

Confirmation Bias Isn't A Flaw In Your Thinking – It Is Your Thinking

Issue No. 4 · 30 September 2026 · Dr. Cameron Roberts

"Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored."

— Aldous Huxley

THE ASSUMPTION

Confirmation bias: you interpret evidence to fit what you already believe, not the other way round. "I grip deeply into the key for an espressivo sound — so did Beethoven." "I sit high at the keyboard — so did Rubinstein." But Taubman never advised to grip. And Horowitz sat quite low. Ouch! Now what? What's best practice? Will you just keep believing that what you've been taught is "right" (your teacher is an authority, right?... and linked back to Beethoven perhaps?) or do what you *feel* is true... or what you *want* to be true, where your feelings of "I'm right" morph with your self-selected facts. Confirmation Bias: as Dobelli says, is "the mother of all misconceptions" — the mind's inbuilt glitching system that helps us enjoy comfort of mind whilst avoiding reality's knocking on the door. It is why most of piano pedagogy's worst advice survives unquestioned, a mush of maybe useful, maybe harmful tips, and passed on... to you.

WHERE IT GOES WRONG

Who cares if you sit high or low? I don't. I care that what you choose works, works the best, and works for your lifetime of piano playing. "Working," working "the best," and working "for a lifetime" will require some seriously good integration with reality though, and if you — the pianist — refuse to collaborate with that reality, because of stubbornly holding onto something that you want to be true, but isn't, you're setting yourself up for failure — pianistic failure, where your talent plateaus at a sub-optimal performance level: technical (your fingers and hand move the wrong way), musical (your ideas are stuck in the wrong place), or physical (your body breaks from your unreasonable demands). In piano pedagogy, very little gets checked — Issue #1's habituation trap, again, wearing a different mask. Things just work really well... until they don't. And when they don't, it's usually ugly: as reality calls the bias to account.

MAKE YOUR PIANISM BETTER

DON'T mistake a confident authority — or your own comfortable habit — for proof. **DO** question: what would be the BEST way to solve this musical problem, bring ease to its technical solutions, and do so with physiological compatibility. If you don't know, start asking questions. Slow down. Better to put into action what's best for you, rather than what serves the comfort of your ego — or your teacher's. It's possible. Think clearly. Choose excellence over hearsay.

One step forward... one step ~~backward~~ forward...

Cameron

Concert Pianist. Pianism Scientist. PhD. Physician. Author.

Next issue: being a "sound chef" — why mixing elements matters more than maximizing any single one.

How sure are you, really?

Consultation — a 1:1 session to pressure-test a belief you've never actually challenged. **Book ›**

The Book — the full chapter on how bias silently writes your technique (Textbox 1.2, Ch. 1). **Read ›**

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REF: Dobelli, R. *The Art of Thinking Clearly*. London: Sceptre, 2014. · Milanovic, T. "Learning and Teaching Healthy Piano Technique," 2011.

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