

OUTSIDE THE PROVINCE OF REASON
WHAT ROLE DOES INTUITION PLAY IN YOUR THERAPY PRACTICE?

CTPAA Presentation 28 March 2014

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Intuition, its mechanism, how it works and why, has occupied my curiosity ever since my mid teens. I realized early in my youth that I “knew” things I wasn’t *supposed* to know. Since many of these things that came to me either by absorption or through dreams and nightmares often made no sense to me, I would try to dismiss them myself.

Growing up in a highly critical and obedience-ruled post war German household, it was drilled into me that asking questions at home (or in school, for that matter) was forbidden and dangerous, if not punishable (usually by ridicule or humiliation). And so I *observed* my surroundings quietly. Perhaps much more quietly than would have been necessary had I grown up with more support for my innate ways of picking up stuff around me, at times out of thin air, it seemed. The **shadow** side of my quiet observer self was a temptation to tuck away things I picked up as too hot to handle, and those same things becoming secrets even from myself. The **upside** was my growing reliance on my inner observer, the ability to be alone and the deep sense of peace I drew and still draw from being in nature.

Had it not been for my young and innocently intuitive eye, I might have never found out anything about my maternal ancestry, dead-silenced under lock and key. But even as a child, without knowing it, I knew that something was missing from our family table. Not only any sign of an extended family on my mother’s side, but also any word or story about its absence! Like an invisible empty hat, absence hung in the air, untouchable.

As soon as I turned eighteen, I took off from home and undertook a journey through the night (literally and metaphorically), across a forbidden border (again literally and metaphorically), guided only by hunches and dreams that wouldn’t let me ignore them. It took me years to process and reconcile inside my psyche the things I would uncover on that trip. Working through was made particularly difficult, because I could neither talk about how freaked I was about my inner intuitive guidance as the source of my findings, nor about what I had found out! The first of the few people I did

tell gave me my first bitter taste of anti-Semitism. So I shut up again. A German girl and now confused, I kept quiet about my newfound Jewish roots for a while longer.

Ultimately, Psychotherapy, first in the seat of client and later as therapist, helped me rescue intuition from the margins of its former hiding places to the bridge of conscious investigation.

It's from the perspective of personal and clinical experience and curiosity (yours and mine) I want to talk with you tonight!

The term *intuition* stands for thoughts and decisions that come to mind quickly and without much or any reflection. The word comes from the Latin word 'intueri', 'tueri' meaning to look at, and in-tueri 'to look inside' or 'to contemplate'.

Some refer to intuition as the 6th sense, others as direct, unconscious or spontaneous knowing, following their nose, or feeling something in their bones, a gut feeling, a 'hunch', guess, the antenna, a vision, an insight, a foresight (usually understood as such in hindsight), a brainwave, epiphany, premonition, a dread, foreboding or a notion, a perception, a funny feeling, a keen sense, a little voice inside. And then there is the word "**intuitive**" that one of my clients has coined for feeling in sync and connected! Being "intuitive" for him implies attunement in his inner world with the world around him. Another client talks about the "rumblings" in his stomach as his intuitive barometer that alerts him to something that's not quite right, when there is no other sign of something being wrong.

Commonly, when we speak about an intuitive perception, we tend to preface it by saying "my instinct tells me". Personally, I make a difference between "instinct" and "intuition". Instinct refers to the automatic and innate impulse to live, no matter what. Human and other animals are born with it. The reptilian brain responsible for our survival, is the oldest, most powerful and most-resistant-to-change part of our brain. Instinct driven behavior serves to defend against and survive real or perceived threats to life, through fight, flight, freeze, submit and other reactive modes. Instinct behavior is concrete, here and now, yes or no, we don't have time to reflect or contemplate. Fear is fear. Intuition by comparison leaves room for fear as less of a literal message, a metaphor, a perception, a contemplative thought. As a lens for considering possibilities, intuition works not only as nature's way to procure continuation (most acutely activated in mothers with babies), but is also involved in the process of inspiration, creating, inventing, thriving - in the

ability to optimize life. Intuition in its non-linear occurrence can help bridge the gap between instinct and the linear side of reason.

I believe that while the line between instinct and intuition can be blurry, the two are as different as for instance an automatic *reaction* or defense *against* something would be from a spontaneous *response* to something, such as an unexpected call, and instantly knowing who is on the other end before I pick up the phone or check the caller ID.

Being a highly intuitive therapist who has suffered a lot herself, Jungian Analyst Marion Woodman once said that, “intuition can be a blessing and a curse”. Marion observed that intuitive people often picked up other people’s unconscious stuff, and because of their lack of grounding and consciousness in their own body, could not differentiate between their own and other people’s pain. This was especially problematic for children growing up in families where addictions such as alcoholism, were rampant. At the price of their authentic self-development, children of dysfunctional families often learn to intuitively appease their neglectful or otherwise abusive parents. They may later still be stuck in those patterns that once helped them survive, but have since then become serious hurdles that keep them from thriving.

In the early 1980’s, Dr. Woodman became a pioneer in the Jungian community of understanding the psyche-soma connection, and advocating body-work as an adjunct to analysis in the therapeutic process. Increased body awareness would help us listen inward, and let the body speak for itself. There, we might discover uncharted territory that had been hidden away, perhaps repressed by shame or fear, or over-compensated for by arrogance and denial. When we are in touch with our embodied self, Marion said, we learn to love, trust and respect our matter - not only our personal body but also the earth as the body we all share - as holy ground. When we listen to and trust our embodied self, mind chatter slows down and gives the voice of intuition a chance to be heard.

In the BodySoul Rhythms® work Marion Woodman, together with movement specialist Mary Hamilton and voice specialist Ann Skinner developed over 30 years ago, they co-designed exercises by which workshop participants would learn to deepen their dream work by intentionally dropping mind and breath into their body, and allowing voice and spontaneous movement to guide their next steps *from* the body, as opposed to having the head *push* the body where head wills body to go. These

exercises became group instruments of individuals' intuition for releasing unconscious healing material to the conscious body-mind where insight and true self bowed to each other in the dance of transformation.

As children of Western civilization and its marriage to the age of reason, we have collectively grown to give almost exclusive weight to evidence-driven science and proof-based, logic-deducted truth as the whole "truth". In the process, we no longer give Intuition with its own spontaneous and organic, albeit non-repeatable kind of logic the credibility it deserves. We are out of balance. Intuition does after all play a role even in scientific research for which Albert Einstein was one of countless famous examples! He is said to have viewed the intuitive and metaphoric mind as a 'sacred gift' and the rational mind as a 'faithful servant'. He warned that "*we have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.*" I certainly don't mean to imply that we should honor only the gift and forget about the servant, but rather remember the gift together with the servant!

In The Tao of Physics, Fritjof Capra writes: "Rational knowledge and rational activities certainly constitute the major part of scientific research, but are not all there is to it. The rational part of research would, in fact, be useless if it were not complemented by the intuition that gives scientists new insights and makes them creative. These insights tend to come suddenly and, characteristically, not when sitting at a desk working out the equations, but when relaxing, in the bath, during a walk in the woods, on the beach, etc. During these periods of relaxation after concentrated intellectual activity, the intuitive mind seems to take over and can produce the sudden clarifying insights which give so much joy and delight to scientific research."

For many people, including myself, the intuitive eye tends to transmit its signals from behind closed eyes. In the weeks of preparing for this evening's topic, my dreams kept coming up with the word "splicing" in 3 consecutive nights. Since this is not a word in my regular vocabulary, I didn't know what to make of it and set out on a little research. Some sources pointed to the context of film, others to splicing methods in molecular biology where it is used to describe processes of altering genetic structures. Neither resonated with my inner inquiry. So I turned to explore the origin of the word, and found an uncanny paradox: stemming from the Old Dutch in the middle ages, splice and split appeared together. Only, 'splitting' as we know it is about division and separating, whereas splicing has everything to do with joining together. Since I know a little about dissociation and disconnection in the service of survival (both in my own past and from my clients' stories), I figured that "splicing" might refer to repairing connection. My

psyche seemed to want me to pay particular attention to the importance of body and mind as a joined-together union in the conscious use of intuition as a tool for tuning in and connecting, putting things together. That was the extent of my interpretation of the word “splicing” as it occurred in those dreams, the last of which showing an image of “a fire in the splicing room”. When I shared these strange dreams with my mentor, he asked me when I had the last dream of the series, the one with the fire. I told him the date. The date turned out to be the exact date a fire had broken out in his building’s “electrical room”! I had not thought of splicing in the context of electric cables, nor an actual event!

Often, dream interpretation can lead us toward insights, sometimes though far afield and away from the connecting source. Those times we may need to simply trust that the unconscious knows something the conscious mind does not yet know or may actually never find out for a fact. That is not to dismiss the dream, but to trust its unfolding in layers of possibility! Dreams after all are some of the closest links to the personal and collective unconscious gifted to us!

If “reason” or the analytical mind takes over as sole captain in a person’s fast paced, conventional life, intuition has been dropped as compass or at least co-pilot on the journey. Re-hiring intuition on the inner body-mind team only takes the willingness as a first step, and is bound to help not only with re-building trust and lowering anxiety, but can enrich us with a creative, connected and insight-full approach to life and work. Intuition can be a signpost for recognizing and re-framing instinct-driven reactivity or dissociation born from past traumatic experiences. Intuition as co-pilot, along with conscious, critical and analytical thinking, feeds the possibility of authentic presence, at-home-ness in our own skin, and being in touch with the outer world through perception that extends beyond our personal and temporal boundaries.

In her book “Your Sixth Sense”, Belleruth Naparstek says: *“Intuitive knowing brings through the normal, sensory channels information that by all accounts we aren’t supposed to be getting because it’s about something or someone other than us. It’s as though our personal boundaries were extended over more territory than our own skins, and so we pick up data from the environment as though it were about us.”* Elsewhere, she explains:

“Bohm’s central thesis is that the world and everything in it is a vast ocean of energy. What we perceive as separate parts – you, me, the chair, the dog, the trees, the air we breathe, the atmosphere surrounding the planet, and the stars in the next galaxy – are all part of a seamless whole (the holomovement) that is pulsing with life and intelligence. He calls this ocean

of living energy the implicate order because it cannot be seen (or measured, except mathematically), only inferred.

There is no cause and effect here, because there are no time sequences; nothing really happens—it just is. The implicate order's central quality of nonlocality pulses into our everyday world, and, to most physicists, nonlocality means instantaneous communication....

...This world appears solid and three-dimensional, but, because it is born of the implicate and superimplicate orders, it really pulsates with intelligence that is nonlocal—everywhere at once—and that holds all of time in a co-present fashion. Since hierarchies, structures and grids—not to mention years, days, and minutes—don't exist at this level of subtlety, things just are, embedded within one another, with all past and future events happening now....”

I want to add a quote here by quantum physicist David Bohm himself from his 2002 book *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, where he writes: *“It is proposed that the widespread and pervasive distinctions between people (race, nation, family, profession, etc., etc.) which are now preventing mankind from working together for the common good, and indeed, even for survival, have one of the key factors of their origin in a kind of thought that treats things as inherently divided, disconnected, and "broken up" into yet smaller constituent parts. Each part is considered to be essentially independent and self-existent.”*

“The notion that all these fragments are separately existent is evidently an illusion, and this illusion cannot do other than lead to endless conflict and confusion.” (1980)

In the context of intuition, everywhere-ness and “knowing” something as if out of nowhere, I have to at least mention synchronicity. Carl Jung who saw intuition as a form of involuntary perception via the unconscious, used the term *synchronicity* to describe what he called an *"acausal connecting principle"* that links mind and matter. He said this underlying connectedness manifests itself through meaningful coincidences that cannot be explained by cause and effect, such as a precognition of a future event, or a vision or feeling about something that is happening at a distance.

Some scientists hypothesize about synchronicity as explainable through quantum physics. I don't pretend to understand it, but am fascinated by it. *"They are finding that the isolation and separation of objects from each other is more apparent than real"* says Meg Lundstrom in her article *"A Wink from the Cosmos"*; *"at deeper levels, everything - atoms, cells, molecules, plants, animals, people -- participates in a sensitive, flowing web of information. Physicists have shown, for example, that if two photons are separated, no matter by how far, a change in one creates a simultaneous change in the other."*

During personal communication I shared with Adam Crabtree, he spoke of the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead who *saw intuition as "involving an unconscious experience of the world as it enters into us.... Through Intuition, I am in touch with and "know" all the rest of creation. He says that everything is in everything else all the time, that every existing thing mirrors the whole universe. This is what makes intuition possible."* ... *Whitehead says that because intuition is not analysis or knowledge arrived at through reasoning, it is able to make an addition to our knowledge that science cannot provide.... To complete that knowledge, we need intuition."* (Whitehead, 1925)

Like Adam and many other therapists and authors I consulted with on the topic of intuition, I believe that we need both kinds of knowledge: the kind we gain by steps of reason and analysis, and the unbidden kind that arrives as intuition. *"This is particularly true for the psychotherapist"*, says Adam. *"In part because of the need to make itself acceptable to the scientific conventional thinking of Western culture, psychotherapy has laid emphasis on systems, analysis, abstractions. In the process it has neglected the central role of intuition in both life and in the therapeutic process."*

Intuition connects us as therapists with our clients beyond their stories and emotions through our willingness and ability to listen with our *inner* ear, that other sense in-and outside the physical five senses – as if we were listening not only from our seat across the client, but simultaneously as if from *inside* them. The "as if" stands for this immediate and intuitive sensing as *symbolic* perception, in addition to or wrapped around what is reported to us as concrete and emotional memory and experience.

So then, how do we differentiate our personal feelings, processes and intuitive choices from those we "pick up" from or project onto others? Between caring for others, do we give ourselves time to care for ourselves, relax, breathe consciously, slow down, play, unplug from clutter and noise, tend our dreams, recoup our still-point, tune in with our deepest inner nature?

Body Dialogue Teacher Janice Rous reminds us of the importance of anchoring in the body for safe containment and a stable home for mind, spirit and emotions. *“If you are so open, that you let everything come in, but you have no membrane to separate that which you want and that which you don’t want, you may be too vulnerable to all that is floating around in the ethers,”* she writes. She always starts her movement classes with attention to breath, and grounding in the body. (Janice Stieber Rous, 2014)

We all have different ways of knowing ourselves, and how we recharge our batteries, be it through dancing, walking, gardening, prayer, yoga, meditation, painting, writing, singing, and so on. The better we know ourselves, the more likely we are to tell charged emotions from clear intuitions when they show up. Intuitive knowledge, I believe, does not come riding in on waves of emotions, although it may show up as a sudden emotional texture, colour, sound, scent or image. We may be afraid of what our intuition might serve up to our inner ear if it differed from what we expected or hoped for. A true intuitive sense is not usually accompanied by emotional guilt or bargaining. Conflicting feelings around intuition are more likely to arise from the struggle between trust and will power. Can that unapologetic response to my inner question “what do I need in this situation” be trusted when the inner voice chirps back “let it go”, or does my ego keep the upper hand with holding on? If in doubt, hum on it, and let the resonance of what rings true for you move you from inside! ~~~ *“Sound”*, says intuitive sound healer Andrea Mathieson, *“affects every molecule it touches”*.

We are vessels which information flows through constantly, but we need to be careful about our holding capacity to avoid over-flow, or end up overwhelmed. As Paula Reeves says in her book *Women’s Intuition*, *“Intuition is a distillation of the vast repository of spiritual wisdom that saturates the universe. We would be swamped by the muchness of it all if we didn’t learn to take our time, to listen, to focus, and to choose what we can respond to and what we cannot.”* Throughout the book she returns to underlining the importance that we be in touch with our own body, its signals, somatic responses and its wisdom. Unlike the philosophers who are steering away from “sensory perception” when they talk about intuition, Paula Reeves guides us directly to the wisdom of the body. *“Intuition can be very helpful in the development of confidence that our choices are our own and not just another way to please. Choice demands discernment and discrimination; otherwise we will accept what others choose for us and lose our moral footing – parroting the opinions of others, we’ll have no true compass of our own”* *“..when we wish to understand our intuition, we need to get out of our heads and into our bodies.”*

Talking of parroting, I’ll be off on a tangent for a moment here, to a real parrot, a bird who with more than the proverbial bird brain demonstrated that he could not only repeat

words he had learned, but actually use them with what appears to be intuition and intelligence. N’kisi is a parrot living in NYC with his owner, Aimee Morgana who treats him with love and respect, and in every way as family.

Aimee Morgana has been exploring the human relationship with Nature in her work dealing with animals, biology, environmental concerns, and quantum aspects of consciousness. Using her intuitive connection with animals, she has been developing her own techniques for teaching parrots to use language. “N’kisi”, she claims, “*speaks in sentences, showing a grasp of grammar in formulating his own original expressions. He is capable of actual conversations. He often initiates comments about what we are doing, feeling, looking at, thinking, etc, which is how we discovered his ability to read minds. N’kisi often demonstrates telepathy in spontaneous situations, and also communicates love, compassion, and a keen sense of humor*”. Incidentally, I looked up the name N’kisi and found out that it is an African term for the meaning of Spirit! A little synchronistic moment, as we’ll see later...

Many years ago, in the mid 80’s, I had the opportunity to participate in a weekend workshop on parapsychology with biologist and author Rupert Sheldrake. He believes that “*memory is inherent in nature, and that natural systems.... inherit a collective memory from all previous things of their kind*” which he refers to as “*morphic resonance*”. “*These fields of energetic memory*”, Paula Reeves writes, “*telegraph not only the limitations of the past but the changes of the present. Bodymind’s naturally intuitive energy field is an effective transmitter for these historical “morphogenic” fields of collective wisdom.*”

I vividly remember Sheldrake’s story about his collaboration with Aimee Morgana and her amazing parrot who had learned to not only read her waking mind, but occasionally would even tell her her dreams (he slept in the same room as she) when she woke up!

Sheldrake has published articles such as *Testing a Language – Using a Parrot for Telepathy* in the Journal for Scientific exploration. Like many others, including Whitehead whose philosophy Sheldrake was influenced by, he strongly emphasizes the idea of interconnectedness between all organisms.

A very moving example of interconnectedness I found in the South African documentary *The Animal Communicator*. In this DVD, animal communicator Anna Breytenbach shows more beautifully than I have ever seen demonstrated the subtle differences between instinct and intuition, both communicated from the body. In the animal world, the drive to survive even the most unthinkable abuse and life threatening danger is instinctual and manifests most often through either aggression or simulating death. Responding to her quiet question or admiring curiosity like “who are you?”, baboons and other wild animals appear to feel the intentional benevolence Anna beams out. The common ground that connects her with the animals is literally the ground they share, that is the earth, and on that, their mutual intuitive in-tune-ness with each other, wherever she goes.

Animal sanctuaries all over the world call on Anna Breytenbach for help with troubled, traumatized animals. Anna attunes herself with the animal through the quiet projecting of mental images into their space. In the universal language of feelings, images and sensations such as physical aches and pains, deep or surface, sharp or dull, fresh or old, she gets back messages about the animal’s wounds, suffering and emotional terror that is stored in its nervous system. Once she has picked up the messages, she is able to confer on the animal an affirmation of the goodwill and healing intentions of its new surroundings. Through this way of intuitive communication, Anna Breytenbach creates a human bridge between human and non-human animal! The wild animals she comes in contact with seem to sense that Anna is there to heal, not to harm.

In the documentary, a black leopard whose integrity had been terribly compromised by his unfortunate past had remained aggressive and huddled in a corner even long after he had been rescued to the natural and friendly environment of a wild cat sanctuary. Upon Breytenbach’s assuring the black beast of the caregivers’ willingness to let him be who he was, without conditions or demands on him, and by conferring on him sincere acknowledgment of his majestic beauty and power, he began to venture out into the pasture for the first time since his arrival at the sanctuary! He was transformed and restored to his true black-leopard-self! His name too was changed: no longer ‘Diabolo’ the diabolic, but appreciated for his true being, the leopard relaxed into who he really was. The new name bestowed upon him was Spirit!

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*Some questions around Intuition to contemplate and discuss*

How and when in your experience, does intuition enter into the therapeutic process?

How do you access your intuition?

What are some challenges for us as therapists with our own and our clients' intuitive antennas?

When do we express a hunch to a client, and when do we contain it, and just stay present to the tension between knowing and not-knowing?

What does "trust yourself" mean to you?

How can we be truly present in the moment, with curiosity and openness, without inner judgment, interpretation, or comparing with our own or others' past experiences?

Please feel free to send questions and comments.

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