

3 WORDS COULD NEVER SAY...

"Imagine a two-dimensional creature, one that knows only length and width. There is no height in her world. Length and width are the only dimensions she sees.

"We want to play basketball with this creature. As we introduce the basketball into her space, imagine yourself in her position . You have a limited view of what is going on in the world; you can see only the length and width of things. Your ability to perceive is narrowed by one dimension from your normal human perception. From a flat context, a three-dimensional perspective and understanding is impossible.

"Richard, when the basketball is moved into the two- dimensional creature's space, what does she see?"

"She is going to experience a flat line. Actually, perhaps just a dot at first, then a series of flat planes until she gets to the other end of the ball when it becomes a dot again."

"Notice, Richard, that our two-dimensional friend, while she experiences something, experiences something that does not exist. When she sees a series of flat planes pass by, she sees something take place that never actually happened. A basketball is not a series of flat planes, though she experiences it as such, it is a spherical object.

"Now, let's go one step further. The two-dimensional creature has invented, in her experience of the basketball, a thing called time . For you and me, the basketball is just there; there is no experience of time involved. Since her perception can not encompass the whole ball at once, she experiences one part of the ball first and another last. This is how time is invented. Suddenly, a thing that for you and me is a single experience requiring no time becomes time-bound. What for us happens in the same instant seems to be a number of different, separate experiences for a creature with limited perception.

"You might imagine that the two-dimensional creature names her separate experiences. She calls the first Joe, another Mary. Each aspect of the ball, as it comes into her awareness , becomes something different. Its size, shape, nature and character change with each perspective . As a result of limited perception she invents and experiences a world that doesn't exist!

"That can be a tough one for the human mind to grasp and is an important principle to recognize; if your perception is limited, you can experience something that never happened except as a perceptual reality in your mind. We are often taught to experience perceptual realities that don't exist anywhere but in our minds. We are also taught to believe that those realities are true in the world outside of us when they are not!

"Imagine our two-dimensional friend's parents teaching her about basketballs. She has read the history books. She has studied the 'basketball experiences' of all two-dimensional creatures. What does all this past speak of, but events that never happened? A written chronicle of an experience that doesn't exist does not make it true. Basketballs simply do

not exist as a series of events separated by time , they only appear to exist that way because of limited perception. Whenever one dimension is missing in a perceptual system , the output of the system is always distorted.

"Is it possible, Richard, that having limited perception about an event, we could experience things that didn't happen?"

"I guess so," he replied.

"How do I go about assisting our two-dimensional friend to bypass the false realities in her mind so she can experience an actual basketball? Do you think that if you and I talk with her and explain what a basketball is really about, we will be able to get her to come and play basketball with us? Is our explanation going to make any sense?"

"When we tell her that her experience never happened, do you think she might be offended?" I asked.

Richard grinned, "I can hear her now. 'Who do you think you are? I have experienced the flat planes; I know!'"

"The difficulty, of course, is she has experienced the basketball as a series of flat planes," I said. "How do you explain to her that she has seen something that doesn't exist? What do we do with that? Can we teach her about basketballs? Is it possible to give her enough descriptions of a basketball that she will give up all of her two-dimensional history? Her experience? Everything her parents and history have taught her?"

"Do you think she will say, 'Okay, I believe you, I've been all wrong.' Not highly likely. Do you think any number of words that she can understand will explain the real meaning of the basketball to her? Obviously not, because her whole vocabulary is based on the limited experience, the distortions, of two-dimensional creatures. Her words only reflect the realities with which she is familiar. There are no words in her language for the three-dimensional perspective of a basketball.

"Think about this in our human terms. Do we have words for what we haven't experienced? No, we only have words for the experiences we have in common. If we were Floridians who had never seen snow, how many different descriptive words might we have for it? Perhaps three or four, which would be adequate for our experiences with snow. We wouldn't have a lot of descriptors because snow is not a major part of our lives.

"If we go to Alaska and interview an Eskimo, things would be different. I understand they have some seventy-plus words for snow—an important part of their environment. If, in Alaska, I'm going to do some cross country travel and you describe the snow conditions inaccurately, I might use the wrong snowshoes and perish.

"The realities present in a mind and the words used to represent those realities tend to be limited by the experiences of that mind.

"Let's imagine our two-dimensional friend makes the shift and experiences playing basketball. Is there any way she could explain to her friends what a basketball really is? Can you imagine her excitement? She has broken the chain of history and she now comprehends the true meaning of a basketball. She approaches her friends and says, with a display of enthusiasm, 'I finally know the Truth about basketballs, they are... ah... ah... t-they... Wait a minute! There aren't any words in our vocabulary that accurately describe a basketball. How can I speak to you about what I've experienced?' You might imagine her saying things like, 'You know, there are so many things that I want to say to you, but you cannot hear them.'"

Richard broke in, "All the words from our world aren't going to be of any use in her world because the words she knows, though based on the same actuality, describe a totally different reality ."

"I agree, and this addresses both your question, 'How can life be so different from the way I perceive it?' and our friend's question, 'How can the basketball be other than a series of flat planes, separated by time ?'"

"How do you get around this predicament?" he asked.

"The best way I know is to persuade the two-dimensional creature to question everything she has been taught and experienced about basketballs. If she can recognize that nothing she has experienced ever happened the way she experienced it, she has a chance of opening to a new perspective. If you can get her to remove every reality ever accepted by her mind and open to a fresh view of basketballs, she might make the leap."

We spoke of the idea, expressed by Einstein, that we live in a four-dimensional world. "Are we, as human beings, actually in the position of the two-dimensional creature? Is our basketball called the world? Are we missing one perceptual dimension? Does that keep us from experiencing the world as it actually is? If so, could we study enough or would we even have any words about the actual world? Are we required to give up all of our experiences from the past in order to step into the Truth about life?"

"What you present is sensible, but I don't comprehend the questions, nor do I have any answers to them. Just trying to think about what you are saying is bewildering," Richard replied.

"I ask these questions not to elicit answers, but to invite you to suspect everything you think you know or have experienced. Until we accept responsibility and grasp the Truth about life, we make up all sorts of realities that are not true.

"Many people live in a perceptual world that contains reference points to the actual world, but at the same time is void of the Truth about actuality. Perception is a made-up story which is overlaid on the actual world. This action destroys the ability to experience actuality. People tend to cling tightly to their false perceptions as though life itself depends on them, which in a sense, it does. The false life lived by most people is

dependent on keeping the Truth hidden. Hence, Truth is its greatest enemy. This sets up an insane cycle—Truth is required to experience Love and happiness—if Truth is not allowed, Love and happiness are impossible. When we deny Truth we engage this insanity cycle and we inflict pain on ourselves and miss out on the gifts life is offering us."

KEY THOUGHT—Now that the Truth has been told, there is room for real Love.
Bill C. Davis, the play Mass Appeal

All our activities should be centered in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage . . . is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort, and obedience to them will be instinctive. But without Truth it is impossible to observe any principles or rules of life.

Mahatma Gandhi , India of My Dreams