

Stockholm, November 2013

As a human today it's like a million Copernican Revolutions all happening at the same time. With Wikipedia in your pocket we know that time is relative, that quantum particles can be both there and not, that space is curved, that colors do not inhere in objects themselves, that astronomic singularities have infinite density, that our love for our children is evolutionarily preprogrammed, that there is a blind spot in our vision that our brains automatically fill in. That our thoughts and feelings are really just chemical transfers in 1,5 kg of electrified pudding. That I am mostly water, and water is mostly hydrogen, and hydrogen is flammable, and yet I am not flammable.

We know a near-infinity of truths that contradict our immediate commonsense experience of the world, and yet we have to live and function in the world. So we abstract, compartmentalize: there's stuff we know and stuff we *know*. Viewed objectively, our situation is deeply schizoid, but still it's very rarely my life is turned upside down by these clashes. Maybe it's because my life is 99% concretely operational, and I operate on what I know, not on what I *know*.

(Van Goghs religious sensations was probably epilepsy, but God didn't tell him that (neither did Google))

In the 90's, Hertha Sturm led an experiment after gaining interest in a silent short film that had caused criticism of a German TV channel by parents of children who have been terrified by the short.

It was an animated film about a man who builds a snowman on his roof garden. It starts to melt in the afternoon sun. He watches. After a time, he takes the snowman to the cool of the mountains, where it stops melting. He bids it good-bye, and leaves. Hertha and her colleagues, who were interested in studying cognition, let 9-year-olds look at three versions of the film:

- A. the original version
- B. one with a voice over that added a simple factual account of the action as it happened
- C. an "emotional" version which was the same as the factual but with some emotional details added

The children's body functions were monitored while they looked at the films and were later requested to answer some questions. The responses showed that the factual version was the worst remembered, least popular but most physically affective, according to measurements of heart rate and breathing.

The saddest scenes was the most "pleasant", the sadder the better. The emotional version was best remembered. The original version was the most "pleasant" overall but caused least bodily affect.

The children, it turns out, were also physiologically split: factuality made their heart beat faster and deepened their breathing, but it made their skin resistance fall.

Hertha and the other researchers were confused by the results that went against several generally accepted dualisms in the emotional spectrum. The measurability of the experience was more complex than they first thought.

The problem seems familiar, and when I really think about it, this intersection between

information and experience is sort of an essence of what I've been doing at Mejan the last couple of years.

Life is a mess.

I think of Herthas experiment during my walk home from a clinic for genetic counseling. 5% risk of diabetes, 50% for cancer, I will probably not have Alzheimer. Last time I saw the X-rays of my mouth, there was a beginning of a hole in my right canine. The taste of my favorite soda remains equally good by the news, if not better. Everyone knows that the overall impression is most important.

I decide to make a video that is about watching video and a floor that is about moving through space.

But it's not really a video with a story and beginning / ending, but more a contemplation of the state of watching it.

"Activate the minimal neural correlate of a given conscious experience and you get the conscious experience itself", said neurophilosopher Thomas Metzinger.

Until the day I can do that, I continue to operate my body based on what I know, and not what I know.

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