

Soham Modi

From: "Soham Modi" <sohammodi@hotmail.com>
Date: 14 September 2014 22:24
To: "Desai Clinic" <desaiclinic@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Argumentative me!

Gaurang,

To further our argument, some basics in philosophy are needed. I will try to keep it as simple as possible. You will have to bear with me.

Philosophy has 2 branches:

Ontology – what is really out there – the nature of stuff (it is too complex – so I will not touch it.)

Epistemology – How we know? What is knowledge? What do we really know? Etc.

The main problem of epistemology is justification for belief in our knowledge (Scientists – practitioners – need justification!). There seems to be none. One theory (foundationalism) is that all our knowledge is based on some justified fundamental facts (axioms). Problem is no one can find them. The other is (coherentism) which says that our knowledge comes from a web of underlying beliefs – no basic belief – it too does not solve the problem of justification.

Kuhn – a philosopher of science (His book – The structure of Scientific revolutions 1962) – has a radical take in the matter. According to him:

There cannot be any objective scientific observations – they are always theory laden. Eg. Blood pressure measurement must be based on belief in the theory of how the machine works, theory of blood flow in the body, theory of what is normal blood pressure, etc.

A body of scientists and practitioners of that science – believe in a set of theories – mostly learnt in schools / text books / trade journals – ‘a paradigm’. They work within the paradigm. Science progresses by puzzle solving within the paradigm. Data which does not fit into the paradigm is set aside as not solvable at the moment or erroneous or just dismissed, etc. However, when the number of discrepancies piles up some another theory or paradigm is proposed by a sub-group. More and more members of the original group shift to the new group. Eventually the entire body starts believing in the new paradigm – the famous ‘paradigm shift’ has occurred! This is how science progresses. Eg. The story of Ignaz Semmelweis – his theory of germs (1847) was rejected by the then establishment – only accepted after his death. The other is of Barry Marshal – H pylori – no one believed him till he infected himself – he later received the Nobel Prize!

Note – paradigm shifts are mostly invisible!

The argument: I believe that the current beliefs about avoiding fats, cholesterol, salt, lowering cholesterol in the blood, etc. are on the verge of a paradigm shift (not in the sense of being rejected – but being substantially modified). It's not based on Googleitis! It's a result of lots of reading (mostly books and magazines like Scientific American). I have been keenly following the subject for 2 decades. Only time will prove me wrong or right.

The useful point: Scientists and practitioners (read doctors) aware of Kuhn's views are more equipped to recognize paradigm shifts and quicker to help their clients, businesses, etc.

The other very important philosopher of science is Karl Popper. His theory of falsification is a great tool for clear thinking. Not just for you – but for your kids too. Learnt now, it will be a great guiding principle in their life. Want to no more ...

Regards,

Soham

Ps: See my comments in red to your arguments.

14-09-2014

From: Desai Clinic

Sent: Monday, September 08, 2014 7:39 PM

To: Soham Modi

Subject: Re: Argumentative me!

Dear Soham

the purpose of any debate/argument should be to get some decision/solution- not the truth. – largely true but not necessary.

is it possible to know the truth by argument? – agreed

here the debate is in the field of medical science which remains a self confessed incomplete science even as of today. yet there are some guidelines which are given out periodically based on observation of many aspects of health by observing the gene and environmental interaction. – agreed – but be a skeptic

the salt debate: more salt is harmless in general is a statement of fact for the community at large. the average american diet (and unfortunately now indian as well) is very high in salt due to the processed food, almost 3500mg per day. if the community at large needs to be guided, a general statement like excess salt is bad for health is essential. there are communities in world that have never added salt to their diet and have no blood pressure within them- natural food contains enough sodium in them for human body to survive- its a different matter that we like more salt as it adds to taste. – I question the science, especially the capability to measure salt intake!

i know of a jain muni aged 82 ywho had come to my clinic and said that he hasnt touched salt, sugar, white rice, milk and white atta- – anecdotal evidence can never be good science.

the cholesterol debate- the good the bad etc- is also linked to the heart disease. its a different matter that the science is still struggling to find the right marker- LDL, LP (a), etc. also the behavior of cholesterol- why in certain people it gets deposited in the arteries very quickly and why in some it dosent at the same given levels- there are many questions. – exactly why I am skeptical about the theory.

having high fatty food is harmful to health in general is an established fact whether to the heart or elsewhere.

the ABC of Diet as i understand is

A- affordable, and awareness

B-Balanced in most nutrients and amount

C- common sense- climate, cultural,

Say a prescribed cure for a disease, for 30 to 40 years, does not work for more than 95% of the patients. Can it be attributed to poor compliance! It's the case with obesity. How many people do you know who were obese for a decade or more have reduced substantial weight and kept it off for 5 to 10 years. I am sure is less than 5% of obese people you know. More people are getting obese, more heart attacks, more diabetes! Its high time everybody questions the existing paradigm. 'The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance – it's the illusion of knowledge' – D J Boorstin (I loved his book Discoverers)

no i haven't heard the gentleman you mentioned. would love to know more about him. human

behavior is my favorite topic.
 thanks for a memorable day – good you stayed for the night.
 hope tejal enjoyed her conference and the her tough day went well today
 regards
 gaurang

On Sun, Sep 7, 2014 at 8:08 PM, Soham Modi <sohammodi@hotmail.com> wrote:
 Gaurang,

Here is more info about our argument last night:

The main culprit in screwing up recommendation about food is USDA aided by CDC and AHA.
 Check their websites: <http://www.usda.gov>, <http://www.heart.org>, <http://www.cdc.gov>.

In 1992 USDA came out with the food pyramid – a recommendation about what to eat (copy attached). They clearly recommended low intake of fats and oils and increase in consumption of bread, cereal, rice (!!!!) and pasta(!!!!).

Look at their new guidelines (copy enclosed). No pyramid. No mention of reduction of overall consumption of oils/fats. Just talk about types of fat. No recommendation about reduction in consumption of food high in cholesterol. Clearly there is a difficult to admit change of opinion. The medical establishment has a lot of inertia – it will take another 5 to 10 years to give up a false hypothesis (about cholesterol / fat consumption).

Coming to salt the jury is still out! First FAQ from NIN India (<http://ninindia.org/faq.htm>)

“1. Does excessive eating of salt increase blood pressure?

Ans: Yes and No

Yes in certain individuals who are salt sensitive, while this does not happen in those who are salt insensitive.”

Let's wait for revised USDA guidelines in 2015 – in all probability the salt restriction recommendation is likely to be diluted. I believe that over the next decade recommendations about cholesterol levels in blood may also be revised – as it now increasing appears to be the effect rather than the cause.

AHA (also) now has no recommendation about reduction in consumption of food high in cholesterol or about reduction in consumption of fat! Copy attached. They were the ones who made the loudest hue and cry about it 20 years ago.

CDC (their guidelines is called choosemyplate) states that:

“For some people, eating too many carbohydrates can lower HDL (good cholesterol) and raise triglycerides.”

I know that you are a good and dedicated doctor. My intention is not to question your knowledge.
 I just want people like you to be skeptics and look at common knowledge with suspicion.

I read a bit of philosophy. You talked about ‘paradigm shift’ with reference to your shifting your house. I wonder if you have heard of Thomas Kuhn (or Karl Popper). They are very important to the above discussion. Want to know more?

Regards,

Soham

Soham Modi

From: "Soham Modi" <sohammodi@hotmail.com>
Date: 25 March 2013 10:27
To: "rjk" <drkadakia@gmail.com>
Subject: Fw: Straight and crooked thinking.

Add: What is history by Carr. Don't read a book on history before reading this.

Soham

From: Soham Modi
Sent: 25 March, 2013 12:25 AM
To: Rajesh Kadakia
Subject: Re: Straight and crooked thinking.

Rajesh Bhai,

List of books that I have read and think are necessary for straight thinking are given below.
 Please recommend good books that you have read.

Regards,

Soham Modi

Philosophy:

The Story of Philosophy by Will Durant
 Karl Popper by Brain Magee (Falsification – the best philosophy for testing you beliefs – a must for straight thinking)
 The Structure of Scientific Revolutions by Thomas Khun (the greatest idea in epistemology)
 On liberty by John Steward Mill

Economics:

The Worldly Philosophers by Robert Heilbroner
 Economics in one lesson – Henry Hazlit (he has several other simple books)
 Free To choose by Milton Friedman
 Wealth of Nations by Adam Smith (get an abridged version)
 Essays on Political Economy – Frederic Bastiat
 The road to serfdom by Hayek (I read the Readers Digest version)

Psychology:

Influence by Robert Cialdini
 Stumbling on Happiness by Dan Gilbert
 Paradox of Choice by Barry Schwartz
 Happiness Hypothesis by Jonathan Haidt
 Thinking Fast and Slow by Kahneman (one of the best books I have read)
 7 principles to make marriage work by John Gottman
 Language Instinct by Steven Pinker (must read)
 Blank Slate by Steven Pinker

Complexity:

Ubiquity by Mark Buchanan

Why most things fail by Paul Omerod

Chaos by James Gleick

Fooled by Randomness – Nicolas Taleb

Antifragility by Nicholas Taleb (Talebs books – must reads - are amongst the best books I have read)

Game Theory:

Moral Calculations by Lazlo Mero

Straight Thinking

Mind of the Market & Believing Brain by Michael Shermer

Nonsense by Gula

How to lie with Statistics by Darrell Huff

Evolution

The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins (must read)

Origin of Species by Richard Dawkins

The Origin of Humankind by Richard Leaky

Physics

The brief history of time & Grand design by Stephen Hawking

Epistemology

A beginners guide by Robert Martin (think about the last chapter on Khun)

Consciousness

Consciousness A brief introduction by Susan Blackmore

Consciousness Explained by Daniel Dennett

Misc.

The third chimpanzee by Jared Diamond

Thinking statistically by Uri (for a brief intro to Bayes Theorem)

The emperors new mind by Penrose (needs some math background)

Free Will by Sam Harris

6 Pillars of Self Esteem by Nathaniel Branden

From: Rajesh Kadakia

09-08-2015

Sent: 24 March, 2013 9:54 PM

To: [Soham Modi](#)

Subject: Re: Straight and crooked thinking.

thanks just loved it read part wil finish n flight.

On Tue, Mar 19, 2013 at 7:35 PM, Soham Modi <sohammodi@hotmail.com> wrote:

Rajesh bahi,

This is an old out of print book. Its one of my favorites and its a great start to straight thinking.

I mostly read non-fiction. Most serious non-fiction books almost always refer to great tinkers of philosophy and economics. Its difficult to get the best from such books without knowing some basics about what these great minds have to say. The best and the most popular books on these thinkers are:

The Story of Philosophy by will Durant

The worldly philosophers by Robert Heilbroner (a book about economists – Heilbroner is a leftist but his book is a great introduction)

Let me know if you like them. I will send you a list of books that I have read and liked on similar topics.

Enjoy!

Soham

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