

Informed Reality

By

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With the election approaching in just a few short weeks I have taken pause to make some observations. My observation began with a question – “What is reality?” If you go strictly by the definition as presented by the Encarta Dictionary (North America edition) it is broken down into five categories:

1. real existence - actual being or existence, as opposed to an imaginary, idealized, or false nature

2. all that exists or happens - everything that actually does or could exist or happen in real life.

3. something that exists or happens - something that has real existence and must be dealt with in real life

4. type of existence - an existence or universe, either connected with or independent from other kinds

5. totality of real things - philosophy the totality of real things in the world, independent of people's knowledge or perception of them

In this and all other election years there are two primary “realities” presented. Within both of these realities there are several variations of the same reality. How can there be a finite reality from so many variations? Reality, as presented in category five above, is the reality of the world independent of people’s knowledge or perception. This reality is one we may never be aware of or at least not until we leave our Earthly existence. This would appear to present a concept that is completely and comprehensively objective in regards to reality. For the sake of this article we will stick with the other four categories. So why does perception of reality seem to take a subjective form for people? This behavior is not a new phenomenon, quite the contrary; it is as old as human civilization itself. People for the most part are driven by their prejudices and beliefs. But where do these come from? Upbringing, education, genetics or perhaps all of the above? The behavior I speak of is the apparent tendency to have a subjective, narrow view of the world. People form their reality from their life experiences and external influences. These influences could consist of many sources but primarily are centered on upbringing, education

and religion or lack thereof. I don't want to paint all of humanity with the same broad brush. There are still a significant amount of people out there that step outside the box and seek their own information and truth but the sad reality is there is a significant amount that do not. A good analogy of this is the iceberg comparison. Our reality is the perception of the tip of an iceberg. This is the only part of an iceberg that is visible above the water. Our reality becomes the visible area of the iceberg. But those that seek answers and decide to step outside their familiar reality box will discover that the majority of the iceberg lies beneath the surface. There is so much more to an iceberg than what is readily perceived and automatically incorporated into our reality. Going the extra mile and exploring what lies beneath the surface has led those, willing to make the effort, to another reality that is much more objective.

Every election year I always find it amusing when I hear people going about regurgitating what some talking head on TV or radio has said as if it were the gospel truth. I find it even more amusing when you question them about their opinion they have just expressed and they look at you like a deer caught in headlights. The most common answer I always receive is "that's what so and so said". The underlying truth here is usually my daddy was this political affiliation and so was my granddaddy so any opinion they hear, whether it be truthful or not, is automatically assimilated in their brain as the truth or their "reality". This phenomenon of being trapped in the box of their reality and refusing to seek or consider any other reality is both troubling and frustrating to those that try to take an objective view of the world. There is no research on their part to determine if this was an accurate opinion; the opinion is based solely on their prejudices. Before you start to get nervous, know that this is not a political article. It would be neither appropriate nor necessary for me to make it so. The political observation I am making here is not the topic of this article, it is merely a starting point.

I personally have been guilty of these prejudices. Politically I have broken with the way I was brought up. In the political genre I am a minority in my family. I did not come about this "minority status" by accident. Over the years I have studied, researched and observed enough to realize there is another potential reality out there and my old way of thinking may have been incorrect. This critical thinking has caused me to step back and take a look now at most things before making a judgment. The topic I would like to focus on for the sake of this article is the paranormal.

Ever since I was a small child I have always been fascinated by supernatural tales. Ghost stories, alien encounters and "mythical" monsters have always captured my imagination. I always enjoyed the stories while all the time in the back of my mind I was asking the question – "could this be real?" I remember occasions growing up when I snuck into old, reportedly "haunted" houses with friends or took girls parking at Woodson Lateral to possibly witness the phantom motorcycle light (wink, wink). I have always been fascinated with the subject but my reality was

that maybe it could be true but who really knows? I had never had a personal experience with the paranormal and all I had to go on was what I read and saw on television. While my affinity with these stories has continued through the years, I never really gave the “is it real” question serious consideration until recently.

In recent years I have had a couple of experiences that I cannot explain. I have seen a woman in my house on a couple of occasions that vanished. My son saw the same thing at a different time. I had another experience that I have never spoken of publicly until now. I will not go into the details of it in this article but I will say it was UFO related and it happened about 5 years ago. No, I didn't get molested by E.T. but it was a remarkable experience. These two experiences turned my “could be true” reality to “probably is true”. That was still pretty subjective approach though on my part, wasn't it? The recent influx of paranormal programming didn't help my objectivity very much either. To state that the recent influx of paranormal themed programming has increased awareness of paranormal investigation would be an understatement. Before I became involved seriously in paranormal investigation, I was fascinated by the evidence presented on these shows. My desire for this phenomenon to be real made me start to believe that it very well could be real. One of my favorite shows was and still is ***Ghost Hunters***. Week after week I was amazed by the evidence presented. The nonstop action on their investigations enthralled me each episode. I was almost at the point of the person “like a deer caught in headlights” that took everything presented at face value. Paranormal programming was the catalyst that finally got me thinking “hey, you can really investigate this stuff” and with the technology now available, catch some “awesome evidence”. Just look at all the stuff they experience every time they go on and investigation, incredible! One of the best decisions I have made in my life is to actually get involved in this field hands on. I quickly learned that everything is not as it seems on TV. The first two things I learned are that investigations are far from nonstop action and most importantly, it takes more than 5 minutes to set up equipment. To quote the president of ARPAST, Larry Flaxman, “investigations are hours and hours of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror”. The sheer terror is usually someone tripping in the dark or running across a spider. Also, I have come to realize there is a tremendous amount of editing done on these shows. That is not to say that the evidence presented is bogus, not at all. But the bottom line is if these shows are not entertaining they will not sell advertising revenue and consequently, would not be back for a second season. From my personal perspective I got caught up in the hype of these shows and as a result they became part of my reality. I got out of my box when I became involved in paranormal research and it really opened my eyes. My reality now is that there *is* paranormal phenomenon but *what* it is I do not know yet. I refuse to get caught in the box again. My motivation now is like what Grissom always says on the television show ***CSI***. “Let's see where the evidence takes us”. The scary thing is I could have stayed in this box and got caught in the “orb trap” and went through the rest of my life with a reality of ignorance.

Why did I break my own rules and let my prejudices, desires and beliefs influence my reality? Humans have an innate desire for two important things- familiarity and the desire to believe in something greater than themselves. This is true of everything in life from politics to the paranormal. I finally had to consider one final question. Is there any person that has a truly comprehensive, objective reality? Probably not. All of our realities are going to contain a degree of subjectivity. Human nature dictates that we will never have a true, definitive and objective reality. We tend to pick and choose what we will be objective about and what we will be subjective about. The difference in reality perception for all of us is probably best represented by a phrase that we are all familiar with which can be traced back to ancient Greece- "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder". As voters, scientists and citizens of this planet we should always seek more information on our presumed realities and at the very least make our reality an informed one.