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The Illusion of Right Answers

There was once a poor man who had four sons, and when they were grown to manhood he said to them: "You will have to go out into the world, for I have nothing to give you. Be on your way, learn a trade, and see what you can make of yourselves." The four brothers took leave of their father and off they went, each in a different direction.

The eldest met a man who asked him where he was going. "I am going to learn a trade," he replied. "Come with me," said the man, "and learn to be a thief." "No," he said. "That does not pass as an honest trade nowadays. I'd only find myself dangling from the end of a rope." "Oh, you needn't worry," said the man. "I'll only teach you how to take things without ever being found out." That convinced him. He went with the man and became a skilled thief, so adroit that nothing he wanted was safe from him. The second brother met a man who also asked him what trade he had in mind. "I haven't decided yet," he replied. "Then come *with me and learn to be a stargazer. There's no better trade, for nothing remains hidden from you." That appealed to him and he became so proficient a stargazer that when his apprenticeship was over, his master gave him a telescope, saying: "With this you will be able to see everything that happens on earth or in the heavens." A hunter took the third brother on as an apprentice and taught him all the tricks of the trade. As a farewell gift his master gave him a gun, saying: "It never misses. You will be sure to hit whatever you aim at." The youngest brother also met a tailor who offered to teach his trade. "Who wants to sit stooped over from morning to night, plying the needle and flatiron day in and day out?" said the boy. "You're only showing your ignorance," said the man. "With me you would learn tailoring of a different kind, which, in addition to being pleasant and dignified, may bring you great honor." That convinced him, so he went with the man and learned his craft from A to Z. As a farewell present, the man gave him a needle, saying: "With this you will be able to mend anything whatsoever, even if it's as soft as an egg or as hard as steel; two pieces will become as one, and no seam will be visible."*

When the four years were over, the four brothers met at the crossroads, hugged and kissed each other, and went home eager for a chance to show their skills.

A few weeks later, the king's daughter was carried off by a dragon. The king worried day and night and made it known that the man who rescued his daughter and brought her back should have her for his wife. The brothers said to one another: "This is our chance."

The stargazer looked through his telescope and said, "I see her. She's sitting on a rock in the sea, far far away, and the dragon is right there guarding her." So he went to the king and asked for a ship for himself and his brothers, and they sailed across the sea until they came to the rock. There sat the king's daughter, and the dragon was lying asleep with his head in her lap. "I can't shoot," said the hunter, "for I'd kill the beautiful princess at the same time." "Then I'll see what I can do," said the thief. He crept up and stole her out from under the dragon, so deftly and quietly that the monster didn't notice a thing and went on snoring. Joyfully they ran back to the ship with her and headed for the open sea. But then the dragon woke up, found the king's daughter gone, and came flying through the air, fuming and snorting. He hovered over the ship and was just getting ready to swoop down, when the hunter took his gun and shot him straight through the heart. The dragon fell down dead, but his body was so big and heavy that it smashed the whole ship to pieces. Luckily, the brothers managed to grab hold of a few planks, which kept them and the princess afloat on the endless waters. They were in bad trouble, but without wasting a minute the tailor took his miraculous needle and sewed the planks together with a few big stitches. Then he sat down on his raft, collected the remaining parts of the ship and sewed them together so skillfully that they could all sail safely home.

When the king saw his daughter again, he was overjoyed and said to the four brothers: "One of you shall have her for his wife, but you will have to decide among yourselves which it is to be." At that a furious quarrel broke out, for each had his claim. The stargazer said:

"If I hadn't seen the king's daughter, all your skills would have been useless. Therefore she's mine." The thief said: "A lot of good your seeing her would have done if I hadn't stolen her out from under the dragon. Therefore she's mine." The hunter said: "The monster would have torn you all to pieces and the king's daughter with you, if my bullet hadn't killed it. Therefore she's mine." The tailor said: "If I hadn't repaired the ship with my needle, you'd all have drowned miserably. Therefore she's mine." The king replied: "You all have equal claims, but since you can't all marry my daughter, none of you shall have her, and instead I will reward you each with an equal part of a kingdom." That suited the brothers, who each settled down to enjoy the fortune he so rightly deserved.

The Four Artful Brothers
THE BROTHERS GRIMM
(freely adapted)

The king wisely saw that each brother was right and wrong in his exclusive claim. Many of us, as students or teachers, are still in search of the one right answer. This belief in a single right answer rests on a view of intelligence that emphasizes outcomes and expert authority.

HOBBLED BY OUTCOMES

Intelligence is often seen as the capacity to achieve desirable outcomes. Arthur Jensen defends his concept of a general fac-

tor of intelligence by emphasizing its "practical validity for predicting the performance of individuals in school and college, in armed forces training programs, and in employment in business and industry."[1] Even Howard Gardner, proponent of a theory of multiple intelligences, describes intelligence as "an ability (or skill) to solve problems."[2] These and other theorists of intelligence presume that the goal of the educational process is to equip students to achieve specific, desirable outcomes.[3] An outcome's desirability, however, is dependent on context. An outcome that is good in one context may be most unwelcome in another.

The capacity to achieve an outcome is different from the ability to explore the world and understand experience. Trying to solve a math problem in a way dictated by the teacher is different from attempting to test one's own hypothesis. The teacher who tells students to solve a problem in a prescribed manner is limiting their ability to investigate their surroundings and to test novel ideas.

Much instruction tends to take a paint-by-number approach. Rather than allowing an individual to generate new hypotheses that may be mindfully tested in the individual's own experience, a teacher or expert often assumes that the objective is apparent and that only the means of achieving it remains obscure to the naive observer. Teaching from this perspective consists of presenting step-by-step methods of problem solving, making possible an essentially mindless type of success.

If we can shed this outcome orientation, we may discover that the freedom to define the process is more significant than achieving an outcome that has no inherent meaning or value outside that particular setting.

Even when intelligence theorists teach such global and frequently useful processes as inference making and hypothesis testing, they are still defining a valued outcome.[4] In this case the outcome is the acquisition of a particular set of skills. Such views can inhibit the capacity for exploring the skills best suited to an individual's goals.

This focus on skills is an attempt to mix traditional conceptions of intelligence as a general capacity with more skeptical views of intelligence as a product of socially acquired skills. Such a compromise is nonetheless outcome oriented. As Ann Brown and Joseph Campione have cogently argued, either one teaches specific skills—those valued in a particular context—or one teaches learning-to-learn skills."[5] These latter meta-abilities are defined by Brown and Campione as the student's speed in learning new tasks and ability to transfer this learning to other related tasks.

The definition of intelligence as learning-to-learn skills still is a traditional model: intelligence is the speed with which persons go from point A to point B. Intelligence testing, which focused first on such skills as bisecting lines or judging weights and later stressed problem solving, now emphasizes the *ability to acquire new skills.* In each case the objective—physical motion, problem resolution, or skill acquisition—is preselected by the intelligence expert.

When students are assessed in this way, they are not given an opportunity to choose their own objectives, nor are they allowed to explore processes that are outside the experts' repertoire of valued skills.

ACTOR/OBSERVER AND OTHER PERSPECTIVES

An expert's authority rests in large measure on an ability to predict events within an area of expertise more accurately than can a naive observer.[6] The ability to predict has been linked with perceptions of personal control.[7] It is possible to distinguish between two types of predictions. When experts make predictions, they generally rely on a collection of observations, sorted by categories that are believed to be stable over time. Yet all of us make predictions based on our own changing experience, not on observations of the behavior of others. The difference between a prediction generated from an actor's perspective (expert's prediction) and a prediction generated by an observer is crucial to understanding the distinction between the concepts of mindfulness and intelligence.[8]

An approach to problem solving based on traditional definitions of intelligence relies on the observer's capacity to use available data in constructing novel hypotheses that in turn reveal different perspectives on familiar questions. Those observers who have considerable familiarity with available data but have not yet become locked into a particular perspective are most likely to make conceptual contributions that advance our general understanding of an area of research.[9]

A mindful approach does not favor the observer's over the actor's perspective. We can test a hypothesis by applying it directly to our own behavior. As an informal example, an acquaintance had some plastic surgery on her face. Two days after the procedure she phoned the surgeon to say that the part of her earlobe that should be connected to her face was not. The surgeon, over the phone, said that was ridiculous; her husband, in her presence, agreed with the expert. Together they caused her to doubt her experience. However, she was stronger than many people in not denying her own reality. She returned to the doctor earlier than scheduled and insisted he look more closely at her ear. The event would have little meaning in this context, of course, if it had not turned out that she was right.

Consider now an example based on data. Much research in psychology has shown that people often ignore population-based information in favor of anecdotal, idiosyncratic information.[10] If, when car shopping, we are shown statistics underlining the high quality of a Volvo but we know someone who has had trouble with a Volvo, we are not likely to give much weight to the group-based information. Whether or not we accept given probabilities, we often don't think about who determined the base rate, that is, we don't consider what alternative probabilities could be if the issue were framed from other perspectives. This distinction can have far-reaching personal consequences. For example, a professor I know was being considered for tenure at a prestigious university. No one in her

field had been tenured there for the past fifteen years, and no woman had ever been tenured there in that department. Friends and others outside the situation told her to look at the base rate, the probability of getting tenure in her department based on what had happened there in the past; their advice was to look for a position elsewhere. When she and I discussed her chances, I asked how many things she had attempted and successfully accomplished? That yielded a different probability for her potential success. We also looked up how many people tenured at the university had received their doctorates from the top school she had attended. That yielded yet another base rate. After trying these and other perspectives, she ended up following her instincts. As an aside, even if we believe there is only one base rate, which would make the probability here seem like zero, there is still a questionable assumption that the present is identical to the past; there is still the possibility of progress. Once again, everything is the same until it is not.

This professor received tenure, so this story had a happy ending, but it might not have. When our experience differs from that of the experts we can follow our own course or theirs and either one may yield a satisfying outcome or not. We cannot know in advance, or there would be no conflict to resolve. To my mind, there are advantages to following one's own perspective even when one loses. Mindful decision making, as opposed to decision making passively based on data assembled by outside observers, is a process of active self-definition.[11]

As we discussed in the context of ambiguous perceptual figures, our ability to view a situation from several perspectives may open a greater range of options. Shifting from ambiguous figures to the larger environment, we can see that the flexibility to change perspectives can open up options that would otherwise remain hidden. When we systematically attempt to narrow a choice, the perspective we most often neglect is our own experience.

Expert observers tend to focus on particular features of a situation that enable them to hold the variables constant. For example, a college admissions committee might admit to college those with the highest SAT scores and grade point averages (GPAs). Perceived stability is often in the experts' interest because their authority frequently rests on the stability of the categories they employ. If an admissions committee used a shifting variety of criteria for excellence, they might well lose their confidence in being able to distinguish the most desirable students. The individuals being rated, however, may be focusing on different, but significant criteria. For instance, consider a student whose grade improved from a C to an A or who achieved middling SAT scores despite having only recently learned English. When we rate our own behavior, it is often in our own interest to generate novel criteria. This capacity to find a means of shifting perspective can be a vital element of our ability to navigate new situations, just as the ability to maintain stable categories is often critical for the expert's authority.

Examples of the tendency of experts to use fixed categories when others might be more revealing can be found in many official educational assessments. Take the landmark *Equality of Educational Opportunity* report, which found that students' achievement was highly correlated with students' socioeconomic

background but apparently uncorrelated with school quality.[12] This report has had an enormous impact on educational policy in the last twenty years. It led many educators to the disturbing conclusion that improving school quality would not increase students' level of achievement. Although this conclusion resulted in positive systemic changes, such as greater racial integration, it also created the unfortunate impression that educators who attempted to make changes in the schools apart from changing their socioeconomic makeup were misguided.

Later, research by Leigh Burstein and others revealed that factors that appeared to be unrelated on a national level were significantly correlated at an international level.[13] In this case, the shift in perspective was a change in what is called the unit of analysis. Unlike the earlier report, which focused only on differences among schools, Burstein's group focused on differences among school systems in several nations and found that educational decentralization, curricular differentiation, and selective tracking all increased the correlation between socioeconomic status and student achievement; tracking, as the name implies, kept the disadvantaged in place—they remained disadvantaged. More-centralized educational systems that offered a uniform curriculum without tracking reduced the effects of socioeconomic status on students' achievement.

Although social scientists recognize that applying statistical data derived from groups to individual cases is problematic, this recognition does not appear to restrict attempts to apply the perspectives developed through statistical methods to individuals.[14] An examination of the difference between focusing on group data and focusing on individual experience brings us back to the assumption that we questioned in Chapter 6, the belief that knowledge consists in knowing what's out there. Efforts to obtain quantified group data are constructed around the belief that these data most nearly *correspond* to reality and thus give individuals greater ability to predict future experience. From the observer's perspective, prediction, correspondence, and personal control are often viewed as synonymous.

From an actor's perspective, though, predictions based on an individual's experience may tend to become true for that individual. Such predictions may not correspond with reality as seen from an observer's perspective; nevertheless, they often prove valid for the actor.

This difference is illustrated in a study I undertook with colleagues several years ago.[15] We tested two distinct coping strategies designed to provide patients preparing to undergo major surgery with a greater experience of control as they entered the operating room. The first approach was based on the hypothesis that providing patients with information about pain and the recovery process based on statistical data would enhance their ability to predict what would happen to them and would enable them to experience greater personal control. Patients who were taught this coping strategy were provided with an objective account of preoperative procedures and with information, based on group data, about what they would most likely experience after the operation. Behind this hypothesis lies the assumption that information that most nearly corresponds to reality provides the greatest personal control.

In the second approach, patients were told that how they chose to view the surgical procedure was likely to determine how they would experience it. These patients were given ways in which to frame their experience. Being mindlessly sexist at the time, I first asked the male patients to imagine how they would respond to a minor cut in the context of playing football, and the female patients how they would respond while preparing to host a large dinner party. They were asked to contrast this imagined experience with that of receiving a minor cut while reading a boring newspaper. After considering how the context affected this imagined experience, patients were asked to think of instances when their perspective on an event had determined their experience of it. They were then asked to generate other perspectives for these same events. Finally, we worked with patients to construct a positive lens through which they could view their upcoming surgery.

We kept records of the percentage of patients who requested pain relievers and sedatives after their operations. Postoperative pain relievers were requested by a significantly smaller proportion of patients in the group that had been asked to view the surgery through a positive lens than in three other groups: (1) those given information based on group data, (2) those given both coping strategies, and (3) a no-treatment control group. Requests for postoperative sedatives followed the same pattern. These results indicate that although factual preparation and training in reframing both emphasize prediction as the key to an experience of personal control, the type of prediction offered by individual experience is distinct from the prediction offered by group data. Whereas prediction based on statistics assumes some correspondence with reality, prediction based on individual experience enables individuals to give meaning to their own future experience.

UNCERTAINTY AND CREATIVE THOUGHT

Although much of social science is an attempt to identify stable phenomena that can be generalized across time and to large groups, it is also interesting to examine the instability of experience as it differs from moment to moment and individual to individual.

Persons who dwell on this perceived instability are likely to experience greater uncertainty than those who dwell on fixed categories.[16] For some, such uncertainty represents an absence of personal control.[17] From a mindful perspective, however, uncertainty creates the freedom to discover meaning. If there are meaningful choices, there is uncertainty. If there is no choice, there is no uncertainty and no opportunity for control. The theory of mindfulness insists that uncertainty and the experience of personal control are inseparable.

Despite the tendency of uncertainty to enhance creative thinking, students are usually taught to view facts as immutable, unconditional truths. For instance, everyone knows that the sum of the angles of a triangle is 180 degrees. Students of geometry are not taught that this geometric theorem is derived from assumptions, assumptions that may be helpful in some contexts and less helpful in others, useful at some times

and less useful at others. Imagine a child sitting on a carpeted floor as she measures the angles of a triangle with a protractor. The child painstakingly measures each angle and repeatedly finds that the sum of the angles equals 183 degrees. Her teacher, who knows better, is quick to remedy this problem. Because all intelligent and educated individuals have been taught that the sum of the angles must be 180 degrees, the teacher knows what to expect even before he measures the angles. Tolerant of the child's youthfulness and supportive of her budding empiricism, the teacher shows the child how to measure the angles correctly. True to the teacher's expectations, the measurements now come to exactly 180 degrees.

Having indulged the child's unformed intelligence, the teacher takes the opportunity to instruct the student on the facts of the matter. He informs the child that she need not measure the angles because geometers have proved that the sum of the angles must be 180 degrees. But the child, who is aware that her own angles were far more painstakingly measured than the teacher's, is not so easily beguiled.

She walks over to a globe and measures with her protractor the angle between the equator and the lines of longitude. They are all right angles, she says, 90 degrees. Then she traces a triangle with her finger: up from the equator to the North Pole and back down to the equator. Each of the lines of longitude forms a 90-degree angle with the equator, but they all meet at the North Pole. The child asks why there is a third angle at the North Pole when the two angles at the equator account for 180 degrees on their own.

We can anticipate the teacher's response: a triangle is a two-dimensional figure; it must be drawn on a flat surface; this triangle is on a curved surface and so is not really a triangle at all. But that is the point: the carpet on which the child measured the triangle earlier was also a curved surface. The perfectly flat surfaces of plane geometry are a mathematical abstraction, not an empirical reality. A small amount of variation in the surface of the carpet could easily account for the few additional degrees the child had carefully measured. It might also have provided a natural introduction to the geometry of curved surfaces, known as differential geometry. Yet the teacher was so constrained by his belief in truths independent of context that he failed to see this opportunity presented by a child measuring angles on a curved surface.

By mindfully considering data not as stable commodities but as sources of ambiguity, we become more observant. Consider the well-known sketch that may be viewed either as a vase or as two faces.[18] On first impression, an observer is likely to view the sketch as either one of these images but not as both. At this stage, most people are quite confident that the image is clear and even after lengthy inspection are not likely to see the other image. Only after being prompted to look at the sketch in another way does an observer see that what initially appeared as a vase appear as two faces.

The same drawing can be seen from a third perspective by turning it upside down. From this angle, the sketch might appear to be no more than a series of squiggles. Curiously, that is perhaps when we are looking most clearly. People usually

depict figures more accurately when they copy forms from an inverted figure than when they copy directly.[19] It may be that by inverting the figure we free ourselves from preconceived categories and open ourselves to the available information—in this case, squiggles on a page.

When Right Becomes Wrong

Two quarreling men came to a judge. The first man told his story. The judge said, "That's right." His adversary, upset at the opinion, said, "You haven't heard my side of the story." He told his side and the judge said, "That's right." A third person said how can they both be right? The judge thought about it and said, "That's right."

One of the fears people may have of an educational system that creates a place for several perspectives is that nothing will remain stable, there will be nothing reliable on which they can lean for continuity. Yet we discover that by viewing the same information through several perspectives, we actually become more open to that information. The information may remain ambiguous, like the squiggles in our example, but we have a consistent foundation from which to work. Just as we might turn a figure upside down to copy it more accurately, we may view the same phenomenon from several perspectives to discover the information buried beneath our preconceived categories. If we fail to explore several perspectives, we risk confusing the stability of our own mindset with the stability of the phenomenon itself.

From time to time educators attempt to recognize the tremendous fluidity of knowledge by providing students with a list of the pros and cons of a particular idea or theory. Much as a physician might list the potential negative side effects along with the expected benefits of a treatment, critical thinking is sometimes taught in schools by having students list the advantages and disadvantages of a controversial idea. Such an exercise almost invariably falls short of the recognition that each potential benefit may also be a liability and that a disadvantage may become an advantage.

Galileo embodied this ambiguity in human accomplishments. Galileo relied on direct observation to transform the nature of truth in Western culture. Empiricism is commonplace today, but for Galileo's contemporaries it was a novelty. The vast majority of Galileo's contemporaries, following Aristotle, believed that a heavier object would fall more quickly than a lighter object. Galileo demonstrated that, if one could account for differences in air resistance, objects of unequal weight would fall at the same rate. He overturned the worldview that dominated his age merely by testing it empirically.

Yet we may also see Galileo as a person trapped by his own ideas. Insisting that only what could be seen was believable, Galileo dismissed the work of his contemporary Johannes Kepler. From Galileo's perspective Kepler relied on a mysterious, unseen and therefore unbelievable force. Today this force is called gravity. By discounting Kepler's assertion that the moon caused the tides, Galileo failed to recognize a force that today is

considered self-evident. Galileo's strength, his reliance on direct observation, also proved to have limitations.

Those of us who teach are often tolerant of students' mistakes—especially when we believe that the students are of limited intelligence—but it does not occur to us to view their answers not as mistakes, but as responses to a different context.

To view an answer as right or wrong, we must freeze the context in which the answer is being evaluated. Take, for example, "The shortest distance between two points is a straight path." This statement might be right in the context of plane geometry, but try to get to the bank from your home and note the quickest way. As another example, try fitting the equation 2 + 2 = 4 with "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

When we are mindful, we recognize that every inadequate answer is adequate in another context. In the perspective of every person lies a lens through which we may better understand ourselves. If we respect students' abilities to define their own experiences, to generate their own hypotheses, and to discover new ways of categorizing the world, we might not be so quick to evaluate the adequacy of their answers. We might, instead, begin listening to their questions. Out of the questions of students come some of the most creative ideas and discoveries.

MINDFULNESS AND SELF-DEFINITION

Perhaps it was because of a desire to provide at least one dimension on which each person could compare favorably that

J. P. Guilford developed a model of intelligence having 150 distinct dimensions. He hoped that this model would be useful "in guiding students into courses and majors" and "pointing to undemonstrated abilities."[20]

Although the proliferation of dimensions of intelligence may help prop up students' sense of self-worth, in the process of identifying strengths we may be unintentionally undermining students' development. Not only do the students who are helped lose the potential benefit of generating a view of their own abilities, but the recipients of most remedial efforts usually accept a devaluation of self.[21] Such devaluation sometimes causes people to compensate by devaluing others. In other words, people accept the ways others have been shown to be better than they by identifying ways in which they are better than others.[22] Adding dimensions of intelligence encourages such labeling and competition.

Such comparisons may also lead to devaluing certain aspects of experience in order to draw comparisons that are personally favorable. People tend to value activities that they do well and to devalue activities at which they are not successful.

From their inception intelligence tests have encouraged this negative labeling. They have been used to identify students who would benefit from programs other than the normal school curriculum. The first intelligence test was developed to assist the French Ministry of Education in identifying students who needed to be placed in remedial schools. We continue to view testing of intelligence as a means of sorting students into groups of one kind or another: college bound, vocational, gifted, and so

on. Too often, rather than encouraging students to discover the usefulness of their failures or to identify the abilities embedded in their disabilities, our educational system seeks to help students by steering them in directions that avoid such challenges.

By valuing some activities—subjects, sports, courses—and devaluing others, we ignore the many perspectives from which any activity may be viewed. At every moment in a mindful state, we are learning something, we are changing in some way, we are interacting with the environment so that both we and the environment are changed. From this perspective, a moment spent on one activity as opposed to another is not consequential. Once we realize that whenever we tackle any particular task we are learning and growing, we do not measure ourselves by the type or program or course we are in. By the same token, once we realize that the reason we did not accomplish one task was because another task *was* accomplished, we no longer need to evaluate ourselves negatively for not accomplishing the first task.[23]

LEARNING AS RE-IMAGINING THE WORLD

As we saw earlier, at the heart of many theories of intelligence is a belief that it is possible to identify an optimum fit between individual and environment. However, we can see that how we interact with our environment is not a matter of fitting ourselves to an external norm; rather, it is a process by which we give form, meaning, and value to our world. If there is no best fit, then an ability to identify an optimum fit may not be a useful concept.

I do not mean to suggest that intelligence tests do not measure something, but the dimension these tests measure may be a neutral trait. The abilities measured by intelligence tests may be useful in certain situations, much as it is sometimes useful to be tall. Yet being small, although burdensome in an environment constructed for taller people, could be an advantage for working in certain conditions, and it is not difficult to imagine a world in which tallness would be a disadvantage. If the world had been designed by small people, imagine how uncomfortable others would be. It is more difficult to imagine an environment in which low intelligence would be advantageous. Nonetheless, mindfulness theory asks us to imagine it. The degree to which we are unable to do so is an an indication of how comprehensively our world has been organized around the category of intelligence.

When shown a sentence with a word repeated in it, people almost always miss the extra word. For instance, try out the last sentence of the preceding paragraph on your friends or colleagues. When a small group of people with head injuries was shown such a sentence, all of them caught the double word, *an* in the example. Why is this so? We can only hypothesize that those who have lost some of their familiar abilities are no longer able to take the world for granted. (Experienced meditators also found the double word with no problem.)

Any disability may function as an ability if we are able to view it from a new perspective.[24] When we are mindful, we recognize that the way in which we tend to construct our world is only one construction among many. We might consider reconstructing this world for ourselves whenever it does not fit our abilities or perceived lack of abilities, whenever we feel stunted or less than fully effective. From a mindful perspective, when we are not feeling smart we are not being stupid; rather, we are being sensible from some other perspective. Even when we are feeling brilliant, we still have a lot to learn from those of so-called low intelligence about alternative ways of constructing our world.

The widespread failure to recognize the insights that can be found in all different perspectives may itself constitute a disability. Indeed, those of us who are intelligent enough to be writing or reading about such an abstract concept as intelligence may suffer severely from this disability. Should we continue to teach this disability to our children?

One day Soshi was walking on the bank of a river with a friend. "How delightfully the fishes are enjoying themselves in the water," exclaimed Soshi. His friend spoke to him thus, "You are not a fish, how do you know that the fishes are enjoying themselves?" "You are not myself," returned Soshi, "how do you know that I do not know that the fishes are enjoying themselves?"

KAKUZO OKAKURA
Japanese Philosopher

How can we know if we do not ask? Why should we ask if we are certain we know? All answers come out of the question. If we pay attention to our questions, we increase the power of mindful learning.