

IGNORANT AND FREE

I have gone through one of those cyclical cynical phases where I question why certain things happen. Maybe others also go through these phases or maybe it is just me, but what was different about this time was that I was able to break out of it sooner by remembering some things I have learned.

You see every so often, I find my self astounded with the choices that some people or managers make. Like when management goes on a year rampage against data loss including the purchase and installation of mandatory removable media encryption. And then they recommend the executives use evernote on their brand-new ipads. WTF! Or someone who repeatedly removes the anti-virus on their machine so that they can access their oh-so-vital research web sites ****cough**** pron ****cough****. And then after each time wants to know why their machine is slow. AARRGGhhh!

So yes, I went through this phase, but nowadays I know about the Dunning-Kruger effect (also known in certain circles as metacognition):

The Dunning–Kruger effect is a cognitive bias in which an unskilled person makes poor decisions and reaches erroneous conclusions, but their incompetence denies them the metacognitive ability to realize their mistakes.[1] The unskilled therefore suffer from illusory superiority, rating their own ability as above average, much higher than it actually is, while the highly skilled underrate their abilities, suffering from illusory inferiority. This leads to the situation in which less competent people rate their own ability higher than more competent people. It also explains why actual competence may weaken self-confidence: because competent individuals falsely assume that others have an equivalent understanding. "Thus, the miscalibration of the incompetent stems from an error about the self, whereas the miscalibration of the highly competent stems from an error about others." [2]

Address : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunning-Kruger_effect>

So some people think they are geniuses because they are morons. How very zen....

Also I remember a little economic something called an externality:

A negative externality is an action of a product on consumers that imposes a negative side effect on a third party; it is "social cost". Many negative externalities (also called "external costs" or "external diseconomies") are related to the environmental consequences of production and use. The article on environmental economics also addresses externalities and how they may be addressed in the context of environmental issues.

Address : <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Externality>>

Or to put it differently, ask the question "who pays?". For example, while the Dunning-Kruger effect plays a role in both my examples above, any natural caution or forethought they may have had was negated by the answer to the question "who pays?".

In the ipad example, the executive themselves do not pay for how they are using the ipads because unlike the other data loss initiatives that are measurable and tracked, the ipads are too new and thus are not held to the same scrutiny, thus they do NOT pay. As for the inquisitive web surfer, when their machine gets to slow they bug a mate to get it fixed, thus they do NOT pay. The consequences of their actions are borne by someone else.

So all of these situations happen because these people think they know better and have no consequences if they turn out to be wrong.

I feel so much better now that I figured that out.....