

Avoiding the Semmelweis Reflex and Worldview Lag

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Abstract: The author supposes a simple idea to avoid the Semmelweis Reflex and a short explanation of the main cause due to first hand experience, backed by simple rule of influencing people in a less caustic way.

Nobody likes to be told, "you're wrong". Being blunt about ideas does not increase their effectiveness in human circles. It might be easy to be a teacher and use red ink on exam papers, but that is given the condition that the student is well aware they will be wrong about something, however small or large. It was already agreed upon without actually saying it that the student has already accepted the fate of being wrong in some way. Unfortunately as the student ages and progresses through school, being told they are wrong has a greater and greater impact on their ego, as they more than likely have spent more and more time and energy making sure they were not wrong about something. As they move through college, and become the experts of a given field of study, the likelihood of that agreement of being wrong SOMEWHERE is diminished. Thus, to tell an expert in any given field that they are wrong concerning something has a much more damaging impact on their ego. As well, past the PhD level they become their own teacher essentially in social circles, so the previous agreement of being wrong about something on a test has long vanished. There is no more unspoken social agreement between teacher and student, because the student has become the teacher. This means that the way new ideas are approached is no longer under the social contract of knowing you will be wrong about something, it is under the social contract that you should have known better. As a teacher, there is no more wiggle room for being wrong. As it turns out, social contracts are illusionary when it comes to the facts of nature, the teacher in fact is always (and has always been) the student, as mother nature has always been the real teacher. Unfortunately, putting nature first is not what is practiced anymore, the expert is under enormous social pressure and can no longer be wrong, and if it is wrong, then its something very little and easy to change. It cannot possibly be a huge wrong. This is problematic, as it leads directly into a known phenomenon called the Semmelweis Reflex.

The tendency to reject new evidence or new knowledge because it contradicts established norms, beliefs or paradigms is very human. We like to believe that ideas are solid, that ideas we have accepted are facts of nature and that they go unchanged forever. Human beings hate change, unfortunately that is the essence of current civilization, change is happening much more rapidly that we like to admit or even

acknowledge. So to tie in the tendency of human beings to reject change, multiply that by the effect of schooling and expertise at very high levels, add ego inflation based on changing social contracts, we get a very different picture of why worldviews take so long to change. Humans are creatures of habit, and that coupled with experts rejecting new evidence due to over-education, and their unspoken acceptance that they are somehow the ultimate teachers (regardless if that is actually mother nature doing the teaching) on social contracts, leads to only one option for designing new worldviews. We simply have to ignore the old worldviews. This leads to lag in worldview development, and is currently being experienced by the author who knows that planets are old stars, and the majority of the scientific community is completely oblivious to this fact.

It is suggested that progress can only happen so fast. Think of a giant rubber band attached to a very large rock. The more someone stretches it out and makes progress in a certain direction, the more the rock will appear to fall behind, and the stronger the rubber band will try and pull them back. It is a mistaken belief that because a discoverer makes a discovery that it will be immediately used or accepted simply because that individual is making progress. There is no amount of pushing progress forward on an individual level that will lead to huge gains in acceptance in much larger communities. The lag is even more pronounced when that person is not inside of the community, because they are not attached by a rubber band. They are free to roam and make advances far, far in advance of the acceptance of any community. This lag is further complicated via over-education and scientists constantly playing the credibility game and obsessing over their own egos, which is noted in them not being able to accept critical eyes. Scientists are insulted very easily because their egos are inflated to the extreme, this is a direct result of the changing social contract of student to teacher, and over-education in fields that are not fully understood, such as astronomy, astrophysics and geophysics.

Over-education leads to huge ego problems. They are seen directly even with the way real insults are treated. For instance, a regular person who has a college degree would take insults as being actual words that denigrate a person's physical appearance or faulty characteristics or bad habits. An overly educated person, someone who has a PhD in astrophysics would take statements someone says that they consider to be wrong, and immediately feel insulted. Just tell an astrophysicist that planets are old stars, and watch them get uncomfortable. Telling a scientist, "you're dumb", doesn't have any impact on their decisions or psyche. On the other hand, publishing a paper that shows evidence they are wrong about something is the ultimate insult, because it says they are wrong, without saying it. This goes back to them losing their student instincts, of accepting the fact that they could be seriously wrong about many things. So instead of examining the new facts and evidence, they reject it out of hand.