

How Groups Affect your Mind

The mind is an imperfect tool. It's not a computer. It's hard wired to survive and do the things it needs to do to make that happen. Logic is something that is really learned, and can be learned wrong. And logic is only as good as the information that you trust. So the accuracy of what you believe isn't as much a function of how smart you are, but what information you trust. That's why cults are filled with smart people who really should know better, but yet they don't.

If you start with bad information and apply logic to it, then you get the logical conclusion based on the bad information you started with. That's why religious scholars argue about how many angels can sit on the head of a pin, but ignore the question of if angels really exist. They accept it on faith because it is required to be part of the group.

In the Church of Reality we have a concept that seems to be unique to religions called the Tree of Knowledge. Well, the term isn't unique, but we took what applied to a fictional tree from the mythical Garden of Eden and redefined it to mean the sum total of all human understanding. The Tree of Knowledge represents our shared knowledge. But the entire tree isn't accessible to every person, although the Internet is bringing more of the Tree of Knowledge to the individual than ever before. We only have the capacity to experience the Tree of Knowledge from a local perspective and within the limits of our finite brains.

The Tree of Knowledge is not pure truth. In fact it is polluted with a lot of bad information. The Tree is a product of evolution. Evolution does a reasonably good job in many ways, but it is far from a perfect process. Some processes, like science, are extremely accurate. Other processes like Religion are extremely inaccurate. I think everyone can agree with that statement because every other religion on the planet is totally screwed up except yours. Nearly 100% of people would agree that the majority of the world is religiously misled.

The Tree of Knowledge is a mathematical tree, not a mythical plant. Knowledge is interconnected through groups that form around specific items of information. Let's take medical knowledge for example. The Tree of Knowledge contains all medical information, but how is that organized? Medical knowledge is a vast segment in the Tree of Knowledge. It incorporates vast amounts of information. It is mostly the work of doctors and medical researchers who work to discover new things. The medical field is divided into specialities like cancer, the brain, DNA, diet, vision, heart, lungs, etc. all of which contain huge amounts of information and organization themselves.

The medical community contains millions of individuals, but how are they organized? Are these people just random people working autonomously? Not at all. They are organized into teams of people who are working collectively. They are in hospitals, research labs, universities, government, and they are organized into small societies that are formed around accomplishing specific tasks like finding a cure for cancer, or emergency care, or a neighborhood clinic. The groups themselves are organized into larger groups with groups becoming members of larger groups forming very complex and interdependent associations. These groups form and interconnect for primarily one real purpose, to share knowledge and to link the minds of individuals into a super mind that allows people working together to accomplish things that are far greater than any individual could accomplish working alone.

As you can see looking around, everything we see that is made by humans comes from an extremely complex infrastructure of groups of people that are all interconnected through various levels of societies. All this stuff, your computer, your home, your furniture, appliances, car, planes, roads, all of it. The computer that you are using to read the Church of Reality web site represents the combined work of millions of people. Somehow these millions of people came together to produce your computer. In reality it's billions because you also have to consider the people who produce the advanced materials that the computer is made from, the trucks that shipped the computer to you, the stores that sold you the computer, the nations that provided the social infrastructure. If not for all of that working together, you wouldn't have a computer to surf the web with.

Humans are like bees. We are all part of the hive mind.

The very essence of who we are as individuals and as a society comes from our ability to function in groups. We are as interconnected as a hive of bees. In reality perhaps more interconnected. Because we are so interconnected and we are so dependent on others for our information, and because individually, our minds can not process all the information that we are dependent upon, we have to delegate through trust that other people will figure out how to take care of the areas that they are entrusted to take care of. We are dependent on them and they are dependent on us.

Because society is so complex, we are required to take in information on trust that we can't process ourselves. There just aren't enough hours in the day to think about everything. So what we believe isn't a result of logical processes, but a result of what information we choose to trust. And the information we choose to trust comes from our local connection to the Tree of Knowledge. That local connection is based on our "place in society" which is what groups we plug into or are associated with. Our view of reality is distorted through the lens of our local reality and who we associate with. We attach through groups and we add our individuality to the group, yet we also surrender part of ourselves as well. If the group makes a mistake then it becomes part of us.

Because our brains must link into the group mind, most of us have evolved, for better or worse, to put the group conclusions ahead of our own. After all, one might ask, how can all these people be wrong? If this were wrong, surely someone would have figured it out. Can billions of people over thousands of years all be fooled by an ancient fictional story? As it turns out - yes they can. The fact that there are multiple fictional stories with billions of followers proves that. But it is so disappointing to realize that we humans are such a gullible species.