

Summer 2024

In Statu Nascendi

# NASCENT STATE

Journal of Intuition

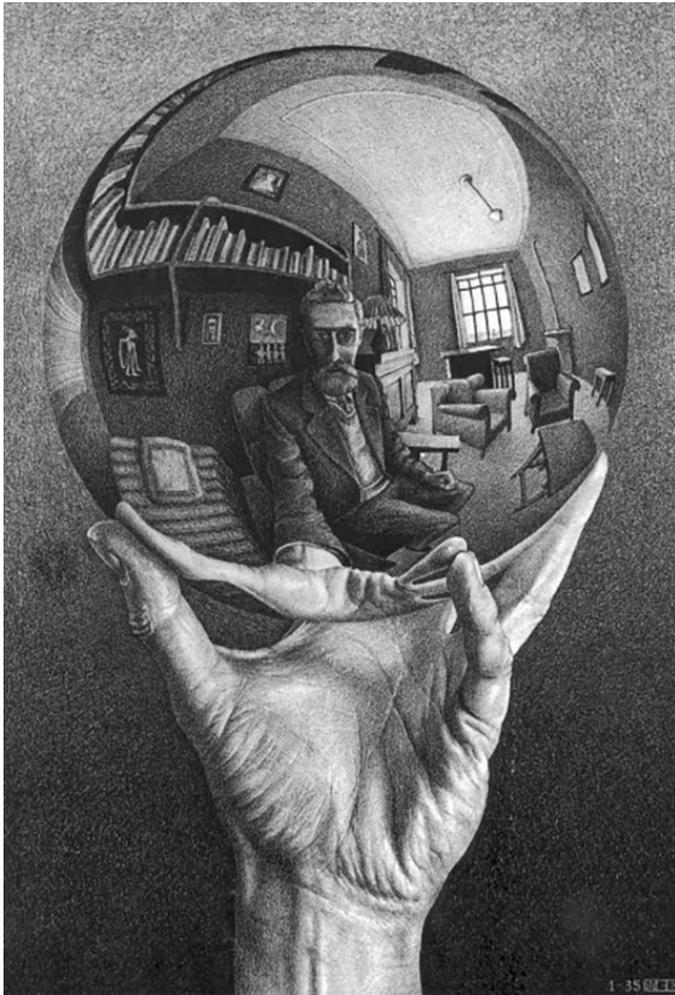
## Magazine

People Watching



Summer 2024

# NASCENT STATE



Front Page: M. C. Escher, Hand with Reflecting Sphere (1935).

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Jim Blackmann

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## From the Editor

‘There is an optical illusion about every person we meet.’

Emerson

There are many enigmas in life, but perhaps none so much as people. We do not have to live long to know that people have a public face and a private face. And not only others...

If we apply logic to our understanding of people, we get prejudice. If we apply intuition, we get insight.

This edition of Nascent State Magazine is dedicated to People Watching. There are articles on the intuitive method applied to Others, to Society and to the Self.

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# Observing Others

*and intuition*



Paul Degas, In a Cafe, 1873 (detail)

People are not always as they seem. Quite apart from being deceptive - sometimes out of a natural cautiousness - people have thoughts they don't express in public. After all, we do the same, and we would be foolish if we did.

Life teaches us that people have an inner life which is sometimes, but not always, expressed in their outer behaviour. If we want to understand people - whether it is to gain from them, to avoid upsetting them, or to understand them - we have to try to glean what is going on inside.

The usual approach is to use logic to deduce a person's motives by observing their actions. Hugo Münsterberg (1863 – 1916) was an early pioneer of this method. He had studied under Wilhelm Wundt, who is regarded as one of the founders of empirical, or evidence based, psychology. Wundt sought to drive out anything 'spiritual' from the study of psychology. From this perspective, what is going on inwardly can be studied in the same way as what is expressed outwardly because thoughts and emotions are no

more than a physiological process. Münsterberg gave an indication of the approach:

'If a girl blushes when a boy's name is mentioned in the family sitting room, we feel sure, even if she protests, that he is not quite indifferent to her young heart. If she opens a letter and grows pale while reading it, she may assure us that the event is unimportant; we know better.'



Münsterberg, centre at desk, 1891.

Münsterberg was employed in criminal trials to

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give his opinion on whether the accused was lying, and was one of the first to employ 'word association' to this end. In criminology, the underlying principle is not, as many believe, the response triggered by the word, but the length of time taken to respond. If the accused person believes that a particular response will betray them, they will think twice before responding to a word prompt; what betrays them is not the word they respond with, but the delay in response.

The same approach still informs psychology today. It was from this outlook that B. F. Skinner (1904 – 1990), who pioneered the science of Behaviourism, came to the view that our actions, thoughts and emotions are not the product of some separate inner life, but are conditioned solely by the environment. He wrote:

'It is in the nature of scientific progress that the functions of autonomous man be taken over one by one as the role of the environment is better understood. A scientific conception seems demeaning because nothing is eventually left for which autonomous man can take credit.'



B. F. Skinner in his laboratory

Skinner's behavioural approach has been incorporated into what is now known as 'Nudge Theory', or changing people's behaviour incrementally through a series of small steps or nudges. This is now government policy with a government-backed Behavioural Insights Team, or 'Nudge Unit', to enforce it.

Wundt, Munsterberg and Skinner all approached human nature through the application of logic. Because logic deals with the known world, its application naturally focuses on what is presently known. It follows that, if we choose to regard people as machines, we will see machines. For those who are content to regard people as machines, all that is required is a more

thoroughgoing application of the method.

If we suspect there is more to human nature than can be explained in terms of mechanics, we may consider the intuitive method.

To see the hidden - in human nature and in the wider world - we have to attend, not to what fits with our expectations, but to what does not. These are called 'enigmas'. Enigmas exist in the outer world - from geometry and proportion in the human body to the nature of time - and also in the inner life. The enigma of the inner life is that the motives for actions are not always clear - not even to ourselves. Carl Jung, who had a keen interest in intuition and the unconscious, wrote: 'Everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things which are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness; all this is the content of the unconscious.'



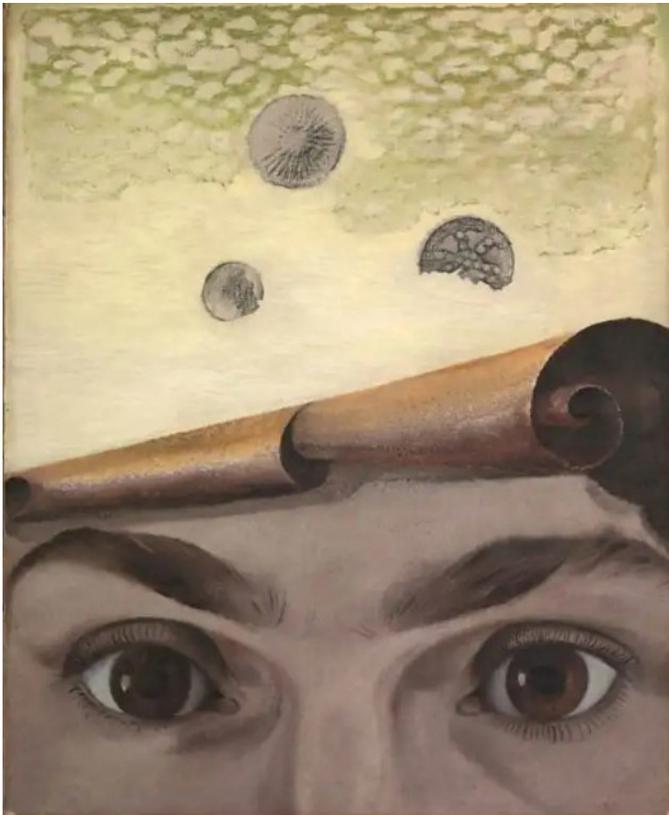
Thomas Kennington, Reading the Letter, 1885

It is only when we recognise that there is more to human nature than is obvious and apparent that

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we begin to understand people. Logic cannot approach this hidden element, but intuition can. This is because intuition comes from the same source as the hidden in human nature. William James, another leading light in psychology, wrote:

'If you have intuitions at all, they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhabits. Your whole subconscious life, your impulses, your faiths, your needs, your divinations, have prepared the premises, of which your consciousness now feels the weight of the result; and something in you absolutely knows that that result must be truer than any logic-chopping rationalistic talk, however clever, that may contradict it.'



Gala Eluard by Max Ernst, 1924.

Science is presently dominated by logic, which is why the mechanistic view of life predominates. But just as there is a logical method, there is also an intuitive method. Just as the mind can be trained to think logically, the mind can be trained to think intuitively, provided we are suitably motivated to do so.

Because we are not always aware of the motives for our actions, our actions are not always coherent and logical. We assume this is an error, but it is human nature. We choose the colour of our clothing, our friends, our partners and our

lifestyles, often for reasons we cannot see clearly. We are as much informed by our dreams as by our rational thinking. What is fashion, ambition or political idealism other than the expression of our dream life?



Fashion, 1950s

If the logical mind speaks in clear and ordered terms, the intuitive mind speaks to us in a whisper. It is often the unexpected thought - about ourselves or others - which is most revealing. If logic is dominant, we won't hear the intuitive mind. We have to be receptive to such thoughts in order to pick up on them when they occur.

It isn't necessary to attach any mystical or magical label to the intuitive mind; it is sufficient to attend to such thoughts. Again, from Carl Jung:

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

If logic is the means to explain human nature by appearance, intuition is the means to understand human nature in all its aspects. A logical explanation is final; intuitive insight is progressive. The means to study people intuitively is to regard them as enigmas. Seen in this way, every person we meet becomes an opportunity to study that which is hidden in human nature. If we use intuition to understand people, we may be surprised that what we learn is not just about others, but about ourselves. If we were machines, logic would be sufficient to understand human nature. We are more than machines.

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# Observing Society

*and intuition*



The technology of the last century gave rise to telephone boxes made of cast iron. It never occurred to those who created, manufactured, and installed the phone boxes they would be obsolete in a lifetime.

The word 'zeitgeist', or 'spirit of the age', refers to what gives a particular period in history its special identity. When we speak of the renaissance of the sixteenth century, or the emergent science of the seventeenth century, or the social upheaval of the eighteenth century, or the industriousness of the nineteenth century, or the technological progress of the twentieth century, we are referring to the zeitgeist of that particular era. In many respects, such definitions are simplistic - any century will have many conflicting views and movements - and yet the depiction is true enough.

In order to characterise a zeitgeist of an era we have to try and see it objectively. The closer we are to the era, the less we are able to do this. In many respects, we are best able to characterise a zeitgeist in hindsight. Nonetheless, the hallmark of the present era is unprecedented change.

The first smartphone was released in 2007. It now defines everything from the news, to shopping, to banking, education, communication, relationships, social networks, propaganda and politics. Our friends are those we message, money is transferred electronically, information is Googled, our cultural identity is no longer defined by the town we live in, and our bank account could be cleared by someone on the other side of the planet.



Steve Jobs and iPhone, 2007

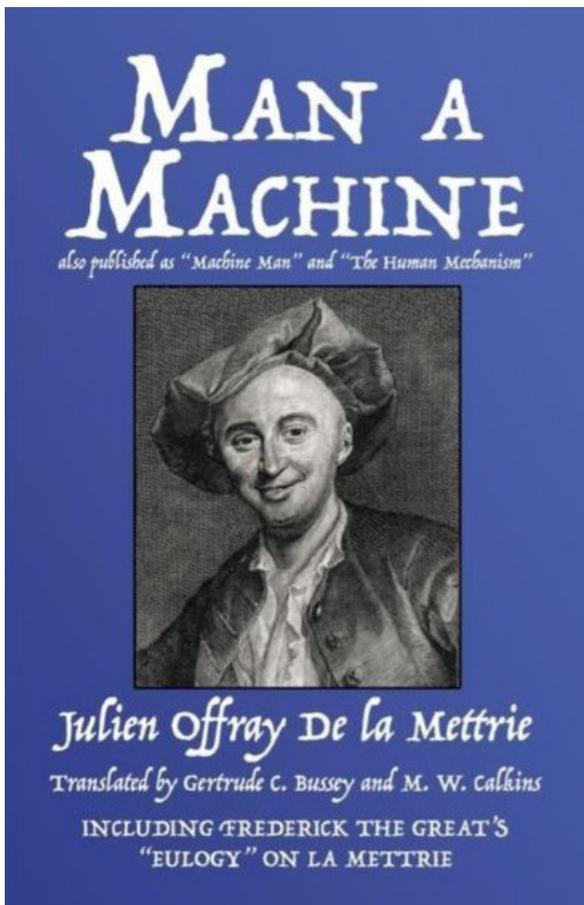
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Artificial Intelligence was released into the public domain only last year. Geoffrey Hinton, regarded as the godfather of Artificial Intelligence, resigned his post at Google to enable him to speak openly about the risks posed by it. He had the following to say about its likely impact:

‘Predicting the future is a bit like looking into fog. You know how when you look into fog, you can see about a hundred yards very clearly, and then two hundred yards, you can’t see anything. There’s a kind of wall, and I think that wall is about five years.’

We welcome change because we associate it with progress. We do so because the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century characterised the past as one governed by ignorance and superstition, and promoted the idea that social and human development were not only dependent on science and technology, but on the eradication of all past beliefs.

To do that, it became necessary to eliminate all that was deemed ‘spiritual’ and replace it with a purely mechanical view of human nature.



It could be said we have always lived with change - primitive cultures were subject to the seasons and to famine and drought - but the change of

the modern era is no longer subject to the limits of nature. Indeed, it could be said that we now live in an environment of our own making. We have created a world where technology is as much a part of life as wind and rain. H. G. Wells, in his Outline of History, wrote about the Wall Street crash and its aftermath:

‘The collapse of 1929, as no one will forget who lived through it, began on the 24th October, in Wall Street. It signalled itself merely by the hasty selling, at rapidly falling prices, of securities which the wiser operators already knew were overpriced. But from that moment the panic spread until the whole surface of the world was affected by industrial paralysis: paralysis is an apt word, for it was like a disease, but a disease with no cause in nature. The starvation, the silent factories, the goods thrown away, the men standing idle were the results of human activities.’



Wall Street, New York, 1929.

The problem of change in the modern era is not change itself, but the rate of change, which is determined more often than not, by short-term gain rather than long term thinking. The first to point to the significance of constant and ongoing change was the writer and futurist Alvin Toffler. He coined the term ‘future shock’ to draw attention to the impact of change on society:

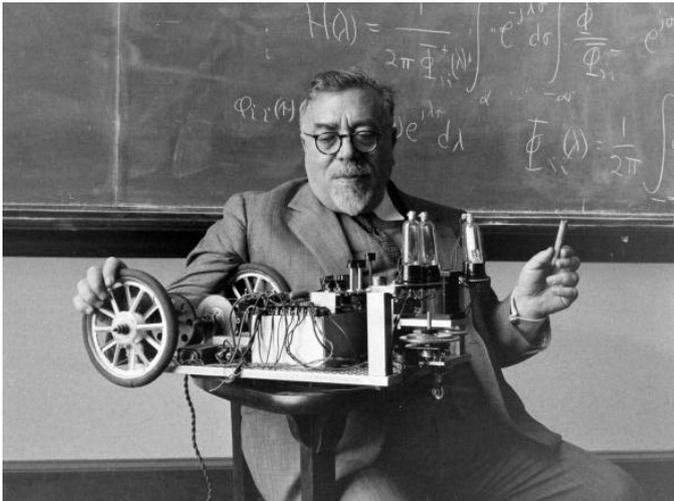
‘Future shock will not be found in Index Medicus or in any listing of psychological abnormalities. Yet, unless intelligent steps are taken to combat it, millions of human beings will find themselves increasingly disoriented, progressively incompetent to deal rationally with their environments.’

Many of the divisions emerging in society

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are between those who can, and those who can't cope with change. The division between mainstream and social media, between party politics and grassroots activism, between industrial productivity and environmentalism, and between conventional morality and diversity are all examples of this. We have not yet seen the rise of an 'anti-tech' movement, and yet this is inevitable. Norbert Wiener, who founded cybernetics, wrote about the downside of an uncritical view of technology:

'Let us remember that the automatic machine, whatever we think of any feelings it may have or may not have, is the precise economic equivalent of slave labour. Any labour which competes with slave labour must accept the economic conditions of slave labour. It is perfectly clear that this will produce an unemployment situation, in comparison with which the present recession and even the depression of the thirties will seem a pleasant joke.'

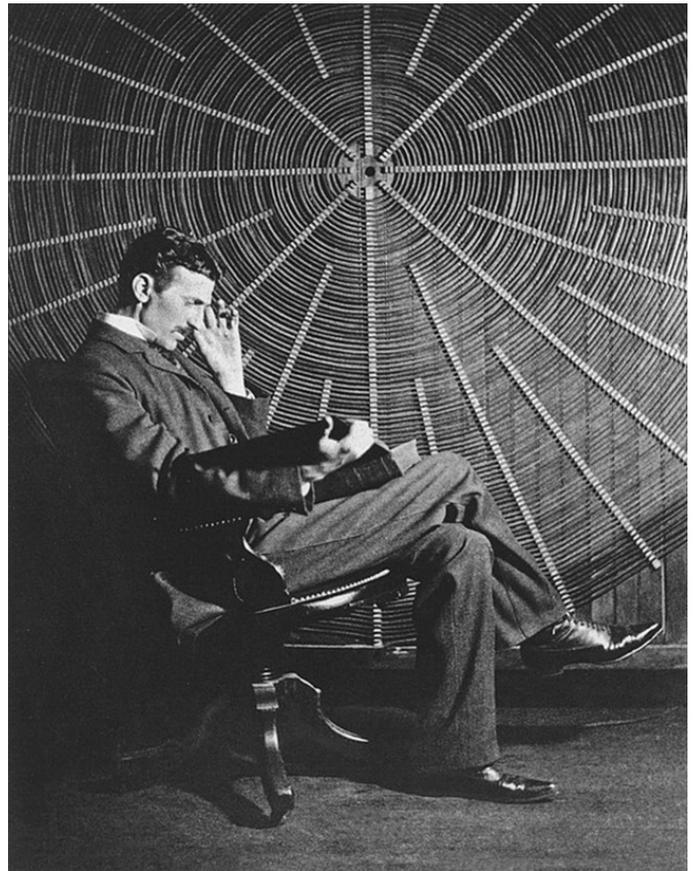


Norbert Wiener and Cyberbug, c. 1960

His warning was the direct outcome, not just of being unable to see the future, but of a future which is approaching with greater rapidity than we are ready for. When Nikola Tesla made the following remarks about the future in 1926, they appeared visionary; now they are unremarkable:

'We shall be able to communicate with one another instantly, irrespective of distance. Not only this, but through television and telephony we shall see and hear one another as perfectly as though we were face to face, despite intervening distances of thousands of miles; and the instruments through which we shall be able to do this will be amazingly simple compared with our

present telephone. A man will be able to carry one in his vest pocket.'



Nikola Tesla and high frequency transformer, 1891

The inability to see the future doesn't bother us provided we can plan for next year's holiday, arrive at the supermarket and find it fully stocked, or pay into a pension for old age. We can live with a degree of change - attitudes to mixed marriages, tattoos and disposable cups have all changed in a lifetime - but continual and ongoing change of the kind that requires us to question our assumptions about what is right and wrong, and to go on doing so, is much more of a problem. Edward de Bono, who coined the term 'lateral thinking', had the following to say about change and its impact:

'In the past, ideas have always lived longer than people. Once they were established, ideas would be changed only slowly and over several generations. But today technology and science have so speeded up the rate of change in the world that for the first time ever people actually live longer than ideas.'

Whether we are ready for it or not, a rapidly changing society is with us, and it will change not just what we do, but what we think.

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Robot operative in warehouse

If we cannot predict the future, at least with a degree of confidence, then the usual method of dealing with it through logic and calculation becomes defective. Logic demands fixed definitions. To make a logical judgement, what was true yesterday must remain true today. Significant and ongoing change means we can no longer do this. When this happens, emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger and frustration, can take over.



1984, Michael Anderson directed film, 1956

It is perhaps for this reason that the zeitgeist of an era is often portrayed through the arts. The arts are by nature free of the constraints of logic and are therefore more open to the influence of the intuitive mind. Many of the science fiction novels of the last century - George Orwell's 1984, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* - are now regarded as prophetic.

For the most part we leave our intuition unattended, which is why so many intuitive judgements are unconscious. When we automatically modify our behaviour at a funeral or a wedding, or when we are speaking to a child or a magistrate, we do so intuitively.

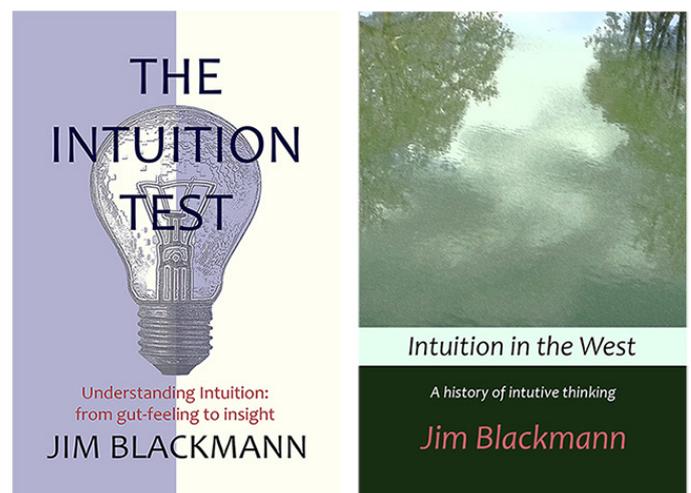
In the past, where sons followed their fathers into the family trade, innate intuition was enough to modify our behaviour to changing circumstances. This is no longer the case. If we are not aware of the need to actively modify our thinking, to challenge our assumptions and to consider new ideas, the coming years will make it so.

Just as we can improve our grammar or mathematical ability through practice and attention, we can do the same with intuition. We can learn to know its voice and to hear it when it speaks.

Intuition is the 'watching mind' - the root of the word 'intuition' is 'tueri', which means 'to watch'. When we vary our judgement - even unconsciously - it is because the intuitive mind is prompting us to think again about our response. Whereas it may have been possible to ignore our intuition in the past, if we continue to do so, we may find ourselves with no option but to react negatively to change. If on the other hand we nurture our intuitive ability, change will serve as a constant reminder to attend to the 'watching mind'. The choice is between anger or self-governance, and it is our choice.

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By the same author:



*The Intuition Test* presents the reader with more than thirty problems for which there is no logical solution, and must be approached intuitively.

*Intuition in the West* traces the history of intuitive thinking in Western culture.

Both are available on Amazon.

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# Observing the Self

*and intuition*



Marlon Brando as Kurtz, from *Apocalypse Now* by Francis Ford Coppola, 1979.

‘Men believe themselves to be free, simply because they are conscious of their actions, and unconscious of the causes whereby those actions are determined.’

Baruch Spinoza

We live life as though we have full knowledge of ourselves, or at least full enough not to be concerned with the lesser details. The phrase ‘hindsight wisdom’ means that we may look back on our life and see it, not in the way we saw it at the time, but in a way which was then hidden from us. The responsibility for this lies, not with some malicious demon, but with our own limited perception. If nothing else, the phenomenon of hindsight tells us we do not see ourselves fully.

The subject of the unconscious was very much in vogue in the late nineteenth century, as can be seen in Eduard von Hartmann and the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1869), and in William James, and the need to address the issue in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). The unconscious self was

taken to be more than simply the unattended element of our inner life, but something much darker and more active. Carl Jung, who wrote extensively on the subject, said:

‘In the exploration of the unconscious we come upon very strange things, from which a rationalist turns away with horror, claiming afterward that he did not see anything.’

If rationalism would not admit to this element of the inner life, the arts - less governed by logic - were more open to the idea. The portrayal of the unconscious mind as a real and malicious entity informed Robert Louis Stephenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886):

‘It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both...’

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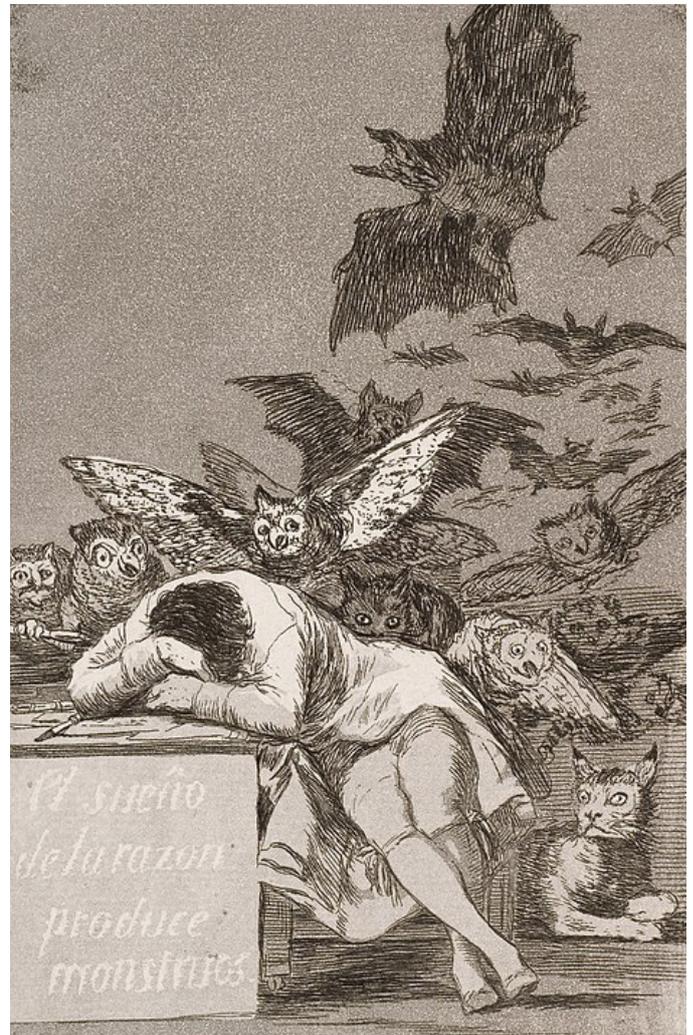
From the Jekyll and Hyde film, 1920

The problem with this view of the unconscious is that it implies the existence of a sinister entity, somewhat akin to the devil, acting within human nature. For material science, this was a step too far. Much more acceptable was the notion of an unconscious hidden by neglect, or by the inability to see our motives clearly owing to a one-sided view of our nature. This was the view depicted by Joseph Conrad in his *Heart of Darkness* (1899). In the novel, Kurtz is on his deathbed, and in the hindsight this affords him, his face reflects what he can now see. Marlow, his witness, recounts:

‘Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn’t touched. I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror — of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision — he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath: ‘The horror! The horror!’

The question is not whether this unconscious and unattended element exists, but whether it is important enough to warrant more than a passing interest.

It seems absurd to suggest that something so essential to life - our own self - could remain a mystery to us. And yet many people find themselves subject to periods of depression in life. No one would welcome depression, and yet it can occupy our inner life like an unwanted house guest. No amount of reason or intelligence allows us to rid ourselves of it. Indeed, the phenomenon of suicide speaks for the very real nature of this darker element of the inner life.



Francisco Goya, *The Sleep of Reason*, c. 1799.

This begs the question; if this darker element in our own nature exists, why don't we see it? Much has to do with our thinking.

The dominance of logic means that, even if we don't regard ourselves as particularly logical, its principles are so embedded in our culture that they inform not just what we think, but what we

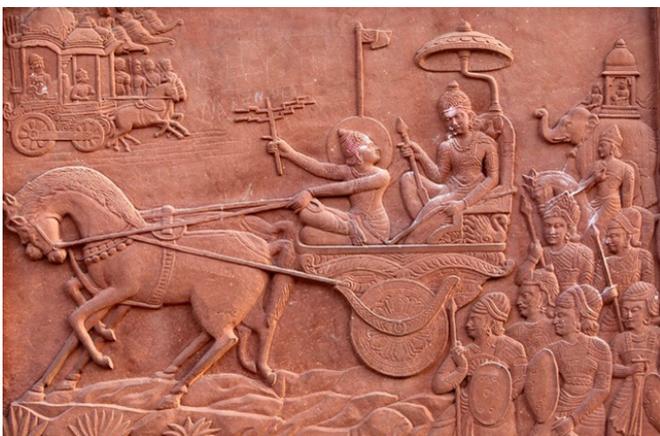
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see and how we see it. From the point of view of logic, something is either good or bad, and it can't be both. As Aristotle put it; 'If no B is A, neither can any A be B.'

Applied to human nature, this means that if we want to regard ourselves 'good people', we cannot admit to anything 'bad' in our character - not even to ourselves. And yet any genuine self-observation of our inner life will tell us that we harbour unkind thoughts, amoral desires and negative attitudes we would not dare admit to in public. If we fail to see this aspect of the inner life, it is not because it is absent, but because we prefer not to look.

In the East, which has a different culture and history, logic is much less dominant. The emphasis is not on the information we have, but on seeing what is hidden. This approach is highly intuitive. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, for example, Krishna explains to Arjuna in symbolic terms why we do not see our inner life rightly:

Smoke hides fire  
Dust hides a mirror



Krishna instructing Arjuna, temple carving, India.

In Yoga, the word 'Jnana' means knowledge, and refers to knowledge gained by insight rather than by deduction. The inability to see our inner life clearly is called 'Maya' or illusion. And the term 'Atman' refers to the realisation of our true self, one which is free of illusion. We may take the view that, provided we do no wrong, what is the harm if our view of ourselves is an illusion? The problem is that, if through circumstance or temperament, we see through the illusion, we can become 'disillusioned'. Perhaps it is this rather than a chemical imbalance which is the cause of depression.

Intuition is the watching mind. The French philosopher Henri Bergson defined it as 'the direct vision of the mind by the mind'. When we are about to say something inappropriate and stop, or when we realise we have become over-exuberant, or when we become aware that a petty remark has unduly affected us, it is the intuitive mind prompting us to attend to this hidden element of our inner life.

The necessity of seeing our inner life clearly is essential if we are to be realistic about our own nature. Not just freedom of choice, but our optimism for the future is dependent on how clearly and honestly we see ourselves.

Where logic is definitive, intuition is progressive. Through insight we may see suddenly what previously was hidden from us. This hidden element is often that aspect of the inner life we would prefer not to see, which is why it is overlooked or ignored.

Insights into this aspect of our nature may present themselves first as enigmas - why did I do that? - and then as annoying and unwanted traits.

Seen from this point of view, all that happens to us in life - wanted and unwanted - becomes a prompt to see our inner life clearly. We can, like Kurtz, wait until our deathbed until we review our life unimpeded, or begin to do so now, while we are in a position to alter our actions. If logic cannot do this, intuition can.

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## Intuition Workshops

We use intuition to make some of our most important decisions and judgments in life - whether to trust someone or not, whether to begin or end a relationship, how we are going to live, and what we believe.

In spite of this we do nothing about our intuition. We are born with a degree of intuitive ability, and we leave it at that.

The best way to develop intuition is to practice it directly. Intuition Workshops provide the means to do this. For more information email:

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