NATURA SOPHIA
The Wisdom of Nature

Intuition as a Spiritual Path

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The intuition is very little understood at the present moment. If we are to develop a more holistic relationship with ourselves and the world, however, we will need to develop the intuition, because 'simply put' this is the faculty that is responsible for holistic thinking.

C. G. Jung posited the existence of four basic 'functions' of the psyche: intuition, thinking, feeling, and sensation (physical sensation). This "terminology has been widely accepted" (Dyer, 1991, 66). However, earlier work with these four channels of interaction between person and world was accomplished by Rudolf Steiner. His book *The Philosophy of Freedom* (1896), reissued as *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path* (1996) argues that this one faculty of the soul lifts us up to, not only a holistic, but a spiritual view of the world. In this short essay we will attempt to learn about the intuition, what it is, how to develop it, and how it births a spiritual view of life.

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There are some great similarities in the teachings of Jung and Steiner that reinforce each other. At the same time, there are deep differences. A contrast and comparison of some of the most outstanding differences and similarities helps us to understand this subject.

Jungian Psychology

Carl Gustav Jung was a psychiatrist who originally embraced the teachings of the Viennesse psychiatrist Sigmund Freud. The two had a great deal in common; when they first met they talked for hours. Freud's discovery and theory of the unconscious was a momentous addition to Western culture. Jung would spend his life immersed in the psychology of the unconscious. However, he and Freud had a serious break.

Freud introduced the terms ego, superego, and id to represent the conscious self (ego), the higher self (superego) created by in-grained social moral education, and the highly-programmed unconscious self (id) that carried the deep, often unacknowledged desires and complexes of a person; sometimes irrupting into consciousness with such interesting and disturbing results. The three together comprised 'the psyche.'

Jung retained the word ego to represent the ordinary, daily, conscious self, but he vastly expanded and developed a psychology of the 'higher self,' which he named the 'Self.' Individuation, or becoming a unique individual, was the 'goal' of the 'Self,' which was different in each person. Jung adopted the theory of the unconscious, but he divided it into a personal and a collective expression. He dropped Freud's term 'id.' He continued to use the term 'psyche' to refer to the totality of psychological functions, both conscious and unconscious. His doctrine of the collective unconscious is still controversial through the idea of a 'racial memory' has taken hold in modern culture.

Another area where Jung parted ways with Freud was over their concept of the nature of 'psychic energy.' Freud saw the energy of the psyche as largely made up of repressed and unrepressed sexual energy, while Jung felt that it included the drive towards self-development and creativity (individuation). Freud had used the word 'libido' to describe the primarily sexual 'psychic energy.' Jung used this term in a broader sense, to include sexual and non-sexual psychic drives.

As we see here, Jung felt no compunction about changing the definition of terms inherited from others. He did this not only with Freudian psychology, but with the Western philosophy tradition, which up until the time of Freud was the vehicle through which the soul or psyche was examined. Thus, Jung adopted the term 'archetype' from philosophy. Originally it meant a specific, defined pattern,

characteristic, type, or 'essence,' but in Jung's hands it came to represent a powerful constellation of psychic energy in the personal or collective unconscious. This represented a substantial change and I have always felt that in doing this Jung showed disrespect for an established tradition. However, there is a problem with the concept of the archetype: both interpretations are valid.

We can see these two differences if we take a look at a well established archetype like "Venus." To the philosophers, and especially astrologers, Venus has a very specific set of meanings: femininity, beauty, harmony, grace, romance, and sexuality, etc. As the 'ruler of Libra,' in astrology, her romantic, partnership, and harmonizing qualities are brought out, while as the 'ruler of Taurus' her tactile sensuous nature is developed. However, a highly charged 'archetype' like Venus is going to be different for each person, and therefore Jung's view of the archetype as a highly charged psychic content also has value. It is unfortunate, however, that he choose to change the definition of an established term.

Jung's Psychological Archetype

Early in his work with the contents of the unconscious Jung adopted the term 'archetype' to describe a complex of psychic energy that has a collective group value, transcending the individual but always appearing in the psychological life of individuals.

> *Archetypes are, by definition, factors and motifs that arrange the psychic elements into certain images, characterized as archetypal, but in such a way that they can be recognized only from the effects they produce. They exist preconsciously, and presumably they form the structural dominants of the psyche in general* (Jung, 11:222).

Thus, deep within the collective psyche of the human race there is an archetype of the mother, often called the 'Great Mother,' including not only the individual mother but all the goddesses of Nature, the harvest, life and death, etc. A person might identify herself with the Mother archetype, or she might appear as a representation of the Mother for another person, even if she is not physically a mother. A goddess or powerful historical woman might also serve this purpose in a dream, myth, or deep-reaching literature. Other archetypes would include the 'Child,' the 'Wise Old Man,' the Fool, and so on.

Although we can name and classify these archetypes, they cannot be completely tied down to any set of reference points. The same person, image, or mythological story could possibly represent the Fool to one person, the Child to another, and even the Wise Old Man to a third. Thus, the psychological archetype is not ultimately a definite 'thing,' yet when it appears it is sometimes impossible to ignore. Indeed, archetypes have killed millions of people. The Shadow, a projection of what one fears, is especially remiss in this regard. Despite such power, the archetype is never directly seen or approachable, but is 'recognized from its effects.' These "effects" are the "archetypal images" (Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche,* 414).

Jung adopted this term from philosophical and esoteric tradition.

> *The term "archetype," introduced in 1919 and today in general use, was taken by Jung from the* Corpus Hermeticum *(God is "the archetypal light") and from Dionysius the Areopagite: "That the seal is not entire and the same in all its impressions . . . is not due to the seal itself, . . . but the difference of the substance which share it makes the impressions of the one, entire, identical archetype to be different." "They say of God that he is . . . an Archetypal stone . . . . " The term also occurs in Irenaeus: "The creator of the world did not fashion these things directly from himself, but copied them from archetypes outside himself"* (Jolande, 1959, 34).

Yet, far from representing the continuation of the use of a traditional term, Jung's definition represents a change in definition and therefore a misuse of a very definitely defined term. Rather than complementing the philosophy and esotericism, Jung treats these activities of society as defunct, a mere junkyard of spare terms from which to take what one wants. It is no wonder that students of esoteric philosophy have considered his misuse of their technical terms as a violation and degradation.

Here we see, by the way, that the origin and use of the term archetype arises in the Hermetic stream of thought.

Jung and Spirituality

Jung has often been viewed as having spiritual tendencies. It would be more correct to say, however, that Jung embraced spiritual tendencies within his system of psychology. For Jung, spiritual matters were psychological and all were embraced within the collective unconscious. In 1931, in his preface to Richard Wilhelm's translation of *The Secret of the Golden Flower* Jung wrote:

> *It is really my purpose to push aside without mercy the metaphysical claims of all esoteric teaching. . . . It is my firm intention to bring things which have a metaphysical sound into the daylight of psychological understanding, and to do my best to prevent the public from believing in obscure words of power* (Jung, 1969, 128).

Until the appearance of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung has been stymied in the development of the theory of the collective unconscious. *Golden Flower.* From this he came to realize that in spiritual, mythological, Gnostic, and alchemical texts there appeared massive amounts of symbolism that verified the collective origin of some of his patient's images. Thus began, for Jung, a life-long study of these texts. This led some to conclude that Jung was a Gnostic, but in fact he was attempting, as he says above, to demystify the metaphysical.

He first developed the theory in 1913 from the contents of patient's dreams and experiences, but he was unable to find another source against which to check his findings until he came across the

Jung rejected all "metaphysical" interpretations of man's situation. In other words, any use of non-ordinary faculties of the psyche, such as clairvoyance or the use of hallucinogenic plants, were not allowable in the modern landscape of acceptable ideas.

> *One cannot grasp anything metaphysically, but it can be done psychologically. Therefore I strip things of their metaphysical wrappings in order to make them objects of psychology* (Jung, 1969, 129).

In denying the possibility of metaphysical perception, Jung was enforcing a basic standard of Western science, which does not allow the use of any faculties but those of logic and physical sense perception. There is, of course, no proof that metaphysical methods of perception do not exist and are not accurate. Jung does goes on to say, shortly after, "if finally there should still be an ineffable metaphysical element, it would have the best opportunity of revealing itself" after such a judicious analysis removed the elements of psychological symbolism.

Jung's rejection of the 'metaphysical' included the rejection of God as anything other than a content of the unconscious. The "metaphysical" argument oversteps "human limitations" to produce "a deity outside the range of our experience" in the rational/physical realm, which has the power of producing "psychic states" (Jung, 1969, 130).

Jung's attitude towards God came to the fore in a dream he had late in life. His father, who was a Lutheran pastor troubled by doubts, now long deceased, came to Jung in a dream and asked for 'marital advice.' Jung's mother was still alive. Then, he rose and Jung followed him. He crossed the street, entered a house and brought Jung to a room on a higher floor where, supposedly, the Deity was resident. The elder Jung bowed his forehead to the floor, but try as he might, Jung could not. He latter explained that he believed that acknowledging God as greater than the Self diminished consciousness.

Jung's Definition of the Intuition

The first modern definition of the intuition as a psychological faculty was offered by Jung. His work on the intuition is embedded in his more comprehensive work on the four functions (sensation, feeling, thinking, intuition) and psychological types.

Jung became interested in the "problem of types" early in his career. His work on *Psychologische Typen* was published in 1921 and translated into English the next year. I am using the 1976 edition. In addition to defining the four basic psychological functions he also introduced the terms introvert and extrovert. Combined, these produce eight primary 'psychological types' that are still the basis for the most widely recognized typological systems used in psychology.

From the beginning, Jung's faculties or functions were associated with personality types. This reflected a long tradition of constitutional typology, mostly used in traditional medicine. Here are Jung's descriptions of the four psychological functions from an early writing.

> *The conscious psyche is an apparatus for adaptation and orientation, and consists of a number of different psychic functions. Among these we can distinguish four basic*

> *ones*: sensation, thinking, feeling, intuition. *Under sensation I include all perceptions by means of the sense organs; by thinking I mean the function of intellectual cognition and the forming of logical conclusions; feeling is the function of subjective valuation; intuition I take as perception by way of the unconscious, or perception of unconscious contents.*
>
> *So far as my experience goes, these four basic functions seem to me sufficient to express and represent the various modes of conscious orientation. For complete orientation all four functions should contribute equally: thinking should facilitate cognition and judgment, feeling should tell us how and to what extent a thing is important or unimportant for us, sensation should convey concrete reality to us through seeing, hearing, tasting, etc., and intuition should enable us to divine the hidden possibilities in the background, since these too belong to the complete picture of a given situation* (Jung, 1976, 518).

Jung goes on to explain that in reality, however, the four functions are not uniformly and equally used, but one tends to dominate over the others. This priority of one function over the other three creates a dominant type, producing the four psychological types.

> *As a rule one or the other function occupies the foreground, while the rest remain undifferentiated in the background. Thus there are many people who restrict themselves to the simple perception of concrete reality, without thinking about it or taking feeling values into account. They bother just as little about the possibilities hidden in a situation. I describe such people as* sensation types. *Others are exclusively oriented by what they think, and simply cannot adapt to a situation which they are unable to understand intellectually. I call such people* thinking types. *Others, again, ask themselves by their feeling impressions. These are the* feeling types. *Finally, the* intuitives *concern themselves neither with ideas nor with feeling reactions, nor yet with the reality of things, but surrender themselves wholly to the lure of possibilities, and abandon every situation in which no further possibilities can be scented* (Jung, 1976, 519).

Jung classified feeling and thinking as 'rational' functions in distinction to sensation and intuition, which are 'irrational' in attitude. What he means is that thinking and feeling follow a predictable order. Rational thinking is based on cause and effect reasoning and is bond to logic. Feeling, although seemingly irrational, can be studied and understood. Deep emotions are predictably created by reinforcement and their history, symptoms, and outcomes can be rationally traced -- hence the existence of psychology and psychiatry. The big, growling dog causes fear; we have seen big dogs before; we know what they can do. To stick one's hand out towards the jaws of the dog would be, as we say, 'irrational.'

By comparison, the other two functions, intuition and sensation, produce psychic contents immediately and without reflection. We round the corner and see a dog. We consider it to be real. There is no evidence for its reality except that we are convinced that what we see and hear in the street is real. We are completely sure the dog is real but that convincement is irrational because it is not based on orderly thinking or feeling. We did not reach a conclusion after investigation: the dog is real no matter what we think or feel about it. It exists independent of rationality. The intuition helps us size up the moment. Rationality tells us we are safe because the dog is tied up, but the intuition notices something is wrong. Something doesn't feel right and in another moment we understand this because the owner takes out a knife and cuts the leash. And indeed, it was proved to be true. Sensation provides us with the experience of the real; intuition with truth. Neither of these are rational or deductive. They appear complete and fully developed the moment they occur in our consciousness. Therefore, they are in origin and content, irrational.

The owner didn't act rationally and the intuition didn't track the danger rationally; the intuition just knew that something was wrong.

The arrangement of the four functions into two pairs (rational and irrational) produces a cross or, as Jung was later to describe it, a *mandala.* Thinking and feeling always oppose each other on the rational axis, sensation and intuition on the irrational. Opposite functions, Jung went on to find, tend to suppress each other, so that when thinking is dominant feeling is unconscious, and vice versa. Thus, the four dominant types tend each of them to have an Achilles' heal, or weak function that expresses through the unconscious in a fashion that is less articulate and more psychologically insecure and helpless. These are called the superior and inferior functions, respectively.

INTUITION

THINKING + FEELING

SENSATION

The Four Functions

Such is the general context within which Jung placed the intuition. Now let us look at his definition of the intuition. While Jung establishes many important aspects of the intuition, I take issue with a number of his definitions.

In the definitions section at the back of *Psychological Types,* Jung establishes three main criteria regarding the intuition. "In intuition a content presents itself whole and complete, without our being able to explain or discover how this content came into existence." Hence, the intuition "mediates perceptions in an unconscious way" Second, it arrives in consciousness "whole and complete" (Jung, 1979, 453). In other words, the intuitive content does not require another intuitive impulse, or a thought, feeling, or sensation to bring it to completion. Third, the intuitive conclusion appears to the intuitive to be absolutely true. "Intuitive knowledge possesses an intrinsic certainty and conviction," writes Jung (1976, 453). "Intuition shares this quality with sensation. . . whose certainty rests on its physical foundations." First, he says, the intuitive content arises out of the unconscious. (Jung, 1976, 453). Second, it arrives in consciousness "whole and complete" (Jung, 1979, 543). In other words, the intuitive content does not require another intuitive to be absolutely true. "Intuitive knowledge possesses an intrinsic certainty and conviction," writes Jung (1976, 453). "Intuition shares this quality with sensation... whose certainty rests on its physical foundations."

The third point is one of the most remarkable elements of intuitive psychology, and I agree with Jung's statement. Number two is also true: the intuitive content arrives as a "whole and complete" entity that does not require further elaboration. However, Jung does not make clear a related point, namely that the intuitive content is itself a picture of a whole or complete situation. What the intuition seeks is not "possibilities" per se, as he says above, but an understanding of how the possibilities form themselves into a whole. The first point, that the intuition arises from the unconscious is one that both myself and Rudolf Steiner would disagree with completely. Steiner writes that the intuition increases self-awareness.

The Intuition in Literature

As the intuition came closer and closer to social recognition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we can be sure that it generated a certain amount of literary description, for such things on the edge of social awareness have a fascinating quality, especially if they are embodied in a fictional (or even a real) character. Such a character was Sherlock Holmes, created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The following paragraphs represent the introduction both to Dr. Watson, and to the reader, of the great detective.

"What ineffable twaddle," proclaimed the good doctor, on reading an article shown him by his new acquaintance. That article is by me, smirks the confident detective. Holmes then treats us to a description of the intuition works.

> *"But do you mean to say," I said, "that without leaving your room you can unravel some knot which other men can make nothing of, although they have seen every detail for themselves?"*

> *"Quite so. I have a kind of intuition that way. Now and again a case turns up which is a little more complex. Then I have to bustle about and see things with my own eyes. You see I have a lot of special knowledge which I apply to the problem, and which facilitates matters wonderfully. Those rules of deduction laid down in that article [written by Holmes] which aroused your scorn are invaluable to me in practical work. Observation with me is second nature. You appeared to be surprised when I told you, on our first meeting, that you had come from Afghanistan."*
>
> *"You were told, no doubt."*
>
> *"Nothing of the sort. I knew you came from Afghanistan. From long habit the train of thought ran so swiftly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps. There were such steps, however. The train of reasoning ran, 'Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He had undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan.' The whole train of thought did not occupy a second. I then remarked that you came from Afghanistan, and you were astonished."*
>
> *"It is simple enough as you explain," I said, smiling* (Conan Doyle, 2006, 11-12).

Even this description leaves a few intuitive deductions unexplained. What is a "gentleman of a medical type" or "with the air of a military man?" These sorts of pattern recognitions are typical evidence of intuitive thinking. Dr. Watson, as he shows throughout Conan Doyle's writings, is enough of an intuitive to understand simple intuitive analysis of character, a pursuit more widely accepted in the nineteenth century than today. He also can follow Holmes' deductions when they are explained to him.

Notice the emphasis Conan Doyle puts on the word *knew* in the first sentence -- it is the only word in the paragraph in Italics. He understands that intuition produces a sensation of *knowing* in the participant. That is the essential quality of intuition.

Holmes relates some additional facts about the background knowledge necessary for the successful use of the intuition. One needs plenty of simple, raw data.

> *You see I have a lot of special knowledge which I apply to the problem, and which facilitates matters wonderfully. Those rules of deduction laid down in that article which aroused your scorn are invaluable to me in practical work. Observation with me is second nature* (2006, 11).

Several things are interesting about this fictional account. Note first that the author, speaking through Holmes, uses the word intuition somewhat tentatively: "I have a kind of intuition that way." This demonstrates the extent to which the word (and the function it represented) was not understood with confidence in the late nineteenth century. The same is true today.
The second observation we can make is that Holmes needs a certain amount of information to make his deductions. They do not by any means fly to him from his unconscious. He requires and uses actual facts at all times. On the other hand, the steps between the observation and the conclusion are often carried out by Holmes in a relatively unconscious state, as he himself notes. "The whole train of thought did not occupy a second." Yet, whenever he is called upon to account for his conclusions Holmes is able to reconnect them at will for the sake of his listeners.

Jung did not need to associate the intuition with the unconscious. There was a long historical tradition in which the intuition was associated with thinking. Indeed, we see that right from the start it was confused with thinking by Plato and Aristotle. The latter defines it as a type of "logic." The association of intuitive thinking with light and consciousness, rather than darkness and the unconscious, is almost universal in traditional literature. The Hermetic writings, with their strong emphasis on thinking from types, always associated the archetype or type with light and knowledge of it with conscious enlargement and enlightenment. During the Renaissance, Marsilio Ficino, Paracelsus, and even Sir Frances Bacon associate thought from similarity or intuition with conscious thinking.

While the source and meaning of an intuition may not be evident to an outside observer, to the intuitive it often as a 'logic' of its own -- i.e., the intuitive can trace the process by which the intuitive content appeared in consciousness as readily as any sensation, thought, or feeling. For instance, if the intuitive does not have enough data, he or she cannot come to an intuitive conclusion. Supplied with a bit more information, however, the intuitive suddenly sees the relationship between disparate contents. (This causes what is called an 'aha moment.') He or she can often explain the reason why additional

information was needed to arrive at the conclusion -- in other words, the whole process occurs in full conscious. If there is a problem with communication or explanation, this is usually due to the fact that modern Western languages have been stripped of their intuitive reference points.

The fact that the intuition draws on fully conscious contents is more clear in the personality Jung calls the "extroverted intuitive." Here we have a person who is an excellent judge of external circumstances. One sees this psychological type especially in the most successful generals and leaders. They see openings others do not and exploit them quickly and effectively. One thinks here of Patton, Napoleon, and Alexander the Great.

I like the study of Civil War generals as a basis for understanding personality types. Sherman commented that Grant had the better eye for the whole picture, including railroads and supply lines, while he had the better eye for terrain and the disposition of troops. Thus, Sherman gained confidence from serving under Grant and never aspired to surpass him; he intuitively understood the qualities each possessed and their relative rank in a military organization. Robert E. Lee was not only an intuitive, but a 'trans-medium' or psychic who could sense his opponent's thoughts and feelings. His best battles were fought when he could sense his opponent's intentions and see the whole battle and how it was being led by his opponent in his mind's eye. This approach depends on a highly developed feeling function and helps to explain why he was very curteous and careful in his relationships with others. He needed to keep his emotional boundaries very precise or he would not have been able to lead effectively. When he met Grant he sensed a toughness and resolution he had not previously encountered.

Although the intuitive extracts information from the internal or external environment, when the 'aha moment' of intuitive realization occurs it is accompanied by the approval of the unconscious. The instincts, which are felt in the stomach, communicate to the mind, in extreme cases through a 'thump on the belly.' The latter can be a response to a feeling, thought, sensation, or intuition that gives the instincts a sense of rightness and appropriateness. It is not connected to any particular function. It is the direct voice of the unconscious.

Jung mistakes the relationship between the intuition and instinct, calling the former a product of the latter. "Intuition is a kind of instinctive apprehension" (Jung, 1976, 453). It would have been better for Jung to say that the 'intuition is like the instincts,' in that both occur directly, without mediation through the conscious mind. I would have to say that it is only because we don't understand the intuition or the instincts very well that such mistakes can be made. The gut level or animal instincts are really the still-present remnant of our animal selves. They are centered in the autonomic nervous system, which controls unconscious activities and are, by nature, unconscious. Yet, they communicate to the conscious mind, especially about issues of safety and danger, or pleasure and pain. This is has nothing to do with the intuition, which is attempting to get the 'whole picture.'

My perspective has the support of history. From Plato down to the Renaissance, at least, the intuition was looked upon, when it was considered at tall, as a kind of mental activity.

At no point in the intuitive process is consciousness lost; in fact, the intuition heightens the sense of individuality and self-consciousness, as Steiner points out.

In the case of an extreme intuitive, like Paracelsus, the objects of the intuition appear to be substantial or material. We see this in Paracelsus' three primary substances or *principia,* as he calls them. These are entirely intuitive concepts, yet Paracelsus defined them by their physical properties: *mercurius* is that which vaporizes, *sulphur* is that which burns, and *salt* is that which remains in the ash. This sort of writing usually only appears in the most extreme, ruthless intuitives who have little regard for the conventions of materialism. Another good example here would be Dr. James Tyler Kent, who introduced constitutional prescribing into homeopathy.

> *The materialist to be consistent with his principles is obliged to deny the soul, and to deny a substantial God, because the energy which he dwells upon so much is nothing, and he must assume that God is nothing, and therefore there is none. But the one who is rational will be led to see that there is a supreme God, that He is substantial, that He is a substance* (Kent, 1979, 69).

I call this a trait of 'ruthless intuitives' because we find the opposite in 'moderate intuitives' like Plato and Aristotle, who consider intuitive contents or archetypes to be 'spirit-like.' This is, of course, exactly what Kent is objecting to.

Intuition and Holism

The second characteristic of the intuition that Jung touches upon is its "whole and complete" quality. He describes this as a characteristic of the intuitive deduction. However, it is also a description of the insight provided by the intuition. This is the faculty that fills in the blanks and makes the observation of fragments fall into a complete picture. One understands the relationship of the parts to the whole. This, of course, is the opposite of the other functions, which split phenomena into pieces. This is a point which Steiner, rather than Jung, brings up.

In our situation as observers of the world, it is impossible to perceive more than one content at a time, including sensations, thoughts and feelings. The intuition also falls under this limitation, but notice that when it passes under the microscope of direct observation of the mind it is experienced as a picture of totality and wholeness.

Intuition and Truth

A third characteristic is described very well by Jung. The intuitive commonly feels the intuitive deduction to be a revelation of absolute truth. For instance, Paracelsus proclaims that his medical theory, "proceeding as it does from the light of nature, can never, through its consistency, pass away or be changed" (Waite, 1976, I:24). This type of thinking shows up even in the writings of Sir Frances Bacon (1561-1626):

> *Truth should be sought, not in the felicity of any particular age, which is a variable thing, but in the light of Nature and experience, which is eternal* (Bacon, 1994, 63).

Jung (1976, 453) explains:

> *Intuitive knowledge possesses an intrinsic certainty and conviction, which enabled Spinoza (and Bergson) to uphold the* scientia intuitiva *as the highest form of knowledge. Intuition shares this quality with sensation. . . whose certainty rests on its physical foundations*.

For intuitives, intuitive impressions are as real as objective sensations received from the physical body. It is as if their knowledge came straight from the mouth of a god.

The Intuition and Excitement

One characteristic of the intuitive which Jung captures, that we see in the character of Sherlock Holmes, is the latter's tendency to "abandon every situation in which no further possibilities can be scented" (Jung, 1976, 519). This thoroughly describes Holmes, who will even resort to cocaine when there are no cases upon which to stimulate his intuition. The intuition is a source of excitement and as such it can be almost an addiction.

Rudolf Steiner: Intuition as a Spiritual Path

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) belongs to the generation prior to C. G. Jung, and his ideas on the intuition and other faculties of the human being were published twenty years earlier than Jung's. Steiner recognized four basic psychological faculties similar to Jung's four functions and described them using almost the same terms as Jung (thinking, feeling, intuition, and observation). We cannot say that he anticipated Jung because both drew on German and classical philosophy, in which these ideas had been long discussed. Both Jung and Steiner reflected "and fully acknowledged" earlier philosophical, occult, and mythic sources for their ideas.

My point is not to establish priority, anyway, but to arrange and develop our knowledge of the intuition in a progression fashion. From this perspective, I feel it is better to have Steiner follow Jung. The latter established the definitions of the four functions that have subsequently been recognized by psychology and culture. However, Jung did not appreciate or describe some elements of the intuition, and he did not attempt to put it into a spiritual context. He was decidedly a psychiatrist and his studies were linked to the human psyche or soul. Steiner, by comparison, was a 'spiritual teacher,' and he was interested in putting the intuition in a spiritual context. His first book, outlining his spiritual outlook, was *A Philosophy of Freedom*, published in 1896.

When *Freedom* was published, Steiner was a scholar working within conventional German academia. He was employed in the editing of the scientific writings of Goethe. These were considered at that

time to be merely the aberrant musings of a great poet rather than a contribution to serious science. Steiner had not yet declared himself to be a clairvoyant or an occultist. He had not yet become head of the German section of the Theosophical Society, nor had he broken with them to form the Anthroposophical Society. So *Freedom* represents Steiner's first declaration of his own spiritual perspective. Although his teachings enlarged and evolved, he always cited this as his most important book.

Before writing *A Philosophy of Freedom*, Steiner had very little contact with people like himself who had an active spiritual life. Most of the people that he tested his arguments on were conventional materialists. This may help explain why a book like *Freedom* is so hard to read. Late nineteenth century German philosophy was Steiner's reference point but it is not likely to be the universe of the average contemporary reader. Therefore the arguments of these thinkers, and Steiner's responses, come across as fairly obtuse and incomprehensible. Steiner's autobiography makes it clear that he was willing to read and reread arcane philosophical tracts ten or twenty times before he could understand them. This seems not to have bothered him, so evidently felt his readers could do the same.

In addition to this, Steiner's diction is always difficult. I had assumed that he would be more readable in the original German than in English translation, but a native German speaker told me that Steiner is easier to read in English because the translators have simplified his diction! He made up his own vocabulary and syntax to describe his unique perceptions as he wanted them represented.

Finally, there is also the fact that the intuition and other elements of human psychology were very poorly described when Steiner wrote. Few had attempted to delineate the ideas Steiner explains in *A Philosophy of Freedom*. This is one reason I address Steiner behind Jung. The work of the latter makes it considerably easier to understand the former.

Attempting to make *A Philosophy of Freedom* more readable, the editors and publishers of the Centennial Edition (1995) released it under a new title, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*. I am glad they made this change; otherwise I would never have attempted to read the book. Included in this edition is an introduction by a longtime student, Gertrude Reif Hughes, who attempts to explain what Steiner is trying to tell us. It is often easier for a student, after decades of thought and experience, to describe something than it was for the teacher, enunciating the idea for the first time. Without Hughes' introduction I would probably not have understood the book. Hughes gives us the following insights into Steiner's work:

> *Steiner made knowledge a key to freedom and individual responsibility, because he discovered that the processes of cognition, which he usually just called "thinking," share an essential quality with the essence of selfhood or individuality.*

Hughes writes with ease about the 'selfhood or individuality,' over which Steiner labored in torturous detail. I would suggest that this is because Jung made the concept of the "Self" available to a twentieth century audience.

Some of Steiner's ideas seem obvious today, but this is only because they have entered the culture and are now widely accepted. We must remember that when Steiner wrote they were so radical that they were almost impossible to explain.

Steiner begins by advocating increased independence of thought, as opposed to the acceptance of generic ideas. This will lead to greater development of individuality. One develops a unique sense of selfhood more fully through self-directed thought and activities, he maintains. Few would argue with this today. However, Steiner jumps to a further conclusion that no one would anticipate even today. He says that the individualizing power of rational thinking is eclipsed by intuitive thought because it develops one's ability to see the whole self or individuality, first in other people, and then in oneself. With the development of self identity and individuality one becomes free to make up one's own mind independent of the unindividualized contents of the generic interests of society.

Individuality leads to a true inner freedom, as one becomes more oneself. Steiner spent a great deal of his argument simply attempting to demonstrate that the freedom experienced by the self-actualized and self-governed person was ethically and morally 'safe' compared to behavior developed and sanctioned by church and government. He clearly expected the average reader to think that good behavior was the result of the proper molding of children, rather than self-governance. It is a commentary on our cultural past that he had to argue against this notion for many pages. Against this, he claimed that self-government and the development of a sense of individuality produced a superior "ethical individualism" during an era when many people presumed that the uneducated, unindoctrinated person would simply become a wild, ungovernable savage.

There are fundamental differences between Steiner and Jung regarding human faculties, intuition, and

individualization. Steiner does not look to the unconscious to produce self-development or individuation, as Jung does. Rather, he sees it as a result of active self-study of the cognitive process. Nor does his system depend upon other spiritual practices, such as fasting, self-denial, withdrawal from the world, meditation, hallucinogens, gurus, a personal relationship to God, spiritual lineages, initiation, dreamwork, psychological analysis, or any kind of practice other than conscious study of one's thoughts and thinking-process. Ultimately, Steiner's method actually breaks with all discipline, encouraging a natural unfoldment of the spiritual individual as the conscious mind stumbles towards increased self-awareness and self-regulation.

In some regards, however, Jung and Steiner are remarkably similar. Jung named the four functions sensation, feeling, thinking, and intuition. Steiner also recognized four avenues of interaction with the world. He called them observation (or perception), feeling, thinking, and intuition. He considered observation and perception to be closely related but slightly different aspects of the same function, and intuition to be a type of thinking -- this was quite traditional -- so his faculties do not clearly add up to the number four.

Jung's fourfold system can be laid out on a Celtic cross (four equal sides). This suggested correlations between the four functions and traditional or mythological symbolic structures such as the four elements, four directions, and the Christian cross. Thus, he felt that the four functions of the psyche were unconsciously recognized in art and literature. This led him to the realization that the square, cross, or *mandala* is a symbol of psychic totality, wholeness, and completion.

It is interesting that Steiner, for whom the four directions and elements were not 'mythology' but part of a living esoteric tradition, did not have this insight. Jung's arrangement made it much easier to see and experience the existence of the four functions inside oneself and others. Such is the evolution of culture, in which an idea well expressed causes a shift in perception.

In many regards, Steiner's examination of observation, feeling, thinking, and intuition is much more detailed and profound than Jung's. He also has a better grasp of the centuries of philosophical discussion that preceded the entry of these terms into mass culture. Jung, by comparison, notes his own superficial acquaintance with the philosophical tradition.

Sensation, Observation, and Perception

Jung's sensation function and Steiner's observation are clear analogs. However, Jung emphasized the sensory aspect of the function -- seeing, touching, smelling, hearing, tasting -- while Steiner emphasized observation, whether of the outside world or the inside, both sensory and cognitive. Thus, his concept is more comprehensive. It includes all "sensations, perceptions, views, feelings, acts of will, dream and fantasy constructions, representations, concepts and ideas, illusions and hallucinations," etc. (Steiner,

2005, 31).

For Steiner, observation is the most basic of human cognitive activities. "Chronologically, observation even precedes thinking," he writes (2005, 31). It is by virtue of observation that we become aware that we are thinking: we observe that we think. Observation directs our consciousness towards some element outside or inside ourselves. When we grasp it we perceive, or experience perception. Steiner called the object of our observation or perception a "percept." This seems like an unnecessarily complex concept, but in fact it is quite handy.

"I will use the word *'percept'* to refer to the immediate objects of sensation. . . known. . . through observation" (Steiner, 2005, 54). He chooses not to use the word "sensation" because it has a specific meaning in physiology and because it excludes the self-observation of feeling and thought. A percept, on the other hand, can include a thought, a feeling, or a physical sensation. (Steiner, 2005, 54)

Percepts are the objects of perception, the way concepts are the objects of thinking. We see a tree, it is a percept. We see a tree in our mind, it is both a percept and a concept.

> *Human consciousness is the stage where concept and observation meet and are connected to one another. This is, in fact, what characterizes human consciousness* (Steiner, 2005, 52).

For Steiner, the most important observation occurs when we turn our perception upon ourselves and examine our thinking. "The observation of thinking is the most important observation that can be made," he writes (2005, 37). The important consequence of this is that "a secure point has been won, from which we can reasonably hope to seek an explanation" of world phenomena. "Without a doubt: in thinking we hold a corner of the world process" (Steiner, 2005, 37, 41).

Steiner's observations differ greatly from Jung's on the relationship of the four functions to consciousness. Jung considered the intuition to be the only function that drew on unconscious information for the derivation of content. Steiner, on the other hand, felt that accurate intuition enhanced self-awareness because it improved the faculty that sees individuality in onself and others. Thinking, on the other hand, which Jung considered the epitome of rational consciousness, for Steiner was an unconscious activity! "This is the characteristic nature of thinking," he writes (Steiner, 2005, 33). "The thinker forgets thinking while doing it. What concerns the thinker is not thinking, but the observed object of thinking."

The Development of Intuition

"People vary in their capacity for intuition," remarks Steiner (2005, 149). "For one person, ideas just bubble up, while another achieves them by much labor." It is, however, possible to develop the intuition. Here I will fall back on my own experience in the field, since learning how to express the intuition was one of the burning lessons in my own life.

The observation -- Steiner's 'percept' -- is always only a part of the whole picture, torn from its context by our incapacity to observe more than one content at a time. The faculty that restores the context of the percept, that deduces from it a complete picture, is the intuition.

We can appreciate how very important this capacity is in a purely survival situation. The scientist has the luxury of throwing out the intuition, but does the warrior? General Buford saw the high ground at Gettysburg and knew he had to retain it at any cost. This was not a decision that could be based on a scientific experiment.

The least observation may reveal through intuitive exploration the true condition -- whether one is safe or in danger. Although Steiner did not say this, I think it can be argued that the intuition is necessary for survival and that it must be capable of revealing the relative truth about a person or situation. Wolves have their teeth, bears their claws, humans their intuition.

Padded by modern security systems, modern people do not need to rely upon their intuition as markedly as pre-technological people. Therefore, the development of the intuition is little supported by modern society and actually discouraged in the scientific community. And yet, the best ideas in science are those that are intuitive. Darwin's theory of evolution is intuitive.

It is not enough to be intuitive. One must also be able to describe what one is perceiving, first to oneself and then to others. Even the most intuitive thinker, if he or she has no vocabulary for describing patterns, will not be able to sufficiently utilize the intuition. I know this from personal experience. Because society offered no guidance in my early education, it was almost impossible for me to express my thoughts until I learned a comprehensive vocabulary of 'energy patterns' or 'types'

with which I could describe my normal mode of perception. When I realized that astrology was a 'language of energy patterns' I dropped out of college so that I could study astrology and Jungian psychology every day, three hours a day, until I could express my thoughts. After a year and a half I could talk to other astrologers. I then learned how to translate my thoughts from astrological or other archetypal ideas into ordinary English. Suddenly, I was a fluent speaker and author, whereas before I had been a tongue-tied mumbler.

My problem was probably due to the fact that I grew up engulfed by a language that was capable of expressing pattern. In the Muskogean languages intuitive and holistic elements are still present, while English has divested itself of such vocabulary, leaving it wholly to the ostracized astrologers and the tarot card readers. In this regard English is an extraordinarily primitive and mundane language.

Thus I would say that in order to develop the intuition one needs a vocabulary of archetypes and symbols. One can use a few or many. The more verbally accomplished person will use many.

Self Realization through Intuitive Thinking

Steiner begins at the same place where the Greeks began: he observes that there are two worlds, one forever changing and the other unchanging. The Greeks called these two worlds Becoming and Being and saw their literal existence in the antithesis of the natural, earthly world and the fixed stars in the heavens.

Emerson used a more immediate frame of reference. He says the everchanging world is the one seen by the eye, while the unchanging world is the one experienced by the observer.

I do not want my readers to suppose that stone age societies are any less sophisticated than Western culture. I heard an Anishinabe Ojibwe elder say the same thing in a lecture in a tattered youth center in the American Indian ghetto in south Minneapolis. Following the traditions of so many of the northern peoples around the world, he equated these two worlds with the circling stars and the unchanging polar star.

The next issue is what to do with this observation. Many of the Greek and European philosophers and scientists, including Emerson, choose to value the unchanging world of the observer as reality and to dismiss the ever-changing observed world as an illusion because of its inconstant nature. When I mentioned this to one of the Anishinabe women in the audience, a well educated Ph.D. candidate she could not restrain her laughter. Only the whiteman would discount a world that could kill him.

A more moderate position is taken by modern science, which mistrusts personal observation, attempting to build certain knowledge upon experiences which can be duplicated at will in the laboratory, seen by many, and therefore considered 'provable,' or in the terms of scientific philosopher Karl Popper, "non-falsifiable."

Traditional indigenous and so-called technologically 'primitive' people around the world virtually without exception take the opposite viewpoint. They live by what they observe, learning the natural history of the plants and animals around them so that they can survive in an environment which is ruthlessly picking off the unobservant day-by-day. They not only trust what they observe but attempt to heighten their observational skills so that they have a special edge.

I read an interesting account of a mixed blood Indian medicine man, Jacob Derringer, who was kept prisoner by the Poncas because his sense of smell was so acute he could scent game and enemies further away than anyone else in the tribe. Later he put this skill to use as an herbal healer, smelling the disease even when others could detect nothing.

Usually, the traditional perspective that the world is real is considered 'primitive' while the critical view of observation and the changing world is considered 'sophisticated.' A less culturally biased view would see the difference as based on the survival skills necessary to live in a non-technological and a technological setting. Steiner, using the philosophical terminology of his era, described these two views as 'critical realism' and 'native realism.' One would presume that he would side with the European critical view, but he does not. Critical realism, he points out, is always based on an arbitary selection of the contents of the observable world, taking some as reliable and others as not. For instance, philosophical and scientific concepts are considered inherently "real" while various other contents are not. Native realism, on the other hand, cannot actually be disproved. Even if two different observers have two different experiences of what appears to be the same event, each experiences a 'reality.'

It is here that we see one important difference between Steiner the occultist and his philosophical and

scientific contemporaries. As an occultist he is the modern representative of the ancient, traditional shaman of an indigenous society. Like these societies and shamans, Steiner adheres to 'native realism.' Although the occultist and the shaman are associated with belief in things unseen, shape-shifting, tricks of observation, either magical in a 'real' sense or magical by deception, in fact they treat the observable world as reality. Occultists and shamans are practical. It is the acuity of their perceptions that lead them to discern forces and presences that are unseen. The native realist would also point out that it is not observation that is faulty but interference by feeling and thinking that obscures what is otherwise a straightforward exercise of the senses. The blind person does not, for instance, live in an illusionary world because he or she possesses less observational abilities than the sighted. If mere limitation of the senses caused illusory conclusions, blindness and deafness would be equated with mental illness.

Intuition and Survival

We have at hand four faculties of interaction with the world: physical observation, feeling, thinking, and intuition (Jung, 1976). In the present time there is a bias towards rational thinking and physical perception. Feelings are fine within the emotional sphere but, like the intuition, they are not considered to provide a basis for accurate interaction with the world. Both are considered too subjective. Indeed, even rational thinking and physical perception are not entirely above suspicion, hence the gold standard for establishing a scientific fact is experimental demonstration -- the replication of a phenomena under controlled circumstances, in order to prove its factual nature. Even this has been shown to be inadequate, since it can be demonstrated that the observer's bias will color the outcome. An even more trenchant criticism arises from the fact that the controlled situation is never found in the natural world, but has to be artificially induced. Thus, there is no reliable method of proof, according to modern thinking, for establishing facts in the natural world.

Our ancestors, living in the forest and plains, unaided by all but the most simple technology, needed to have accurate information. 'proof' and 'demonstration.' They had to trust to their powers of observation, instincts, quick thinking, and intuition in order to survive. They needed to see the world they lived in with careful detail, so their faculties of physical observation and sensation were highly developed. One of the old herbalists, John Derringer, had been kept prisoner by the Ponca Indians because his sense of smell was so highly developed he could smell enemies at a distance and diseases gnawing at the flesh. Ancient people also needed to trust their instincts, which lie at the root of feeling. They needed to be able to reason carefully from the evidence they observed in a practical, linear, rational fashion -- sometimes very quickly. But finally, they needed a faculty to put all of this together, to tell them what it all meant, what they were missing, where the danger or the safety lay, and what to do. This was the intuition. They did not trouble themselves about it.

The intuition does not kick in automatically, but requires the collection of enough data from which the whole picture can be deduced. Then it acts instantaneously, producing the "aha moment." However, it can work from a very small amount of information. In any case, it can make leaps that seem almost magical.

The intuition tells us the truth a situation or person. We have to have such a faculty because we can so easily deceive ourselves with our perceptions, feelings, and thoughts. Our instincts develop into feelings and these are always inclining us towards or away from situations and people. Indeed, we can call feelings "inclinations." Thus, our instincts can be led astray. Our thoughts can solve problems but also produce them -- doubts, uncertainties, relative values. Knowing the truth about a situation or a person is a necessity of survival. Hence, *the necessity of the intuition.*

An Example of Intuitive Thinking

A few years ago a retired career marine, taking classes on Indian spirituality from a friend of mine, noted that there was a technique used by the marines when there was no logical way out of a situation. It was to act in an illogical way and it was called 'hey-a-ka.' This was clearly derived from the term *heyoka*, meaning a 'contrary,' which had been defined in class.

My readers should be thinking right now, how could a person think up a survival method when there is no way out and tere was only a split second to make a decision? That ought to be impossible.

A good example would be the response of veteran firefighter Wag Dodge when his crew was overtaken by an inferno in Mann Gulch, Montana, in 1947. The fire is estimated to have run up the valley at a hundred yards a minute and to have been several hundred yards deep. When the panicked group reached an opening in the forest sloping up the ridge Dodge saw the bluff above him as the smoke

cleared for a few seconds. In a split second he deduced his crew could not make it to the top and there was only one way out. He took a paper match book out of his pocket and lit a fire in the grass before him. Within seconds it had raced a hundred feet up the hill. Two crewmen at the front of the line made it to the bluff. When they looked down they heard Dodge trying to signal his men and they understood, but someone yelled 'that's crazy' and the rest of the crew ran. Before they had to turn and run for their own lives, they saw Dodge put a bandana over his face and lie down in the ashes of his fire. In a flash they understood that by burning off the combustible grass Dodge had made a spot the main fire couldn't burn. The fire roared over Dodge for several minutes, but there was a fine layer of oxygen along the ground and he was neither suffocated nor burned. The men who didn't follow his directions, except for the two at the front of the line, died a little below the top of the ridge.

At a hearing on the fire, Dodge described several minutes during which his body was lifted off the ground by the inferno. (One can only imagine what that felt like, commented McClain). Government bureaucrats cross-examined him about how he thought up the 'escape fire.' Ever hear of it before? No. Did it occur to you it wouldn't work? Never thought of that. Why did you do it? It was the only 'logical' thing to do. But it wasn't logical at all, as fourteen young men proved by their deaths.

McClain noted that there was only one thing that was cool in Mann Gulch that afternoon and it was inside Wag Dodge.

Today the 'backfire' is a standard protocol for escaping a fire moving rapidly in unwooded territory, but on that afternoon it was 'crazy.'

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Welcome to NaturaSophia

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