful than violence.

Chapter 4

Happiness, Confidence, Bravery and Courage¹

When people are confident they are happier, so what then is the difference between confidence and happiness?

Confidence is more a matter of how sure you are about yourself. How it is you think about yourself. If you think you are good, then you are going to feel good about yourself. Does this mean that you can be sad if you are confident? That is, when you think about yourself you feel good. That is what confidence is. Happiness is feeling good in general. A way to get to happiness then is to feel good about yourself when you think about yourself, so you associate yourself with being happy. Confidence boosts happiness. Confidence eliminates fear because it is the opposite of fear.

What is the difference between confidence and courage then?

Courage is the continuous state of being brave. Being brave means your emotions don't fluctuate when presented with a danger. Confidence means your emotions don't fluctuate when presented with more of an intellectual threat than with courage. Courage therefore is more of an emotional thing, and confidence is more of an intellectual thing. Confidence is more related to thought and bravery is more related to feeling.

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14865/1.4/>>.

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Chapter 5

Logic Vs. Intellect¹

What is the difference between logic and intellect? Logic seems to be a way of going about using knowledge so that it is processed correctly. Whereas intellect is more focused on memory or things that don't require as much understanding as logical things. Logic would be the correct way of doing something, but doing something intelligently would just mean doing something with knowledge.

So if you are doing something logically, you are doing it in a correct manner. But if you are doing something intelligently, you are just using a lot of brain-power to do it (that power might come from memory, or skill). So logic seems to be a way to get to an end, the more direct route of doing something, but intellect is more complicated and would involve things other than taking the direct approach to solving a problem. Logic would involve a more scientific reasoning (a leads to b, etc). Science is direct and clear, and logical thinking would be more direct and clear thinking, versus intelligent thinking would just be thinking of a higher order.

So something intelligent would just involve more thought, like a hard math or science problem. But something logical would involve thought that was approached in a scientific, clear, trying to get to the end (right answer) quickly and simply manner. Therefore if a person is logical, they wouldn't need to have a good memory, but, when given lots of facts (as someone with a good memory would know already) are able to sort through them in a logical, scientific manner.

You could still call someone intelligent even if they don't have a good memory, however. If someone is logical you could call him or her intelligent because even though the data isn't already in their head, when presented with the data (or knowledge) they are able to sort through it, and that is using their mind, so they could be called intelligent.

Anything that has a therefore, or a because in it (or a then) (such as A leads to B, therefore... or A exists because B is such and such, or if A leads to B, then...) would be more logical. If I said, I only need to brush my teeth half as much as people with non-electric toothbrushes because those toothbrushes are only half as effective. You are drawing a conclusion through inference, not just stating facts, but drawing conclusions. That is, I took two facts (electric toothbrushes are twice as effective as non electric) and the fact that I need to brush my teeth, and put them together to form the idea, I only need to brush my teeth half as much.

Someone with just knowledge and no logic might know that electric toothbrushes are twice as effective as non electric ones, and might know that they need to brush their teeth, but they wouldn't know that therefore they could brush their teeth half as much as people with non electric toothbrushes. That is an ordinary example based on relatives. That is one person would have more logic relative to the other person, not that either person has no logic at all.

You still have to draw other conclusions in that example, however. If you couldn't understand that brushing teeth is the combination of your hand moving, and holding a brush, then you wouldn't be capable of understanding the concept of brushing teeth, and when someone told you that that was what brushing

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14341/1.7/>>.

teeth was, you wouldn't be able to comprehend it, and therefore, wouldn't be able to remember it. Like most animals other than humans (or even a fly) wouldn't be able to understand (have enough logic to understand) brushing teeth.

But then again, dogs are capable of understanding concepts are large as their own name. A dog is a very complicated system, and it is capable of understanding a concept as complicated as itself. They even occasionally know words such as Frisbee, brisket, or food. Dogs can understand when you tell them (some dogs) do you want to play with the Frisbee? So clearly they have a lot of logic. But why then can they only understand a very very few things, if each thing had about equal logic? They would be randomly picking up lots of concepts and words then. Unless it took a certain number of times repeated, with higher emotional emphasis, for them to remember it. The answer is that dogs don't randomly pick up things, for a dog to understand it it has to be easy to comprehend. Like a dog understanding its own name is easy for it to understand, or any large emotional experience. So even dogs have some logic since they are able to pick up on some things. Their level of logic (being able to put two things together) seems to match their memory and intellect (their ability to understand individual facts) however.

What is it about the facts, electric toothbrushes are twice as effective as non-electric, and therefore you only need to brush half as much. And the facts, you have a Frisbee, you can play with it, that the first set of facts requires more logic to figure out than the second? Anyone can see that clearly the first requires more logic, you could even say that the person was logical to figure it out, but you wouldn't say that the person who figured out that they can play with the Frisbee was logical. "I have a Frisbee, I can play with it, therefore I am logical". That just doesn't make any sense.

It is probably because two of the facts (Frisbee and playing with it), go together more easily than the other two facts (toothbrush being good and brushing less). So it is just a matter of how hard it is put facts together which determines logic. When someone thinks about a Frisbee it is easy to see someone playing with it. The two facts are emotionally, logically and physically together. You see the Frisbee and someone playing with it at the same time, so it is easy to remember them that way. However, you don't see "brushing less" that clearly or "being less effective" that clearly. They simply aren't strong images in your head. Playing with the Frisbee doesn't require a person to draw any difficult conclusions, but the toothbrush example does.

So logic is connecting facts that are harder to see, facts that are less present and therefore their connection is going to be less present. Even if a dog loved brushing their teeth and loved electric toothbrushes, it still wouldn't be able to understand that the electric toothbrush worked twice as well as the non-electric one. That is because it is hard to picture one toothbrush working better than the other one. It requires logic, or a scientific process of thought. It is easy to picture (visually) playing with a Frisbee, but (visually) it is harder to picture the electric toothbrush working better. It is more just like a fact than an image.

Therefore logical connections or facts (logic was previously defined as putting two distant or obscure connections together) are strengthened by vision and visual images. That is like different types of learning styles, learning visually or learning by reading. That in fact someone isn't really more "logical" than someone else, they just have a better visual processor. So in the end it really boils down to sensory stimulation, and putting together different types of sensory stimulation. That makes sense since everything is sensory stimulation to begin with, since the world is only real and physical.

This brings us back to the intellect vs. logic discussion. Logic is bringing distant or hard to understand (or see) facts together. But someone with a high intellect might see the brushing very well and be able to remember that electric toothbrushes are more effective, but they might not be able to connect the two facts. So although they can remember individual facts well, and have a large knowledge base, their ability to connect them is less (if they have less logic).

Vision isn't going to be the only thing leading to more logic. You might "visualize" an answer but that just means you can see the answer, but how is that different from knowing the answer? When you say that you see it, you might mean that the answer is so large and complicated that it can exist by itself, so it can be separated in your mind and seen, like it is an object that is separate, versus a part of your understanding. If someone just said, "the pen is on the table" then they wouldn't say that they are visualizing the pen on the table, because they can already see it there. So if the answer or conclusion to a problem is already clearly seen, extra effort doesn't need to be made to visualize it. Thus problems using logic are probably going to

be harder to figure out than problems without using logic, and hence it is going to be harder to visualize them.

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