



## Theology of Neurology: The Capacity to Orient & Adjust: “Specificity” & “Plasticity” of Neural Pathways: How to Change the Way You Think

### 5. The Capacity to Orient & Adjust

- 1) The norms and standards and scale of values that are developed in the conscience and which serve to bring order to the soul do not exist at the moment of a person’s physical birth.
- 2) Acquisition of these principles occurs gradually and with the acceptance of each one, order in the soul is positively developed to that degree.
- 3) The reason none of us is perfect—except from the obvious presence of the sinful nature—is that in a single lifetime we are incapable of assimilating all the principles of righteous conduct.
- 4) But our life experiences influence a series of alterations in our inventory of ideas.
- 5) As we become aware of a principle of truth, and are volitionally willing to alter our view and change our mind, then the brain must have the capacity to make this adjustment.
- 6) But change to be meaningful must be ordered. Accepting a new standard which contradicts another well-established one often results in confusion and disorder.
- 7) In order for an idea to have the power to change a person’s thinking it must find its source in an impeccable authority who possess infinite wisdom.

Example: The Divine Institution of Marriage is ordained by God for the establishment of a home. He has decreed that marriage shall be a monogamous relationship between one man and one woman.

Marriage is the only environment in which legitimate sexual activities may be conducted. Marriage is also the only legitimate institution through which children are to be conceived and reared to adulthood. Therefore marriage is the prerequisite for the divine institution of family. Both of these institutions become the bases for stability in society. Therefore, marriage must remain one of the “permanent things” for to change it in any way never results in improvement. Human order cannot be maintained outside the laws of divine establishment.

- 8) Further, this wisdom must have been tested in the crucible of human experience. Some ideas may be referred to as the “permanent things” while others are temporal. Dr. Russell Kirk makes this point on behalf of establishment truth in:

**Kirk, Russell. *The Roots of American Order*. (La Salle: Open Court Press, 1974), 10:**

We must have permanence in some things if change is to be improvement. Americans generally retain a respect for their old moral habits and their old political forms, because those habits and forms express their understanding of order. This attachment to certain enduring principles of order has done much to preserve America from the confused and violent change that plagues most modern nations.



If the roots of an order are healthy, that order may be reinvigorated and improved. If its roots are withered, “the dead tree gives no shelter.” Permanence and progression are not enemies, for there can be no improvement except upon a solid foundation, and that foundation cannot endure unless it is progressively renewed. What Patrick Henry called “the lamp of experience” is our hope of order refreshed.

- 9) What Dr. Kirk calls permanence and progress, we refer to as inflexibility and flexibility. The permanent things are the absolute principles of God’s Word and to those we are to remain loyally inflexible. In other areas we are instructed to be flexible.
- 10) The establishment of these two categories in the brain is described by neurologists as “specificity” and “plasticity.”
- 11) In order to function effectively, the human mind must possess two contradictory properties:
  - a. Stability in order to resist the pressures of daily exigencies which continue over a lifetime.
  - b. The ability to adapt and modify one’s beliefs in the face of repeated experience.
- 12) This stability is called “specificity.” We always go with what we know and tend to reject the unknown, the new, or the different.
- 13) But life is a series of experiences each of which challenges our established belief system.
- 14) Whenever we orient to this new information and adjust accordingly we have become plastic—and a change occurs in our brain’s chemical makeup.
- 15) Those things which are stable or “specific” are established wheel-tracks.
- 16) The laying of new wheel-tracks indicates the capability of the brain to make adjustments and indicates that it has capacity for change.
- 17) Plasticity allows for spiritual growth—the ability to take in new information, the capacity to establish new wheel-tracks, and the flexibility to adjust to circumstances.
- 18) Life demands the capacity to orient and adjust and the brain therefore must be equipped with the capability to make those adjustments.
- 19) If change is to occur, then one must become convinced that certain established principles are flawed.
- 20) The new idea must become a wheel-track offering opposition to the old idea whenever future decision-making circumstances occur.
- 21) Once again it is demonstrated that personal volition is the governor of the soul and that the individual must be held responsible for his own decisions.
- 22) Thus, specificity is the brain’s capacity to catalogue absolute truth as a foundation for soul order.
- 23) Plasticity is the brain’s capacity to alter one’s belief system whenever a wicked wheel-track is uncovered.
- 24) Whenever a wheel-track is laid, its availability for recall under pressure is contingent upon the brain’s capacity to remember.

