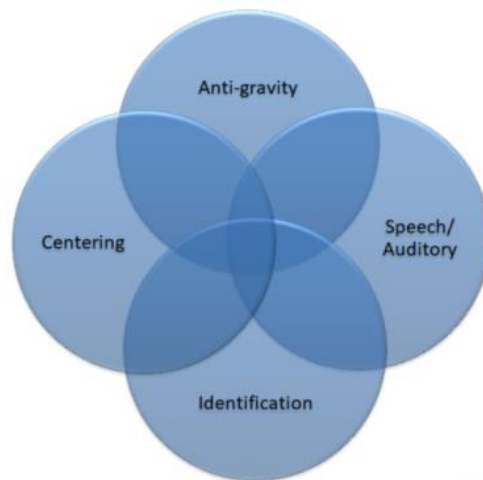


Kraskin Invitational Skeffington Symposium on Vision
January 15-17, 2022
Steve Gallop, OD

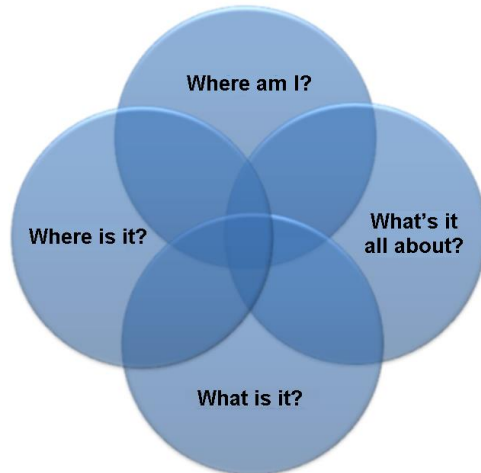
Time Is Of The Essence

If I have seen further than others, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants...but it's still pretty damn blurry. I don't know that I've seen further, just from a different angle. Anyway, I promise not to take up too much of your time.

WARNING: Thought experiment ahead...



Many among us, past and present, have tinkered with Skeffington's Four Circles and debated what each circle really means, or how to best make use of the concepts within. I can think of one among us who preferred to hang his hat on the eidolon. But remember, this whole circles-thing was never etched in stone; according to legend, it was actually "etched" on a cocktail napkin...and there were only three circles for a while.



At some point each circle was embellished with a question. I have to say I prefer the question format. Maybe I spent too much time watching *Jeopardy* or talking with Bob Kraskin.

Greg Kitchener has preferred describing each circle relative to the action involved, instead of the simple noun originally used to describe each circle. After all, the primary purpose of the visual process is to direct action. And really, each of these aspects of the visual process rely on and result in directing action. Though you'd obviously need much bigger circles due to the necessary language.

The more action-oriented description of each circle might go something like...

Anti-Gravity/Where am I?:

How do I get myself properly oriented to gravity in order to make my next move?

Centering/Where is it?:

What movements are needed to get me to where it is?

Identification/What is it?:

What can I do with what I'm looking at?

Language/What's it all about?:

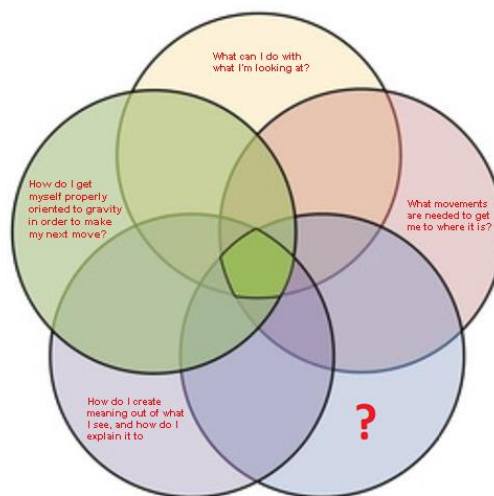
How do I create meaning out of what I see, and how do explain it to my friends?

We weight tests and therapy procedures to focus on one aspect of the visual process or one of the circles, but the whole of the visual process is involved at every moment. We simply cannot in reality isolate any aspect, no matter how we might stack the deck. Still, it is nice to have a way to talk about the various aspects. But we must not lose

sight of the wholistic nature of the visual process. It is also important to know what questions to ask.

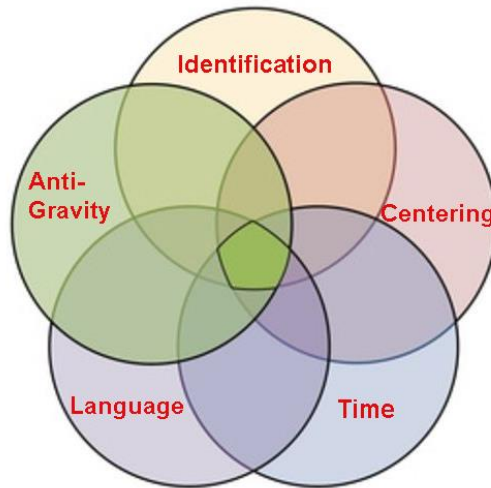
Speaking of questions, as I was putting this presentation together another question emerged: we've always talked about vision being the emergent from the 4 circles, but is the visual process the emergent or is it the other way around? Is the visual process the ground within which the figures of the Four Circles reside? Is it more productive to think of each circle as representing some aspect of the visual process made distinct for the purpose of dialogue? Okay, so that was three questions. So sue me.

But, that's a rhetorical question...for now.



As you can see, this is much less aesthetically pleasing, and would have been all but impossible to sketch on an average cocktail napkin, but hopefully worth considering nonetheless.

In any event, I propose it is long past time for a fifth circle: Time.



How long do I have to decide if it's a sparrow or a wren? How long will it take me to get my hands on this thing I'm looking at? How much time do I have to pull out into this busy traffic without endangering other drivers?

Just as Einstein made it clear that the x, y and z axes were insufficient to explain the world's dimensionality, I think we need to be more in touch with this Fourth Dimension. Am I comparing myself to Einstein? Most certainly not...I will leave that up to you. Either way, it is high time we took time more seriously, and give it the respect it deserves. Even though it certainly does not respect us.

Our brains store information about how actions have been carried out in the past, how those actions pertain to current or potential actions. We "measure" and understand the world based on our movements within it, which also occur over time, and which are of course, directed by the visual process.

So, if you have a few minutes I'd like to talk about time.

I haven't come up with a question for this new circle. Maybe something like, "Does anybody really know what time it is?" this might run into some copyright issues. "How long is this going to take?" And of course, "Are we there yet?"

After all, everything we do must take place in time. It takes time to assess how we are in relation to gravity – that seems to take longer as time goes by. Once we've established how and where we are, we can then take the time to start looking around. It takes time to decide where the action is/what to look at. It takes time to discern what to do about what we're looking at – sometimes that takes longer than others.

It takes time to look; sometimes we have to look quickly then look somewhere else, sometimes we must linger or look longingly. It takes time to describe what we're seeing – sometimes much longer than anyone would prefer. For example, what is happening in real time right now.

We need to include within the Time circle timing and rhythm, and speed. It's not uncommon for metronomes to be part of VT, but even without artificial time keepers, there is rhythm everywhere. You can hear it our speech, you can see it in our movements.

Do our patients speed up to avoid being more in the moment? To ignore or omit difficult or uncomfortable aspects of the task? Do they take too long, unable to perform at a "reasonable" pace? Do they freeze up, afraid to make mistakes?

So, it's not just about how many cycles of accommodative flippers or prism flippers a person can handle. Even if that is the probe or activity they are doing. I think it's more useful to think about this in terms of how quickly and accurately they process what they are doing with the environment and how quickly and effectively they can act, rather than merely the flexibility of accommodation and/or vergence.

Many children who are struggling with a task have a tendency to rush in order to get it over with. This often results in them having to do the task again. Unfortunately, what is typically expected is an acceptable product, with insufficient attention paid to their process, but that is just the reality in many cases. When I see this type of behavior in the therapy environment, I have a bit of advice...

Words to the wild:

If you really want to get something done quickly, take your time.

One of the first things that made me think about time in the visual process is the Marsden ball. The immediate performance changes I saw by adding +0.50s had to be more than just a spatial transformation. One important fundamental aspect of the visual process is anticipation. Sophisticated visual processing helps us anticipate what is about to happen in the environment as well as our actions either to respond or to pre-empt. It's about time.

We all are aware of the concept of figure/ground. We understand that one moment's figure may be the next moment's ground. We live in a perpetually fluid world – the world itself is fluid, we are fluid creatures (at every level), and our relationship/interactions with our environment are certainly fluid as well. Time is also

fluid. And there is a difference between consensual (clock, calendar) and subjective time – that which we perceive as we carry out activities throughout our lives.

Now of course, I know what you're all thinking. There are too many idolons. But, I'm just spit balling for now; I'll haven't quite worked out all the kinks/details. I'll need some more time. I'm going to need a bigger napkin, or maybe a tablecloth.

But for now, it looks like I'm out of time, but I hope there's time for some questions or puzzled looks. Hopefully, you're thinking to yourself – it's about time...but in a good way.