

Eric Weinstein x rationality x psychology x important

Sunday, August 5, 2018 20:44

On switching to Tech at 30

So, when I was 30, I guess I was still struggling to stay in or get out of academics. What I didn't realize is that the structure of the Universities was that they were either hitting steady-state or growing very little or shrinking and that was a not a healthy place to be.

Most of the good seats in the musical chairs competition had already been found in the 60s and they had occupants and we were in some sort of a game where we were doing work for the system but we weren't set to inherit it.

What I needed to do was to decamp and to realize that technology was going to be a boom area. Even though I wanted to do science rather than technology, **it's better to be in an expanding world and not quite in exactly the right field, than to be in a contracting world where people's worst behavior comes out and your mind is grooved in defensive and rent-seeking types of ways.**

Life is just too short to be petty and defensive and cruel to other people who are seeking to innovate alongside you.

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Embracing contradictory ideas

We have to embrace the inconsistency of our own minds, not as a bug, but as a feature, that we are in essence, brought here by the forces of selection. We are the products of systems of selective pressures, and what they seem to do is, to create the ability to run many many different programs, and often contradictory programs within the same mind. The question is why have we put such an extraordinary emphasis on intellectual consistency, so that we are constantly alerted to the hypocrisy of others, but we are seemingly blind to it in ourselves.

Our mind is constructed with an architecture that allows us to run various sandboxes, where we can experiment with the ideas of others without actually becoming the other. Can we run another mind in emulation, perhaps not as well as its original owner? But can we run that mind well enough to understand it, to empathize with it, and to argue and spar with it, to achieve some kind of better outcome, where we are actually able to turn foes into dancing partners, as we come to show that we've actually understood perspectives different from our own.

The biggest objection to this way of thinking is that it's somehow a kind of a cheat that hypocrisy is being summoned by another name. But I think this is actually incorrect. I think that we have these sandboxes, for example, so that we can fight more effectively a foe, that we feel we must defeat. So for example: recently I talked about the importance of being able to run a jihadi sandbox in our minds, if we want to understand the forces that are behind Islamic terror, and its effect, on what I think are relatively fragile western sensibilities about life and death.

And so if we choose not to empathize with the other, to say, that so much as beyond the pale, we are probably not going to be very effective in understanding that the other does not see itself as evil. It does not see itself as an enemy that must be fought. I don't necessarily need to agree with it, but to demonstrate that I can't even run the program, simply for the purpose of social signaling seems the height of folly.

How do we hope to become effective if we can't guess what the other will do next? There are limits to this, we have to have a certain kind of consistency of mind. But the idea that you can't be capable of running a diehard rationalist materialist atheist program, as well as a program that says perhaps I will open myself to transcendental states. And if I need to anthropomorphize

those as coming from a deity.. perhaps the idea is that that architecture is not what a Richard Dawkins would suggest: as a kind of mind virus, but in fact, it's a facility that we choose to deny ourselves at our peril.

What if we're trapped on a local maximum of fitness, and in fact, we need to get to higher ground. But the idea is that the traversal of the so-called adaptive Valley, where we have to make things much much worse, before they get much better. What if the idea is that cannot generally be attempted rationally.. that we need a modicum of faith, a belief, that we cannot reference to any sort of information set. We could end up trapped on local maxima forever. But I think it's really important to consider that some people may be able to traverse the adaptive valley without belief in a deity — some may need a temporary belief in a deity; some may be able to reference some sort of a transcendental state, and steal ourselves, in order to make the journey.

But however it is accomplished, there are times, when it would appear that all hope is lost, and that if we are not to end our days stuck on these local maximum, whatever we have achieved, that we have to fundamentally experiment with ways of thinking, if only temporarily, to get us to higher ground.

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On the book Zero to One

I think the problem is the average person has never had an idea, a really powerful personal idea. So most people don't have a single secret. And so the real reason most people shouldn't start a company is that they don't know or believe anything that the rest of the world knows or thinks of as being nonsense. And so this is the engine behind the book.

What's disturbing is to watch people reading this book, not realizing that it's the whole thing is predicated on the idea that you must have a secret. Try to imagine somebody building a car with no engine, it doesn't really matter how nice you get the upholstery it's not going to work.

I think that in part this is why it's so difficult coming back to the sort of kung-fu panda pedagogy question. Assumed that I hit one or two of these secrets and I am successful at them. It doesn't have to be in business, it could be in science, it could be in literature, anywhere. The problem is, you want to lead someone through the process of succeeding at something and seeing what blocked the path.

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Russell Conjugation (or Emotive Conjugation) is a presently obscure construction from linguistics, psychology and rhetoric which demonstrates how our rational minds are shielded from understanding the junior role factual information generally plays relative to empathy in our formation of opinions.

I am firm. [Positive empathy] You are obstinate. [Neutral to mildly negative empathy] He/She/It is pigheaded. [Very negative empathy]

The thing that I was searching for was what word should I use that sounds like synonym where two words are content synonyms but maybe emotionally antonym. So a good one is think and whistle blower right. Somebody in Florida wrote and said you're looking for a motive conjugation or Russell conjugation. Turns out Bertrand Russell had been here earlier and in 1948 he was on the BBC and he said 'Let's look at the construction:

'I am firm. You are obstinate. He, she or it is a pig headed fool'

That was just a moment where I said oh my gosh I don't realize that I have been given no extra information about the three conjugations that he's gone through, and yet I feel differently.

I liked the fact that somebody is firm and steadfast, and I dislike the fact that somebody is pigheaded. And then I realized that this could actually be weaponized and as part of an arms

race that maybe the newspapers were in fact conjugating 'President' 'strong-man' 'dictator' and so I remembered this very strange phrase from years past. Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega. I thought who would come up with a construction that awkward and always invariant. And then everyone repeats it.

A controversial businessman was applied to a friend of mine. Declan Ganley who had fought the Lisbon Treaty in the EU, and at some point they removed controversial businessman, so he just became businessman Declan Ganley.

Two reactions from the same person about the same thing

And so what I came to understand is that the big boys don't play around with faking the facts. What they realized is that we have multiple opinions on everything but our emotional state selects which opinion,

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On trying psychedelics

Relatively recently, and it was because I had been propagandized so thoroughly, that even to this day I don't like the association. I don't like the word cloud around them. There were all sorts of confusions, that the power of one of these substances must come from killing brain cells, like pouring acid on your brain and leaving it as Swiss cheese.

It wasn't until I started meeting some of the most intellectually gifted people in the sciences and beyond and I realized that this was sort of the open secret of what I call the hallucinogenic elite. Whether it's billionaires or Nobel laureates or inventors and encoders, that a lot of these people were using these agents, either for creativity or to gain access to the things that are so difficult to get access to through therapy and other conventional means.

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An essay that changed his life

The most interesting thing about it is that it carries a publication date in the New York Times in 1944 and what it is a discussion of is the Holocaust before the world is ready to hear that it is going on. There is in particular a paragraph talks about what it is like to hold this position in a hostile universe which doesn't wish to believe this because of various state interests.

Article mentioned in this podcast: A. Koestler. "The Nightmare That Is a Reality." The New York Times Magazine. January 9, 1944.

"As to this country, I have been lecturing now for three years to the Troops and their attitude is the same. They don't believe in concentration camps. They don't believe in the starved children of Greece, in the shot hostages of France and the mass graves of Poland. They have never heard of Lidice Treblinka or Belzec. You can convince them for an hour, then they shake themselves. Their mental self defense begins to work, and in a week the shrug of incredulity has returned like a reflex temporarily weakened by a shock.

Clearly all this is becoming a mania with me and my like. Clearly we must suffer from some morbid obsession, whereas the others are healthy and normal. But the characteristic symptom of maniacs is that they lose contact with reality and live in a fantasy world, so perhaps it is the other way round.

Perhaps it is we, the screamers, who react in a sound and healthy way to the reality which surrounds us, whereas you are the neurotics who totter about in a screen fantasy world because you lack the faculty to face the facts. Were it not so? This war would have been avoided, and those murdered within sight of your daydreaming eyes would still be alive."

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Peter Thiel

Peter is just a stunning, sparkling mind, and somebody who has not only the courage of his convictions, but has been right so many times and over enough things that he has had the freedom to break with all tradition when he thinks the world is wrong, and one or two people may have it right. which is that's exactly my cup of tea. The first issue is that, it's so difficult to think for yourself. I mean, I find it very difficult to think for myself. I have all sorts of ideas in my head that aren't mine I'm subjected to all sorts of pressures I find difficult to resist.

I think Peter's looking for the tiny universe of people who are attempting to think things through from First Principles, and as it's become very tough because socially constructed reality is so much a part of our lives. So I think first his feeling would be find the people who are capable of seeing something really new and then figure out what to do with them later.

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