

Report Creation, Intuition, Meditation

Enjoy the moment, rain or shine

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I first glimpsed Guy Claxton lying on the beach at sunny Frenchman's Cove enjoying the moment (a massage) before the second Caribbean Symposium (Feb. 2000). Guy, incidentally, wrote the report on that SMN get together with Jim Austin on Zen and the Brain (Network no.72). Guy's symposium on *Creation, Intuition, Meditation* (Nov 26th-Dec. 3rd) marked the third SMN rendezvous in Jamaica and could be considered another, rather different, species of Zen and the Brain. Those of us lucky enough to attend both meetings could compare two very different approaches and very different weather conditions.

Much of Guy's message is contained in his recent book *Hare Brain Tortoise Mind* (HBTM) in which he argues that it doesn't always pay to think too hard. It is a persuasive reminder, as the subtitle suggests, of "how intelligence increases when you think less." For those completely unfamiliar with Guy's work, the title and the cover blurb, advertising a remedy for "our decisive and businesslike ways of thinking" in "these accelerated times" might suggest a glib, quick-fix manual for harried corporate executives. Far from it. Guy's approach is grounded in "The Heart of Buddhism" (another of his excellent titles), and speaks to a nurturing of both intelligence and intuition through Buddhist practice and an understanding of contemporary psychological research.

Guy's persona as M.C. was, and I'm sure always is, light, humorous, eclectic and thoroughly casual. Enjoy the moment! On day one he came to the podium barefoot, in shorts and T shirt announcing "Ceci n'est pas un Magritte." No oil painting perhaps- but clearly a lively hare brain that don't miss much - even when playing the fool. The introductions, where everyone spoke unguardedly about why they had come, set the tone for a very relaxed and convivial atmosphere. In this eclectic vein, within the first hour we were peppered with quotes ranging from Alfred Hitchcock to Goethe and Descartes, and many others who few but the most eclectic scholars could hope to digest. But here is the appeal of this wide ranging approach: use your intuition to pick your favorite gurus and savour the wisdom that resonates best with you. In this same vein attendees were invited to jump in at any time. Thus everyone became participating observers rather than students asking questions of the teacher.

So what is intuition? Perhaps central to an intellectual understanding of this phenomenon is the refuting of Descartes "error" which held that "the intelligent subconscious simply did not exist" (HBTM p. 205). Intuition is that subconscious intelligence that lies just below the surface of consciousness. In a Jungian sense it is a holistic knowing of the whole rather than merely the parts. Guy asked us for definitions and some were pretty good: "a gut feeling, hunch or deeper level of knowing about what fits into the natural order of things in the universe." In comparison with Jim Austin's detailed investigations of brain morphology and biochemical function Guy took the integral approach that attempts to map out brainscapes. Using complex systems vocabulary we find the brain has no specific centre for intuition or creativity. These are evidently attributes of whole brain function, understood in terms of "neural networks," "parallel distributed processing" functions "attractors" and "pathways" that configure our "brainscapes."

Guy used the metaphor of a "badger pathway" to describe those habitual patterns of thought etched into the neural landscape, and suggested that novelty and intuition are tapped when we can access the rich forest diversity that lies beyond these well-worn trails. Perhaps, using another metaphor, meditation and tortoise minding are the types of activity that allow the well-delineated paths get overgrown by the underbrush of creative intuition and novelty. Creativity is not so much a faculty as having access to all faculties, and its enemy is that impatient desire to always be on some narrow badger pathway that leads to some specified or anticipated destination - which, by definition, is predetermined and lacks novel spontaneity. There is nothing wrong with narrow focus, or intense hare braining: they just serve different functions that too often shut out tortoise minding. If you go crashing into the forest it will never reveal itself to you. You must sometimes sit and wait.

Guy encouraged and led morning meditations and directed specific exercises including creative poetry writing, which again produced some fine results-thanks to a fair smattering of inherent creative talent. As always at Frenchman's Cove, much creativity is involved in planning schedules for the many relaxing hours spent between beach, symposium and dinner outings. (Thanks- organizers!) Activities included presentations on Goethe, Homeopathy, the Scoble report (Network no.73), ear candling, local molluscs and beach yoga, as well as collecting books for the local library, and braking flimsy chairs in a local restaurant.

A symbolic high point of my beach-combing was the discovery of a ping-pong ball-sized egg on the day of the full moon. Speaking eloquently to the theme of tortoise minding this leathery capsule produced the near full-term embryo of a deceased turtle hatchling (see photo). Given the endangered status of sea turtles is there a message here about the need for more tortoise minding?

Another high point was watching Guy dance at the Dragon Bay restaurant. The entertainment was not the best and our crowd was rather self conscious about being dragged on stage to perform lewd dance rituals. Last February the rapport was better and Guy and others formed the "Not so bad bongo band." Despite the seasonal downturn, however, there was Guy, alone on the fringe of the festivities, loud shirt and all, abandoned to the rhythm of the moment, prancing to the Caribbean beat like and energetic bunny. Hare feet, tortoise mind. (The guy also has a pretty good repertoire of jokes for social occasions).

Alas the seasonal downturn also affected the weather. After the third day it rained almost incessantly, and the water, in both creek and taps, turned a little murky. That's rain forest. Jigsaws were added to the repertoire of activities. A few tummy upsets were effectively remedied by Helen Campbell's homeopathic magic. But, alas, there is no such easy remedy for the nasty incident that took place after the symposium, when a desperado entered two of the chalets with a machete scaring off and robbing its residents. Thankfully they were not physically harmed. Although it is small consolation for the victims, such incidents can happen anywhere, and much worse has happened in American schools. As I submit this report the Network plans to beef up security and go ahead with forthcoming symposia*. Most participants have voted to try again. Sad though it is to have trouble in paradise, Frenchman's Cove has not entirely lost its lure.

Claxton, G. 1990. *The Heart of Buddhism*. Thorsons (Harper Collins) 191p.

Claxton G. 1997. *Hare Brain Tortoise Mind*. Fourth Estate (Harper Collins, 2000) 259p.

*New security arrangements were in place for the February meeting, which will be reported in the next issue.

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