

Winter 2024

In Statu Nascendi

NASCENT STATE

Journal of Intuition

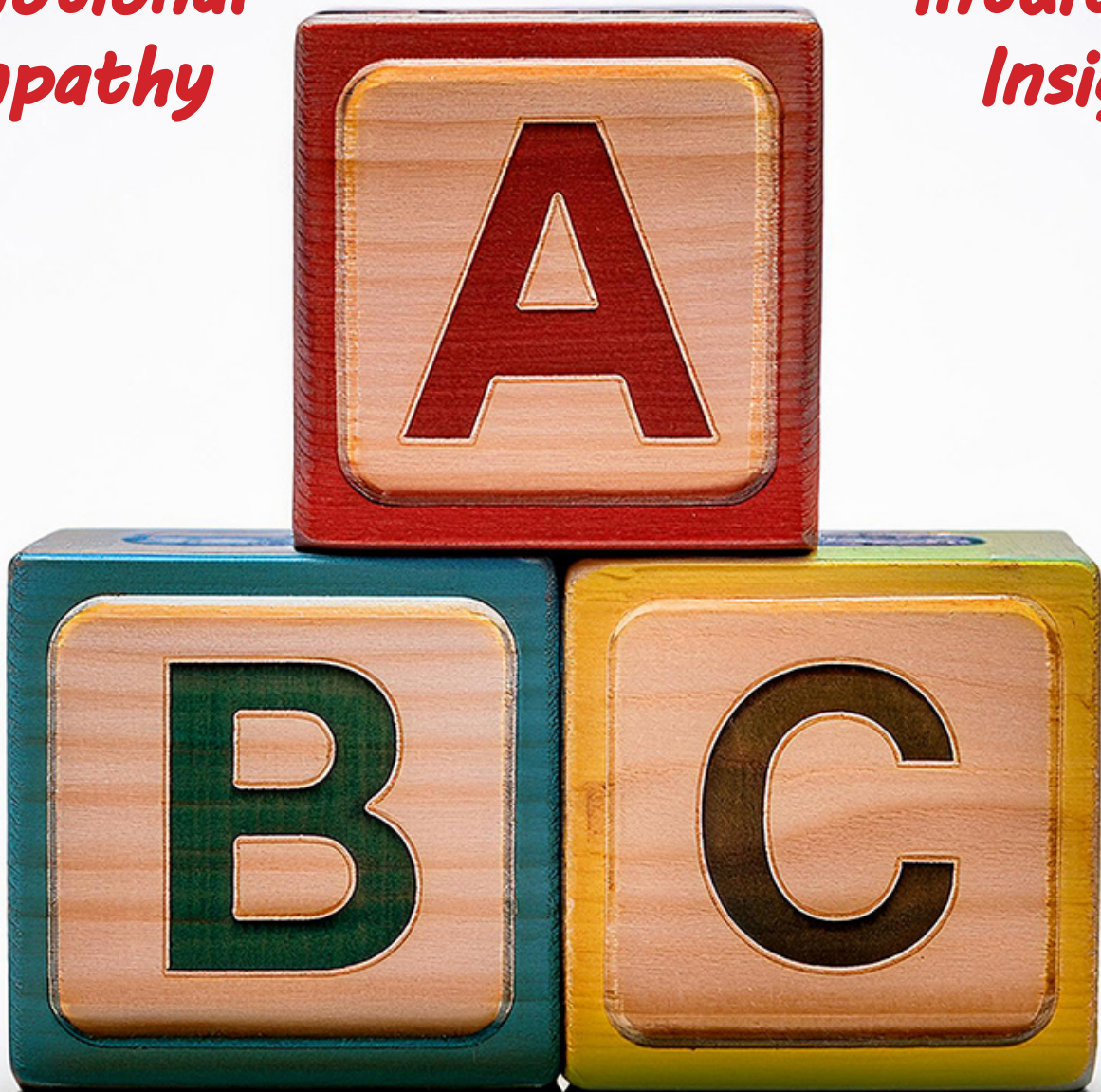
Magazine

The ABC of Intuition

Gut-Feeling

*Emotional
Empathy*

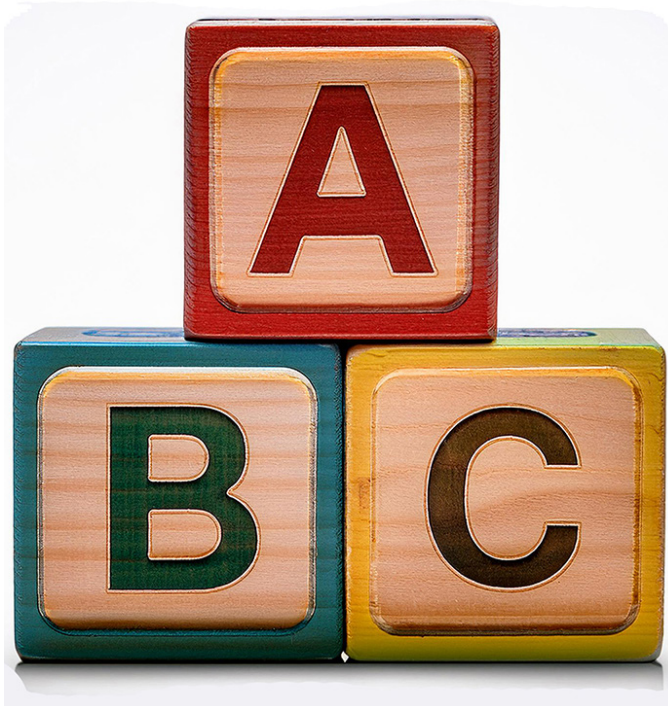
*Intuitive
Insight*



NASCENT STATE

Intuition

The basics



Christmas cracker joke:

Q: What's always right in front of us but we can never see it?

A: The future.

From the Editor

This edition of Nascent State looks at the fundamentals of intuitive thinking; gut-feeling, emotional empathy, and insight. Gut-feeling is the most common form of intuition; most people will have had the experience of their gut-feeling telling them to pay attention to what the logical mind misses. The second form of intuition is emotional empathy; 'heart thinking', is quite different from the dry intellectual thinking of logic. The third form of intuition is the phenomenon of insight, where, in an instant, a new idea arrives which can alter our whole outlook. We use logic to deal with what we know; we use intuition to deal with what we don't know. In a changing world we will, sooner or later, have to deal with the unknown - a new job, a new relationship, or deciding what we fundamentally believe is true. The better we are at using our intuition, the better we will be at dealing with the unknown.

Nascent State Magazine is presented in a PDF, free-to-download format; download it and read it at your leisure. For enquiries, contributions and comments, email:

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Jim Blackmann

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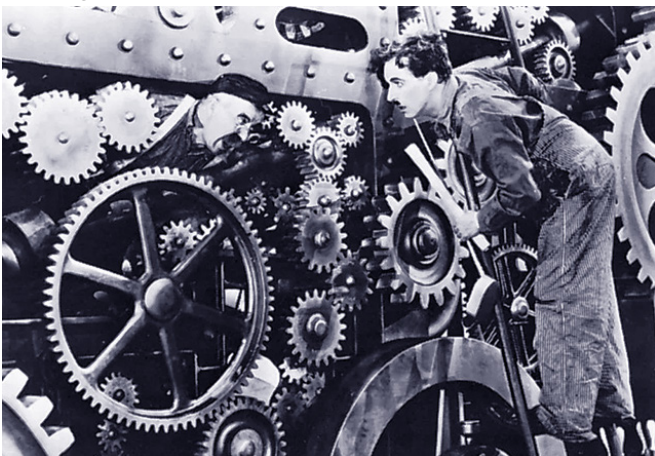
Gut-Feeling

‘The faculty of intuition exists in each one of us, but covered over by functions more useful to life.’

Henri Bergson

We pay little attention to our intuition. The demands of life mean that we wake to an alarm, arrive at work on time, fulfil our duties, log off, and then go home and rest from the stress of the day. We do this to a calendar, a contract and a budget. There is little time to consider much beyond coping with the demands of the day and even less time to consider the part intuition plays in life.

And yet the intuitive mind is with us, always. Gut-feeling will tell us when an explanation sounds false, or when a project has not been thought through carefully, or when we may be overreacting to an event. A healthy intuition is just as important as paying the bills, keeping a roof over our head and looking after our health.

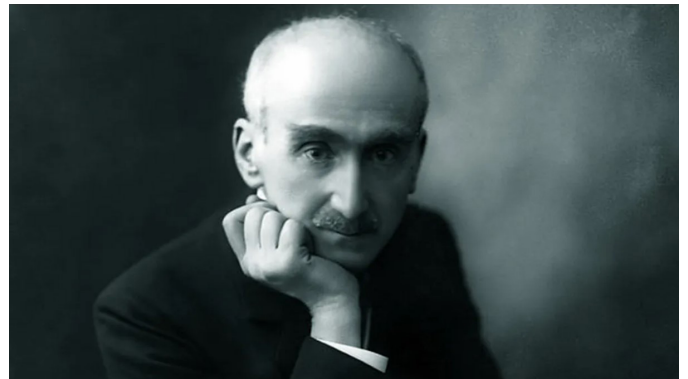


For all this we don't value intuition. This is in part owing to the demands of life and in part owing to the society we live in, which values logic over all other forms of thinking.

The terms 'gut-feeling' and 'gut-instinct' are often used interchangeably, but they are quite different. Instinct is what causes us to wince when we see mouldy food or to jump when we hear a loud bang. Intuition is much more than this. We may have a

gut-feeling about a person, an event, or our own motives for an action, and not necessarily respond to it; with instinct, we can respond in only one way. The French philosopher Henri Bergson described gut-feeling as a kind of 'refined instinct'.

‘By intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely.’



Henri Bergson

We have a much better understanding of logic. Logic teaches us to define, label and classify our experiences. We use logic for separating fruit from vegetables, for political debates, for finding a book in a library, and for writing computer programs. Logic is highly useful for dealing with what we know, but not so good for dealing with what we don't know; and there is much we don't know.

The unknowns in life include other people, emergent phenomena, unexpected events, the outcome of our actions, and - most importantly - the future. It is easier to deal with the known world, which is why we establish routines. We are 'creatures of habit' because dealing with the world we know allows us to feel we are in control of life.

And yet we will have to deal with an unknown at some point in life - and the unknowns are often the biggest, most problematic decisions. That is why choosing a new vocation, deciding to move to a new town, beginning or ending a relationship, or

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deciding whether we trust someone or not are all intuitive. Perhaps the biggest unknown is deciding what we ultimately believe in.

If we apply logic to such decisions, we will discover there is something missing in the outcome - what we feel intuitively.

We are taught to think logically at school. In a multiple-choice exam we are presented with a question and four possible answers. We work through the answers and try to find fault with each of them. When we come to the answer without any fault, we choose that and tick the box.



But no one teaches us to think intuitively. We are born with it and we assume it will kick in when the time comes. This lack of attention to genuine gut-feeling means it can be too easily mistaken for self-certainty, anger, suspicion or self-righteousness.

But intuition is much more than this.

The word 'intuition' comes from the Latin word 'tueri', which means 'to watch'; intuition is the watching mind. It watches over us as we go about the business of life and - if we are suitably attentive - it will warn us if we are about to overstep the mark, or when we need to calm down, or when something which appears to be good might not actually be that good at all.

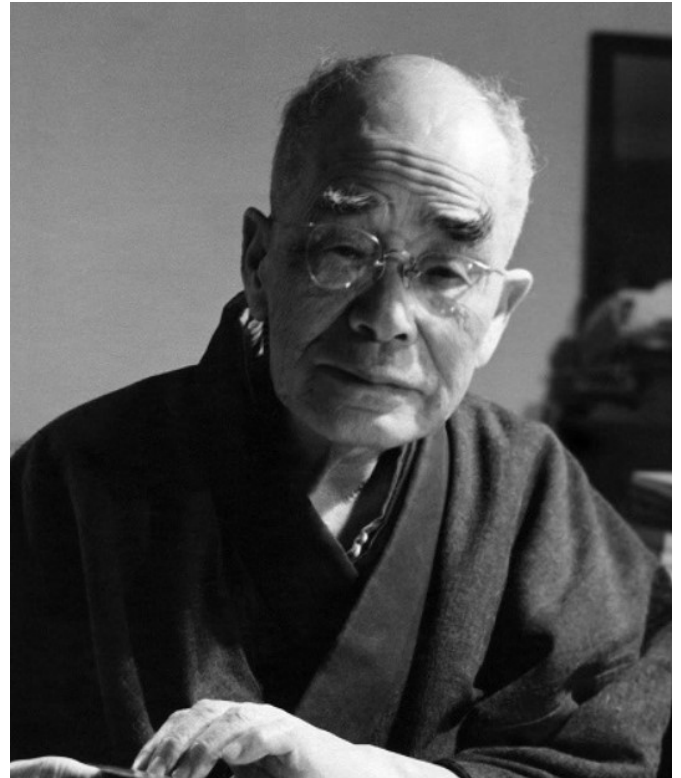
To hear the intuitive mind when it speaks, we have to know its voice. It whispers to us, like the silent Echo of the Greek myth. We are more familiar with the everyday voice of the mind that carries on endless conversations, arguments and explanations in our head; we have to silence this in order to hear the intuitive mind. The psychologist Carl Jung wrote:

'Hence, for intuition really to become paramount, sensation must to a large extent be suppressed.'

The East has a different cultural history from the

logic-dominated West. In the East, gut-feeling plays an equal part in thinking, particularly when important decisions are concerned. The Japanese writer, D. T. Suzuki, put it this way:

'People in China and also in Japan -- I do not know about India - when some difficult problems come up, often say 'Think with your abdomen', or simply 'Ask your belly'. So, when any question in connection with our existence comes up, we are advised to 'think' with the belly..'



D. T. Suzuki

We may look back on a time in life when our gut-feeling spoke to us - perhaps we listened, perhaps we didn't - and often in hindsight know that it was warning us to pay attention to something we were missing at the time.

We can become more aware of our intuitive mind by understanding what it is and what it does, and by listening to it when it speaks. It is like developing an ear for music; the more we attend to it the more familiar we become with it. We can nurture our natural intuitive ability in the same way, by studying it, attending to it, and by practising it when we can.

Gut-feeling will draw our attention to what we might otherwise miss. It is what causes us to say 'this feels wrong' when we have an inkling something is not right in an action we are about to take; we may not be able to say in exact terms why, simply that there is something amiss. Logic is good for many things, but not for seeing the bigger picture.

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Empathy

'If you have intuitions at all, they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhabits.'

William James

The psychology of the modern era arose when materialism, or the idea that all of life - including the inner life - could be understood purely in terms of its material nature, was beginning to gain the upper hand in science. Science was beginning to provide the means, through Faraday and others, to harness electricity. It is not coincidental that the novel *Frankenstein*, a creature brought to life by electricity, was written in 1810.

Prior to the modern era, our understanding of the inner life was based on the assumption that there is an element to human nature which exists independently of the physical body. René Descartes, in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), put it this way:

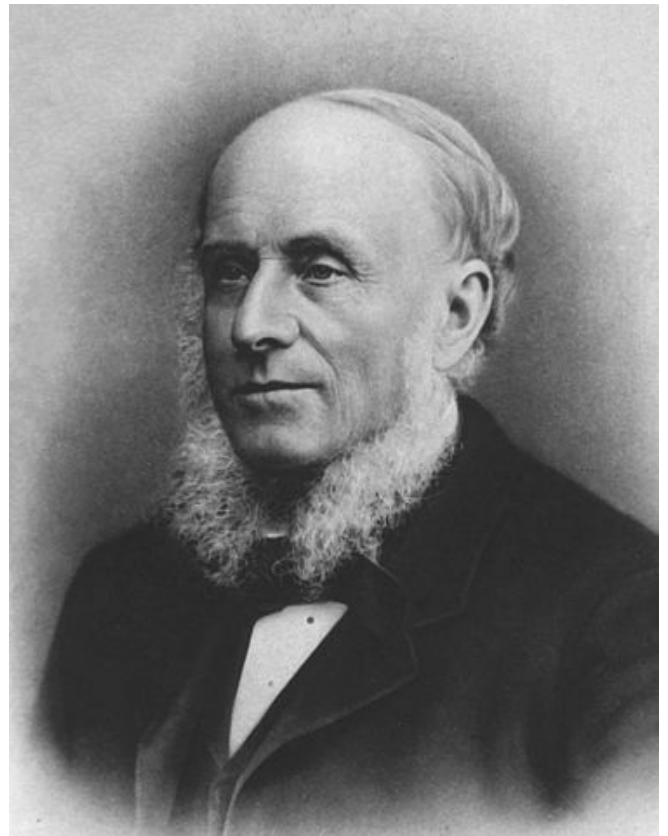
'I am a thinking thing; that is, a substance whose essence or nature consists solely in thinking and which does not require a body to exist.'



René Descartes by Frans Hals

Materialism gave rise to the science of physiology, which studied the relationship between our thoughts and the physical activity of the brain. An early proponent of this view was Alexander Bain, who wrote *Mind and body: The theories of their relation* (1873). For Bain, all thinking could be accounted for by neural activity alone. He wrote:

'Every thought, every feeling, every volition, is accompanied by a physical change in the brain.'



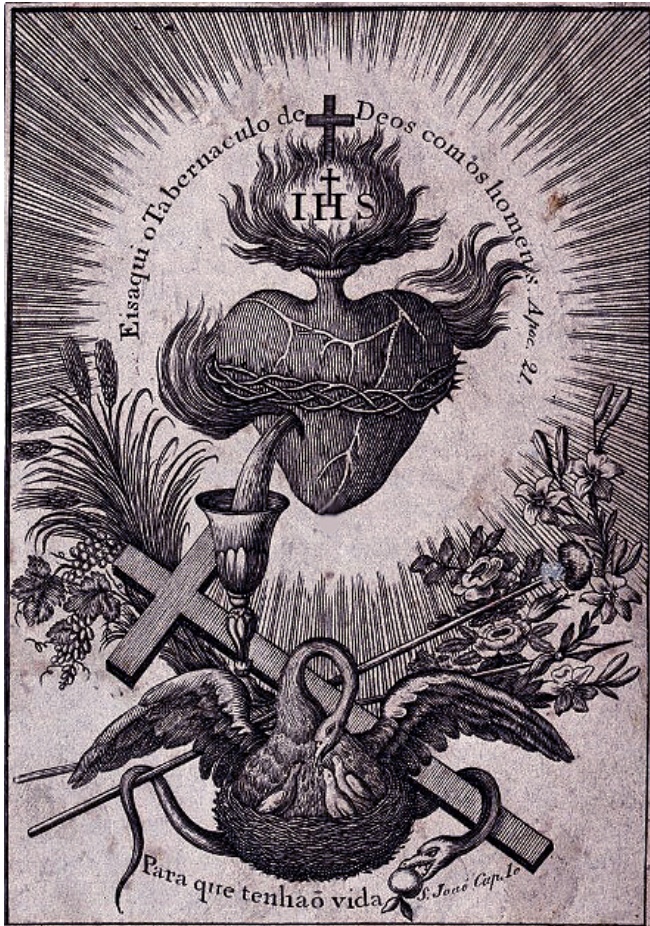
Alexander Bain

From a materialistic point of view, each organ has a function; the function of the brain is to facilitate thoughts and the function of the heart is to pump blood through the veins. Emotional understanding - thinking with the heart - became a quaint notion held over from the pre-scientific era.

It is true to say that the idea of thinking with the heart belonged to a pre-scientific era. The ancient

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Greek term 'metanoia' refers to a change of mind accompanied by a sudden change of heart. The 'epiphany' of the early Christians, whereby a sudden insight was accompanied by a change in the emotional life, was much the same. And the 'Gnosis Kardias' of the mediaeval Gnostics, translates as 'knowledge of the heart'.



Gnosis Kardias

Regarding the heart as a pump meant the importance of the emotions in understanding was no longer recognised. This led to the view of the human being as a robot and of all knowledge being the product of logic alone. A computer can handle logic, and handle it well; there is no place for the emotions in computing.

And yet new knowledge - knowledge which is more than simply the further elaboration of existing knowledge - can only come from changes in the emotional life. The lack of acknowledgement over the part played by the emotions in our understanding of the world is the reason why ideology and polarisation have come to dominate the thinking of the modern era. That is why the Enlightenment led to The Terror, and the Russian and Chinese revolutions led to the purges which resulted in the deaths of many millions.

Logic cannot deal with the emotions. The emotions are too fluid, changing, varied, nuanced and complex to be captured by a single term and then classified under a fixed heading. What is emotionally right in one context may be quite wrong in another. To grieve at a funeral is understandable; to grieve endlessly is not. To be angry at unfair treatment is understandable; to be vengeful is not.

Unless we become aware of the emotional content of our thinking, we will be governed by it unconsciously. Unchecked emotion can lead to negativity, intolerance, and a lack of balance. Becoming aware of the emotions and the part they play in thinking is intuitive.

We do not just build cities and nations or create whole cultures for their own sake, but because the image or idea behind it motivates us to do so. Such imagery is as emotional as it is intellectual. We would have no concept of justice, success or failure without the emotions.

It is owing to the dominance of logic in thinking that art, music, literature, and poetry are regarded as forms of expression and no more. The arts often reveal more that is essential in human nature than any amount of dry reasoning ever could. The Sufi poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207 – 1273) put much emphasis on 'knowledge of the heart'. He wrote: 'The mind says there is nothing beyond the physical world; the heart says there is, and I've been there many times.'



Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī

The rate of change - largely brought about through technology - is such that we are rapidly creating a world based on a purely logical view of human nature. If we regard ourselves as machines we will build a world fit for machines.

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Insight

‘Through our feelings we experience the known, but our intuitions point to things that are unknown and hidden — that by their very nature are secret.’

Carl Jung

Logic informs Western culture to such an extent that considering its influence is like asking a fish to consider the water it swims in.

Aristotle outlined the essence of logic in his collection of works known as the *Organon* in the fourth century BC. While Aristotle was influenced by other thinkers, notably Plato, his approach was to deal with the nature of thinking itself rather than with any discussion about the nature of truth.

Aristotelian logic was later adopted by St Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274), who wrote the *Summa Theologica* (the Sum of all Theology) to incorporate logic into the thinking of the Church. The Church then set up the universities to teach theology to young monks, and in doing so they naturally taught them to think logically. Although society became increasingly secular (or non-religious), from the time of the Renaissance onwards, the basic template for education was set; with logic there can be only one correct answer to any given question, and the student must supply it in order to pass the examination.

Secularism arose more fully in the eighteenth century. The French *Encyclopedie* was written with the intention of replacing the Bible as the source of all truth. The dominance of logic meant it came to inform all aspects of Secular culture, including education, politics, science, economics, business, philosophy, psychology, and even - through Clausewitz - military planning.

The other form of thinking - eclipsed by logic - is intuitive thinking. Intuitive thinking has its own history, largely connected with the subcultures of Europe, and examples of this can be found in Gnosticism, the Heresies, the Romantic Movement, and in some of the New Age movements of the

modern era. Its connection with the subcultures of Europe is the reason why intuition is associated with personal emotion and subjective thinking.



Middle Age Hermeticism

And yet intuitive thinking has its own methods and means, and it can be learnt, practised and developed just as surely as mathematics or logic. The essential difference between logic and intuition is that logic deals with what we already know and intuition deals with what we don't yet know. To arrive at a solution to an unknown using logic, we have to observe, classify and categorise. To arrive at a solution intuitively, we need insight.

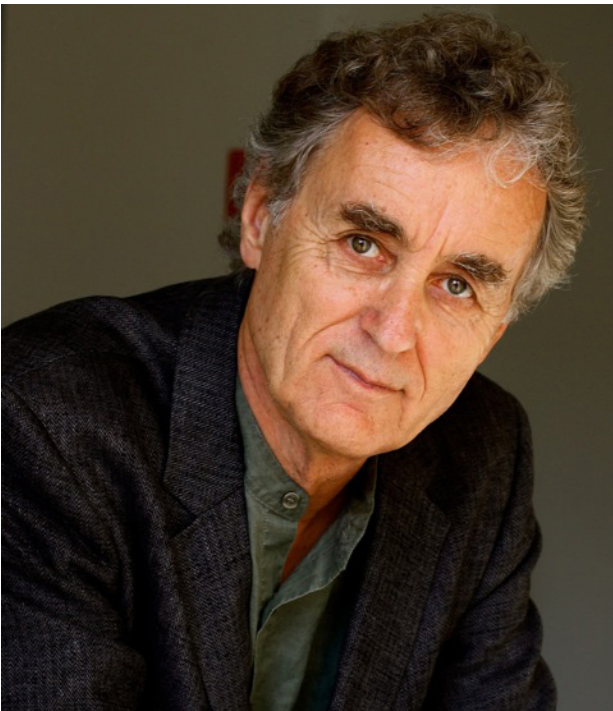
Insight is the sudden arrival of an idea, when in an instant we see what previously we couldn't even imagine. One of the earliest examples of this comes from the story of the mathematician Archimedes, who was charged with the task of working out the mass of a complex crown. After much hard thinking, he took a bath. He lowered himself into the bath and saw how the water flowed over the sides; in an instant he knew that the mass of the object displaced the same amount of water regardless of the shape. The suddenness and instant arrival of the solution caused him to run naked from his bath shouting 'Eureka', meaning 'I have found it'.

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Other examples of insight can be found in the mathematician Rowan Hamilton and the instant arrival of his 'quaternions'; the suddenness of its arrival caused him to carve it in the stone at Brougham Bridge in Dublin in case he forgot it.

In a further example, the physicist Fritjof Capra had his own experience of insight - in this case, seeing the connection between Western physics and Eastern Taoism. He described the experience in his book, *The Tao of Physics*:

'I remember the first such experience. Coming, as it did, after years of detailed analytical thinking, it was so overwhelming that I burst into tears...'



Fritjof Capra (photo by Zenobia Barlow)

Logic proceeds from certainty to certainty and then to a conclusion; it can only do so by working within our existing understanding of the problem. Insight however is the sudden arrival of an idea from outside our present perspective or outlook. What limits our present outlook is not a lack of logic but actually logic itself. The more we examine our existing knowledge, the less we will see what we may be missing.

To see what we presently do not see requires us to be open-minded. One of the methods employed in intuitive thinking is to consider the essential nature of an object without passing judgement on it. This practice plays an important part in the East, and is a useful example of the two different approaches. In Zen, for example, the practice of observing silently without judgement is known as observing the 'suchness' or 'isness' of a thing. We can apply the

same 'isness' approach to understanding people or unconventional ideas; logic will not allow this, but demands that we criticise anything unconventional.

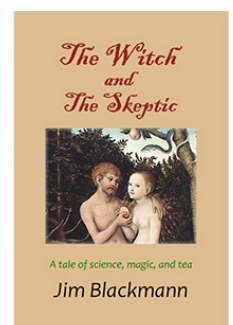
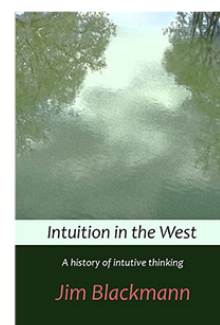
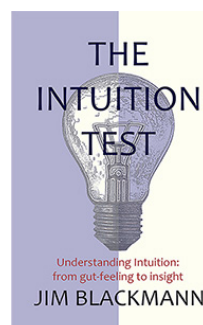
A further practice - also drawn from the East - is to be able to approach a complex problem from more than one point of view. Logic demands that we must choose one 'correct' point of view. In Jainism, for example, the word 'anekantavada' means 'many-sidedness' and refers to considering many different points of view as equally valid but also imperfect images of a greater whole. This whole approach is based on insight.

Whenever we have to make a decision about a future we can't see, or whether to trust a person we don't know, or to take an action which may have unforeseen consequences, we have to think about what we can't presently see. We have to consider, not what is obvious, but what is presently hidden. Intuition leads us to regard the world as an enigma. The study of symbolic images can greatly assist in the development of this ability. Symbolic images are, by nature, enigmatic.

Logic wants us to define and maintain an outlook throughout the whole of our life. This can result in the adoption of an ideology or dogma, whether religious or secular. In the past, such ideologies or dogmas existed for many centuries, because society was relatively slow changing. This is no longer the case. We are now living in a time of unprecedented change, which means that any fixed outlook will soon become redundant. Logic will not allow us to cope with ongoing change.

It may be some time before the deficiencies of logic are understood by wider society. As individuals however we can begin to study and adopt intuitive thinking for our own benefit.

By the same author:



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