

Winter 2023

In Statu Nascendi

Nascent State

Journal of Intuition Magazine



The Future

Logic
its limitations

Emotion
dystopias & nightmares

Intuition
hindsight & foresight

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NASCENT STATE

Magazine



Ray Milland, from *The Man with the X-ray Eyes*, 1963

From the Editor

In the Greek myth, Cassandra warned the Trojans not to accept the gift of a wooden horse:

'Cassandra's lips unsealed the doom to come; lips by a god's command never believed or heeded by the Trojans'.

In 2013, a helicopter crashed onto a pub in Glasgow, killing the three crew and seven patrons, and injuring thirty-one others. Had anyone walked into the pub five minutes before and said a helicopter was about the fall out of the sky, like Cassandra, they would have been regarded as mad.

Not being able to see the future doesn't bother us when we are content, or when life is governed by repetition and routine, but when there is uncertainty or change, or when an emerging event appears ominous, the inability to see the future can be a problem.

The logical approach to the future is to gather as much information as possible, analyse it, and try to calculate what is most likely to happen. If we try to envision the future emotionally - as is the case with literature and films - we tend to depict it in dystopian terms. Another way we deal with the future is through intuition and insight.

This edition of *Nascent State* magazine is devoted to the future, and the three ways - logically, emotionally and intuitively - we try to deal with it.

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

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Jim Blackmann

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Logic

and its limitations



The Archduke Ferdinand just prior to his assassination, Sarajevo, June 1914

It is an extraordinary fact that the time between the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28th June 1914 - the event that triggered the 1st World War - and the beginning of the war itself, on 28th July 1914, was just one month. The rapidity of events meant a single act changed the map of Europe forever. Walter Lippmann, in his *Public Opinion*, tells an illustrative tale:

'There is an island in the ocean where a few Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans lived. No cable reaches that island, and the British mail steamer comes but once in sixty days. In September it had not yet come, and the islanders were still talking about the latest newspaper which told about the approaching trial of Madame Caillaux for the shooting of Gaston Calmette.'

He goes on to say that, when the steamer arrives, they discover they are no longer friends, but enemies at war.

We live with an unknown future. We rarely consider this directly, but indirectly and unconsciously; we take out insurance, eat a healthy diet, keep an eye on the news, stick to a budget, get a regular check-up, save for a rainy day and lock our doors at night. This is as much a part of life as eating an evening meal or holding down a day job.

We think about the future because - being unable to see it directly - thinking is the only means we have to deal with it. Just as we use our eyes to tell whether there are storm clouds or clear skies, we use our thinking to navigate a future we cannot see. All urban planning, commercial investments, political manifestos and technological developments are pursued with an image of the future in mind, even if this is not always explicitly stated.

We have been taught that logic and analysis are the most reliable forms of thinking, which is why we believe they are the best means to predict the future. This was the approach taken by the mathematician Pierre-Simon Laplace, (1749 – 1827) in his *Philosophical Essay on Probabilities*:

'We may regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its past and the cause of its future. An intellect which at a certain moment would know all forces that set nature in motion, and all positions of all items of which nature is composed, if this intellect were also vast enough to submit these data to analysis, it would embrace in a single formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the tiniest atom; for such an intellect nothing would be uncertain and the future just like the past could be present before its eyes.'



Pierre-Simon de Laplace by Johann Ernst Heinsius, 1775

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It could be said that, on a lesser level, when we write a shopping list, plan a budget, check our receipts, scrutinise a contract, smile at the boss, or go to bed early before a busy day, we are unconsciously calculating the future.

And yet the problem with logic is that we can't calculate what we can't see. All our past experiences will not prepare us for what is called a 'black swan' event, where we are confronted by what we once presumed was impossible. We can analyse what we know, but not what we don't even expect at all; and like Lippmann's islanders, we cannot see the unexpected.



Australian black swan

While it can be said that more information is better than less, the problem with logic is that it can provide us with a coherent view of the world even if that knowledge is incomplete. We can make sense of the world with limited information - indeed, we have no choice but to live with insufficient knowledge - and so it follows that anyone with less information than Laplace's universal intellect would still have a rational and coherent outlook of life; they just wouldn't be able to see what they were missing.

There are some who, knowing how precarious it is trying to calculate the future, have decided to try and shape it instead. Once we began to irrigate the land, plant seeds and store harvests for winter, we were no longer willing to trust

what nature provided us. In the same way, those who believe it is not enough to trust the future will work out well have decided instead that it is more rational to try and control it. The behaviourist, B. F Skinner, wrote the utopian novel *Walden Two* to express this very idea.



B. F. Skinner, 1904 - 1990

Skinner's novel was by no means mere theory. His work was taken up by Richard H. Thaler, who with Cass R. Sunstein, wrote the book *Nudge*. In 2010, the UK government set up a 'Nudge Unit', known as the 'Behavioural Insights Team' to put the ideas suggested by Thaler into practice. Suggestions on subliminal control include what Thaler called 'Paternal Libertarianism' which means we should be free to choose, but our choices should be designed through 'choice architecture'

'Here as elsewhere, government should respect freedom of choice; but with a few improvements in choice architecture, people would be far less likely to choose badly.'



We are more likely to choose an item if it is at eye-level

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It has been suggested that *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley (1797 - 1851), was the first science fiction novel. Written in 1818, it was a bold work of fantasy for any young writer. And yet it has stood the test of time because its central theme is founded on a degree of understanding about human nature. In the novel, the 'Creature' (never referred to as a 'monster' by Shelley), is created artificially by the scientist Victor von Frankenstein.



The 1931 film *Frankenstein*, with Boris Karloff

In spite of the Creature's fearsome appearance, he is quiet and reflective, and ponders his origin and place in the world. It was Shelley's intention that the Creature should represent not just scientific invention, but the consequences of transgressing the boundaries of nature. The central message of *Frankenstein* is that any venture begun with an inadequate understanding of human nature is likely to produce a very mixed outcome.

It is a truism to say we live in changing times - all previous ages thought so too - but the rate of change now is higher than ever before. Alvin Toffler, in his *Future Shock* (1970) wrote:

'Throughout the past, as successive stages of social evolution unfolded, man's awareness followed rather than preceded the event. Because change was slow, he could adapt unconsciously, 'organically'. Today unconscious adaptation is no longer adequate. Faced with the power to alter the gene, to create new species, to populate the planets or depopulate the earth, man must now assume conscious control of evolution itself.'



Alvin Toffler, 2006

Whereas at one time, being subject to the forces of nature meant suffering flood and famine, we now live in a world largely of our own making, and our biggest concern for the future is not natural, but man-made disasters; the two world wars and two major revolutions of the previous century are testament to this. It follows that the more we live in a world of our own making, the more will our limited understanding of human nature become a problem.

If we were programmable machines, or if our genes could be altered to make us so, the future could be known, designed and controlled. Our unconscious realisation that we do not know the future is itself a reflection of the unconscious realisation that we do not know our own being. *Frankenstein* has survived as a metaphor because it speaks a truth rarely touched on by logical analysis; that we are something more than flesh and blood, and what that 'more' is, is largely hidden from us.

Logic can only deal with the known; to think beyond what we already know - whether human nature or the future - we need a different form of thinking.

The rate of change in society means that the problem of the future is likely to affect us even more so in the coming years. And if logic and analysis provide an inadequate means to deal with an unknown future - particularly one where new technology makes possible today what was impossible only yesterday - we may have to consider resorting to other means.

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Emotion

dystopias and nightmares



Scene from Blade Runner, 1982 film by Ridley Scott.

We have an emotional as well as an intellectual life. We do not merely analyse people, we sympathise with them, understand them, make allowances for them, and do our best to deal with their emotional life. If we want to understand people - and our own nature - it is not enough to limit our understanding to what can be reduced to logic and analysis. We have to understand the emotions.

The dominance of logic means we tend to think of emotions as being rather like clouds; sometimes dark and threatening, sometimes light and soft, sometimes static and sometimes changing, but not as real and tangible as bricks and mortar.

And yet the emotions are not only real, those who understand their nature can use this knowledge to influence and control those who don't. Edward Bernays, who wrote *Propaganda* (1928), was quite hard-headed about the use of emotions to affect the thinking and behaviour of the masses. He was no mere theorist - his clients

included the American Tobacco Company, Procter & Gamble, the American presidential candidates Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, and the CIA. He advised business that the best way to sell their products was not to promote their craftsmanship and reliability, but to appeal to the emotions:

'Big business has realised that it must use as many of the basic emotions as possible. The politician, however, has used the emotions aroused by words almost exclusively. To appeal to the emotions of the public in a political campaign is sound; in fact it is an indispensable part of the campaign.'

We can begin to develop an understanding of the emotions provided we do not expect them to conform to the rigour of logic. It is not that the emotions are illogical, it's just that they are different. Just as we employ logic and analysis to deal with an unknown future, so too do we use emotions. This can be seen most clearly when it is expressed in the form of literature.

The more well-known novels about the future include *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley

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and *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949) by George Orwell. Each depicted a dystopian and very inhuman future, and each was written as much as a warning as a fantasy. If the novels are well-known, it is because their message resonates with sufficient numbers of people to make them relevant. Indeed, the passing of time since their initial publication has made them even more so.

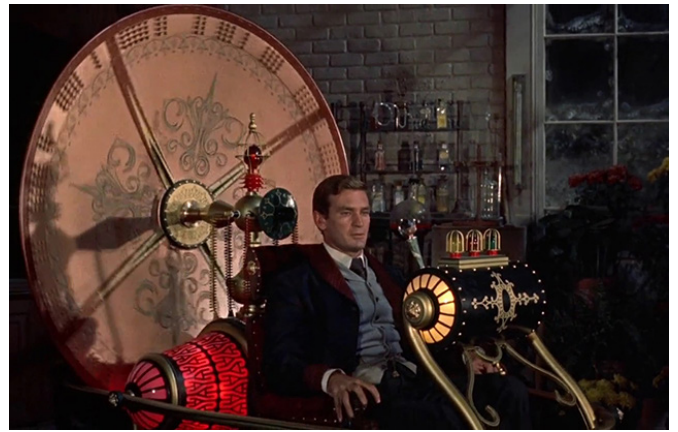


1984, directed by Michael Anderson in 1956

If both novels are dystopian it is because our image of the future is haunted by the past. If human beings had only ever created good things, we could be assured that any created future would be to our liking. But history is marked by inquisitions, religious wars, persecutions and purges, brutal empires and tyrants, and - in spite of the secularism of the modern era - the twentieth century has given us fascism, Soviet communism, nuclear weapons, surveillance states, overbearing governments, and military and political propaganda units.

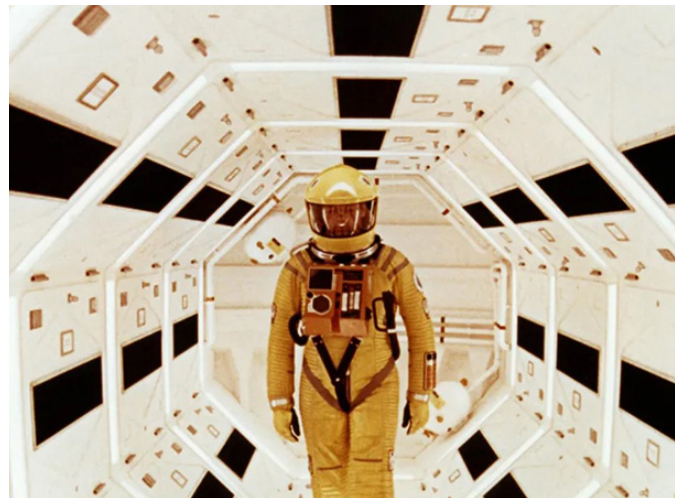
Whereas logic would demand that we choose either a future based on progress or one governed by fear, the emotions can accommodate mixed feelings. We can be hopeful one moment, fearful in the next, and then finally broad-minded and stoic, and we can still believe in progress in spite of plentiful evidence to the contrary.

In terms of our image of the future, science fiction is very much a product of the imagination fuelled by emotion. The science fiction which resonates, does so because it expresses what is called the 'zeitgeist', or 'the spirit of the age' in which it was written. If it survives beyond the age in which it was written, it is because it expresses something broader still, and at times may even approach truth.



From *The Time Machine*, 1960, by George Pal.

Science fiction novels of the nineteenth century, Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864) and *The Time Machine* (1895) by H. G. Wells were written with an optimistic tone. Even *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) by Mark Twain, in which the hero is transported into the past, attempts to portray the future as one of progress through science. Each was the expression of what technology could achieve, and although each had an underlying moral tone, each was an expression of that belief in progress.



From *2001: A Space Odyssey*, 1968, by Stanley Kubrick

By the time of the twentieth century, and particularly after the destructiveness of the two World Wars, two major revolutions, the invention of nuclear and chemical weapons, satellite surveillance, cluster bombs, behavioural psychology, government propaganda units and 'active denial systems', the zeitgeist had changed. The science fiction of the latter part of the twentieth century - Robert A. Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1966), Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) - largely depicted

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a very inhuman future. If technology once represented progress, by the twentieth century, it represented human folly writ large.



Oskar Werner burning books in *Fahrenheit 451* (1966)

To a degree - as with logic - emotion can provide an image of the future which is more than mere fantasy. The zeitgeist is not always something that can be put into words, and so prophetic imagery can sometimes be the best rendering of it. A zeitgeist can find concrete expression through fashion, ideology and outlook, and these can inform the nationalism, politics and economics of the day just as much - and perhaps more so - than reason and analysis.



The Panic, by Francisco de Goya, c. 1808

When our image of the future is expressed emotionally, it is because its dreamlike nature can express elements which are excluded by logic and analysis. If such images are like nightmares, it is because they reflect the content of the

unconscious mind. While we pride ourselves on reason, it is worth remembering that the Age of Reason was followed by the Reign of Terror; it sometimes takes an artist to convey this.

Emotionally, we fear what we cannot control. Whether this is represented by a bogeyman or by a totalitarian order, it is expressed as a force which acts against our interests. It is interesting to note that in the examples stated, the devil is not mentioned. The devil, whether invented or as an expression of the destructive element in human nature, is perhaps the most complete image of a force that works against our better interests.

If our imagination creates both fantasies and nightmares, it is because human nature is both rational and irrational, and these contradictory elements will inform the future just as surely as any technology we might invent.

The use of emotions to know the future, like the use of analysis, can be in part reliable and unreliable. Emotions, particularly in literature, are an expression of our incomplete governance of the inner life. However absurd it is that anyone would act in a way which is detrimental to their own interests - that is what human beings do.

Any image of the future based on either utopianism or fear, no matter how heartfelt, may prove to be as unfounded as any logical forecast. We can only know whether the emotion was a personal anxiety or the unconscious mind picking up on something very real only after the event; it remains that we do not know the future.

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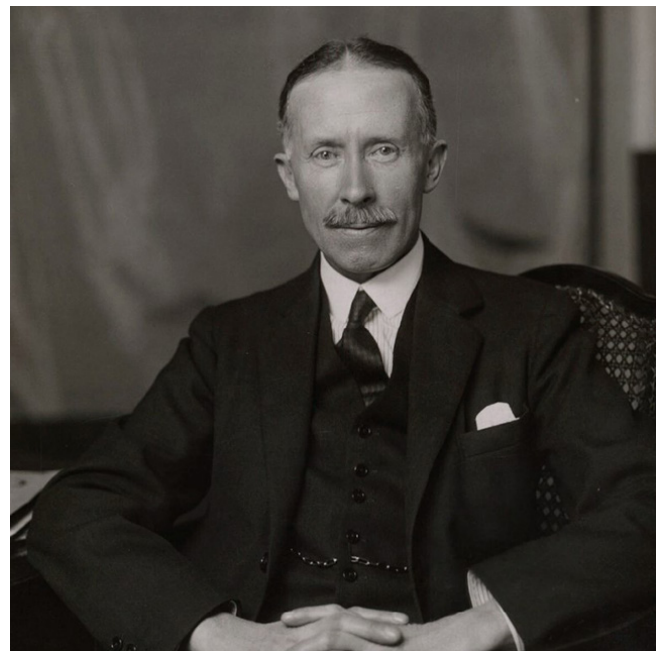
John Collier: Priestess of Delphi, 1891 (detail)

The first question to be asked in any attempt to approach the future intuitively is whether it exists or not. If the future doesn't exist, then only reason and emotion can guide our thinking. If it does exist, then we may pick up on it intuitively. But the question still remains, if it does exist, why don't we know it?

The problem of a pre-existing future is not a problem about the nature of time, but rather of our relationship to it. We believe the future doesn't exist because we can see only the present. There are those who have tried to show this is a fallacy; that both past and future exist simultaneously with the present in a dimension beyond what we can access via the senses. J. W.

Dunne, who had experienced what he believed were precognitive dreams - occasions when we dream about events before they occur - wrote *An Experiment with Time* to explain it:

'Now, if I were right, and there remained a still unsuspected logical fallacy in our notions of Time, that fallacy would prove, of course, self-evident - once it was discovered. Moreover, the discovery could hardly fail to affect every branch of science and to reap its quota of confirmation from each. The inexact evidence of dreams could provide no part of the essential basis of a serious scientific theory, and to attempt to make it such would be the worst possible policy. But I could not ignore that evidence.'



J. W. Dunne (1875 - 1949)

A second person to query the limitations of our time-sense was Carl Jung, who wrote *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle* (1952). He was prompted to explore an issue which had formed a background to his thinking for some years; indeed, it was his early discussions with the physicist Albert Einstein that prompted Jung to consider whether time as we experience it is quite as it seems. Jung coined the term 'synchronicity' to explain why events that come to meet us in life may not be the product of mere chance, but may indeed be 'meaningful

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coincidences'. A meaningful coincidence suggests that the future, like a road, exists, and that it is we, blind travellers, who cannot see beyond the ground we stand on. He wrote:

'Professor Einstein was my guest on several occasions at dinner... These were very early days when Einstein was developing his first theory of relativity; it was he who first started me off thinking about a possible relativity of time as well as space, and their psychic conditionality. More than thirty years later, this stimulus led to my relation with the physicist Professor W. Pauli and to my thesis of psychic synchronicity.'



Carl Jung, c. 1935

What Dunne and Jung were pointing to was an idea which had been around for a very long time; that events are governed by a mind greater than our own. The idea of time in relation to an eternal mind can be found in the 5th century BC *Bhagavad Gita*, where Krishna tells Arjuna:

'I know, O Arjuna, all beings in the past, the present and the future; but they do not know Me.'

Erwin Schrödinger, who won the Nobel Prize for his contribution to Quantum Theory, was yet another scientist who was also a student of Eastern philosophy. In his *What is life? Epilogue: On Determinism and Free Will*, he wrote:

'There is obviously only one alternative, namely the unification of minds or consciousnesses. Their multiplicity is only apparent, in truth there is only one mind. This is the doctrine of the Upanishads.'



Erwin Schrödinger, 1933

In a further example, the historian Oswald Spengler (1880 - 1936) held an 'organic view' of history, which is to say that, just like any organic body, a nation or culture has its phases of youth, maturity and old age. In his *The Decline of the West* (1923) he wrote:

'But what is time as a length, time without direction? Everything living, we can only repeat, has 'life', direction, impulse, will, a movement-quality (Bewegtheit) that is most intimately allied to yearning and has not the smallest element in common with the 'motion' (Bewegung) of the physicists. The living is indivisible and irreversible, once and uniquely occurring, and its course is entirely indeterminable by mechanics. For all such qualities belong to the essence of Destiny, and 'Time' - that which we actually feel at the sound of the word, which is clearer in music than in language, and in poetry than in prose - has this organic essence, while Space has not.'

Spengler's organic approach to history means he is at present regarded as something of an oddity. It is worth noting however that as society becomes increasingly technological, and society is governed as much by human nature as by nature, Spengler's organic approach may be due for re-appraisal.

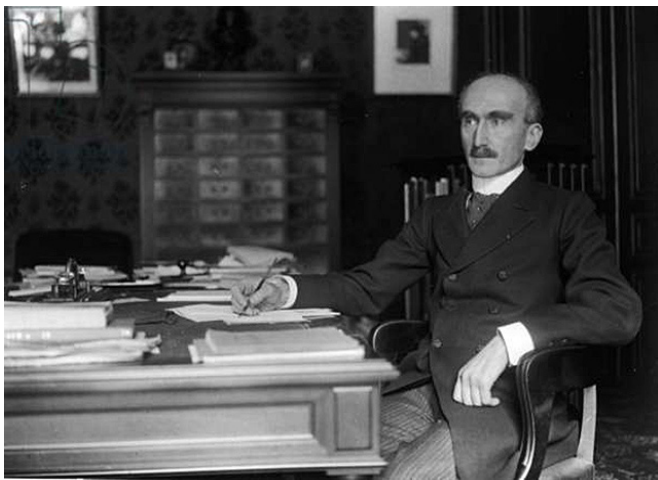
It has been necessary to begin with a theoretical approach to the question of time because we live

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in an age dominated by materialism, and from the point of view of materialism, the future cannot exist. Many assume there is universal agreement with this outlook, but this is clearly not the case. Having at least questioned this dogma, it will now be possible to adopt a more intuitive approach to the future.

The intuitive approach is based, above all, on direct experience. There are, of course, our common-or-garden experiences of life, and while there is much to commend attention to such experiences, intuition requires equal attention to the inner life as the outer world. Whereas self-awareness plays no part in analysis or the emotions, genuine intuition is impossible without it. The French philosopher Henri Bergson, who rejected the materialistic conception of life, wrote in his *Creative Evolution* (1907):

'But it is to the very inwardness of life that intuition - leads us, - by intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely.'



Henri Bergson, photo by P. F. A. Cardon

Without subjecting the inner life to the same objective scrutiny as is applied to the study of the outer world, any claim to intuitive thinking is just as likely to be self-deception as the real thing. Just because we fear catastrophe doesn't mean there will be catastrophe. The question is, where do genuine intuitive thoughts come from?

Beginning with our direct experience of intuition, we come across three phenomena which are related to time; namely hindsight, insight and foresight. With hindsight we see, on reflection, what was not apparent to us at the time. Indeed, any genuine reflection on the past - however painful - will tell us that we did indeed have all

the information we needed to make a wiser judgement, but didn't pay attention to it. What we see depends less on the information available than on our openness to it.

In the case of foresight - as with precognitive dreaming and synchronicity - such thoughts can come to us in surprising ways. We cannot force them; indeed they come from a mind which is more embracing than our day-to-day mind of planning, scheming and self-interest. In order to become more aware of such thoughts when they occur, we have to be able to distinguish between the intuitive, the analytical and the emotional.



Zen Ox-Herder picture 2: discovering the footprints

In order to become more aware of such thoughts, it is necessary to silence the logical mind and to calm the emotions, at least to a degree. This is the essence of intuitive observation - to observe without imposing our own thinking on what we see. In the East, in Zen, this is called seeing the 'suchness' of a thing. If we learn to distinguish between being in love with our own opinions, and seeing the 'suchness' of what we are observing, such observation can lead to insight.

The word 'insight' is often employed without a fuller understanding of its meaning. The physicist, Fritjof Capra, who had his own experience of insight, wrote *The Tao of Physics* (1975) said:

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

Insight reveals the hidden in the present moment. When this is applied to the past -

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intuitive hindsight - it has the same effect. A genuine insight into our past actions may cause us to feel embarrassed at our blind stupidity. Just as it is possible to have insights into the nature of the world around us, it is possible to have insights into the nature of our own inner life. What blinds us is not any external limitation, but an internal one. Carl Jung took the view that what limits a fuller picture of our inner life is 'an unconscious opposed to the will'. In other words; we do not know ourselves.

If we cannot see the future, it may be because it doesn't exist, or it may be because any such thoughts we have do not conform to our present set of assumptions and prejudices. The symbol for the intuitive mind is Echo, who whispers to Narcissus from beyond the world he knows and sees. That is why, when insightful thoughts occur, they often seem like less than whispers. If we desire such knowledge for selfish means - to gain advantage over our neighbour - then like Narcissus, we will not hear her.

We might ask 'If the future exists; how can there be free will?' This question is the product of logic, which by its very nature polarises ideas into pairs of opposites. Whereas Western philosophy is full of 'Determinism versus Free Will' debates, in the East, which has been less dominated by logic, free will and fate are regarded as merely two aspects of a greater whole.

The oracle known as the *I Ching*, or book of changes (9th Century BC) is used for the purpose of knowing the future. Rather than submitting helplessly to fate, such knowledge provides us with the means to deal with an unavoidable event. Richard Wilhelm (1873 – 1930), who produced one of the best translations of the *I-Ching* (1923), noted this in his introduction: *'Each situation demands the action proper to it. In every situation, there is a right and wrong course of action. Obviously, the right course brings good fortune and the wrong course brings misfortune. Which, then, is the right course in any given case?'*

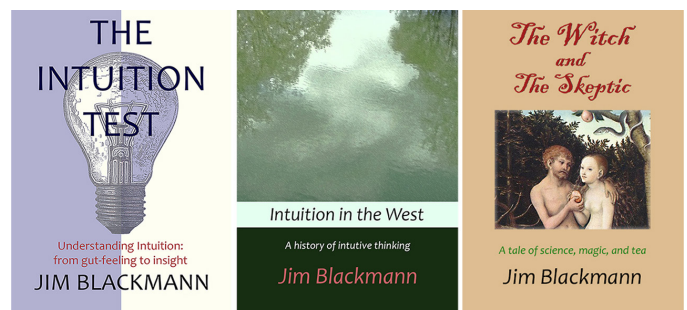
The *I Ching* is intended to facilitate insight. Reading a random passage from a book will trigger thoughts not included in our present outlook, and such a thought, once thought, cannot be unthought.



Eight hexagrams from the I Ching

The desire to know the future comes - in its best form - from an unconscious realisation that we do not know it, and with respect to the future we are like blind mice on a table-top. Whatever method we choose to deal with an unknown future will be validated by what it reveals. If we have intuitive thoughts about the future and don't pay attention to them, then reflective hindsight will remind us of that thought at some point in time. If we want clever arguments, then logic is fine. If we want to succumb to emotion, then imagination is fine. But if what we want is wisdom, then only intuitive thinking can provide this.

By the same author



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