

# Not Making Mistakes, And Inventiveness: Comments On Minsky

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This is taken from several emails to a colleague of mine, with additional notes.

Subject: Aha! Inventiveness vs. avoiding mistakes

[Recipient],

Here's a quote from the b&n web page on Minsky's book "Inventive Minds":

Minsky once observed that in traditional teaching, "instead of promoting inventiveness, we focus on preventing mistakes." These essays offer Minsky's unique insights into how education can foster inventiveness.

Of course, you want to avoid mistakes. But I wonder if we're so focused on this, that we say, "These are the givens, they are implied so as to be untraceable, and these are the conclusions, and these are reified to be proven.", in school, over time – and then we enforce the 'mistake' of deviating from that course. This grows to adulthood. It's also a failure to ask the question, "Why?"

If you drive, you want to avoid mistakes. So a driver's ed class is effective, and to study, for dealing with what and why.

We had to be inventive the first time something was created, that was functional – and it had to be proven.

Then, there's this perspective, again, when we try something and it does or does not work: "I Made A Mistake In My Homework, And 'All Of The Above'".

Kevin

Subject: Aha! And...

[Recipient],

And it's a certain class of 'mistake' that Minsky might be talking about, vs. inventiveness. We're trained to be petrified at getting the wrong answer in class, if we're called on! Rather than to work with the material and formulate our own view, and justify it or not.

Reason. The present moment.

But, yes, there are certain mistakes one wants to avoid. Thus, training. So it will be interesting to see Minsky's description.

Kevin

## Notes (Inventive Explanations, And Dialogue Or Inquiry)

It seems to me that we might try to explain this or that phenomenon in different ways. “Excuse me, I’m sorry that I interpreted what I encountered as a mental being, or a demon, or a voice with meaning.” “Maybe they are a realm of the mind, or of the religious or spiritual.” “Maybe just the observational or participant/active.” We invent an explanation for what we encounter. We then subject this explanation to scrutiny, with a context. Prior knowledge may be important, as may the insight of others. The experiential and the philosophical or spiritual or religious or psychological or speculative may be important. We may be puzzled or not.

We may have no explanation.

It should not be the case that the individual is necessarily punished or treated in a punitive way for experience – especially experience with potential valid or profound explanation, or one that can start inquiry! Yet this happens in psychiatry, and in particular in psych unit psychiatry, where reason – reason itself, with the individual as participant – is kept ‘off the table’, with the individual, is denied as an opportunity, actuality, reality, or right – and so is description, and vocabulary, and discussion of the mind, and consciousness-and-action.

Whether it’s adverse childhood experiences (ACE’s) or sounds of the mind (voices or other sounds), or consciousness-and-action (which could be taken up in Nagarjuna’s terms[1]) or the states (mental states, emotive states, intentional states, physical states), these should be encouraged to be discussed, and reasoned about – yet such is flatly contradicted.

Instead the psych unit psychiatrist takes a third-party report, describes a segment of behavior from that report or from a cursory pseudo-interview (too short, sans content), and determines a diagnosis of absolute deficiency pointing to an alleged permanent neurobiogenetic malfunction. The individual (now a patient) is treated with no meaning-content, is not given a chance to explain or discuss standpoint (either for treatment or justification), and is sent home to the same situation, the only difference meds. It is described as a strictly medical issue by the psychiatrist because meds are drugs and drugs affect and influence the mind – but the mind is perception, meaning, thought space, energy states – and the ability (often) to switch or to change (with care, mutable mind) or to explain.

This ‘medical issue only’ sans meaning, reality, experience, etc., is an inverted world.

We should be invited to reason and develop experiential inquiry into our various routine and inexplicable states and worlds – not to have this cut off. This is consistent with ‘inventive mind’. And we can be most instructive when we *are* instructive in how to avoid costly or serious mistakes – while showing the basis in givens or reasoning or perception for this or that. And we should work with logic, feeling, and reason, and experiential reason into why we do this or that. We want to do things from a sound basis, and acknowledge the real world, before us.

## **Notes (Various Descriptions)**

A person might say, “I have my logic and ethics, and this is my consciousness-and-action, and these are the sounds of the mind (voices and music) I hear.”

A person might say, “I have my logic and ethics, and this is my consciousness-and-action, and these are the sounds of the body (voices and music) I hear.”

## **Notes (Enforce, Prevent, Tolerate)**

Minsky had a phrase that he used in his book “The Society Of Mind”: “enforce, prevent, tolerate”.

What if this were: enforce policy; prevent mistakes; and tolerate a lot of inventiveness, working-with, experience, realization, and expression.

## **Footnotes**

1. See “Fundamental Wisdom Of The Middle Way” by Nagarjuna translated by Nishijima.

## **Related Papers**

“Logic 1.1: Bio-Genetics Or Built-In Mutable”

“I Made A Mistake On My Homework, And ‘All Of The Above’”

“Psych Unit Psychiatry Contradicts And Refutes ‘All Of The Above’”

“Is The Relational Mind? And, Psych Unit Psychiatry”

“Mutually-Awakened Understanding”

“The Neurobiogenetic View, Zen Buddhism, And ‘All Of The Above’”

“Wittgenstein, Intelligence, Voices, Mind, And The Neurobiogenetic Theory”