

Cognitive Self Defense: Tools and Applications

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Review

Humans are virtualized animals

- Agency via technology
- Communion via culture
 - Language creates virtual reality
 - “Culture is not your friend” – Terrence McKenna
- Modern manipulation (e.g. Century of Self)
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Century_of_the_Self
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnPmgoR1Mo4>
 - “ the people aren’t in charge, peoples’ desires are in charge”

All communication is manipulation!

Review

Defense by discipline / rigorous examination

- Subjective

- Exploration: meditation, reflection
- Testing: self-discipline practices

- Objective

- Exploration: data gathering, measurement
- Testing: falsifiable hypotheses, peer-review



Not that simple: easier said than done!

Practical Wisdom

Wise is as wise does

Behavior mechanism

- Perception → Motivation → Action

Wisdom attitudes

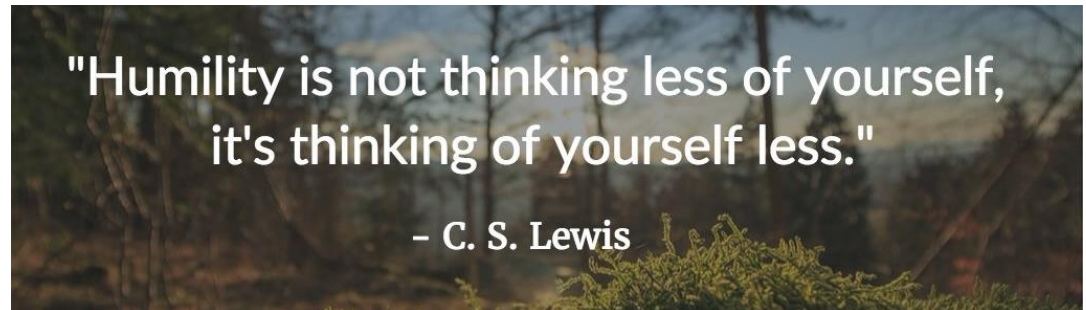
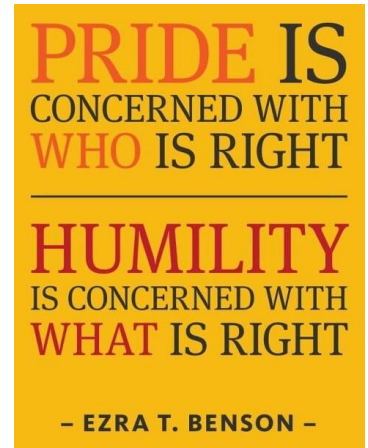
- Humility, Equanimity, Curiosity
- Self ownership



Practical Wisdom

Humility in perception

- Awareness of limitation
- Gradient of certainty; margin of error
- Inevitability of ignorance, incompetence
 - Don't believe everything you think!
- Value of innocence
- Beginner's mind



Limitations of Knowledge

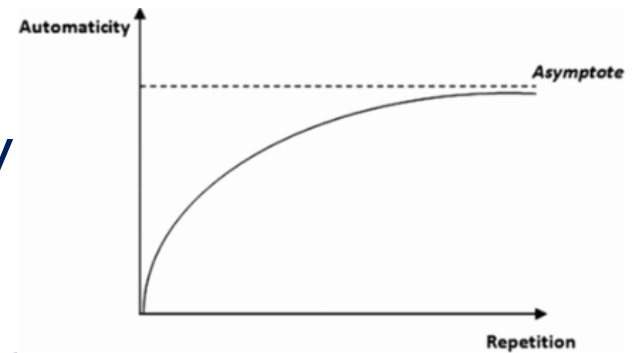
“All models are wrong, but some are useful”

– George Box

Knowledge is asymptotic to reality

- Heisenberg uncertainty principle
- Gödel's incompleteness theorems

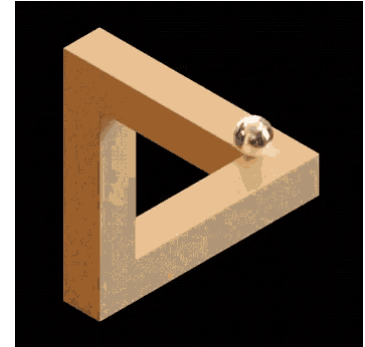
Honoring mystery (MESTery)



Limitations of Knowledge

Illusions

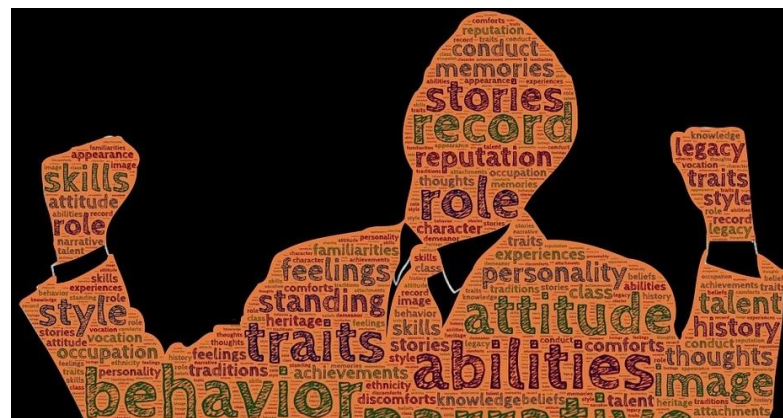
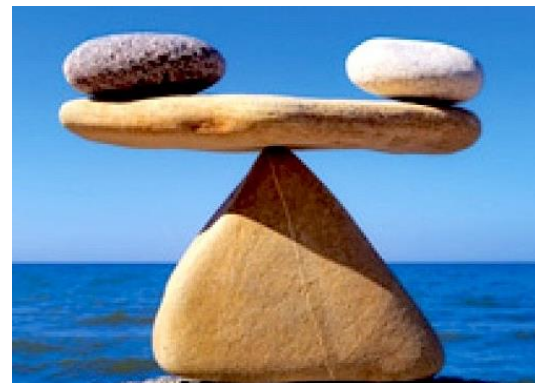
- Perceptual (e.g. optical, auditory)
 - Emotional (e.g. chatbots, advertising)
 - Cognitive (e.g. confirmation bias, dissonance)
-
- Do not trust absolutes
 - “safe”, “effective”



Practical Wisdom

Equanimity in motivation

- Motivational balance
 - Approach: desire, hunger, love
 - Avoid: repulsion, disgust, fear
- Awareness of attachment
- Power & identity
 - Desire to be right
 - Fear of being wrong



Practical Wisdom

Rationalization

- Rectifying self model
- Values: good | bad
- Attitude: compassion | hate
- Attention: curiosity | dismissal



Practicing Equanimity

Calmness under pressure

- Mental (e.g. meditation, concentration)
- Physical (e.g. yoga, exercise)
- Deprivation (e.g. fasting, isolation)

Delayed gratification

Comfort with discomfort

- Increases immunity to manipulation
- Be suspicious of convenience



Practical Wisdom

Curiosity in action

- Joy of magic, discovery
- Question
 - How do you/they know?
 - Identify assumptions, biases
 - Construct alternatives



Practicing Curiosity

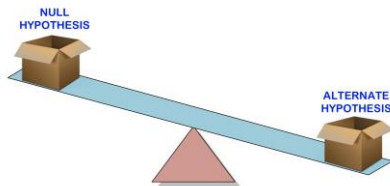
Focus on knowledge

- Not self

Learning by testing

- Falsifiability

Either win or learn



What Most
People Think



What Successful
People Know



Basic Epistemologies

Distinct validity!

| Subjective | Objective |
|-------------|-------------|
| Internal | External |
| Intentional | Behavioral |
| Interpreted | Measured |
| Sensual | Empirical |
| Free | Constrained |
| Art | Math |
| Personal | Public |

Extremes on spectrum of intersubjective consensual reality

Objective Bias

Objectivity is still biased!

- Measurement reductionism
- Selectivity
 - Cherry-picking
 - Confirmation bias
 - Curse of knowledge
 - Evidence-based decisions | decision-based evidence
 - Avoidance
 - “There is no scientific evidence for” what is ignored

Basic Epistemologies

Harmonious coexistence

Sanity: objective informs subjective

- Does not deny or overwhelm
- Cultural imbalance

Postmodern insanity: subjective overrides objective

- Compelled speech
- Carpet the world vs putting on shoes



Examples

The tragedy of transgenderism

- Sex as objective biology
 - Ovaries (eggs) | Testes (sperm)
- Gender as subjective social construction
 - Female ≠ Woman (feminine)
 - Male ≠ Man (masculine)
 - Separate dimensions of expression
- No need for “transgender”
- Confusion denies
 - Diversity within
 - Fluidity between
 - Multi-dimensionality
- Imposition of subjective on objective
 - Insane
 - Authoritarian
 - Oppressive

***This is gender-affirming,
not transphobic!***

Basic Epistemologies

Authoritarians repel objectivity

- Evidence
- Reason, logic
- Consensus

Beware authoritarian imposition of subjectivity!

- Destruction of ideological commons
- Definition by fiat, not evidence or agreement
 - “pandemic” , “case” , “vaccine” , “immunity” , “woman”

Basic Epistemologies

Therapeutic use

- Grief
 - Subjective reality can persist without objective input
- Injury
 - Subjective can dissolve/transform without objective
- Ritual
 - Makes subjective objective; realizing imagination

Summary

Practical Wisdom (fool-resistance)

- Perception
 - Humility
- Motivation
 - Equanimity
- Action
 - Curiosity

Cognitive sovereignty, autonomy, ownership

Thank You!

