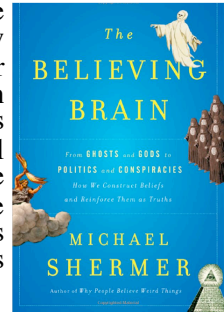


Readers' Comments and my Addenda to [Newsletter#15](#) as of June 2, 2012

Thanks Joe. Interesting. I read about this fellow in one of my Mom's Reader's Digests years ago. I'm currently reading *The Believing Brain*. You might find it a relative investigation into your wonderings and wanderings of things. So glad you continue to improve. Stay the course. (See the summary below.)

Bestselling author Michael Shermer's comprehensive and provocative theory on how beliefs are born, formed, reinforced, challenged, changed, and extinguished.

In this work synthesizing thirty years of research, psychologist, historian of science, and the world's best-known skeptic Michael Shermer upends the traditional thinking about how humans form beliefs about the world. Simply put, beliefs come first and explanations for beliefs follow. The brain, Shermer argues, is a belief engine. From sensory data flowing in through the senses, the brain naturally begins to look for and find patterns, and then infuses those patterns with meaning. Our brains connect the dots of our world into meaningful patterns that explain why things happen, and these patterns become beliefs. Once beliefs are formed the brain begins to look for and find confirmatory evidence in support of those beliefs, which accelerates the process of reinforcing them, and round and round the process goes in a positive-feedback loop of belief confirmation. Shermer outlines the numerous cognitive tools our brains engage to reinforce our beliefs as truths.



Interlaced with his theory of belief, Shermer provides countless real-world examples of how this process operates, from politics, economics, and religion to conspiracy theories, the supernatural, and the paranormal. Ultimately, he demonstrates why science is the best tool ever devised to determine whether or not a belief matches reality. http://www.amazon.com/dp/0805091254/ref=rdr_ext_tmb

Another former classmate and friend wrote the following:

Dear Joe, I continue to rejoice that you are improving. The list of your restrictions in the newsletter are daunting, but your spirit seems to be taking the right approach. The topic of miracles certainly comes to mind when we face physical limitations. And I think you are right to approach reported miracles with skepticism -- especially when money is involved. I think your definition of a miracle is interesting. It probably agrees with the common use of the word without dealing with the traditional approach. Faith, of course, is a big topic. And I, for one, do not like to see it tied so closely to miracles. Thanks for lots of provoking thoughts.

This was posted in the Comment Section:

Hi Joe, interesting musing on John of God. I have a friend who has been a regular in his "community," going once or more every year for maybe 10 years or more. From his reports, and from info other friends of his have gathered, there is much pathological behavior, manipulation and spiritual violation going on in the scene down there. It might help us to consider that, according to some serious "scientists" there is essentially an infinite amount of energy present at every point in space in our universe. Even in California. Namaste

ADDENDA: Last evening (June 1) Patricia and I just viewed on CD Dr. Wayne Dyer's lecture in a chapel at Lourdes. This was part of the PBS 4 dvd set on his Spiritual Journey to Assisi, Lourdes, and Medjugorje (2011) called *Experiencing the Miraculous*. We both found his talk powerful: engaging, enlightening, encouraging, insightful, and entertaining. Dyer is a persuasive witness to the power within and without; presenting unexplained changes (miracles?) within the close purview of his experience and that of his contacts. This CD supported the sense that we have more power within than most of us realize, and as such satisfied my rationalistic and cautiously skeptical tendencies. He also introduced me to something called [The I AM Discourses](#), which is something also you might wish to explore and opens up all sorts of new worlds which support the thesis that the *theos* within us is very powerful. -Joe