

New Ways of Seeing

by Pete Dalton

Ulu ka hoi

The bitter yam grows

(There is interest in what is going on—a play on *hoihoi*, "interest")

Hawaiian Proverb

Have you ever been walking somewhere familiar and noticed something that seemed jarring, out of place, incongruent and different? Then on closer analysis and despite much disbelief you find that feature had been there for a long time only you had never noticed it before?

Or perhaps you have been travelling somewhere on a route you regularly take and reach your destination the way you usually do each time, regularly and unremarkably. Then someone you know who takes a similar route asks what you thought of the new shop that has finally just opened and did you manage to avoid the pile up en route that morning and you just hadn't noticed any of it?

I recall an experience of being in Nice in the South of France, a city I enjoy visiting very much. There, I often walk along the *Promenade des Anglais*, admiring the azure blue sea and marvellous views along the sea front. At one point on the promenade there is a wonderful sculpture of a *chaise bleue*—an iconic blue chair—a feature so symbolic of the sea front at Nice. I would often pass by the sculpture and think how fantastic it was. I had done this numerous times and even photographed it, only to notice at a later point that what I thought was a three dimensional sculpture was actually two dimensional! I had made an assumption that it was a larger version of the three dimensional regular blue chairs and for a while that was what I saw.

We are habitual creatures. Our Ku learns patterns and we revert to them unless there is a distinct choice or need to change something. Habitual actions are useful. Without habits, the simplest of things that we do on a regular basis would become very complex undertakings indeed. We are exposed to a massive amount of information second by second, so being able to function habitually makes things manageable. Despite this, our routine behaviours and habitual ways of thinking can result in a narrowed sphere of attention and prevent us from noticing what's novel and different, and in some cases prevents us being as effective as we might be.

An experiment I came across many years back springs to mind where researchers changed the handle on an unlocked door to the side that the hinge was on to see how people would react. A significant number of test subjects approached the door and tried to open it using the handle and after many futile attempts to open it that way, concluded it was locked and gave up. This points to the way in which we habitually generalise assumptions about how things will be and then fail to think beyond that.

Consider the times you may have taken a journey that you regularly take and how you just seemed to arrive at your destination without recalling the journey much or even at all. In these cases, your thoughts and attention were elsewhere and not focussed in the present moment. Generalising also brings with it the notion of stability and a sense of 'fixedness.' Again, this is useful to an extent. However, consider that reality is not a fixed thing. Even our bodies which at times appear to feel somewhat stable, are in a constant process of change.

In this sense, we can be considered to be a series of processes rather than fixed objects in space and time. It is no coincidence that a Hawaiian phrase for the body is *kino*. If we look at the roots of *kino*, we get *ki* (energy), *ki'i* (image), *no* (an intensifier), and *no'ono'o* (a thought). This can be interpreted as a highly

energised thought form. Thoughts and energy are ever changing in a state of flux; it is part of our nature.

Huna postulates that there are different perspectives on reality, all of which bring different rules and considerations into focus. These provide convenient ways of categorising ways of relating to reality for which words can never fully do justice. These are commonly considered to be:

'Ike Papakahi (the objective worldview): the material objective world. The world typified by newtonian science. Things are separated. There are subjects and objects, 'things' in space and time.

'Ike Papalua (the subjective worldview): the realm of psychic phenomena and where things are connected in ways that are beyond regular scientific understanding. We can communicate at a distance with others and objects, plants and animals. This may be the realm of the quantum where phenomena such as 'spooky action at a distance' has a place.

'Ike Papakolu (the symbolic worldview): the realm of dreams where the shaman is commonly considered to work. Reality in this view consists of symbols that can be understood, influenced and transformed.

'Ike Papaha (the holistic worldview): the realm of mysticism. Here there is no separation, everything is one.

The Huna adventurer adopts whichever perspective is the most effective for whatever purpose is at hand. This entails shifting perspective and may involve holding two or more perspectives simultaneously. This requires flexibility and the appreciation that adopting new ways of seeing, because adopting different perspectives can increase effectiveness.

The quality of our lives can be considered to be improved by improving the quality of the moments we live and this can be done by being more present and really paying attention and noticing the experiences we are having. One way of fostering the

habit of being focussed on the present moment is to consider from time to time what is new and different at any particular moment. We can never consciously take in all of what we experience, so at any particular moment there is guaranteed to be something novel and different in our experience if we choose to look for it. This may appear as something tiny and insignificant or as something big and meaningful that was never previously noticed. Either way, something will be new and different and the process of noticing this keeps us aware in the present.

To some extent, adopting new ways of seeing is akin to seeing through childlike eyes once more. We are more open to notice the newness of things and take more in and see what's different. Time appears to move slower and the world can appear to be a more exciting and fascinating place. With the intensity of focus on newness and novelty, we notice different things and engage with reality in this way.

Perhaps, then, it is no surprise that when young children were subjects in the experiment with the door and hinge, compared to the adults, more of them just pushed the door and it opened. Their expectations were different than the adults and their perspective on reality was less generalised.

There are many benefits of taking time to really notice what you notice and take less for granted. It cultivates curiosity and creativity and provides insights into each new moment. It is also associated with physical benefits such as increasing levels of dopamine, which is linked to feelings of happiness. This activity trains the Ku in being more flexible and open to new experiences which previously may have gone unnoticed. Simply noticing the new and the different can be considered to be an effective, if somewhat passive, approach to take.

A Huna adventurer always has more than one way to approach any situation and a more active alternative is to actually change

something in your present moment experience in order to then notice what's new and different. This can be a big change or something really small and almost imperceptible. As an example, going back to the *chaise bleue*, I have a lovely little souvenir sculpture of one set in a glass cube that sits on the desk where I do a lot of my writing. From time to time, I will move its position, because... well, you know the reason.

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