

### Does Man Think, or Just React?

In my counseling class at Lancaster Bible College, my fellow graduate students and I were asked to write about the human being as a thinker or as someone who reacts to external forces with no capacity for any internal reflection. What say you?

I am from Elmira, New York where Mark Twain's wife attended Elmira College. There is a beautiful museum there in his former home with his writings posted and admired. He was a Presbyterian, but I have no idea of his salvation in Messiah Jesus. I find that my biblical world view is at enmity with his carnal presentation of man. He wrote, "Whatever a man is, is due to his make, and to the influences brought to bear upon it by his heredities, his habitat, his associations. He is moved, directed, COMMANDED, by exterior influences-solely. He originates nothing, not even a thought" (Entwistle, 2010). Spoken as someone who has no knowledge of a Creator, nor knowledge of that Creator's most crowned making—man. If Mr. Clemens is correct in his postulation of man and how man thinks, then what is the purpose in life? Humans would just be reacting to stimulus in the environment based upon genetics and what is happening currently. There would be no deep thinking, no planning, nor a capacity for love. Nothing from inside self to regulate attitudes or behaviors, or even to consider those things in others.

Yes, man's behaviors and attitudes are deeply influenced by heredity, environment, and life experiences/social encounters. But this is but a small portion of what drives man. Secular scientists and psychologists have even recognized that outside forces act upon individuals, causing internal cognitive processes to mature, allowing evaluation of issues, problem solving, and developing attitudes and behaviors. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory focuses on cultural influences and how the human mind responds. This is a socially mediated process where adults and more expert peers influence a child's developing mind as it learns to tackle challenges, encouraging the child to reflectively think and apply knowledge. (Berk, 2010).

Another example is seen in the field of cognitive neuroscience. Scientists in this discipline study "the relationship between changes in the brain and the developing person's cognitive processing and behavioral patterns" (Berk, 2010). All of this shows how the brain is highly functioning and able to adjust and regulate itself. With these adjustments comes internal abilities to think and create. If man had no internal need for creating, but just reacting, there would be no highly developed brain working on its own to create new pathways when injured, or to just go through the normal human neuro-development where the brain is highly plastic and lateralizes. All of these examples identify a human that is able to take in stimulus, process that information in an organized method, apply past experiences, think about future consequences, and then think and act.

Besides scientific data on human cognitive abilities, there is the biblical perspective of the human mind. If God created man in His image, and God is an intelligent being able to create the entire Universe by just His words, then man is also intelligent and able to create. The LORD God has given man the ability to reason and to communicate with Him and other humans.

## The Lord's Corner -- Does Man Think?

Written by Alena Petersen

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Psalm 8 specifically speaks to the issue that God has made man and given him a responsibility overseeing the earth. In verse 8, the psalmist writes about the "paths of the seas". Naval Officer Matthew Levi (1806-1873) pondered Psalms 8:8 and began to search out the pathways of the seas, leading him to the discovery ocean currents ( [answersingenesis.org](http://answersingenesis.org) ). Matthew Levi took this external knowledge, considered it, and went on to prove that the seas have currents and temperature variants. Only an intelligent, reasoning being could hypothesize this and move to prove it.

By stating that heredity, environment, associations play a part in man's behavior is fair. These factors do greatly influence what a person thinks and feels. However, man does have the reasoning capability to control his behavior, unless there is some organic or mental problems. Man is not a victim, just reacting. Man can direct his behavior if he chooses. With this in mind, there must be a will and desire to counteract certain outside circumstances that may influence attitude and behavior. A choice must be made, and since God made man with the ability to decide and direct his paths, this happens. An example is the life of Pastor and author Dr. John Perkins. He had been raised in the segregated South and had witnessed the death of his brother at the hands of racially motivated hate. This evil is what he grew up with, lived, and breathed. Did he respond in like manner when he was beaten and jailed? No! He decided in his mind to be like Christ and rise above the wickedness and love his enemies. He forgave those men that killed his brother and had brought so much degradation upon him. He was able to decide, from within himself and the Holy Spirit, to move in a positive direction. I believe all humans have this capability.

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