

Enlightenment Conspiracy

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The exposure of illusion is sometimes experienced as enlightenment, and it makes a place for new perspectives. This can present either a vulnerability or an opportunity, depending upon the circumstances. Cult leaders, politicians, salesmen and philosophers often create and then exploit this type of vulnerability in order to promote a new perspective that serves their own purposes. Effective personal counselors, psychotherapists and gurus undermine problematic perspectives and then exploit this opportunity in order to promote a new viewpoint that better serves their client's interest.

The exposure of illusion is not difficult to achieve because most of our perceptions and beliefs are actually rooted in much looser soil than we would like to suppose, starting right at the bottom of our cognitive hierarchy. We experience vision as the direct reflection of objects that are "out there in the world" but the picture that you see in your head is actually built up over many stages deep inside your brain. What you see in your head has the same relationship to the images on your retina as the presidential nuclear button has to the reality of World War III. They are related but not at all alike. It is meaningless to say that objects in the world "look like" anything at all, unless you also specify a mechanism like the human visual system or a sonogram to "see" it. On this shaky foundation babies construct a belief in object permanence, in order to play peek-a-boo, and then go on to construct elaborate personal and cultural ideas about family, money, sex, fun, mathematics, video games, careers and philosophy.

Everything that we perceive and believe is built on this tower of Swiss cheese. When you consider the enormous ambiguity of English and all other natural languages it is clear why it is so easy to expose illusion in almost any direction you choose to turn. If you see that this is true, do not despair because this recognition does not actually cast you adrift as it might seem. The human brain is constructed in such a way that we will always believe in our perceptions with what Ed Tronick calls *impelling certainty*, even when we recognize the tower of Swiss cheese that supports them. It is precisely the holes in the cheese that make it Swiss, and these gaps make constructive renovations possible from the foundation up. Call me.

Relief, Recovery, Resolution

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