

How Much Do We Know? A Review of *What the Bleep Do We Know: Discovering the Endless Possibilities for Altering Your Everyday Reality*

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Preamble

I was fortunate to lay hold on a concrete copy of this book *What the Bleep Do We Know: Discovering the Endless Possibilities for Altering Your Everyday Reality* by William Artzn, Betsy Chasse, and Mark Vicente. Reading the blurb on the back cover page gave me an insight into the work. I was really curious to read the content of the book. I could imagine the set up of the movie, the setting, the actors, the costume, the actions, the peak and the crescendo or catharsis as we studied in literature. "It is after going through the book that I will stand at a better position to critic and also to believe or disbelieve the ideas posed", I said to myself. So I reserved further comments until I read the book through, cover to cover, myself. After going through I decided to make it public by reviewing it for publication. A copy of the book is available at Babcock University Library, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.

What we know we know.

What we know we don't know.

What we don't know we don't know.

Given that we are only aware of 2, 000 BITS of information out of the 400 BILLION BITS of information we are processing per second...

When we argue against new knowledge how much of our "awareness" is arguing?

How can we know everything about all the things we don't know?

The above quotations are the opening statements on the first few preliminary pages of the book *What the Bleep Do We Know: Discovering the Endless Possibilities for Altering Your Everyday Reality*. The book was also a text form of a movie *What the Bleep Do We Know* incorporating Jack Forem and Ellen Erwin. Reading the blurb at the back cover one is tasked to think deeper than he has been thinking. Read! "This is a book of mind-stretching questions that will encourage you to explore yourself and your life outside the realm of your everyday existence".

Summary Introduction

From the introduction of the book William Artzn wanted to experiment on new thought that came into him. He wanted to go out of the known to explore the unknown. He wanted to do things differently. He questioned the existing theories and beliefs. He touched the very existence of mankind, real life and spiritual life. The medium chosen to air his views was also spectacular. Films and cinemas have become the most popular means of enjoyment, relaxation, and recreation and so choosing to use movie to portray his ideas and intentions is a well thought of medium. To embark on this project he related his vision and mission to his friends. They eventually collaborated with him simply because he shared his vision with them and they keyed into it. This is a big lesson to those who believe in secrecy. Tell people your mind, though some may discourage you, but you may see those whose ideology is the same with yours. Let people criticize you for this will give you strength and, may be, new direction. It was not all rosy for him. Embracing new idea is not always easy. There are obstacles to overcome. The first mountain to level was ability to get a film industry to accept shooting the film. Changing from an established norm is not, has not, and will never be easy. Some people will totally resist it others will sit on the fence. There are yet others who will accept it with a pinch of salt waiting to say "I thought about it" when it fails. If you are convinced of anything, whether it has been done before or not, try it. Conviction is a catalyst that spurs one to action.

Success of the movie brought joy and fulfillment to the actors. What about if it had failed? Life is full of ups and downs. A successful person is the one who falls and rises again to continue venturing.

Asking Questions

Can one know without asking? Can a dumb person ask question? Can a baby who has not started talking ask question? Chapter one of *What the Bleep Do We Know?* started with "What Is a Great Question? Why should we bother? "What Makes it Great?" p. 2. Answers were given in the cause of the reading. Questions are the

beginning of adventure. It is digging to know the unknown. Questions help one to change direction and also to focus. Should we wait until there is a crisis before we ask those penitent questions about life?

Children, sometimes, if not always, are better than adults, they are curious, they want to know reason for whatever action they see. They are inquisitive and honest in their ways. They ask surprising and baffling questions and are eager to receive honest answers. When the answers come they are excited and happy. Such answers may generate more questions. Man is insatiable. As adults we ask questions we already know the answers or we expect a certain response to when otherwise answered we become annoyed. There are genuine questions of life and such questions are the ones that lead to understanding and wisdom and come with progress. Human beings have multiple assumptions which are very difficult for us to lay aside in order to absorb new ideas. Like the conversation between a profess of and Nan-in, unless we empty our cups that are already full of our own ideas and opinions we cannot refill with new ideologies. There are many questions needing answers but we feel we know the answers what will we be open to learn? Great questions are questions that have no answers yet; questions whose answers are in the future. Such questions as “Where is God? After man dies what next? What is holding the sky from falling? If the sky falls will it kill everything on earth?” These are great questions demanding answers. I personally believe that any question asked by anybody, whose answer is not known to him at the time of questioning, is a great question. Questions challenge assumptions and eventually lead to more findings. Some people are so rigid that they cannot bend, with bugling questions and eye-opening answers they change their mind and shift their stand.

Knowledge is Nobody's Property

Questions lead to answers that impact someone's knowledge or understanding. Knowledge is not resident in someone's home that others go knocking to get some. Rather one could say, with authority, that knowledge is housed in everybody's abode. Some people who know more than others do so because they ask more questions than the others. The more we ask questions the less we know and the less we know the more we ask. It is a virtuous circle. One thing we need to understand is that each society has its peak knowledge. There seems to be a bar which is hard to exceed until another generation comes up. It looks like God gave each generation the knowledge they need enough with their understanding capability. Anything further than that becomes either a mystery or a heresy. Religion and astronomy (science) have been existing since creation. Religion has to do with spirit while science has to do with reality, observable phenomenon.

Science and Religion

Religion has to do with spirituality while science deals with realities of life. Science deals with things you see, taste, feel, things that are tangible. In this case religion or spirituality deals with beliefs that are not physically touchable. It is a thing of the mind. It is a mindset of individuals prepared by beliefs passed on from generation to generation, from forefathers. We grew up to follow our parents do what they do without knowing why. Sometimes we worship whom or what we do not know simply because we follow the footsteps of those who were before us. Though religion is a thing of the mind people are induced unconsciously to follow a pattern of behavior inherited from their past. Moral inclination is one of the reasons why we belong to a certain religious denomination or the other. I believe that morality is inherent in every created being. We know what is right and what is wrong but the manifestation of each to overrule the other depends on how much you are exposed to one of them. When one leans more on one aspect of behavior that behavior controls him. This is why our parents would like us to be exposed to a system of behavior which we call morals. Religion basically is training in morals as its basic but it is a belief in a supreme being who created and controls the universe. This being called God has rules and regulations, has laws that must be obeyed to live a happy and fulfilling life. Disobedience to the laws results into a riot. Families belong to religious organizations who teach beliefs that are associated with good moral formation. The question is: What is the test of a good moral? Who determines what is good and what is bad? Some people believe that conscience is the judge but we should not forget that what you are fed with is what nourishes your body. For anyone to know what is good and what is evil I strongly recommend the Book called BIBLE, a Christian's Holy book, to him. Not only is it good in teaching morals, it is a book that solves the problems that science and philosophy are unable to solve. This single book of books has solutions for every question of life from beginning of the world to its end. Is it not surprising to know that it has been penned down how this world will end? It is surprising to note that the Bible has exposed it without mincing words. I recommend this book to every living soul.

Science compliments religion. Sometimes religion is full of principles but science is full of practicals. It looks like religion, as is in the Bible, is recipe that science uses in its experiments. Science tests the beliefs and assumptions of religion to consolidate man's belief. This is true to a receptive mind, mind not stuffed with all kinds of presuppositions destined to confuse people's mind. There are a lot of things we don't understand and it will be dangerous for us to think that we can understand everything. Even those we seem to understand the understanding is limited to our perception and our mood at the time of delving into the knowledge. So there are

lots of things we do not and will not know. One problem with science is that it does not have the ability to say “I don’t know.” Rationalizing is not good in certain aspects of life. The fact that the world will come to an end one day creating room for another type of existence shows that nothing remains the same. Scientists should base their findings on what are existing at that particular time. You cannot emphatically say the dimension of a particular river or sea because there is always encroachment, reclamation, climactic changes which make the initial measurement untrue. Could this be the reason why religion is full of principles? There are many theories that are now obsolete and could not be applied to get the results they used to give. There are held beliefs that are no more real today. Take for instance the belief that the universe has nine planets. At one time we were told that there were only eight, the ninth one, Pluto, was not stable and therefore does not qualify to be a planet (chacha.com, 2012; en-wikipedia.org; helium.com). But in 2005 a tenth planet was discovered (Pbs.com, 2006; NASA, 2005). A tenth planet has eventually been discovered. According to NASA Science News (2005:1):

"It's definitely bigger than Pluto." So says Dr. Mike Brown of the California Institute of Technology who announced today the discovery of a new planet in the outer solar system. The planet, which hasn't been officially named yet, was found by Brown and colleagues using the Samuel Oschin Telescope at Palomar Observatory near San Diego. It is currently about 97 times farther from the sun than Earth, or 97 Astronomical Units ([AU](#)). For comparison, Pluto is 40 AU from the sun.

The Bible said that there are other worlds (principle) while science said there are nine planets (concrete figure). In everything science let there be a qualifier, something to say when the experiment or statement was made; why the statement was made, the condition for making it; what led to the statement; how long the statement will remain truthful. As much as ambiguity will be removed let not create a certainty that will not stand the test of time. Again I say, let there be qualifiers.

Science tries to prove all things while religion tries to believe all things. Both can work together for a better understanding of life. The issue now is which religion do we believe in. This world is full of confusion. Denominations of churches flood everywhere. Religions are proliferating. The few popular world religions known such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Shintoism, Zerostranism, Buddhism, and Hinduism have increased to include regional traditional religions like African Traditional Religion, Taoism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Animism, and even Divination. How much do we really know? It is only God who knows everything. He knows the end from the beginning. Things will continue to change, perhaps, that is the basic thing we should know that things are never constant. Things will never remain as they were/are. Since what we know continues to change and we do not know what they will change to become we need to humble our self and know that we don't know enough. Since we don't know enough we will continue to ask questions. The problem with humanity is that it is difficult for us to accept change. It is like being in a cruising car and suddenly applying brakes. When motion is constant and stable to apply brake for a turn or a stop gives a shake to prove resistance. It is not easy to shift a paradigm. This is how it has been and it has been working why do we need a change. Paradigm has to do with assumptions, and so, could be tested and disproved of; but even theories may not be true always. Some theories are not tested or proved through experimentation. In this case, if the theory fails the test of time what stops people from discarding it? Theories, assumptions, beliefs and religions change with time. They are not isolated or detached from human activities. They are what make life worthwhile. No one continues to wear one style of clothe or use one pattern of furniture when new styles and patterns are coming out each day. At the same time nobody should change a winning team for the sake of change. Variety is good but should be done reasonably. Let us have reason for whatever action we take. Our actions eventually impact on us whether good or bad, positively or negatively.

Population of the world is increasing. Activities performed on earth subsequently will increase because there are more mouths to feed, more pupils to go to school, more roads to construct, more houses to build, more cars to manufacture, more hospitals to build, and a lot more increase in everything under the earth. This implies that old things will give way to new ones and larger ones too. New innovations have to come in because the land mass remains what it is. If the area of land occupied by human beings is constant and population is skyrocketing, should we continue to have the same farming method? Should we maintain the same type or style of building? Should we not change our system of doing things? When all these changes are affected have we not shifted a paradigm? A paradigm shift is inevitable in this world.

Perception

Perception is a topic I will like to dwell in a bit because this is the cause of different reactions of people to life. How I see things are not exactly how you see them. *The Chambers Dictionary* (1998: 1211) defines perception

as “the act or power of perceiving; discernment; apprehension of any modification of consciousness; the combining of sensation into a recognition of an object; direct recognition; a percept; reception of a stimulus”. The real meaning of perception will not be grasped properly here without stern effort. One phrase here, “the combining of sensation into a recognition of an object” gives us a direction from which to look at perception. Looking for accurate and elaborate definition of perception I picked up *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd edition, Unabridged published in 1975. It says that perception is derived from a Latin word “perception” where the direct translation of perception comes from. It listed six different but related definitions for the word:

- (1) consciousness; awareness
- (2) the awareness of objects or other data through the medium of the senses
- (3) the process or faculty of perceiving
- (4) the result of this; knowledge, etc. gained by perceiving
- (5) insight or intuition, as of an abstract quality (p.2330)

From this Webster’s dictionary one starts to see clearly what perception is all about. It has to do with awareness – realization and noticing of what is happening around you (consciousness). It takes the awareness higher by the application of the senses as a medium of the awareness. A deeper sense of perception is its insight or intuitiveness. Stretching the meaning further, it is the ability to make meaning out of abstract qualities. Perception is a loaded word with multitude of meanings depending on the angle at which people are looking at it. Before I actually expose my views on perception let us look at it from a professional’s point of view. Perception is a psychological term and so we should hear from a psychologist. Barry D. Smith (1998) could not give the definition of perception without connecting it with sensation. Both of them must be coupled to make a sensible meaning. Quoting Smith extensively he says:

Both sensation and perception begin with stimuli and we can distinguish two general classes of stimuli. A **Distal Stimulus** is an actual object or event located in the real world such as a person we are looking at or a piano we are hearing; a **Proximal Stimulus** is the information received by the sensory apparatus. The task of perception is to accurately interpret the distal stimulus on the basis of the proximal stimulus. Often, however, the proximal stimulus is not ideal for this purpose, and such factors as context and past experience must be brought to bear in order for accurate perception to occur (Smith 1998: 107).

This is an elaborate quotation that helps us to fully understand the intricacies of perception. Perception is not only real world, actual object or event that we see. It is much more than that. It has to do also with the senses which he calls proximal stimulus. So in perception the ability to interpret is fundamental. This is done by sensory perception, making use of the sense organs. The question that comes to mind is, Can an insane person interpret realities? Do people see things the same way? What role has age and experience to play in perception? These are concerns to human beings. There are, in fact, more questions than answers in this wide world. The more we question the less we know and the more mysterious the world looks. Really the world is sophisticated. Sensation means consciousness of a physical experience, resulting from a certain bodily condition or resulting from stimulation of a sense organ (*Chambers Dictionary*, pg. 1505). The purpose of sensation, according to Barry D. Smith, “is to provide us with an absolutely essential and reasonable accurate picture of what is going on both inside and outside our bodies” p.107. For human beings to enjoy life, to survive, to locate our enemies and run away from them, we need this picture. Does this not show that our bodies and what happens in this world work together? There is no isolation. It is in line with John Wheeler’s statement that the universe is an extremely interactive place and that we are shapers and creators living in a participatory universe. Though he mentioned this in line with Quantum Physics but from the angle of perception and sensation it holds true also. The creator of the universe has built in His creatures triggers to react to certain conditions. Is it not amazing to know that we can perceive something and react accordingly as the stimuli dictates? Man is wonderfully and fearfully made as is testified by the Holy Scriptures. What is real?

Reality

This is a big word that could only be understood if one is sane. Perception and sensation work together to show reality. Reality has more to do with metaphysics. The mind has a big role to play in knowing what is real or what is illusive. Man interprets things differently depending on his angle of perception but more on his state of mind. As I mentioned earlier an insane person sees what normal or ordinary persons do not see. What he sees are real to him, but you, who are not seeing them, are they also real or relative? If reality is relative it will not be dynamic. If what is real to you is not actually real to me, who determines what is real? This should give us a theory, if not in existence, that people with same mind, same thought, same beliefs, same culture perceive issues the same way. If everything should be equal, which is impossible, everybody will perceive events and circumstances the same way. Our attitudes, our outlook, our emotions, and the health of our sense organs

determine how we perceive reality. Representing the foregoing in a formula we will have: PERCEPTION + SENSATION = REALITY.

Attitude

Attitude is an interesting article of the book *What the Bleep Do We Know* that needs mentioning. Ramtha taught in his school, Ramtha School of Enlightenment (ramtha.com, 2013) that “consciousness and energy create the nature of reality, and attitude is everything. The first idea states the law of how things got the way they did, and the second idea is why things are the way they are (p. 119). Ellen Langer and Rebecca Levy’s comparative study of memory loss in elderly people of different cultures really showed that attitude has a vital role to play in people’s existence. Americans who live in a culture that fears old age and knows that as they age their powers reduce or decline had substantial memory loss. In contrast, “Chinese whose culture holds older people in high esteem, not only showed very little memory loss, but the oldest performed almost as well as the youngest people in the study” (p.120). This is a nice discovery. Another example is the French whose culture sees nothing wrong in drinking wine, smoking cigarettes, eating pastries, and cholesterol-clogging sauces yet live happy, healthy, thin and ripe old age. Without this research I would never believe that anyone eating all those things will live long. I would expect them to die from diabetes, coronary disease, or kidney disease at a young age. So, what we think of our self manifests accordingly. This is in line with an Ibo proverb which says that people’s firewood cooks their food for them. People’s culture imparts their lives. Culture shapes attitude.

Consciousness and Addiction

Consciousness has affinity with the brain. Different parts of the brain do specialized jobs but after reading this book a new insight came. The fact that the brain continually rewires itself throughout life and amazingly that “A sand-grain-sized piece of a brain contains 100,000 neurons and a billion synapses” is amazing (Berins 2010, Feud-sigmund.com, 2012). These are amazing facts and numerous others. It is surprising to note that tracks are made in the brain which deepens as we continue in a particular action. This is in line with an axiom that says that repetition or practice deepens impression. On the other hand when one stops doing a certain thing the pathway created starts to narrow because it is now fallow. This is likened to a footpath. When the use of a footpath stops, the path grows weeds. Continuous use of a footpath makes it a track that eventually becomes wider and wider with time and usage. When stopped it starts to grow weed and eventually closes. Constancy is important in retaining knowledge, the path must remain open. Being conscious means being alert. Addiction is a wide pathway created by repetition of an action in the brain. Emotions are constant reminders of an event or a circumstance in the past. Repetition of such emotions gives a constant impression in our brain and makes it difficult for us to forget. There are emotions of joy, sorrow, good, bad, cry, laughter, etc. There are good and bad addictions. Every community has its norms and laws, dos and don’ts. We have admirable behaviors and shun ways of life. Those things that are evil in a society, de-tasted in a society, regarded as taboos should be avoided. If one has grown to imbibe the de-tasted habits of a society the person is said to be addicted if he is engrossed in doing it. With this footpath in the brain, it becomes difficult to close it up. To change a habit means replacing the habit with another one appreciable to the community. This entails creating another brain footpath. It is allowing the old habit track to lie fallow while creating an enroute to be constantly maintained. This is another way of saying “a change of paradigm or a paradigm shift.

Conclusion

The book or the film is a thought provoking one which keeps human beings thinking about this world. It makes you to have a second thought or a rethink about the universe. Is the world really what we think it is? Where are we, who are we, and where are we going are questions that yearn for answers. Can we really say we know this world? Do we know as much as we should? Adventures are everywhere in this universe. There are potentials in us that we have not even discovered. Until the owner of the universe returns to claim it human beings will never explore the whole world. What we now know may not be up to one billionth of what we will know when sin is eradicated. Until then, there will continue to be discoveries and inventions. What really do we know? How much do we know?

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