

Is Knowledge Transmission Possible ?

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May 18, 2009

The past 100 years were fruitful in discoveries, inventions and technological apparatuses which made the access to information available to mankind. Thanks to such advancements, we can interact with people from all over the world instantaneously. We transcend space notions in these interpersonal relationships and lessen the time of content transmission. However, we have not increased the speed in which geniuses are created; we have not decreased hunger in the world; we have not foreseen nor prepared for the current economic crisis; we have not impeded the deforestation of the Amazon region nor the global warming; we have continued to grow disorderly and, as an addiction to novelty, we have become massively anxious.

The speed at which we acquire information through television, radio, cell phones, computers, video games, GPS is directly proportional to the speed at which we forget them. The lack of memory deepness leads to lack of sensitivity and superficiality.

The conclusion one can derive from this is that transmitting information does not necessarily mean transmitting knowledge. The idea of knowledge transmission itself deserves being revisited. It implies the concept of knowledge as a matter that can travel through space by different means. This concept may be false under the proposition that knowledge is made up of the relationship with the environment, information and experiences. Thus, having a skill in relating to the environment, information acquisition and living experiences characterize the minimum requirements for a vehicle of knowledge. According to this analysis, it is understood that the human being is a vehicle of knowledge and thus can move with knowledge around space.

The question now goes from transit to transmission. Starting from the fact that the relationship with the environment depends on the unique characteristics of the vehicle – which happens with experiences likewise – we can infer that knowledge is unique for each vehicle, even if the information is the same among several vehicles.

What makes the relationship with the environment and the acquisition of experiences unique is the way they happen, that is to say, in relation to time.

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Given the fact that you cannot replicate the arrangement of the vehicle in time, one cannot consider knowledge as something measurable, transferable and elementary. From knowledge, one can transmit information in an intact way. You can also simulate the relationship with the environment and the acquired experiences to generate similar knowledge in a different vehicle which produces similar results. Such simulation can be done through a detailed description or simple imitation.

It is at this point that a new concept arises: Learning. Whereas knowledge is made up of the sum of the relationship with environment, information and experiences, learning is formed by simulations of the relationship with the environment, simulations of experiences given the same information. Thus, learning is the only alternative to the transmission of knowledge.

As said before, the simulations can be done through descriptions and imitations. Descriptions are information that can be transmitted by all known means, whereas imitations need one vehicle of knowledge to imitate another one. In concrete terms, a simulation can be described and transmitted by books, computers and teachers. Imitation, on the other hand, relies on the fact that somebody is willing to represent his or her knowledge so that somebody else simulates it, or imitates it. These are named master and learner. For the same reasons, it is understood that the disciples are originated from masters. Disciples can become masters and eventually geniuses. Masters preserve a balance among the relationship with the environment, information and experiences. Teachers generate students, with an emphasis on the transmission of information, being these the core of knowledge or the description of experiences and relationship with the environment.

Finally, once knowledge has its indivisible connections with time, it is utterly important to cultivate time. If information comes and gets lost instantaneously, it is relevant that those which represent potential knowledge may receive the needed maturing time so that they are not lost. The human being needs to recover their major innovation, their capacity of learning and applying it to a continuous relationship among people.