

**FLICK YOUR BLIK--OR WHAT TO DO WHEN  
YOUR WELTANSCHAUUNG GOES WRONG**

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Did you ever play "Used To Thinks"? It's great fun at parties as a kind of ice-breaker. Everyone is asked to share something that they used to think was so (as a child or an adult) but no longer do. It's fun. Try it. You'll have a few laughs and get to know one another a little better.

I used to believe that it wasn't true that you could not see land on the other side of the ocean. I had heard that was the case, but I just did not believe it was possible. I guess I was a flat earther at heart. I was sure that when I saw the ocean for the first time that I would be able to see Europe on the other side of the water. One day we went to Misquamacut beach in Rhode Island. It was to be my first view of the Atlantic ocean. There it was just as they said it would be, water as far as the eye could see, and yet as I looked out across the water I tried to convince myself that just over the horizon there was land, only the horizon would not hold still. I finally had to admit that what I saw was water, water everywhere, and not a drop of land. My view of the world had been expanded.

I suppose you could label that my Columbus experience. If I needed proof that the world was round and not flat, I now had my proof, well, sort of. Because my view of the world was still too small. I also used to think that Springfield, Mass., where I grew up, would be at least as big as the State of Texas if properly portrayed on a map of the world. I remember being shown a globe of the world and I asked my father where Springfield was located. He pointed to a small dot in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I thought the whole state was Springfield and I remarked, "Is that all?", as I pointed at the whole of Massachusetts. No, my father said, it's only that little dot inside that small space. That small space represents all of Massachusetts. Well, that was just too much for my child mind to comprehend. I knew Springfield was big. It took 20 min. to a half hour for the bus to get from the corner of my street to the center of downtown Springfield. It couldn't possibly be that small on a globe of the world. But it was. And so my view of the world had been expanded just a little bit more.

You've heard the expression that the map is not the territory. I was beginning to learn that fact. Have any of you ever seen a map of North and South America with South America placed at the top of the map and North America at the bottom? It looks strange because we've been taught to always see it the other way around. But if you were looking at the globe from outer space there would be no up or down, and south could just as easily be at the top as north, depending on your angle or perspective. Seeing it portrayed that way on a map kind of jolts your sensibilities because it literally turns your world upside down.

You might say my *weltanschauung* was wrong, or my paradigm was out of line. It was time to flick my blik. *Weltanschauung* is a German word meaning "world-view" or picture of the world. A "paradigm" is pretty much the same thing. "Blik" is a word coined by the philosopher, R.M. Hare. Bliks represent attitudes or opinions about the world that are unconscious and logically prior to facts. A blik can be psychological, social, religious and cultural. It both colors and filters your perception of people, nature and events.

Everybody has bliks. Some are narrow and confining and distort reality. Some are open and flexible and help to illuminate reality. But narrow or open everyone has bliks. When your *weltanschauung* goes wrong it's time to flick your blik, get a different view on things, enlarge your vision, learn a few more facts, revise your prejudices, change your mind. If your paradigm is out of line flick your blik, reorient your mental framework, alter your presuppositions, expand your cosmology. If your myths and beliefs no longer mesh with your reality model, flick your blik, give your metaphysics a good physic, trade in your model of reality for a new mode of being.

Your blik is like a psychic grid or mental filter. It lets in some portions of reality for focus or comprehension, but keeps out other aspects of reality too difficult or confusing to comprehend. Kind of like the tuner in a radio set, it lets in only one station at a time. If they all came in at once utter confusion and mumbo jumbo would result. It's kind of like watching the old 3-D movies without your special polaroid spectacles. Everything's a blur. But put on your polaroid bliks and the flick clarifies.

Bliks seek other bliks that see the world in the same way. These gatherings are like conviction communities or blik blocks. When an alien blik comes

into the conviction community the tendency is for all the other blik to subtly or overtly try to make that bloc of a blik conform to the beliefs and behavior of that conviction community. Sometimes you get whole teams of blik competing against teams of other blik, a veritable psychic grid iron competition is the result. Some blik are blocked, some blik get broken, some have their paradigms thrown out of line, some get welts on their *weltanschauungs*. Some have a complete cosmological meta-physic and switch teams. That's the way it is in this psychic grid iron of a world.

You all know what I'm talking about. You read about it in the papers everyday. Palestinian Islamic blik compete with Jewish Israeli blik over who can control and own the real estate in that small corner of our globe, each one backing up its claims with religious zeal and historic precedent. It remains to be seen whether the three western monotheistic faiths, which have common origins in ancient Palestine, can ever learn to live together and tolerate one another's competing religious blik. It doesn't look very promising in spite of the President's recent efforts to change the game.

We used to think that in spite of Pearl Harbor 1941 we would never have to endure a serious attack on our own shores by an enemy from abroad. Intellectually we knew better, but we never seriously thought it would really happen. The illusion and dream of our impregnability was shattered on September 11, 2001. We lost our innocence, but in the process for a brief moment in time we rediscovered our patriotism across party lines. But now in yet another election year we realize that our party-line political blik don't blend and everyone wants a change.

For years capitalist free-world blik competed with socialist-communist blik for economic/political control of the globe, each side backing up its blik with nuclear blik and anti-blik-tic missiles, when suddenly the communist blik gave in and switched sides, or so it seemed. Only a few years before we were supporting Mujhadeen guerillas to drive the Russians out of Afghanistan. (Be sure you see "Charlie Wilson's War" for a view of what led to the mess we have today). Suddenly the enemy of our former enemy became our enemy and we were the ones fighting the Taliban. This could be called a blow-back blik—meaning that what we used to think and practice has come back to haunt us, as it did in Iraq with faulty intelligence about WMD blik that no longer existed. It seems that our Intelligence blik

drew a blank and our rationale for war was based on a web of mistaken assumptions if not outright decept.

History is more or less an account of broken blik and shattered paradigms and the discovery of new world-views. Copernicus and Galileo removed the earth from the center of the solar system and opened the doors to an infinite cosmos of stars and galaxies beyond number. Darwin expanded the time frame of the creation story from a few thousand years to millions of years of evolution over eons of time and changed the way we view the development of life and ideas. We now see things and ourselves in process and change rather than in fixed categories of being. Freud unveiled a deep unconscious dimension to the human mind and dethroned the ego from the center of consciousness. We now know that there are hidden depths and complexes, drives and motives, within all of us. There is more to us than meets the eye.

I used to think that the economic and political motives of the USA were always and without exception as morally pure as the driven snow, that untainted idealism informed the actions and decisions of our national leaders at all times. However, I heard my family complain about City Hall and the State House, so I knew that lower echelons of government were not perfect. But I knew that was only because they were Democrats and that if the Republicans got in all would be well. How anyone could not have voted for Thomas Dewey over Roosevelt and Truman was beyond my comprehension, utterly above my blik. But then four years later Ike won and the good guys in white hats were in at last.

Decades passed and I grew up. My *weltanschauung* was not so much wrong as narrow and naive. It was time to flick my blik. Like all of you I lived through the civil rights movement, the debacle in Vietnam, Watergate, Iran-gate and Monica-gate, and now Iraq-gate. I saw Democrats and Republicans with equal aplumb mucking things up, wasting the nation's honor, influence, integrity and power. I came to see that motives of pride, self-interest, power, greed and fear colored the actions and decisions of even the best and most decent of men and women. My blik of presuppositions about human nature and my beloved country had to be altered to take these facts into account.

I grew up in the Christian Science Sunday School. I used to think that Christian Science was a true and complete revelation from God to Mary Baker Eddy about the spiritual nature of reality and the infinite power of

healing within the human mind, although every time I got a cold I had some doubts about it and a twinge of guilt as well. But as I grew older I came to realize that the Catholic Church, the Muslims, the Mormons, and other sects and religions thought they had the last and best and most complete revelation of God's truth. This puzzled me because I knew they could not all be right. I came to suspect that none of them were.

Over the years as I took courses in philosophy and comparative religions my religious blik became radically relativised. I came to see that no religion or metaphysical belief system had a corner on the truth market. It was a painful process of paradigms lost and regained, of blik broken and renewed. I came to realize that truths about God and things spiritual were difficult to come by, that a measure of doubt and humility along with faith, hope and charity was a necessary corrective for a balanced and healthy spiritual outlook.

The human longing for a sense of absolute certainty and security is very strong. The pain and distress of living with ambiguity and uncertainty is sometimes too much for some to endure and so they flick their blik back to a world-view more simplistic and uncomplicated. Abortion is always wrong, no exceptions under any circumstances. Political correctness must be adhered to at all times, no variant views allowed. The Bible (or the Koran or some other Scripture) is the inerrant Word of God. The Pope is infallible on matters of faith and doctrine. The blik of my community of faith and conviction is true and right altogether. Your blik is wrong. I won't sleep easy until I have won you and everyone else over to my world-view or destroy you in the process. My paradigm is divine. Sorry about yours.

Human beings with few exceptions are social animals. We need communities of faith and conviction--scientific, religious, cultural, political, familial, social--to confirm us in our humanness, uphold the truths we believe, give us the tools to find new truths, and help, hold, heal, guide, protect and love us. Our blik and *weltanschauungs* are an admixture of all these things. We now live, however, in a world of interpenetrating cultures, religions and ideologies, of competing blik and shifting paradigms. We cannot afford any longer to pretend that our finite and limited blik and partial paradigms are the final and absolute truth about anything.

As Unitarian Universalists we covenant, in the words of our principles and purposes, "to affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and

meaning." And so I would say to you: hold to the truth you know and the faith you believe with honor and integrity. But know also that what you know and believe is partial, limited, finite, and mixed with error and illusion. Let your faith be open to the views and beliefs of others, perhaps even to the point of changing your view of things in small ways or large.

Like a kid with an old fashioned stereoscopic view finder, find your favorite 3-D view of the world, but for variety and challenge, flick your blik from time to time to see how others view the world, and compare it to your own. If you don't change, at least you will know why and will appreciate your blik all the more, even though you know it is not infallible. In one way or another all of us must come to learn, in the words of Napoleon "Bill" Lovely:

Though our knowledge is incomplete,  
Our truth partial, and our love imperfect,  
We believe that new light is ever waiting  
To break through individual hearts and minds  
To enlighten our human ways,  
That there is mutual strength in willing cooperation,  
And that the bonds of love keep open the gates of freedom.