

Learning to Use Intuition in Futures Studies: A Bibliographic Essay on Personal Sources, Processes and Concerns

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Introduction

This essay is part of a special “Symposium” issue of the *Journal of Futures Studies* focusing on Intuition in Futures Work. It builds on the brief summary review of conceptual positions about practical intuition contained in my brief introduction to the symposium (Markley, 2015), and describes the specific sources, methods and explanatory models I personally have found most useful in my own professional trajectory as I learned the practical art of using intuition in futures studies. It ends with suggestions for handling the problem of when doing this type of work in public settings.

How I Learned to Elicit and Facilitate Intuition for Futures Studies

As described elsewhere (Markley, 1998; 2012a), my involvement with intuition began ~1972 when I realized that merely rational/analytic modes of thinking were intrinsically inadequate for robust exploration of alternative futures involving systemic transformation. Since then, I have come to rely on many types of processes for eliciting intuition—not as a replacement, but as an integral complement to rational/analytic methods for insight, foresight and wise-choosing.

Some months after I had first become aware of the need for intuition in futures research and had begun a search for “appropriate technologies” for so doing, I found what I was looking for quite serendipitously in a self-hypnosis-based speed reading course I took in order to cover the extensive range of materials needing to be surveyed for comprehensive futures research work. The methodology of the course was essentially modeled on what has become known as “Silva Mind Control” (later described in Silva, 1977), in which progressive relaxation and guided imagery are used to induce a non-ordinary state of consciousness (NOSC); which, in turn, enables the use of virtual technologies such as an imagined special room for visioning in which judgmental thinking based on conventional beliefs is disengaged, and in which non-local processes such as out-of-body remote viewing

become feasible.

As an aside to the main narrative, it is interesting to note that in traditional Silva Mind Control courses—in order to make good the marketing promise “ESP or your money back”—all students at the end of the course are required do a remote diagnosis of a health issue written about someone on a note card contributed by another member of the class. Reportedly most students are able to do this, although I know of no published research verifying this claim.

Much to my surprise, I myself was able to quite easily do this the first time I tried in the class where I learned this method—and it was precisely this experience that led me to immediately choose relaxation-enhanced guided imagery as a tentative appropriate technology for facilitating intuition-based exploration and visioning of alternative futures. Soon thereafter, I began an informal R&D laboratory undertaking involving futurist colleagues at the Stanford Research Institute, to learn and to test the practical capacity for using intuition as a way to resolve major problems from the day-to-day futures research work that conventional rational/analytic methods were not adequate for. This “skunk works” laboratory, as we called it, and the importance of suspending judgmental thinking in such visioning work, is detailed in Markley (2012a, pp. 8-9).¹ From the beginning, I routinely followed an intuition-based premise that “the guide should be [intuitively] guided” in the guided imagery processes we used, and virtually all of the guided imagery processes I have developed have come into being by virtue of this “inspirational” pathway I have come to call “cornucopia causality” (Markley, 2012b)²—described below.

Based on this informal R&D work at SRI and subsequent teaching of an intuition-based “Visionary Futures” course at UHCL, I have come to consider guided imagery an “appropriate technology” for practical intuition in futures work because it is inexpensive, flexible, easy to learn, and ethical. It does, however, require an appropriate mental set and institutional setting for effectiveness, as well as either a skilled facilitator or carefully crafted programs of recorded guided imagery instructions.

Finally, in case there is any doubt about this, while both relaxation-based guided imagery and hypnosis use a trance state for effectiveness, in guided imagery this is based on inner actions suggested to you by the facilitator that you voluntary do yourself, whereas in hypnosis the facilitator usually uses an induction that takes you into the state without any volitional direction on your part.

An Annotated Bibliography of Personally Useful Sources

Introductory writings on intuition-based visioning—both those I found most useful when I was beginning, and those found most useful since then—include:

- Shakti Gawain’s various books and other offerings listed at <http://shaktigawain.com> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakti_Gawain, e.g.:
 - *Creative Visualization: Use the Power of Your Imagination to Create What You Want in Life* (1978/2002).
 - *The Creative Visualization Workbook* (1982/1995)
 - *Developing Intuition: Practical Guidance for Daily Life* (1987/2001).

Gawain's first book has sold more than 10 million copies and is considered by many to be the foundational work on practical intuition, although Gawain herself, on pp. xvii-xviii of *Developing Intuition* makes it evident to any knowledgeable reader that her own initiation was either Silva Mind Control, or as in my own case, a course based on this methodology that uses the blind remote diagnosis regimen as a final exam exercise.

Many professionals, including myself, have long considered Gawain's initial writings to be too "New Age Wu" to recommend to a professional audience. For full disclosure, however, I openly acknowledge their utility for my own growth of competency in this subtle art. Gawain's more recent *Developing Intuition*, on the other hand, has become the single book that I now most frequently recommend as a practical introduction to the topic for most people—both lay and professional.

- Frances Vaughan's (1979) *Awakening Intuition* was for years my most frequently recommended introduction to intuition, due to its balanced and highly nuanced presentation. Citation analysis indicates that it is one of the earliest professionally credible introductory sources on "transcendental intuition."
- Willis Harman & Howard Rheingold's (1984) *Higher Creativity: Liberating the Unconscious for Breakthrough Insights*, although short on practical guidance, is a such a masterful compendium of transcendently inspiring ideas and historically important sources that I try to reread it every few years.
- United Church of Religious Science's (1985) *Visioning Handbook* has for me been a touchstone on how to connect with other transcendentally oriented activists on for co-creative visioning.
- Weston Agor's (1989) *Intuition in Organizations: Leading and Managing Productively*, although not about futures work specifically, is a great historical source about institutional intuition work.
- Gay Hendricks & Kate Ludeman's (1996) *The Corporate Mystic: A Guidebook for Visionaries with Their Feet on the Ground*, also not about futures studies specifically, is an amazingly astute set of guidelines for futurists who would include practical intuition in their work with corporate clients.
- Martin Rossman's (2000) *Guided Imagery for Self-Healing* and associated set of four CD's containing audible guidance scripts, is perhaps the gentlest and most ethical approach to this sort of work that I know of. Although they are not focused on futures studies, they are immediately applicable for developing and using guided imagery for insight, foresight and wise-choosing.
- Finally, two extraordinarily well-written sources that I have only recently found and thus far not finished due to deadline pressures, but nevertheless recommend wholeheartedly:
 - Nancy du Tertre's (2012) *Psychic Intuition: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask*. As an admitted "skeptical psychic" du Tertre chronicles specific evidence on the psychophysiological underpinnings of intuition along dimensions that I never even suspected.
 - Peter Nelson's (2014) *The Way of a Seer: Reflections from a Non-Ordinary Life*. This book, recommended by fellow symposium author, Marcus Anthony, is something of an experiential tour de force on the topic.

My Most Useful Processes and Imagistic Models for Practical Intuition-Based Futures Exploration

Some of my students maintain that my best methods were the ones earliest published as:

- “Using Depth Intuition in Creative Problem-Solving and Strategic Innovation” (Markley, 1988); subsequently reprinted as a chapter in the *Source Book for Creative Problem-Solving: A Fifty Year Digest of Proven Innovation Processes* (Parnes, 1992), and briefly summarized in “Visionary Futures: Guided Cognitive Imagery in Teaching and Learning About the Future” (Markley, 1998).

The most popularly used of my methods however, are undoubtedly these two, both of which are described with appended scripts that knowledgeable facilitators can easily adapt to their own needs:

- “Experiencing the Needs of Future Generations” (Markley, 1994; Markley & Burchstead, 1997).
- “Mental Time Travel: A Practical Business and Personal Research Tool for Looking Ahead” (Markley, 2007).

Depending on how they are adapted, these methods can be used separately or as a set, and are particularly suitable for three broad classes of future-oriented applications: problem solving, policy analysis, and strategic planning—both personal and corporate.

Imagistic Intuition Theory

Just as intuition often comes in images rather than words, I have found it useful to convey an experiential understanding of how intuition works via both imagistic theory and experiential guided imagery processes that students and clients find useful. Additionally, the transcendental aspects of these methods are easier for skeptical observers to provisionally accept and experientially explore if they have a way to visualize them in non-verbal ways. Thus, I have found it essential to develop several imagistic models for this purpose. Touched on briefly in Markley (2012a), they are described more fully in pp. 12-14 and 19-23 of the online expanded preprint of this didactic article.³ A particularly useful model featured in this expanded preprint portrays two different types of causality and action in futures work—symbolized in Figure 1.

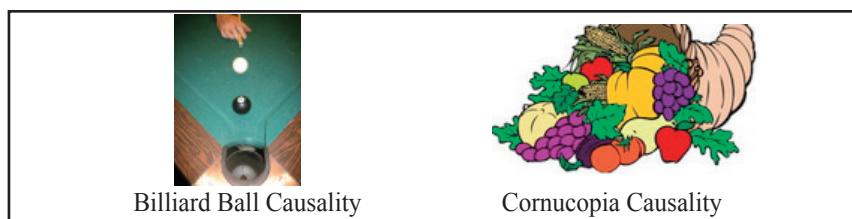


Figure 1. Two ways in which things change

Conventional or Billiard Ball Causality is easy to visualize as the action of physical force of one object on another. In the competitive sphere of the “body politic,” this type of causality can be visualized as power over. Cornucopia Causality, on the other hand, is power from within—power to mobilize the manifestation of things in the physical world from a trans-physical origin.

Also called “horn of plenty,” the cornucopia has been used by many cultures, both ancient and contemporary, to symbolize the generative miracle of life in all its forms. For example, it is a traditional symbol used in American Thanksgiving Day celebrations.

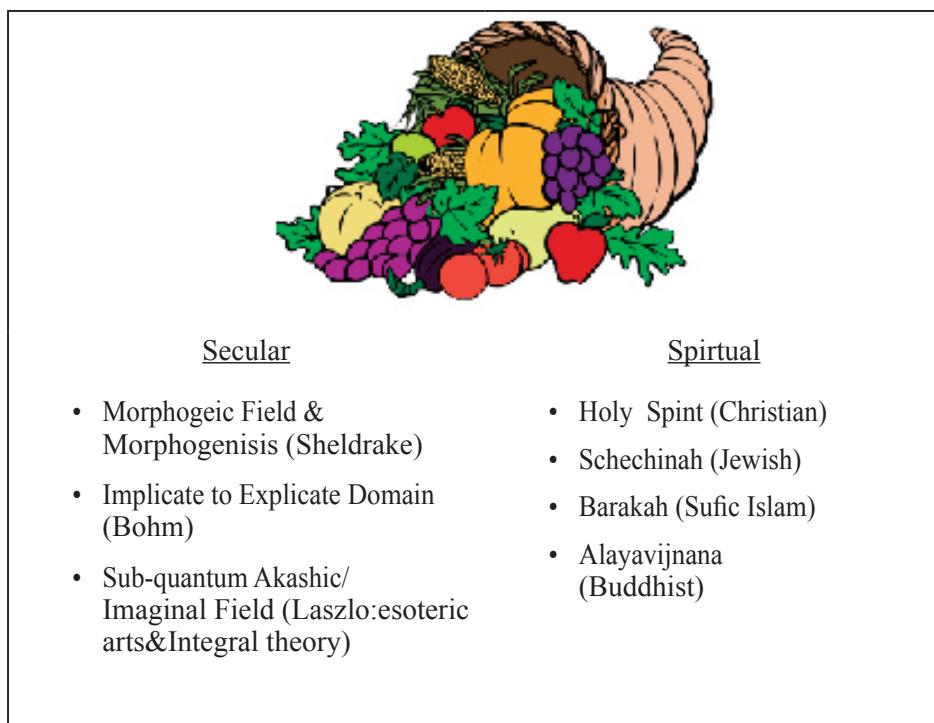


Figure 2. Theories and concepts underlying cornucopia causality

At a superficial level, the cornucopia obviously symbolizes a plentiful harvest, for which we naturally feel gratitude. But at a deeper level, as illustrated by Figure 2, it also symbolizes an expanding spiral vortex of manifestation, which quite literally out-flows from the “no-thing-ness” of the sub-quantum akashic field into the “this-here-ness” of matter, energy, space and time making up what we conventionally call physical reality, including bio-socio-psycho-spiritual phenomena such as thoughts, minds, emotions and motivations (Laszlo, 2004, 2009). Related secular concepts include the implicate and explicate orders of reality and holomovement (Bohm, 1980), as well as the morphogenetic field and morphogenesis (Sheldrake, 1981).

In spiritual terminology, this is the type of causality employed by the life force energy (chi, prana, ki, microvita)⁴ enlivening the vitality of all of ecology and what Harman & Rheingold (1984) term higher creativity, as well as prayer and other transcendental sources of wisdom having names such as Holy Spirit (Christian),

Shekinah (Jewish), Spirit of Guidance (Sufic), Alayavijnana (Nondual Buddhist).

Esoteric teachers from various traditions have used the term *imaginai* to distinguish this subtle phenomenon (referred to both as a noun and as an adjective), and its relevance for citizen activists.⁵ Scientific skeptics, on the other hand, typically use only terms such as *insight* when referring to the hidden guidance of the mind (c.f., Costa, 2010). From a holistic, general systems perspective, however, it seems to the author that the wide variety of such terms are but different names for the same underlying resource whose nature is quite literally “beyond words.”

Figure 3 portrays how at one extreme I see these two as essentially different but yet complementary processes rather than oppositional in futures work—*yin* and *yang*-like opposite sides of the same coin—as denoted by the (~) symbol in between both.

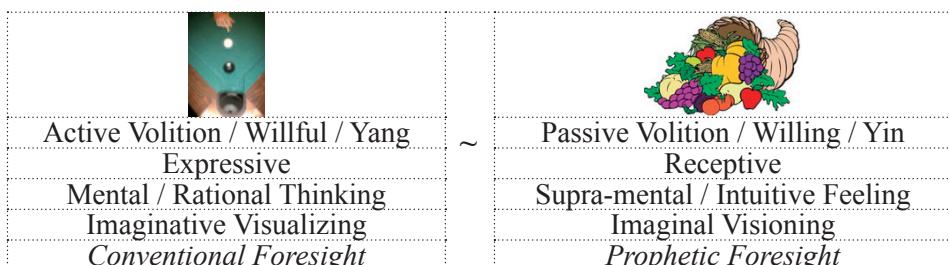


Figure 3. Two types of mental process in obtaining foresight

But they can also be integrated in what I think of as Integral Activism, in which internal alignment with one’s “higher” sourcing is an essential complement to co-creative external alignment with others—as is known to be essential for “emergent” organizational change, especially in times of crisis (Laszlo, 2008; Holman, 2010). This sort of integration seems be functionally equivalent to what, elsewhere in this Symposium, Marcus Bussey (2015) calls Transcendental Empiricism and Marcus Anthony (2008, 2015) calls Integrated Intelligence (INI).

Dealing with the Problem of Methodological Credibility

For the final topic in this short bibliographic essay, I almost have to focus on my concern about what may be the most critical obstacle to open acceptance of practical intuition methods in the workplace—its lack of credibility for many, especially futurists and administrators for whom political correctness is of greater importance than verifiable validity and usefulness in dealing with problems for which there may be no other viable remedy. To illustrate, here is a case example quoted directly from Markley (2008, p. 21):

Policy analysis and alignment of viewpoints across different levels of management in a multi-national corporation

A second case example involves a team from a large automotive and electronic data systems corporation who came to UHCL to learn state-of-the-art tools of applied futures research. Membership in the team included an assistant vice president, a department head and several staff professionals. As we were discussing various visionary futures research

tools, the group decided that they would like an experiential introduction to the method described above as Mental Time Travel. Since the group had just several hours before involved themselves in a frustratingly inconclusive discussion regarding “Third World” policy implications for their global corporation, the policy option chosen for investigation of this futures method focused on this question:

What would the future of our company and of the world look like if major ‘First World’ Corporations such as us [do versus do not] strategically embrace the poverty-stricken ‘Third World’ nations and cultures as customers (i.e., not just as the source of low-cost labor)?

Our exercise was attended by all of the corporate team members plus two UHCL futures faculty and several graduate students and alumni. Two Mental Time Travel journeys (one for each policy option) were facilitated by the author, who first described the process, then gave appropriate instructions for relaxation and focusing. Various frames of reference and time horizons to experience were suggested as the participants imaginatively journeyed through two different futures: one representing the “do” and one representing the “do not” policy options, regarding the embrace of the Third World as a strategic customer base by First World corporation.

The results were clear-cut. All participants, both corporate team members and academic participants, experienced much the same thing. Our conclusion? Globally, “the chain” of human systems is only as strong as its weakest link. In the very long term, sustainable growth and well-being is dependent on the well-being of all nations, not just the ones that have a good shot at becoming prosperous. Thus, it is clear that developing a Third World customer base is essential.

The corporate team, in mulling this over came to an additional conclusion: The strategic question that should be focused on is not: Whether or not the corporation should move in this direction; Rather, it needs to be: How might it be feasible to help leaders at all levels in our corporation to experience and see this for themselves, so that meaningful progress in this direction might become feasible to achieve? Obviously, Mental Time Travel would be a way to do this, but the team members saw this as politically too risky to recommend to their corporate superiors, so the matter was dropped, and the team continued their brief experiential survey of research and forecasting methods.

Other than with the production of high quality media materials on the topic, the solution to the credibility problem, as I see it, lies along several progressively more visible levels:

1. Co-create an informal, administratively unobtrusive, experiential community of practice where practical intuition can be explored, developed and mentored by interested and qualified personnel; and using both personal/professional concerns and workplace problems as “grist for the mill” of experiential R&D. Do not publish the outcomes unless or until it is politically expedient to do so, but carefully document them toward the day when it is.
2. Recruit one or more “champions” from senior staff professional, managerial

and executive ranks, who are interested and willing to mentor the community of practice in strategic and tactical knowhow of organizational change management.

3. Carefully talk in increasingly public circles about this work, telling “war stories” of wins as well as losses in the struggle for acceptance, but not in ways that would embarrass those who want intuition work to remain a “taboo topic” to talk publically about.
4. Publish in both academic and professionally credible venues, with compelling stories of success.

Concluding Statement

Even if it turns out to be an ‘urban myth’⁶ that Einstein said the following, it is nevertheless a fitting benediction:

*The intuitive mind is a sacred gift
and the rational mind is a faithful servant.
We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.*

Let us hope that the future brings an honoring of both the servant and the gift. Indeed, how else can we transform our perception of intensifying global challenges from frightening threats to be looked away from, to inviting opportunities to be co-creatively dealt with.

Notes

1. An important part of this story—to at least note in passing—is a pivotal experience I had of a virtually escorted visit to a transcendental resource for intuitive guidance about evolutionary dynamics called “Omniverse Center for Cultural Development;” and how I was later able to escort some colleagues at SRI to visit it as well in a group-NOSC, in order to resolve a research question we had not been able to adequately handle in other ways. An abridged version of the story has been published (Markley, 2009), with a longer version available online at: <http://www.inwardboundvisioning.com/Docs/MONTREALOmniverseSpeech.htm>
2. A short 15 min. video introducing this concept can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNquUDqXWdg>.
3. <http://www.imaginalvisioning.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Imaginal-Visioning-for-Prophetic-Foresight-Preprint-V2.1.pdf>.
4. About this type of energy, Anita Moorjani (2012, p. 145), talking about her Near Death Experience (NDE) that involved an intense illumination, leading to rapid and complete healing of her lymphoma stage-4B cancer, said: “To explain this [healing] from another perspective, although I have been using the words, Universal energy, know that I could just as easily say chi, prana, or ki. These words mean “life-force energy” in Mandarin, Hindi, and Japanese respectively. This is the chi in Tai Chi and Chi Gong, and it’s the ki in Reiki. In a nutshell, it’s the Source of life, and it runs through every living thing. In fact, it fills the entire universe and is inseparable from it. (Emphasis added.) Microvita is yet another name for this intelligent energy (Bussey, 2011; Sarkar 1991).
5. See, e.g., “Accessing the imaginal realm to heal our planet,” by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi with Raqib Ickovits (2005); also the writings of Neville Goddard

(1954) who frequently spoke of imaginal prayer; and the writings of Gerald Epstein (1981, 1991) whose online exposition of imaginal theory, "The imaginal, the right hemisphere of the brain, and the waking dream" (<http://www.biomindsuperpowers.com/Pages/Imaginal.html>) is a good technical introduction to and overview of the topic.

6. <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/09/18/intuitive-mind/>

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