

Intuition

From: Ann Procter, procter@phoncoop.coop

Note you welcome correspondence on Chris Lyons editorial in the winter issue of Network Review. I would like to take up the issue of intuition, which may be of interest to members.

A bit of herstory perspective: I was invited to join the Network very early on in its existence - number 390, as, I think, the first NON scientific/medical member. At the time I was developing a service I called 'Self Help in Cancer' from a psychological and spiritual standpoint which was embraced by a doctor member. The founders felt that some catalytic input from people who were 'into other dimensions of awareness' would be helpful to the aims of the Network. Perhaps I can do a little of that now in this letter, hopefully without being accused of introducing 'New Age mumbo-jumbo'.

What sparked me into writing was Chris Lyons assertion near the bottom of his first column that it was 'practically universally intuited that the Earth was the centre of the universe'. I contend that this had very little to do with intuition, but much to do with the current cultural norm being upheld very strongly by the Church. Let's face it, if you dared to think otherwise you were liable to be imprisoned, tortured and put to death!

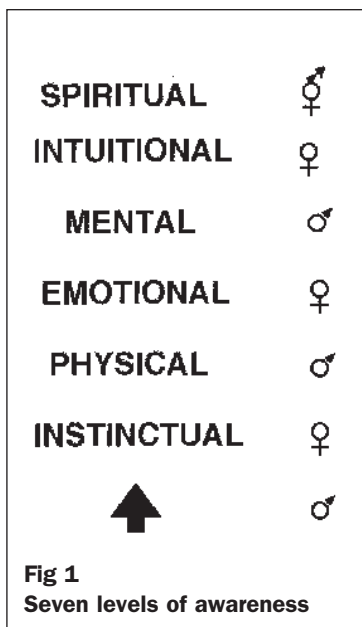
Not being scientist I find my own ways to map my experience and I would like to share this simple diagram of seven levels of awareness (fig 1); it may help to clarify understanding for members as it has for many people who have come on our courses entitled 'Accessing your Intuition via Dowsing'.

You can co-relate it with lots of other maps/diagrams, e.g. colours of the rainbow, chakras, vibrational frequencies. The map is not the country, but it may offer some insights just like those gained by studying a road atlas, an ordnance survey map and a street plan of somewhere you plan to visit.

You could surmise that science is rooted in the mental level so finds the intuitive level outside its scope? But we are not made in cut and dried levels so the ways they differ

and the interactions between them are worth exploring. A spark of understanding lit up for me when I read the work of Edward de Bono in the 1960's proposing the notions of vertical and lateral thinking. I relate vertical thinking to the use of the mental level and the scientific method.

Something is proved and can be put beside something else which is proved and then more can grow on top. The trouble is that the ensuing wall can become so high and impermeable it is



difficult to see over the top! (fig 2) Lateral thinking is about what means something to an individual. We start on it very early in life: a baby seeing his mother's breast knows he is likely to get food. Later a toddler assumes he is going out of doors if someone puts his coat on. Gradually we each build up a huge jig-saw puzzle with millions of pieces and no picture on the lid. Intuitive insights could be compared with that moment in doing a jig-saw when you think you've spotted just the right piece. We could call these hypotheses: some of them will fit into the puzzle, some will have to be discarded because they are not quite right, they didn't work out in practice. So intuitive insights don't have permanent validity, they can last anything from a few seconds to a lifetime.

They can also very easily be distorted by other levels of awareness, mostly unconsciously. What we feel about something, i.e. at the emotional level, very often clouds the

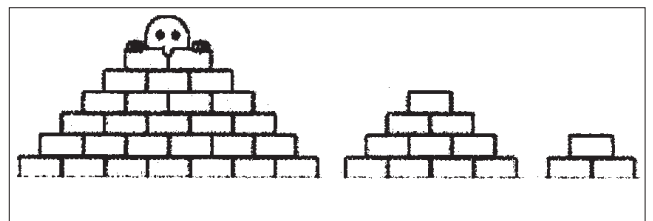


Fig 2

issue. Our very survival, stemming from the instinctual level, may prompt us to modify how we behave at other levels. Science is not immune: a glaring example is the commercial slant put on drug researches in favour of the interests of the pharmaceutical industry. I will not enlarge upon these interactions and distortions in this letter, wishing only to point out that the intuitional level has a place on the map, but certainly not claiming to 'know it all'.

So does the spiritual level, and both these are relevant to the list of questions Chris Lyons would like to see proved (or otherwise). I suggest that the mental (akka scientific) level can relate with them only by observing the jig-saw puzzles individuals are working on and finding patterns and mechanisms which make sense of the meaning and validity

of these experiences for those people. My personal jigsaw has included aspects of all the eight items on the list and they fit well into my experiential whole. However, as they are concerned with meaning rather than fact, trying to quantify them in double-blind laboratory type experiments would likely remove most of their essential components. A very fine example of this observational method was published recently : 'The Art of Dying' by our president, no less, Peter Fenwick with his wife Elizabeth. We did our own humble statistical review of our 'Healing Sick Houses' work, which is available on our website procterdowning.co.uk and featured in Network Review number? Would it be helpful to Chris's aim if Network Review made a list of studies under the eight headings suggested, inviting members to add to the list, and giving internet references etc. Then members could see what meaning these findings have for them as individuals, and incorporate them into their own jig-saws if they see fit, rather than expect anything to be 'proved' in the brick wall sense.

Members who are very strictly scientific may find this way of looking at a subject difficult: I see it as being approached via the anima. This a psychological term coined by Carl Jung: he proposed that we all have masculine and feminine attributes at a psychological level, whatever shape our bodies are physically.

Becoming more whole involves a synthesis - the man embracing his anima and the woman her animus. This is beautifully illustrated in fig 3, the yin/yang diagram. You may have noticed the masculine and feminine glyphs

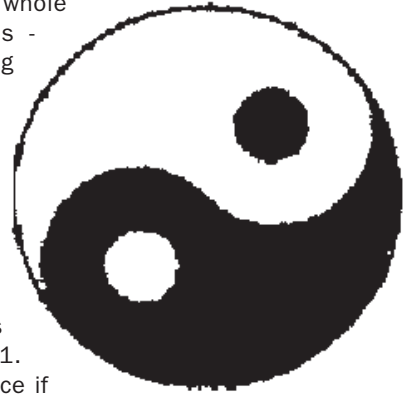


Fig 3

We are out of balance if we do not incorporate both. If we are not prepared to hear, receive and nurture the experiences of our fellow human beings in an unjudgemental way and with minimum imposed structure we are unlikely to find out in more depth how they tick and what their intuitive insights can contribute to a greater understanding of the human condition.

May the Network continue to pioneer further explorations. It's fascinating stuff !

Restoring Science to its Rightful Place

From: John Caton, john.caton@gmail.com

At his inauguration, President Obama used these words to signal a break with the anti-science regime of George Bush. Anticipating the President, in 'Some More Thoughts on Tightropes' (Network Review Winter 2008), Chris Lyons addresses similar issues affecting the Network.

Ten years ago, the Network still described itself as an 'organisation of doctors and scientists' - no longer. With the change of membership has come a change in Network discourse. And as my professor of education used to say, 'one discourse drives out another'. It is clear which discourse is currently in the driving seat.

Chris has identified the problem of debate within the Network: as the conflict between 'concern for others' and 'rigour'. Trying to adhere to both criteria puts scientists at a disadvantage. There should be no such conflict. Mystics and spiritualists are not shrinking violets. They are notably forward in asserting their claims. They make free use of pejorative terms like 'materialist' and 'reductionist'. There is no reason why they should not expect a robust response. 'Middle class politeness' cuts no ice.

Scientists should not be inhibited from pointing out lack of rigour in the alternative case. The exemplary manner in which Rupert Sheldrake has conducted his pioneering researches into telepathy shows what can be done. Within the Network this should be a standard requirement.

The article goes on to list some areas in which the Network needs to establish a position. Otherwise, in Dr Lyons'

opinion, the slippery slope to mumbo-jumbo beckons. I support this view but am not certain that all the issues listed are even in a fit condition for debate.

Top of the list is 'consciousness', a concept which continues to lack definition. Like the anthropic principle, beliefs on human consciousness form a weak-strong continuum. A weak definition given recently by a Network member would also fit a fruit fly (eg 'Do fruit flies dream of electric bananas?' Douglas Fox, New Scientist, 14th February 2004). At the strong end we find assertions that the universe is under the control of human consciousness - the answer to global warming?

It seems clear that reaching a position on consciousness would be a cat-herding project until its supporters can offer a definition around which debate could be framed. Optimists might anticipate something concrete emerging from 'Beyond the Brain 7'. Sceptics will not hold their breath.

There is an issue which could (and in this year of the Darwinian double anniversaries, should) be debated in the way Chris Lyons recommends. The opposing positions are well enough known. That is, evolution. Not the theory of natural selection, in favour of which the accumulating evidence is approaching overwhelming, but the fact of evolution. If an organisation which calls itself 'Scientific' cannot achieve a position on a vital issue like this, then it really is on the slippery slope, and should be looking for a change, not only in its title but also in its mission.

Ways of Knowing

From: *Claudia Nielsen, claudia@cnielsen.eu*

I refer to Chris Lyons' article – Some More Thoughts on Tightrope – A Personal View published in the Winter 08 Review, which was a commentary on Martin Redfern's previous article – pointing to the dangers of walking the tightrope between rigour and mumbo-jumboism. Chris says: 'There are two big and very difficult questions on the edge of science. One concerns the origin of the universe, the other the relationship between matter and inner experience (the so called hard question of consciousness). It's possible that those represent the limits of what science can achieve but we can't be sure of this and it isn't a reason not to keep on pushing at the limits of knowledge. Moreover to introduce a final cause or supernatural explanation for these things gets us no-where. In this sense, God is an epistemological dead-end'.

My focus is specifically on the second of his 'big questions on the edge of science', and his following comments, which I see as raising a couple of problems. The first is the assumption that only science can produce knowledge. I am sure Chris did not mean it in this way, but this statement leads to the discussion about what are valid sources of knowledge. Next, I would say that the last sentence is justified only if we accept human consciousness as being the highest consciousness that exists. In this case any 'supernatural explanation', including God, can be justifiably excluded as nonsense. If however, we can entertain the idea that human consciousness may not be the highest consciousness in the universe (within or outside space and time) then we must also accept that more sophisticated consciousness/es must exist, a position which has fundamental ontological, existential and philosophical implications.

The exploration of consciousness is undertaken by 'seekers' in a process considered spiritual in which the person may seek contact with a higher consciousness. Being a first person experience, it does not render itself to third person scientific methodology. The navigation is internal, through feelings. This is an ancient quest and our ancestors have given names to consciousnesses, calling them 'spirits', 'angels', 'gods' or even 'God'. For some people they have a form, and for others the highest consciousness is formless, beyond concepts, a no-thing.

Science has without a doubt contributed vastly to our progress and has empowered us to see ourselves very differently from way we saw ourselves in the distant past. It has also given us a technology which has enabled improvement in every aspect of life in a way our ancestors could not have dreamt of. We owe a lot to science!

Nevertheless, the paradigm which enabled the progress of science, with its particular approach to this exploration, has also caused a fundamental shift in attitude which feels to some of us, a bulldozing of part of our nature – our spiritual dimension.

Using current technology, I see the body/mind complex as a metaphorical radar using feelings as the signals needed for navigation. Emotions are feelings which help us to navigate interpersonal relationships, physical pain are feelings which help – mainly, but not only - with body matters and feelings also help us navigate the spiritual realm. It is true, as we know from personal experience, that interpretation of feelings can be tricky in each of these realms, and the spiritual is not excluded. Self-knowledge helps, and the more we know ourselves, and our tendencies for self deception the clearer we can be about our feelings in this realm. Spiritual practices are designed with this in mind.

I would like to suggest that to see knowledge deriving exclusively from science is to reduce and devalue human capacity to know and understand. Quoting again from the article - It's possible that those represent the limits of what science can achieve but we can't be sure of this and it isn't a reason not to keep on pushing at the limits of knowledge'. If we want to push at the limits of knowledge in the field of consciousness, I contend that we must accept that this area cannot be examined with the methodologies currently used by science. That however is no reason not to push at those limits, provided we accept that the tools used are different. Mystics have since time immemorial been exploring consciousness and through it acquired wisdom. Science, with everything it has to offer, cannot offer that.

The SMN is a forum for exploration of topics outside the mainstream, and by definition, deals with controversial subjects. Walking the tightrope between rigour and mumbo-jumboism is indeed tricky and Chris is right in pointing to the need to keep this balance as near to perfect as possible, but I think ambitious in wanting to have answers to questions which point to the mystery of human nature. The best the SMN can do, to my mind, is to provide platforms - some more public than others - and get a debate going by those interested in the area, in the knowledge that certain questions will elude a pinned answer. Simply engaging with the process of exploration will help us get that little more in tune with our spiritual dimension, our connection with that which is beyond us.

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