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ONGOING DISCUSSION "THOUGHT PIECE"

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UNTYING THE KNOT TO CREATIVITY BEYOND THOUGHT

A Trans-Egoic Perspective On Innovation

Andrew N. Johnson

“Creativity beyond thought” (CBT) refers to “a-ha” moments of profound insight that are distinct from mere better understanding. Whereas one can mentate on finding a solution to a problem by thinking systematically, CBT solutions arise spontaneously, seemingly unbidden, out of the blue, when one is in a state of deep relaxation and presence. When Einstein had his biggest insight in arriving at Special Relativity, which he called “The Step”, (during a visit to Bern with his friend Michele Besso), he had temporarily let go of mentating a solution to the apparent incompatibility between relativity and the constancy of the speed of light, and had gone out for a walk. He recalled the momentous occasion as one of “chance”, “suddenness” and “inspiration”. [Interestingly, there is very little documentation or background to the discovery of Special Relativity, in comparison to the exhaustive amount for General Relativity.]

The Notion

In interviews I conducted to better understand the process of CBT, subjects have likewise reported that illumination came “like a bolt”, “out of nowhere”, “just like that”. It could be said that this type of creativity comes to the person, and not the other way around. In that sense, one cannot really say that they “had” an idea – it would be more fair to say that the idea “had” them! When one deeply looks at the situation, it becomes impossible to take credit for the CBT idea, as it didn’t originate with the self, but from beyond. But from where beyond?

The physicist David Bohm (a colleague of Einstein's, incidentally, whom he had named as his "intellectual successor") has ascribed scientific language to the notion that (at least) two types of reality exist: the *explicate order* is that in which we normally reside, composed of physical reality in which space and time exist and are knowable. The *implicate order* precedes the explicate in that it is enfolded (infinite patterns of possibility) and gives rise to the explicate. This implicate order is synonymous with the dimension of being which sages and mystics have variously described for millennia as "radiant emptiness", "nothingness", "stillness", "oneness", "infinity", "timelessness". The implicate order is therefore non-dual in nature, and the explicate, dual. Biologist Rupert Sheldrake describes it as the "Morphic Field", an organizing field from which all manifest reality emerges. Buckminster Fuller refers to "pattern integrity" as the primordial ground that is the whole out of which is spawned all concrete manifestations. Spiritually speaking, all the major religions acknowledge the implicate order as the source of all creation, albeit by different names. In Christian tradition, it is the "Holy Spirit", in Islam and Sufism, the "Open Heart", in Buddhism, the stillness that is discernable after cessation of the mind. Please feel free to use any term that best fits for you.

CBT comes from the implicate order of non-duality, is downloaded/ received into the explicate order by the person, "unpacked" or interpreted by the brain, decoded through thought and articulated through language so that it may be disseminated into broader human consciousness.

Consciousness is stratified in various ways according to various models, and in general, these models agree on three main stages of evolution: pre-egoic, egoic and post or trans-egoic. The

pre-egoic stage is generally up to 5-6 years of age, with the egoic stage lasting the balance of most persons' lifetime. The post-egoic or trans-egoic stage occurs to few people in their lifetime. This stage is characterized by a switch in leadership from selfhood led by the ego to the Self led by listening to the implicate order. The ego continues but is no longer in charge – it is now a part of, and serves the higher master of *presence*. While most of us do not live in the trans-egoic stage, we do regularly visit it as a state. In deep meditation, deep non-REM sleep and throughout the day, whenever a total gap exists in thought streams, we are visiting this state. We are then available for CBT to arise. And arise it does – most people have experienced CBT, though may not have known (or cared) to label it as such.

Untying the Knot

Most people report that when they experience CBT, it is profound and meaningful. How, then, can we have more consistent and frequent occurrences of CBT? Or to put it from the point of view of the CBT: how can a person more consistently and frequently align themselves into a state of being that promotes the receiving of CBT?

Many models for creativity have been developed and used successfully, such as Ackoff's three-step process, DeBono's Six Thinking Hats, etc. These egoic models are complementary to CBT in that they provide the context within which CBT arises and is interpreted or unpacked. They are particularly useful in helping to set the mental conditions for the arising of CBT in that CBT "prefers" a mind that is fluid, lateral and unbound by the shackles of rigidly held assumptions. However, a mentally fluid and dynamic disposition is not a sufficient backdrop for CBT. Since the mind is but one *aspect* of the system (the human

organism), and that CBT originates from the reality that is the ground of being for the whole of the system (and indeed for the whole of everything), then if someone wishes to cultivate CBT, she must first prepare the whole of the garden. Body, mind and spirit must be aligned in a state of presence within stillness. This can be done intentionally, and it also occurs without strategic intent – either way, presence in stillness is the key. Archimedes was having a bath when his Eureka moment arrived; Newton was sitting under a tree when his apple fell.

The intentional approach is simple, yet not easy. As Einstein said: “Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler”. How does one align body, mind and spirit? There is no right approach, and many approaches point the way. Alignment can be attained as a momentary state, or as a more permanent and all-encompassing stage. While the latter is a longer process, it also yields many more benefits. This is the focus of my company, miruspoint. For some, meditation/prayer is useful. For others, what works is following a path of subtraction: understand what is stopping you from being aligned, and dis-identify with that, until what remains is essence – the Self. Still, it’s a vast field of possibility, with many approaches. Which is best? It depends on you. Whatever method enables you to come to a state of stillness will be useful. Once in stillness, listen without expectation. Again, this is simple yet not easy. Often, the inquiry/questions that we wrestle with for long periods of time are the ones that matter most to us. And as we are strongly identified with our minds, it seems paradoxical that we must let go of our minds/move beyond the mind to find the solution. In the *Laws of Form*, G. Spencer Brown says that new knowledge *comes* when one holds the problem, until it yields. This desire for solution is a necessary ingredient to CBT – it serves as the focus into emptiness, from which wisdom may emerge. And so against the backdrop of

your inquiry, and the work you have done of loosening assumptions, seeing the situation from a perspective of increasing wholes (per Taguchi's injunction of concern for society as a whole) and generating possibilities, now you must let go of mind and seeking altogether and sink into the Self so that you may *listen in the stillness to that which wants to emerge*. This is a garden in which CBT flowers. And there are no guarantees.

CBT cannot be commanded to arise. As it is a creature of the implicate order, it manifests in mysterious ways which are unpredictable. As Paul Tillich said in his sermon on Grace and Acceptance: "It happens; or it does not happen. And certainly it does not happen if we try to force it upon ourselves, just as it shall not happen so long as we think, in our self complacency, that we have no need of it."

Think of the time(s) you have experienced CBT in your life. Usually, it is such an extraordinary moment that we remember details about it – not just what the idea was, but where we were, what we were doing, the smell in the air, etc. This is because we were fully present at the time. Notice if you were actively mentating on a solution, or if your mind was momentarily at rest. Many report a "distorted" perception of time, as if they were in slow-motion. This is because "no-time" is a feature of deep presence. There is often an accompanying sense of deep peace and elation or joy – other features of presence within stillness.

CBT is therefore "outside the system" and as such provides wisdom that is unfettered by conditioning or assumptions. It is another dimension (depth) to be plumbed within the system

thinker. If lateral thinking is the egoic tool of choice for creativity and innovation, then CBT is its trans-egoic complement.

When a CBT moment does occur and illuminates or conceptually solves a problem, then what? It can be explicated and made concrete. There exist many great models within the systems community for doing this and for designing systems that continue to stay solved as long as continuous improvement is systemically applied. CBT can be complementarily incorporated to these models and systems along the whole of the continuum.

At the 2007 In2In Forum, during the pre-conference workshop of the same title as this paper, participants will have the opportunity to discuss this topic with me, and to experience ways to enter the state of stillness, from where they can listen without expectation for that which wants to emerge, thus illuminating their topic of inquiry. If this is of interest to you, come to the 2007 Forum! I look forward to seeing you there. And bring a worthy question...

Andrew N. Johnson – Biography

Andrew Johnson brings a rich history in facilitation, coaching, training, economics and national politics to his role as founding partner of miruspoint Facilitators Inc. His articulate insight, passion for individual transcendence and strategic execution of change processes have helped shape miruspoint's remarkable development as a force in the world of transpersonal psychology and evolution.

Andrew graduated with Honours in Economics from Carleton University and worked on Parliament Hill as a Committee Officer, notably on the Meech Lake Accord, and later as Assistant to the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. As the Vice President for an economic consulting firm, he authored policy papers for the Canadian and foreign governments. In the early 1990s he launched Andrew Johnson Associates Inc. which specializes in partnering, team building, strategic planning, executive coaching, organizational management and facilitation. His clients range from the municipal, provincial and federal governments to major construction and design, oil and gas, and forestry and transportation industries as well as small businesses. Andrew's exceptional work in these varied sectors has garnered him a reputation for applying creative approaches to understanding people, conscientious attention to detail as well as commitment to win/win outcomes in both career and personal paths.

Andrew's joyous life with his wife, Nancy, and their daughter, Gemma, inform and illuminate his perpetual curiosity about how to live with greater congruence, compassion and freedom.

*"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."*

– T.S. Eliot