

Essay

How Information in Our Brain Interacts with Itself

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ABSTRACT

This essay was written during quite unusual circumstances, where I had lost my own perception of reality, in some regard. I put myself through a series of different musical experiences and found that these experiences altered my perception of who I was. I found that the deeper the art within the music was, the more I got to share the artist's perspective on life (during the musical piece), and thereby I was also forced to change my own.

Keywords: Music, perception, information, brain, interaction.

1. Changing My Outlook on Life Through Music

Having never written anything even remotely academic or scientific, this will be one of the hardest things I have ever done. I will try to put forward my views on consciousness and hopefully be able to communicate them in a way that translates to a broad range of people. I hope to be able to account for every conclusion I have drawn in the following pages, but if something slips by me I do apologize. I will try to add to the current discussion on consciousness, by suggesting that the issue might not be as complex and incomprehensible as previously thought, due to the fact that we haven't found an effective way of looking at it yet. How does consciousness help our survival? What does it *do*? Are we really as aware as we perceive we are?

Being born in the 90s and an avid music listener, I have had access to my mp3 player or iPod for the most part of my life. What I found when I was listening to music was that when entering the domain of *art* within music, with the likes of Bob Marley, Louis Armstrong, Captain Beefheart, Tom Waits and Dr. John, I was altering my own perspective on life by experiencing emotions that the artists had captured within the music. I grew interested in what in psychology is called the '*cognitive triangle*', which explains the connection between our *emotions*, *thoughts* and *actions*. It shows how these three pillars affect each other, and how they always change and adapt to each other when one of them becomes affected. When I was experiencing different emotions in music, I noticed how this led me to different thinking and thus acting differently, and I began questioning these connections more in depth. What effects would it have on my outlook on life when experiencing various emotions? How would my behaviour change during these experiences? My hypothesis was that these new experiences would ultimately change my perception of my position in my surroundings, and force me to change as a person.

What purpose does it serve for us to appear to depend upon being aware about our own position in our surroundings? This question has a rather obvious answer: *because it helps us to stay alive.*

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Being able to interact with the outside world increases our chances of survival. Being able to differentiate what is good and what is bad to us as beings is crucial.

2. The 'Cognitive Triangle' Might be Part of a Larger System

What I realised was that when I was listening to a certain song, my perspective on the world changed and I perceived my surroundings and myself in a new way. A new perspective on the world changed my way of thinking about the world and a new way of thinking about the world changed my way of acting towards the world. These changes ultimately led to me being in a different position in my surroundings. I made the assumption that the emotion I experienced in the song was a piece of information and that pieces of information gets stored inside the brain by our senses and becomes a part of our consciousness. If this is the case, the cognitive triangle appears to be part of a system that processes information in order to make the information useful to us in our survival. In order to determine how best to survive, every piece of stored information is processed and taken into account to form an output.

3. We Appear to Have an Input and an Output of Information

Imagine that we have an *input* (our senses) and an *output* (our emotions, thoughts and actions) of information. In this scenario, the input receives information about the outside world and the output acts upon that information. When the input receives information it gets processed by a system, which determines whether the information is positive or negative to us in our survival. The output then changes and alters itself in order for us to best survive. This in turn suggests that there is some kind of connection between every piece of information that we have stored. When new information is received, it then has to synchronize with the already existing pieces of information. Without synchronization the information would be useless, as there would be no way of relating it to anything. Examples of synchronization would be all states where as little input as possible is being received, such as sleeping, crying, laughing, screaming etc. During the process of synchronization, the information might then create a connection, which enables it to be put into perspective, in relation to every other piece of information. Our emotions might be used to help us sort the information, labelling it as either negative or positive to our survival in relation to the already existing information that we have stored.

4. The Output Sums Up Our Information to Make a Decision

Suppose that when we perceive a piece of information as positive to us we label it with a positive emotion. Suppose that when we perceive a piece of information as negative to us we label it with a negative emotion. When the information is labelled the output might then be able to structure the information in a hierarchic order, choosing the most favourable outcome to our survival during any given moment.

Let me give an example:

Imagine a scenario where a human is going to climb a tree. In this case the tree will provide both food and shelter for the human. Falling down will either hurt the human or kill the human. The human is aware of both the positive and negative possible *inputs* of climbing the tree. I assume that the human will attempt to *avoid* the negative possible inputs and *pursue* the positive possible inputs. The positive and negative possible inputs of the climb will change and affect our output when being taken into account. The output cannot choose to ignore those pieces of information when summing up all of the stored pieces of information to make a decision. The human in this scenario will likely use the piece of information that our hands can provide a tighter grip to keep us from falling etc. The output has already made the decision to climb the tree in the first place, and now it changes and alters itself in order to be as useful to us in our survival as possible. All pieces of information changes and alters the decision making process in our brain. The piece of information that falling down will have a negative input has to co-exist inside the brain along with all the other pieces of information.

5. All the Pieces of Information Co-exist with Each Other Inside the Brain

If every piece of information in our brain is used to determine the output, then all of the pieces of information in our brain must have a connection with each other. The pieces of information must in some way interact with each other in order for the correct information to be used at the correct moment by the output. The pieces of information must be "aware" of each other. I have started to think of "being alive" as a constant moving process, and as soon as that movement stops, the state of "being alive" is gone. I would therefore argue that the system I have presented works to protect this constant moving process. I suggest that when something is negative to us, it is because it threatens our constant moving process to stop, and vice versa when something is positive to us, it is because it helps our constant moving process to keep going. The brain might have created a system to help guide us in the right direction. In this system, every piece of information might only be either positive or negative in relation to all the other pieces of information. The system that connects all of our stored pieces of information together might be what we perceive as consciousness. In this case we might only be aware of our own perspective on the information that we have received during the course of our lives.