

Perceptual Reality and the War of 2022: Was It a Surprise?

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Abstract Background: The first two decades of 21st Century found major dominance of poor health in all global societies with consequential pandemic and war. It is a seeming enigma why so much physical and cognitive illness still exists while so much is known about human biologic systems. The purpose of this study is to explore the dilemma. **Material/Method:** Public domain records, related to biologic systems in health and disease, have been studied. Systems science methodology was used; it offered corresponding method for the examination of living systems in health/peace or war. **Results/Conclusions:** The perception of self, how we see ourselves and the world around us, the human perceptual reality, has a parallel influence on our decisions and relationships, and, in a feedback loop, impacts the state of health. It is not what the eye can see but how it is interpreted that affect the creative epigenome for health or disease. The combined outcome of ‘what you see and what you do’, especially on a global level, leads to the prevalence of similarly tainted global decisions—from poor health to pandemics and wars. A foundational positive shift in world’s affairs can only come from ever-increasing optimizing individual decisions, which would eventually diffuse up, from ‘people working in the trenches’ to the ‘governing vertical societal hierarchies’.

Keywords: reality, relationships, war, health, perception

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1. Introduction

When people run out of words, they reach for the sword, Oliver Cromwell, 1634 [1]. In the early part of 21st Century, non-optimizing decisions, with their destructive impact on global health, reached historic levels, afflicting all generations. The 2020 pandemic and a major war in 2022, shared similar etiology. Rationality vanished, affecting individual as well as global relationships, as if the world was trying to put square decisions onto circular problems.

Anything of significance that ever happened to people, such as wars, famine, pandemics, etc., had its antecedence in the prevailing perception, how they saw and related to themselves and the world, a capacity with unlimited mutability, fully infusing all relationships. Such a state has been eloquently expressed by philosophers, such as Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1869): *Every man takes the limits of his own vision for the limits of the world* and poets, such as Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862): *It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.* [2,3]

2. Method

Systems science explores life’s principles on all levels and searches for coherence; it connects downstream evidence

with likely upstream significance, upstream decisions and downstream consequences. General system theory was originally conceptualized by von Bertalanffy in the 1960s. [4]

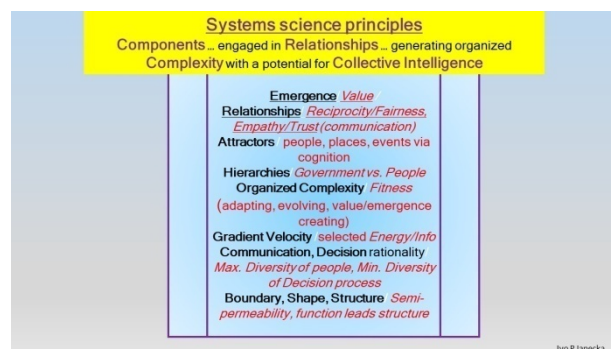


Figure 1. Systems science principles

There are two attributes of systems science that are especially relevant to this research: One - it offers a method for creating a structural context, a framework along life’s principles, as a preferential path for search toward complementary knowledge; and, two - it gives pre-eminence to sensory input capable to register, evaluate, and react to change and its outcome. A healthy human body is a valid model for an optimized biologic system as viewed through systems science: multiple components and subsystems, all engaged in supporting the larger system with bidirectional learning relationship loops, semipermeable boundaries,

ongoing decluttering/recycling, inter-operable communication, system-optimizing outputs/emergence, horizontal and vertical hierarchies, all affirming the value of life. [Figure 1].

All pertinent information is available in the public domain.

3. Terminology

Awareness – a state of activated senses; attractors - what is chosen from awareness.

Biologic time – an endowed cycle of life that is in compliance with its principles, a healthy life; it is measurable via methylation within the epigenetic clock. Chronologic time – measurable by dates on a calendar from a birth to a death certificate.

Entropy – detrimental accumulation of non-functionality.

Fitness – amalgamation of endurance, speed, strength and flexibility in one biologic system.

Hierarchies – an upstream and a healthy governing vertical hierarchy, exercises ‘macro-prudential’ influence: good judgment with laws, rules, and regulations; those steps intend to provide safety and security for the whole system, without engaging in downstream micromanagement of the horizontal working hierarchy, in order for it to gain the capacity to create value through self-organization.

Intelligence - ability to solve problems preciously not encountered, based on a core knowledge of basic sciences, with the capacity for rationality and responsibility.

Neuro-net – the physical existence with functional input and output, an emergence, of central and peripheral nervous system.

Optimized – a capacity for generating health as value from complementary contribution of its subsystems, e.g. a bodily system with sub-systems, organs. Optimization/value creation is an evolutionary principle that preferentially seek efficiency, effectiveness, risk management, and proportionate energy cost.

4. Discussion

How do we know that we know? It is a complex and a multi-phase journey with many possible pitfalls affecting perception, from sensory input to cognitive output. The available data and information that are capable to trigger our senses, are infinite; what is selected for our viewing and captured by senses, is extracted by our cognitive state at the time, the perceptual reality.

The beginning of sensory processing starts with input filtration and compression, by specific retinal cells and neurons that translate it into electro-chemical signals, the language of processing. Any understanding of the processing polarity of the signal language, the pluses and minuses, depends on its next level of translation into words of our thought language, object-word recognition, imprinted on cognition as patterns, through learning, from mothers to schools. In the final stage of sensory awareness, the words of our internal language have to be re-formatted into meaning and that step is subservient to an existing perceptual reality.

How do we know that what we know is true? Truth is always subjective, specific to an individual or to a cultural cluster with a dominant perceptual reality. Objective reality, when studied, is revealed only occasionally, partially, and temporarily by basic science research, subject to the understanding of the quantum state of the Universe.

Why is there such a plethora of bad global decisions?

Decisions represent an upstream etiology of problems that lie downstream; most lifestyle diseases, for example, are visible as downstream manifestations of unhealthy upstream lifestyle decisions. A million dollar question in 2022: Would any healthy person put himself and his nation between two opposing forces, one driven by fear, a long-term emotion, and the other, by hubris of self-centered existentialism, also a form of a negative emotion, allowing for an attention span of milliseconds? Healthy decisions originate in healthy individuals; unhealthy ones, dominated by emotions, will never be optimizing. [5]

Perceptual reality is the *Alpha* and the *Omega* of the experience of human consciousness; its cellular components can be traced to the time of conception, when the functional epigenomes of parents, with all accumulated generational modifications, is shared; and, the process of accretion continues throughout the rest of the first, the ancestral phase of life, subject to parental, educational and cultural influences; this initial period of life ends with the maturation of the morphologic components of the pre-frontal cortex of the neuro-net, around the age of 25 years. Significant changes are likely to emerge during the next, the decision phase of life, when personal experiences and individual decisions predominate; throughout this phase of life, modifications can take place of what was inherited, by individual choices that re-modify the existing epigenome, for better or worse; without firm implementation of decisions-consequences feedback loop, however, person’s perceptual reality assumes the reality of the cultural cluster without learning; this period ends around the age of 50 years. The third and the final period of life follows as the phase of consequences that basically reflect the life’s momentum, gained in the preceding phase of decisions

It makes no difference what you think about someone else’s thinking or action, as each person has different, sometimes diametrically opposed, perceptual reality. For example, if someone expresses concerns about safety and security, the most fundamental of all human needs, proportionate responsiveness has to be engaged, not a confrontational challenge; without safety and security, no one can ever move to any desirable higher level of communication and relationship, as emphasized by Maslow. During recent decades, the state of safety/security has been declining in many societies, paralleling the worsening of physical health, generating its own fear; as a consequence, the individual perceptual reality has become a dark part of disorganized complexity, which lacks rationality and responsibility that ordinarily create healthy system intelligence; war on self, with suicides, has dramatically increased and, unsurprisingly, spilled into the global arena. The negative/dark self-perception in global societies has paralleled the poor global health statistics. The relationship to self, sets the

stage for any other relationships, ranging from harmony to disharmony, often ending as terrorism and a war, on self or onto others, including other forms of life; the culmination of self-absorbed existentialism is that it cannot maintain bi-directional communication flow, destabilizing and extinguishing patterns in all relationships. [6,7] [Figure 2]

Boundaries are essential for sustaining life but extremes, either being too tight or too porous, strangle life; evolution has always looked favorably on semi-permeability, the intelligent porosity. Boundary has to be understood not only in physical but also in perceptual terms; thus, both, what you do as well as what you communicate, run against boundaries. Decision-consequences learning loop represents interconnected process of self-education about an essential systems science principle – a decision as a boundary - and its key role in healthy life through

its semi-permeability; without it, life deteriorates; deferring/socializing consequences is an unrecoverable error. [Figure 3]

Abandoning the decisions-consequences learning loop impairs intelligence with its needed rationality and responsibility. It is often substituted with inflated, magical thinking of self-importance, which lacks the gravitational pull of intellect, freely substituting a chosen narrative for facts. On a larger societal scale, this phenomenon becomes evident within the governing vertical hierarchy that is dreaming up changes to the world, while creating nightmares for the people in the trenches, the horizontal working hierarchy of any societal system, preventing its self-organization capable of generating value; the absence of gravitational rationality, however, always is, eventually, dramatically consequential when societies are painfully awakened from the dreaming narrative.

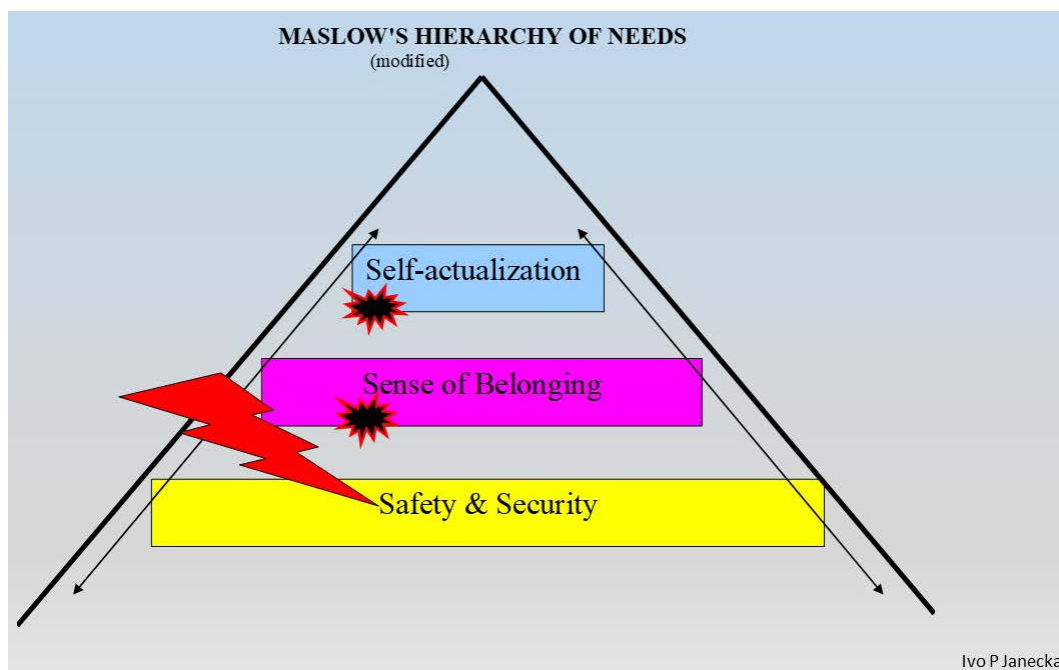


Figure 2. Maslow's pyramid of human needs (modified)



Figure 3. Mycorrhizal fungi inside plant cells in a cross section of a European blueberry root, demonstrating multiple semi-permeable boundaries. This arrangement allows soil residents of very different sizes to exchange nutrients; magnified 2,200 times

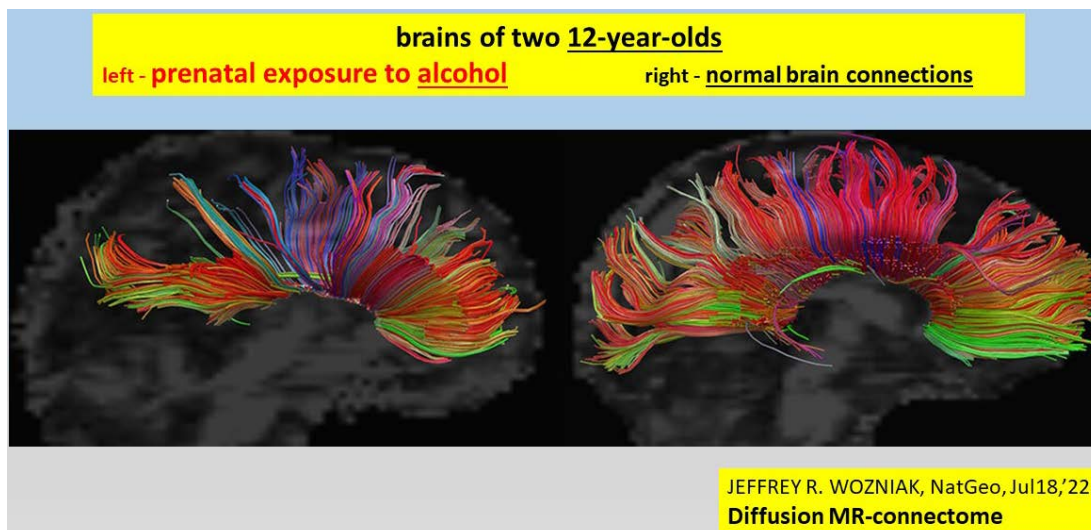


Figure 4. Diffusion magnetic resonance (MR) scan images showing detrimental effect of alcohol on brain, here exemplified in contrast to normal brain of a child; other degenerative diseases also show similar deficits of connections

Most leaders in a vertical governing hierarchy that operate under an existential fear, fight for their survival. Those that employ unhealthy reward pathway for sensory processing, form decisions that resemble alcohol-induced pre-frontal cortex dysexecutive syndrome, e.g. narcissistic-self-centered arrogance that ignore the memories of the hippocampus without any historic reference. The disorganized complexity of dysexecutive syndrome can be visualized as being analogous to the detrimental effect of alcohol on brain's connectome, but other degenerative diseases also show major deficits. [Figure 4]

A relationship with self is where all interpretations and interactions with life begin, it is where the proprietary perceptual reality charts its daily journey. Relationships form networks - family, friends, and society, where each one is a connecting node, important to the larger network. Communication within relationships represents the actual connections that carry messages in a network, similarly to synapses in the neuro-net that are not physically wired but have spaces, synaptic clefts that are filled and re-filled with biologically active compounds, the neurotransmitters; in interpersonal connections, such clefts are also filled and re-filled with hormones of emotions--love-hate, stress-fear, joy-despair—based on choices of lifestyle attractors, subservient to engaged perceptual realities that either facilitate or obstruct/threaten relationships.

Consciousness is an awareness of sensory experience, either as a reflex or perception; on one hand, a reflex has a shorter and faster neural pathway from stimulus to response, no decision is required; it is a senior process on evolutionary timeline; on the other hand, perceptual reality, the more recent arrival with cognition, also begins with stimuli but the neural pathway is much more complicated; it runs all the way to cerebral cortex, either through hippocampus that may or may not be 3-D memory optimized, or mostly bypassing it altogether as it travels via the caudate nucleus along the unhealthy reward pathway. Without senses, there is no conscious reality, though some may still be alive in such a state but just don't know about it, due to the absence of all reflexes.

Life on earth is always changing but its principles never do; they represent, for all living entities, the endowment to follow for future sustainability; such codes are derived

from evolutionary partiality to decisions-consequences learning loops, keeping what works and letting go of what does not, by ending their cycles; all living things are existing within such a canon, but only humans, mostly, ignore this doctrine and continue to prefer lifestyle consciousness dominated by sensory processing via the reward pathway, expressing shared delusion that end with self-sabotage, convinced, erroneously that healthy life can be lived without the safeguards of decisions-consequences learning loops; sometimes even among scientists, the reward path is chosen, because a discovery in itself is rewarding, while ignoring the fundamental requirement for any innovation, to be concordant with sustainability of life; examples of extreme deviations, starting with a creative opening of a new box of discovery, but then, turning it into a Pandora box, are chronicled by Benjamin Labatut in his book, *When We Cease to Understand the World*, when people transgress the boundaries of life's principles that are essential for healthy and sustainable life, organized complexity, and value creation. [8]

5. Results

It is the perceptual reality that shape human decisions as it interprets encountered changes. All life experiences are filtered through it in search for meaning; initially, it is shaped by others, but with physical maturity, it is left to ourselves; personal growth must continuously modify it by absorbing knowledge of basic sciences, humanities, etc.; otherwise, primary influence of others dominates.

Senses do not translate into meaning what they capture that is the scope of perceptual reality, which also selects the next target/focus for sensory engagement. Contrary to the popular saying, paraphrasing as *the beauty of a flower does not come from the eye but from the mind*.

Perceptual reality, how we see self and the world, creates our own internal culture: how we think about the past, present and the future, which all influence our decisions and lifestyle/behavior that imprint our epigenome, thus continuously evolve or devolve biologic bodily function and structure.

Existing perceptual reality mutates with sensory encounters and the underlying state of health; health is an emergence of a biologic system (anatomy and physiology) on one hand, and the perceptual reality (emergence of cognition) on the other; both formulate individual's 'framework for life'. The methodology of systems science, used for root-cause analysis of decisions/events, embraces evolutionary principles of life, which continue to be subjected to the decisions-consequences learning loop as the primary corrective influence; only humans have had a choice to 'opt out', though not indefinitely, from the consequences of their own decisions, awaiting their final and inevitable arrival, often too late to improve decision-making.

The chief driver of the quality and wisdom of relationships, is the comprehensiveness of perceptual reality, which is wholly dependent of individual's state of health generating intelligence; without that life is a bumpy road with shortening of a potential biologic lifespan.

A rolling state of health is compounding past decisions with the latest ones; the prevalence of unhealthy choices leads to commonness of poor health that on a societal level, become part of its culture, reflecting, on one hand, the fractured collective intelligence with loss of rationality and responsibility; on the other hand, healthy collective intelligence is directly correlated with living a life that is guided by network of principles for any rules of engagement; those doctrines offer direction to healthy rationality and responsibility; you cannot 'drill' for it, buy it or 'mandate' it; it comes from learning, through the tight decisions-consequences feedback loop, leading to optimizing decisions and parallel results. With global health at disappearing levels, the 2022 war represented a confrontation of two unhealthy states: one – engulfed in self-importance/unawareness and two – consumed by fear/anxiety; both are entropy states. Per Wade, *'Pluralistic ignorance' implies that a large proportion of a population misunderstands reality. They may all agree, but they are, nonetheless, mistaken.* [9]

Healthy relationships are built on progressive reaffirmations of reciprocity, fairness and empathy that lead to trust. 'Self-centered existentialism', the *'all you say and do'* has none of these components, resulting in mistrust; as a consequence, lacking the guidance of healthy/optimizing framework for life, it engages in deviousness in its *modus operandi*, and that never has a good outcome.

Trust is not an isolated relationship state; it is a progressive concordant effort with an eventual emergence within the non-physical space, the communication cleft among engaged parties, filled with perceptual reality-generated hormonal transmitters; it is either a glue that hold relationships together or not. Without it, nothing else will keep it healthy.

The experience of fear generates the classic 'fight or flight' reflexive/primal response that is common to all living entities; it is a survival instinct and as such, it dominates any expected attempt at magnanimous rationality. Human needs have been categorized by Maslow, with safety and security as the foundational level; unless it is achieved, no other progressive steps are achievable; there is no greater primal fear than that of survival.

Once the 'end-stage relationship' is reached, there exists zero commonality among parties; a conflict awaits; a reversal can only be anticipated with vanishing of the

'narrative guardians' and their dominant 'perceptual realities'; only then, new relationships can begin. A narrative is a human creation and, currently, it is not concordant with cycles of health; by comparison, health is not a narrative, it is an effort-full emergence of a healthy system with perceptual reality that lead to optimized relationships, with decisions that trail evolutionary principles and are beneficial to all, including Nature/climate; the opposite leads to destruction.

Errors of judgement have been studied in law, medicine, aviation, military, etc. providing a retrospective view/assessment of forecast in various fields. In real-time, all decisions represent expressions of, then existing, perceptual reality of engaged individuals; better outcomes do not come from averaging predictions of a group; initial selection of healthy individuals to make critical decisions, starts any process in the optimizing direction, but even that, like a weather forecast, is likely good only for a few days; averaging a scatter graph will not identify the 'bull's eye'; though, randomness may occasionally intersect with linearity of predictions, for an affirmative outcome, but that probability is comparable to a meteor reaching a predictable target, not something to count on. A quote, often attributed to General Eisenhower, describes in a paraphrase, the zero correlation/the null of usefulness of consensus decisions to prospective events: *when the shooting starts, throw away all the war plans.*

6. Conclusions

War is an end-stage of relationships, initially with self but invariably induces fails with others.

What preceded this war were decades of ever-worsening health on a global scale, an outcome of chosen fitness-compromising lifestyles, affecting cognition and its formation of perceptual reality; decisions were 'privatized' but the consequences were 'socialized'/distributed, representing a fatal break of the fundamental evolutionary decisions-consequences learning loop.

The polarity of 2022 warring states can be characterized by self-centered existentialism on one side, embracing negative attractors of power in seeking rewards of war; the other side of the schism had fear/despair as their negative attractors, setting the stage for fatally divergent dominant *modus operandi* in any mutual dealings. The confrontation was clearly 'in the cards' for decades with ever increasing disorganized complexity of pertinent societal systems.

All wars end. The 2022 war will end, not because of lack of guns, but with change of perceptual realities of engaged parties.

Notes

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