

Written by Allan Besselink
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<http://www.flickr.com/photos/41864721@N00/530238735>I will confess - I was always thankful for physics in high school. Strange as that may sound, it was one of my strongest subjects. But beyond that minor digression, physics defines what we experience in the physical world. Newton and Einstein, among many others, have contributed greatly to our understanding of the dynamics of the world around us. <p>At this point, you must be asking ♦why ponder physics on New Year♦s Eve?♦, and this would undoubtedly be a fair question. Physics certainly doesn♦t involve resolutions, or the consumption of alcohol, or watching the ball drop on Time♦s Square. </p> <p>But when left to your own thoughts about life, when left facing the challenges of your world, you may sometimes revel in some newfound insight. And insight finds us at the strangest moments, at times when we are open to what the universe has to say to us. Perhaps the problems don♦t change, but the way we see them changes. As Einstein himself noted, ♦the significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them♦. Smart man, that Einstein guy.</p> <p>Strangely enough, physics may indeed contribute to not only our understanding of the world around us ♦ but the world within us as well. There are two optical principles that I can think of right now that apply to life as well as they do to our physical realm.</p> <p></p> <p>Reflection is ♦the return of light, heat, sound, etc., after striking a surface♦. We are able to see ourselves in a mirror because of reflection. But in our internal existence, reflection is something not so completely different. Reflection involves looking back on something - ♦a thought occurring in consideration or meditation♦. It involves ♦looking at ourselves in a mirror♦ and perhaps trying to comprehend just what it is that you see, what it is that you feel, what it is that you♦ve experienced. It may evolve into further reflection ♦ of the ♦why♦ behind what you see, feel, or experience.</p> <p>Reflection involves an almost meditative process ♦ a process that may be difficult, challenging, disheartening, and at the same time revitalizing and rejuvenating. It may provide new perspectives, new insights, new thoughts, new ways of perceiving the world around us, within us. Reflection may truly be the lifeblood of our own personal growth, assuming that we pay heed to what we have learned in the process. One can reflect on life, yet not choose to do anything with the insights gained.</p> <p>Refraction is another optical phenomenon - ♦the change of direction of a ray of light, sound, heat, or the like, in passing obliquely from one medium into another in which its wave velocity is different♦. A fine example is the perceptible ♦bend♦ of the straw as you look at it through your New Year♦s Eve drink.</p> <p>Refraction in the internal milieu is much like communication ♦ in that there is a ♦bending♦ or change of direction of the spoken word ♦ by the medium through which the words are passing. Simply put, refraction in our daily world is like having the words you speak (and the intent behind them) perceived in a way that is, quite possibly, far removed from the intent. We all impose our own biases on the world around us, and those biases serve as a virtual ♦medium♦ by which our world is refracted. When our words pass through the new medium ♦ the mind of the recipient ♦ those biases are imposed and the words are refracted. But refraction is fine, as long as you know the medium and the biases

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involved ♦ and willingly and knowingly correct for them accordingly. Again, that involves choosing to understand the factors at play, and then do something with them.</p><p>Little did I know that reflection and refraction ♦ two principles that I learned back in high school physics ♦ would apply to my internal world and my interaction with the world around me. It is highly likely that this isn't some earth-shattering insight. Sometimes simply ♦reconnecting the dots♦ is all it takes to make better sense of our inner being and external environment. Perhaps Sting was correct when he noted in ♦Spirits in the Material World♦ -</p><blockquote><p>Where does the answer lie?
Living from day to day
If it's something we can't buy
There must be another way</p></blockquote><p>We are just spirits ♦ in this, our material world, searching for answers, for peace, for love, for hope. With any luck whatsoever, we might even make a little sense of it all, one moment at a time. </p><p>Photo credits: ecstaticist; Wikipedia</p>