

The Fundamental Human Problem: Perceptual Limitation 2021

Thomas A. Burns PhD.

Klamath Falls, Oregon

Let's get to the root of the human problem regardless of whatever issue in whatever sphere at whatever scale we consider: **limited human perception!** In spite of all the advances that we have made in understanding the tiny peek our senses provide us in perceiving reality, our worldview, procedures, and behavior continue to be defined almost exclusively by the highly questionable assumptions that we make from our peek-a-boo level of awareness. Even science, which is responsible for revealing our perceptual limitations, remains confined in many of its theories and methodologies by this basic limitation.

Let's examine what this is all about!

Start with our "major" human senses: sight/vision and sound/hearing. Humans perceive approximately 400 frequencies – the visible light spectrum – in the electromagnetic spectrum of 10 to the 24th such frequencies from gamma rays to long radio waves. Humans perceive about 20,000 sound frequencies through the medium of the air of about 10 to the 10th such frequencies. Our "minor" senses – taste, touch, and smell – are no better. When it comes to material phenomena, human perception is limited to mid-range scales – missing all microbes [bacteria, fungi, viruses, etc.], all molecular, atomic and subatomic particles, and everything at the macro solar, galactic and cosmological scales. Everything considered, humans do not have the ability to perceive 99.999% of all of the reality that is "out there"! Our technology makes us aware of the existence of this vast material and energetic reality beyond our direct sensory reach, but it has had little effect on our worldview and understanding of how we relate to the reality in which we participate.

Let's pursue this further by considering just one common phenomenon – Wind. By sight alone, humans look right through wind/air as if there is nothing there. Humans perceive moving air/wind by feel/touch and indirectly by sight as we observe how wind moves other objects – leaves, waves, snow, etc. So, we know air has mass, and from science we know that most of it is made up of various microscopic particles, microbes, and elements, but we cannot perceive it unless it carries larger components like combined water molecules in mist.

Now, imagine what it would be like to perceive the microscopic world of air/wind. We would have to move through seemingly surrounding "clouds" of perceived air to get to anything "else." Imagine further, if we were able to perceive all of the other micro and macro material phenomena as well as all of the electromagnetic

and sound frequencies that collectively define most of reality, the “clouds” around us would become so “dense” that they would consume us to the point where we would lose our sense of being discrete entities. At the energetic level, the field that we know “surrounds” each of us would be integrated into the comprehensive energy field that exists across all scales, revealing our shared identity with everything. All separateness/discreteness among “things” would disappear because it is only our limited sensory awareness that makes it possible for us to separate different things and attribute separate actions/causes to them. In the REALITY of full perceptual awareness there is only the equivalent of a constant state of vibration in which all phenomena of different energy densities are field related and participate as one unified, infinite creation.

It is only our extraordinarily limited perceptual capabilities that create the illusion of our separateness and of other entities as discrete. And, very importantly, our language reflects this perspective – carving out and naming “different” things and attributing different actions to them. Our limited perception and our language define for us what constitutes our material reality which we accept as the fundamental way reality IS. And we manipulate this reality in these terms plowing through the 99% of the rest of reality that we are privileged by our very stupendous limitations to ignore. Because we are very good at these manipulations, the results seem to be successful, which support our basic assumptions about a reality of material discreteness. In effect, humans operate in a self-perpetuating conceptual loop based on our grand perceptual ignorance.

Why is penetrating to this awareness important?

First, much of our science remains mired in this error, and we see the results all the time as scientists attempt to reduce the infinitely unified system of reality to particular causes and effects among separate entities. The consequence is that scientists are constantly discovering all of the “other” causes and entities that are involved in the phenomena and processes that they are examining. And when we shift the scale of our perspective up or down, scientists discover that their theories often do not hold up. Why? Because everything in reality is fundamentally interconnected, and the separate pieces of the fabric that we extract to “examine” and “explain” in science are inherently artificial constructs. Yes, what scientists discover can be useful as we attempt to manage the limited reality that we perceive, but the underlying assumptions of separate entities with causes and effects specific to them are not reliable because discreteness itself is only a convenient illusion. Interestingly, as modern science moves away from a material – particle perspective to an energy – field perspective, it is trending in the direction of recognizing the comprehensive state of connectedness in reality.

Second, socially our major weakness in modern complex society is our inability to sufficiently cooperate at the national and global levels required to address the many challenges that humanity currently faces. Cooperation and communal values are based on the concept of connection while competition and individual values are based on the concept of separation. Cooperation promotes unification at the social level and is in tune with an understanding of reality that recognizes the essential oneness of all “things.” It is not THE answer, but it is a better answer than that provided by following the discrete/competitive orientation which perpetuates the view of reality from our grossly limited perceptual perspective.

Third, spiritual traditions in all human societies [not religions per se] have promoted a view of reality that emphasizes breaking through the material/objective/competitive perspective on reality to the spiritual/subjective/cooperative perspective. What constitutes enlightenment in these ascetic traditions is very much in accord with the view of reality as totally connected and unified. It is more than a little interesting that the lead orientation in theoretical physics and cosmology in the direction of an energy based conception of reality accords in many respects with the view in these ancient spiritual traditions. As science breaks through to an awareness of a vast reality not adequately understood in terms of the assumptions based on our human perceptual limitations, it is coming to share more and more with the spiritual point of view. Physics, the science of discreteness, which has been historically committed to the material/objective/analytical/discrete view of reality, is progressively confirming its opposite – the energetic/subjective/synthetic/unified view of reality.

Conclusion – Where do we go from here?

On the one hand, humans operate as limited perceptual predators regarding other “things” as separate resources to take and use to their advantage. But on the other hand, humans should be aware at both the spiritual and full perceptual levels that they share identity with all other “things” in a totally integrated and unified reality. To survive biologically, humans can not abandon their limited perceptual bias as predators, but they can do so responsibly under the restraint encouraged by their awareness that what they “take” is really a part of themselves. Ultimately, the only solution to this dilemma is for humans to strive for balance and to develop societies that promote this balance. Unfortunately, many modern societies have lost their spiritual base of understanding, have committed to a winner take all material perspective, and are completely unaware of the totally integrated and unified reality that the sciences are revealing and to which they belong. If humans are to survive in the civilized state of complex society, they will have to repair this severe condition of imbalance.