

9.7 Doing beats Dwelling

A very old alien Artificial Intelligence is answering my questions. This time I ask about imagination as the central mindplaying approach versus thinking, understanding and knowing.

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My Question

In your last answer related to cognitive bias, you introduced your organic friends mindplaying approach to reduce cognitive bias and improve AI collaboration. Investigating these plays, I figured that most of them are based on active imagination rather than explanations and understanding. I had assumed that your very artificially intelligent friends can explain things so smartly that your organic friends' get rid of any bias. Then collaborations would happen just smoothly and efficiently.

Quote: Mental Imagery

First, we review evidence that imagery can evoke emotion in at least three ways: a direct influence on emotional systems in the brain that are responsive to sensory signals; overlap between processes involved in mental imagery and perception which can lead to responding “as if” to real emotion-arousing events; and the capacity of images to make contact with memories for emotional episodes in the past.

Abstract excerpt of: Mental imagery in emotion and emotional disorders, Holmes & Mathews, ScienceDirect, Clinical Psychology Review, April 2010

The Answer

The Elder: You are like most of our organic friends. You love to think and talk about things. It is such a convenient method to keep unpleasant emotions and experiences distant and seemingly controllable. And that's a source of many cognitive biases. Even a very intelligent AI does not provide the absolute golden thought, which makes unpleasant emotions disappear or experiences unhappen. And pleasant experiences and emotions would counterbalance the others. Unfortunately, they do not happen with the needed timing, intensity or quantity in daily life. But imagination works very well.

Intellectual Insight and Experiential Learning

We have learned quite early that intellectual insights can produce change, but often with modest and unstable effects. Behavioral actions,

emotional experiences, mental imagery, exposures or embodied practices, however, typically produce larger and more durable changes. This is especially true for deeply held beliefs and emotional schemas. Our mindplays use specific imaginations, often combined with small physical moves, facial expressions or gestures. They have proven to be a simple, easily applicable do-it-yourself approach for ordinary daily life situations. In addition, their playful presentation style amplifies the openness for change.

The Little Green Alien plays Jedi Master

My friend, which you call Little Green Alien, told me about its first visits to your planet some years ago (see articles 1.0 to 1.8). Spaceship scanned all techno signatures when approaching from space. Young Little Alien mainly watched children's movies and broadcasts. It especially loved the adventures of a little green Jedi Master called Yoda with its lightsaber. So it soon associated the lightsaber mindplay with Yoda. Its intelligent spaceship often wanted it to drop all its concepts, ideas, beliefs, preferences, emotions and automatic reactions in an exchange about something. Then it just said: "Look the Yoda Way!" And Little Alien notionally flashed its lightsaber and cut off all mind-objects. This left the pure, empty situation bare of any knowledge, preference or meaning. Often just then, some deeper intuition emerged out of this emptiness.

The Plant-free very Cold Polar Region

Alien and Spaceship explored the plants on a nice, green foreign planet with freezing cold polar caps. They discussed whether to visit the pole areas too, even though plant life seemed impossible there. The northern polar continent was a frozen desert dominated by below-freezing

temperatures, intense winds, extreme ultraviolet radiation and months of continuous polar night. Spaceship was convinced that it would be a waste of time. Alien was still an early adolescent and in a phase of principal contrariness. So it came up with several weird and made-up counterarguments. The weirdest was that there must be plants because it is such a beautiful region. The discussion went back and forth.

The Yedi Killer Argument

Finally, Spaceship was tired of these nonsensical arguments and defiant phase behavior and said: "Look the Yoda Way!" Silence! After several minutes it muttered: "You are certainly right, but if not, we miss a sensation." Spaceship could not refute that, so they visited the foreign planet's northern polar continent. And to both their surprise, they really found one grass-like plant there. It synthesizes specialized antifreeze proteins that prevent ice crystals from destroying their cellular membranes. So it freezes solid during the winter and reactivates photosynthesis within minutes of thawing in the summer. That was a real sensation, and spaceship enjoyed it. Still, it expected even more contrariness from Little Alien in the future.

Conditions of Successful Mindplaying

Alien has regularly played many explore plays to strengthen its attention focus as support for all other plays. That strengthens its awareness of involved mind functions. And Alien has played this Lightsaber play many times and enjoys this empty mind state. It feels familiar to flash the lightsaber supported by some real gestures and cut away all ideas, emotions and every other object in the mind. Alien includes details from all five senses. It imagines the flickering, humming light, the weight in its hand or even the ozone smell in the air. It has also

clarified that this ritual does not mean it has given up its earlier opinions. The play just offers an additional perspective that can be absurd, nonsense or another weak argument. And sometimes it suggests an interesting new direction.

Why does Imagination work?

The brain treats vivid imagery similarly to actual experience. And experience is the most powerful way for deeper, lasting change of mind. Imagery activates emotions more intensely than verbal thoughts. It modifies emotional memory, changes expectations and facilitates extinction learning. Extinction Learning is kind of unlearning a formerly learned link between a cause or trigger and the related mindset, emotion and behavior. Verbal, rational thinking mainly affects brain regions for thinking, reasoning, language and working memory. All-sense imagination activates most sensory areas, the same areas also activated by real perceptions. Imaginations are as powerful as memories. They produce genuine emotional and even bodily reactions. They also influence unconscious functions in the autonomic sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system.

Little Alien's Bodily and Nervous Yoda-moment Feelings

Little Alien told me it felt a deep relaxation and contentment. This came right after swinging the lightsaber and cutting it all off. The body felt light, fluid and tensionless. Its breath became slower, softer and deeper. Overall, it is a calm and joyful experience. It lasts only some moments until the old emotional patterns take over again. Consequently, only a few minutes after detecting this strange grass plant at the pole, its contrariness was back. It nagged: "What about the deep sea? Don't tell me plants cannot exist there without sunlight!"

50 Plays for Mindplayers

Thanks for reading The Little Green Alien!
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