

Separate Realities

A powerful implication of the inside-out logic of the mind is the idea of separate realities. Valda Monroe and Keith Blevens brilliantly lay out the truth of this implication, which I have summarised as follows:

When we recognise that our minds only operate from the inside-out, we do not waste time being dismayed that others do not think like us. We understand that one person actually cannot have another person's thoughts and that no one can think the same as anyone else. As much as I may think it would be better if you would think like me, it cannot happen. This puts us in a position to respect differences of opinion, and enables us to listen and communicate better.

When we mistakenly believe that our minds operate from the outside-in, separate realities are not obvious to us. When others do not think like us we wonder if there is something wrong. We stay trapped in the illusion that others should be thinking the same, stirring up unnecessary and often unhelpful reactions.

Last week I sat in the car in our driveway as one of my sons explained how he had reached a dead end: he couldn't find a resolution between himself and his school. He felt that he had honestly and thoroughly looked into his own mind, and concluded that despite his best efforts he could not extend himself any more in terms of what the school expected of him.

The school had a different view, of course. As its leadership seemed unwilling to shift from that view, the message to my son was pretty much along the lines of, "Our way or the highway!"

He didn't regard this as unfair. He's had a lifetime of learning from Brian and me that we are not "victims of unfair". In his mature and balanced

THE PEACH WHO THOUGHT SHE HAD TO BE A COCONUT

view, he understood that the school would not budge in what they were demanding. He wasn't angry about it. He was just at a loss what to do.

It's a curious thing how we superficially form opinions about people and arrive at conclusions. We don't look deeper than what meets our eye, which is usually just beyond our peripheral vision. Yet I have learned that there is always a solution that lies outside of what we can see. Insight is available in every moment. And so I was hopeful that one might emerge, even though I had absolutely no inkling of it in my line of sight or thought.

My son asked if I could help by coming with him to talk to his head teacher. I said that I would. I presumed I understood his side of things and felt I also understood the school's side. Then he said, "Mom, I know you think you understand me. But you don't."

For the briefest of moments, I felt myself becoming defensive. *I do get where he is coming from*, I thought to myself. But a split second later, I came away from this line of thinking. What I know about separate realities told me that he was factually correct. We can never fully immerse into someone else's world of Thought.

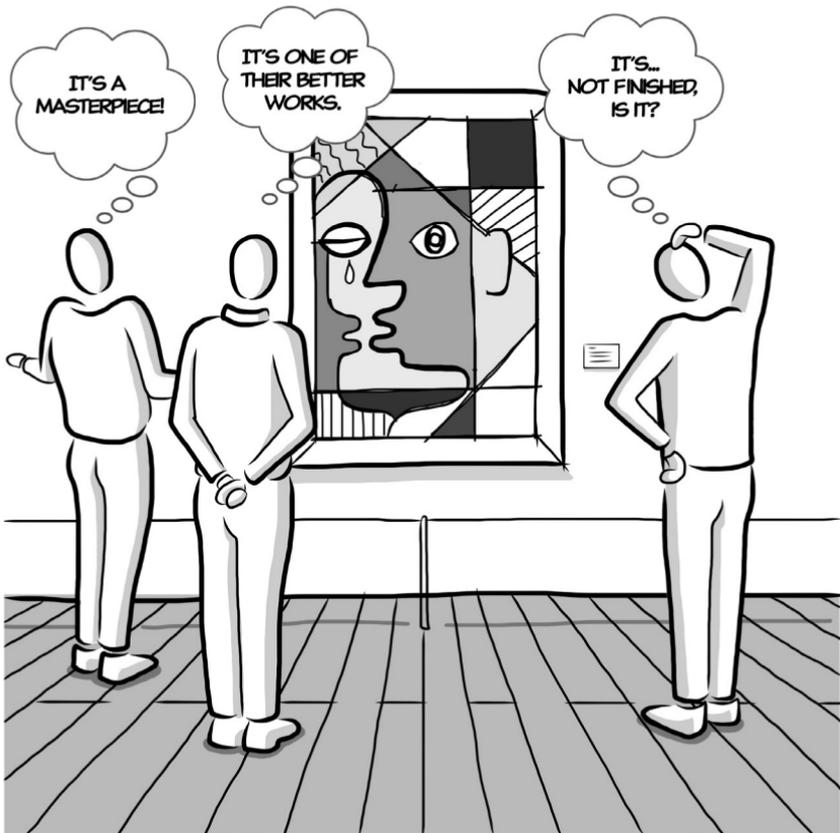
So I turned to him and asked, "Why don't you tell me more about what you are feeling? I *want* to understand better."

He then let me in a little further into his internal world – and I stepped in a little more deeply. I felt so connected to him. It was a moment of seeing into his heart, his soul. I was so full of love and compassion. It was such a special experience: however much I thought I got this child, I saw that there was much more. It humbled me and gave me so much respect for him and his reality.

The next day we had the meeting at the school that potentially carried significant implications for my son's future education in the school. (And not in a good way!) My son and I had reasonable insight into the head teacher's view and were respectful of it. We just didn't know how to close the chasm between the two positions. It felt like the Grand Canyon lay between them.

So what was the result? Did a solution emerge?

Well, you may be disappointed to hear that a solution has not yet materialised. We failed to bridge the gap between our respective thinking. And the situation has not really improved since then.



IT'S A
MASTERPIECE!

IT'S ONE OF
THEIR BETTER
WORKS.

IT'S...
NOT FINISHED,
IS IT?

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But here's the thing: from my perspective, the meeting at the school was a very generative dialogue. There was no arguing or defending of positions. I was so proud of my son. He showed maturity and was respectful and insightful. I also saw how he had been constantly learning from the situation. Although I obviously do not wish to see him struggle, I am grateful that he has had an opportunity to learn that his thinking and another person's thinking does not have to be the same. In truth, it can never be the same. I love that he gets to see that just because we don't agree with another's point of view does not necessarily invalidate it or us. And I love that we can have a connecting, informative dialogue with no obvious resolution, which still provides a meaningful learning opportunity.

I am not sure how this will play out or where we will end up. But I trust both my son and myself that we will do the best we can with the thinking that occurs and makes sense to us, moment to moment.

In the meantime, we have become closer, my son and I. And we are both enjoying a deeper appreciation of the endless depth of separate realities.

BLOGSIGHT: Separate realities are an implication of the inside-out logic of how we create our psychological experience. When we recognise that our minds only operate one way, we are not dismayed that others do not think like us. As much as we may prefer for others to think like us, it simply cannot happen. Contained within this one truth is a built-in direction towards resolution.