

Skeptics vs Cynics - the battle over disruptive discoveries

More often than naught, when someone tells you they have an open-mind...they don't.

I read an article about Dr. Mina Bissell, a brilliant scientist who discovered that a cell's function and biology depend on its surroundings. The article in *The Scientist* was really about amazing scientists who came to the US as immigrants (she from Iran) but we'll not divert to that issue. This is her comment that struck me: *"I have been saying the same thing since 1981 and only in the last 15 or so years have many other scientists come around."* For 36 years she's fought to have other scientific minds at least try to understand what she discovered. I'll bet most of them told her they had an open mind.

If you've ever tried to give life to a concept that challenges traditional thinking and mindset you'll have no trouble identifying with this article. I've had the opportunity to try that a number of times. So as not to mislead, I'm no brilliant scientist by a long shot. But I do have a knack for finding other people's discoveries that are game-changing, helping move them from a possibility into a reality.

One example is a way to produce fault-free software source code. A lot of "open-minded" people dismissed that as an impossibility without even asking how that could be done. Another is that we can significantly influence the qualities and performance of liquids and solids by using specific frequencies to alter the molecular structure and alignment of the target material. A lot of "open-minded" people think that's nonsense too. Again, no enquiry about how that might be, to them it simply can't be. Even the quote from Nikola Tesla that frequencies hold the secret of the universe doesn't help. The fact that people like Dr. Bissell and so many others far smarter than me persist, often for decades, is a huge encouragement.

Oddly, many people won't talk about any provocative, game-changing ideas unless there are "peer reviewed" articles published in esteemed journals. Strange term, isn't it? What exactly is a "peer?" Did da Vinci have peers? Archimedes? Franklin? Tesla? Gates? Musk? If throughout history innovators waited for peers to change their thinking, we'd still be sharpening stone axes.

And who said scientific journals are infallible when it comes to truth? Retractions from academic scientific journals are at an all-time high with retractions over a ten year study growing by 1000%, each cited an average of 45 times.

Publications in total grew by only 44%. This means all those that cited retracted papers are also suspect. "Truth" is not the sole purview of academia. Still, such journals are the first place I look when I want to understand something; they are invaluable to us all.

No-one expects mindless acceptance of a new idea. Indeed, the only way to know you are really moving the markers in your chosen field is the resistance you get. Otherwise you are merely rearranging old thinking. Challenge to new thinking comes from two kinds of people: Skeptics and Cynics.

Those compelled to claim they have open-minds are mostly cynics. The term comes from ancient Greek *kynos* meaning dog-like. Also meaning the "sneering sarcasm of the philosophers," meant to be "critical, disparaging the motives of others, captious, sneering, peevish." In my experience cynicism comes from people who don't understand something and so instead of enquire, they eviscerate...less they be seen as lacking in intellect and thus below others. They lack confidence and have fragile egos. They are not your peers. Stay away from them and, should one accidentally get in your face, don't let them get to you.

Skeptics, on the other hand can be your saving grace. The word means enquiring, reflective, to look. Wrote Miguel de Unamuno in 1924: "Skeptic does not mean him who doubts, but him who investigates or researches as opposed to him who asserts and thinks that he has found."

We should all be skeptics - of other's work and especially of our own. There are always even greater possibilities.

I once had the chance to present the fault-free source code idea to someone who knew software technology and who could be very influential. I was shocked at her openness and expressed my gratitude. When she comes across concepts that are far beyond the status quo she said, her first thought is: What if this is true, how would the world change for the better? In other words she started with wanting it to be true.

In presenting a way in which frequencies in water could truly change our thinking about agriculture and water management, one scientist said: "I've never heard of such a thing." And then he went on to read or watch everything I sent him on the topic. True skeptics are insatiable learners. Any questions or issues he wants to raise are fine with me, they will significantly improve what I think and what I'm doing!

Please be a skeptic. But don't tell people you have an open-mind. If true, that will become self-evident soon enough. Think about what would happen if what they have discovered works out. Tell them you have a thousand questions that will help you understand their concept more thoroughly. Look for ways to help their idea work and not for reasons it won't. Remember, even failed ideas reveal a little more about what is possible.

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