

Intuition, Rationality and Imagination

Marcus Bussey
University of the Sunshine Coast
Australia

Introduction

For too long a shallow empiricism has blinded researchers to the greater potentiality of human perception. Even qualitative research, which implicitly accepts the transperceptual possibilities of mind, is shackled to empiricism. This paper will argue that intuition is a cultural resource and that when practiced rigorously, researchers gain access to rational processes that extend the sense making possibilities denied us via a narrow empiricism. The paper thus **seeks to extend, not over-turn, empiricism**, in the same way that qualitative research extended it from the 1960s on. The focus is on how researchers can access the kind of information about the world that we need to foster transformative agency and insight.

Intuition is a central feature of any holistic approach to the future. This statement, of course, invokes a host of interjections that demand a response. Is intuition anything more than a hunch? Is it something that can be measured? Is it empirically useful? Or even better, can it be harnessed? Can intuition ever be a legitimate way of knowing the world? Is it a sensory or super-sensory dimension of human activity? Does it have a place in scholarly and pragmatic engagements with the future? This paper will seek to deal with a few of these issues regarding the nature of 'knowing' the world via forms of intuitional reasoning as a mode of anticipatory action learning.

I agree with Markley (this issue) that intuition ruptures rational processes eliciting an affective response to a context or issue. As he says, it "... 'connects the dots' of all manner of different contextual factors shaping the thing intuited" (Markley, 2015, p.84). In this paper I argue that intuition extends the rational and offers a synthetic response to the analytical that, in a delightfully yin-yang way, strengthens both. This compliments Markley's position which makes a sound case for the intuitional in futures work. These thoughts on intuition grow out of my twenty eight years of practicing meditation which has led me to recognize/appreciate that intuition offers an extended form of knowing based on a richer epistemology than that which informs current rational systems. Thus I take a position offering us what Gilles Deleuze (1994) decades ago, and at considerable risk to his reputation, described as transcendental empiricism.

Taking such a position – and I admit to stretching Deleuze’s use – allows me to argue that intuition is a form of reasoning based on the capacity to connect the dots in ways that disrupt the present and allow for it to become remarkable. Deleuze coined the term transcendental empiricism as he sought to make sense of the patterns and ruptures that challenge all readings of culture and the conceptual experiments undertaken by cultural agents. I want to emphasize that intuition is a cultural tool – it is shaped by our experience of culture and can be harnessed when we are considering questions that lie beyond the contemporary horizon of the sensible and rational. This is how I read Hubbard’s connection to Christ – Christ holds the intuitional and cultural space for a new expanded form of knowing that allows her to invoke “a personal future in a transformed body, in a transformed world, in a universe of many mansions” (Hubbard, 2015, p. 111). Her Christ does not close the cultural windows but opens them to the ‘many mansions’ so important to futures thinking. Here I am reminded of Zia Sardar’s insistence on Mutually Assured Diversity (Sardar, 2010).

Intuition and Reason

Intuition is a form of intimate knowing. It offers a sense of embedded being in contact with the subtle elements of the world. It opens the mind to relational possibilities that were previously denied to it by cultural conditioning. So as a futurist I seek to problematise what is taken to be real by offering embodied experiences that disrupt the narrative logic of any given present. Visioning (Markley, 2012) work is of course one way to do this but there are plenty of other ways also (Bussey, 2014c; Hayward, 2006). The application of CLA (Inayatullah & Milojevic, 2015) in a variety of creative and embodied ways offers pathways for intuitively ‘connecting the dots’ and redefining agency and the rational boundaries imposed by a dominant narrative (Bussey, 2014a; Head, 2012; Lederwasch, 2015).

Similarly Hayward and Voros (2006) developed the Sarkar Game to bring the whole body into the thinking through of assumptions about transformation. I have used embodied practices such as the Futures Mirror, improvisation, dance and mindfulness to also interrupt the logic-boundaries workshop participants naturally carry to protect themselves from intuitional disruption (Bussey, 2014c). All such practices presume an intimate and creative bodily connection, via the senses, with intuitional knowing.

Within the parameters of intimate futures work, reason is extended to include the intuitive. The role of extended mind in this process is critical. Marcus Anthony calls this ‘integrated intelligence’ that accesses a ‘mystical intuition’ (Anthony, 2010) and argues for its place in the research work of scholars. Whilst the spiritual and the mystical are challenging categories for mainstream futures practitioners there is an upsurge of interest in what the Indian philosopher and guru, Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, calls the intuitional sciences (1993).

To extend reason requires a deeper empiricism to allow for the condition of reasoning beyond the common place. When talking of the apophatic experiences of mystics Michael Sells (1994, p.213ff) reminds us that perception is usually constructed around experience. Experience demands a subject-object relationship whilst apophysis ruptures this ‘necessary condition’ offering the condition of absence or ‘silence by denial’ that intuition speaks to. Now in a deepened empiricism, the

subject-object relationship becomes less visible. Intuitive perception often goes beyond the binary of the subject-object. I am thinking here of the kind of distinction the Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh (1988) describes as *inter-being*. In such a state of awareness the subject and the object interpenetrate one another. Thus knower and known, perceiver and perceived are relationally constructed. There is no separation. Yet there is an apophatic augmentation of the condition to which intuition gives us oblique access. Intuition both acknowledges this relational nature of being and also seeks to make it explicit in futures work. Ramos (2015) in his essay in this symposium talks of first, second and third person experiences in the action research cycle. From the perspective of intimate knowing and deepened empiricism Ramos' steps are stages on a continuum of engaged perception moving from the apophysis of experience to the relationality of inter-being to the impersonal stance where the subject-object merges.

Re-Enchantment

This extension of reason to include intuitional knowing offers us a deepened empiricism in which knowing the world, accessing both past and future possibilities enlivens the present. Re-enchantment is the result as Berman (1981), Oldenski and Carlson (2002) and others note. Such re-enchantment is politically and socially dangerous. It destabilizes the present opening it to the disturbing and the uncanny (Ricatti, 2013; Young, 1997) and an awareness of loss that arises from the separation of the subject from the world (Macy, 2007). This deepened empiricism challenges the empirical impoverishment of reality that maintains the shallow sense of being and knowing that fosters a state of what Agamben (1998) calls *homo sacer*: the biopolitical condition of the bare life. Such a condition is based on the political notion of individual sovereignty. Such a condition implies separation. Separation limits the mind and objectifies thought and perception as linguistic extensions of the bare life.

Intuitional knowing moves Agamben's critique of modernity into a reconstructive engagement with the world and challenges futurists who are proactively facilitating futures beyond 'business as usual' to deploy intuitional processes that deepen empiricism. It calls language, as a vehicle of perception, into an engagement with both the somatic and the spirit (Abram, 1996). The shallow empiricism of modernity can be seen to be not just an intellectual project but also a political one that separates humanity (the citizen) from a politics of engagement. A deeper empiricism releases the potential of the citizen to realise richer futures. Intuition, a faculty we all know and have experienced, is a pathway back to connection and a deeper politics of engagement. Miller in this Symposium (2015) describes just this when employing visioning and guided imagery techniques that align her client's aspirational goals with intuitive knowing or 'certainty' around preferred futures.

Intuitional Space

Futures work, seeking to deepen our politics of engagement, therefore becomes an engagement with the cultural landscapes of 'clients'. Creating a place of safety for clients is an essential first step in this work. Partly this involves the suspension of disbelief. It also requires the introduction of new disruptive experiences and a set of

concepts that makes sense of the new landscape. The mapping work of the futurist supports extended rational functions in which re-enchantment and reconnection become not just logical but also intellectually, emotionally and spiritually desirable.

Inayatullah (2008) describes the use of the futures landscape as a pillar of futures studies, CLA is also, as I have argued, a map (Bussey, 2014a). Hutchinson (2005) also looks at the mapping work that people do as a form of sense making when exploring a range of futures. Such mapping work, whether done explicitly as in these cases, or implicitly creates a meaning framework for people seeking to identify alternatives to business as usual. Once a 'map' is in place and ready to support further futures work it falls into the background as the teleological framework from which new stories can emerge.

Psychologically this is important. Intuitive possibilities retreat when under threat from too much disorientation. The map, stabilizing chaos, is a sense making device that allows for greater creativity and the intuitional possibilities this evokes. As Dervin notes:

“Sense-Making thrusts itself between chaos and order, structure and person, facts and illusions, external worlds and inner, universals and particulars. Sense-Making posits reality as ordered in part, chaotic in part, evolving in part” (1999, p. 730).

Too much chaos and human learning retreats. Too much structure and human learning becomes superficial and static. I would argue that intuition plays a significant role in sense making, bridging as it does the subject-object divide. Intuitional process helps us navigate structure by allowing us to 'see' around the next corner and anticipate, not just cognitively but relationally, new possibilities. It goes at least some way towards fostering the resilience that Dervin's definition suggests.

Intuition is a Cultural Resource

As I see it, intuition is a cultural resource. How we intuit depends on the cultural framework we inhabit. This point is made by Marcus Anthony (2015) in his paper for this Symposia. He is correct to see the current materialist and scientific culture as a barrier to the legitimation of intuition. Yet I would argue that, despite this, culture has... the space to allow for intuitive dissent to occur. Here I am thinking of Tom Graves' argument for Futures by stealth (Graves, 2007). To me culture is the key. Julian Jaynes (2000) for instance argues that when thought first became a serious cultural phenomena it was externalized as disembodied voice. An idea/thought at this time, roughly the archaic period in Eurasia ie between 1500 and 500 BCE, people (heroes, prophets) apprehended as a voice inside-outside the person receiving it. Often this was described as coming from a God such as Athena in Greek myth (think Odysseus) or Yahweh in the Judeo-Christian tradition (think Moses).

This fascinating proposition is relevant to my conjecture that intuition is a cultural resource because it illustrates how when thinking was new it was given a cultural frame or map to make sense of it. Today, intuition is framed via certain rubrics of psychology, New Age theories, and so on. It is valued at the personal level but is not treated as a cultural resource because we live in a highly individual culture in which relational thought and relational action are poorly understood.

Epistemologically intuition is frowned upon because it seems to stand beyond the perceivable, the rational and the scientific.

Despite the efforts of scientists such as Rupert Sheldrake (2004) intuition is not readily accepted in the scientific community. This of course is not a problem for futurists working on human questions of social change and cultural transformation. Such questions being qualitative in nature allow for the practice of intuition even when it is treated with skepticism. The practice does not even require a name and can be introduced by stealth (Graves, 2007). However, to look intuition squarely in the eye and embrace it as a futures tool requires a braver approach.

For this we need conceptual tools and methodological practices to support intuitional capacity. I have touched on a number of these already but want to focus on an extended map of the imaginative possibilities as a way of extending both the thinking and practices of intuitional futures work. Such is the pragmatic orientation of futures work we need to ground the imaginative potential of both individuals, organisations and communities in a robust understanding of practical imagination (Bussey, 2013a, 2014b).

Imagination

The imaginative potential of people is often overlooked. Yet how we understand imagination determines how we experience and engage intuition. The intuitive requires an openness to imaginative domains so that the murmurings of our individual and collective hearts can be given form. Without an imaginative template intuition cannot take meaningful form and be acted on. **Figure 1** breaks down imagination into domains. Each domain pertains to a different kind of intuition. All together it could be said to describe an intuitive landscape from which futures thinking and action can emerge.

So if, starting at the centre we understand ourselves as citizens within the *homo sacer* model described above then intuition will always be a whisper denied; a hunch, and no more. Such an imaginative self-representation limits the possible to local and discrete actions centred on an alienated ego. However, if we have richer anticipatory imaginings that construct the self as deeply connected and powerful then of course our palette of possible futures becomes varied and exciting. The first offers us a closed culture and a closed future whilst the second an open cultural terrain in which certainty may diminish but from which multiple possibilities arise.

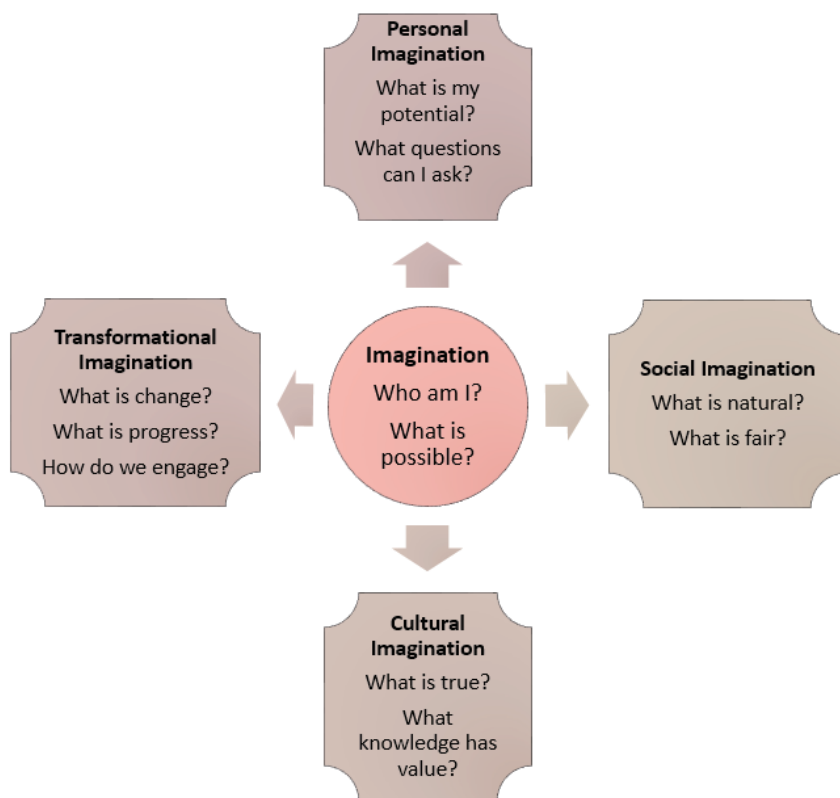


Figure 1. Mapping the Imaginative domains

Similarly we can re-imagine the personal, the social, the cultural and the transformational. At the **personal level** it is possible to understand the intuition as an augmentation of the self that enriches our ability to navigate the future in search of deeper meaning and more profound being. At the **social** we can understand that intuition knowing and perceiving is a natural part of what we humans do. Social process deepens as a result and invites us to trust and increases a practical optimism that empowers us to engage more effectively with the myriad of issues facing us as we hit the physical limits of our planet. Such limits of course morph when intuition emerges as a viable epistemological tool for rethinking and engaging with this global problematic (Bussey, 2013b).

Embracing intuition changes how we approach the question of truth (Truth!). When we engage **cultural imagination** – a key aspect of futures work – we take the lid off what is possible and work across the social and cultural imaginative terrains (with maps in hand) which, though clearly demarked conceptually, are of course intimately entwined in reality. This brings us to the axiological which requires of us to own up to our values and our own complicity in the state of the world ‘as given’. We come to see that values have effects in the world, so if we look at what we are doing as opposed to what we are saying we can work backwards to the ‘real’ values we hold as opposed to those we hide behind in a declarative haze. When we come to grips with this uncomfortable situation we can start to imagine transformation.

The **transformative imagination** challenges our understandings of change and progress. It recognizes that intuitively we all know something is not 'right'. There is a gap between the rhetoric and the practice. The intuition allows us to access the imaginative possibilities beyond the horizon of the present. Such intuition work is tentative but essential. We may not have a name for where we are going. We may not have a map for how to get there. Yet we know we must move forward and engage the liminal that extends the rational basis of our current episteme and find, via an intuitive engagement with Being, a new set of processes and cultural referents from which to operate.

Such a map points us to what Derrida was exploring under the banner of the 'Enlightenment to come' (2005), read this way it harnesses intuition as an adjunct to anticipatory imagination. All Derrida can intuit about such a condition is that it is beyond and more than what we have at present. For him this new state is both a cognitive and a cultural project that up ends current assumptions about the real and what is of value. Such a condition will give birth to new concepts and reconfigure old ones. Adopting this approach may seem counter-intuitive, a subject deserving a symposium on its own, but human beings are often it seems the architects of their own evolutionary leaps. Runia (2014) makes this case and offers us a counter intuitive argument for a leaping forward into a future which is unknown and likely to bring with it the catastrophe needed to foment new modes of being.

Conclusion

In this new landscape I argue the intuition and the spiritual will have centre place. The human capacity for 'connecting the dots' will increase and, as all enlightenments imply, we will re-orient the very heart of culture to accommodate a new set of epistemic and ontological bearings. I use the word spiritual here to flag this new orientation. By spiritual I do not mean the religious (Kesson, 2002). Rather, I am referring to a deepened appreciation of connection with the world and to the spiritual pragmatics that arises from such an awareness. When one feels connected one cannot stand idle whilst injustice, suffering and violence occur. Connection makes the world's pain our pain and when we experience pain we are forced to do something about it. Here intuition is raw and vital.

Notes

1. The title of his book was *Difference and Repetition* first published in 1968.

Correspondence

Marcus Bussey
University of the Sunshine Coast
Australia
E-mail: mbussey@usc.edu.au

References

- Abram, David. (1996). *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Vintage.

- Agamben, Giorgio. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (D. Heller-Roazen, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Anthony, Marcus. T. (2010). Integrated Inquiry: Mystical Intuition and Research. *The Open Information Science Journal*, 3, 1-9.
- Anthony, M. (2015). Classical Intuition and Critical Futures. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 20(1), 131-138.
- Berman, Morris. (1981). *The Reenchantment of the World*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Bussey, Marcus. (2013a). Foresight Work as Bridge Building: Poetry, Presence and Beyond. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 17(4), 103-116.
- Bussey, Marcus. (2013b). Re-Imaging Limits. *Sociological Bulletin*, 62(1), 129-131.
- Bussey, Marcus. (2014a). CLA as Process: Mapping the Theory and Practice of the Multiple. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 18(4), 45-58.
- Bussey, Marcus. (2014b). Concepts and Effects: ordering and practice in foresight. *foresight*, 16(1), 1-16.
- Bussey, Marcus. (2014c). Intimate futures: bringing the body into futures work. *European Journal of Futures Research*, 2(53), 1-8.
- Deleuze, Gilles. (1994). *Difference and Repetition* (P. Patton, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. (2005). *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Dervin, Brenda. (1999). On studying information seeking methodologically: the implications of connecting metatheory to method. *Information Processing and Management*, 35(6), 727-750.
- Graves, Tom. (2007). Stealth Foresight for Innovation: Creating Support for Creative Change in Large Organisations in Australia. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 12(2), 121-128.
- Hanh, Thich Nhat. (1988). *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax.
- Hayward, Peter., & Voros, Joseph. (2006). Playing the Neohumanist Game. In S. Inayatullah, Bussey, M., and Milojevic, I. (Ed.), *Neohumanist Educational Futures: Liberating the Pedagogical Intellect* (pp. 283-296). Taipei, Taiwan: Tamkang University Press.
- Head, Sabina. (2012). Forward Theatre and Causal Layered Analysis. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 17(1), 41-56.
- Hubbard, B.M. (2015) Intuition and Evolution: How I find it essential to use intuition in my futures work. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 20(1), 111-114.
- Hutchinson, Francis. P. (2005). Mapping and Imagined Futures: Beyond Colonising Cartography. *Journal of Futures Study*, 9(4), 1-14.
- Inayatullah, Sohail. (2008). Six Pillars: futures thinking for transforming. *foresight*, 10(1), 4-21.
- Inayatullah, Sohail., & Milojevic, Ivana (Ed.). (2015). *CLA 2.0: Transformative Research in Theory and Practice*. Tamsui, Taiwan: Tamkang University Press.
- Jaynes, Julian. (2000). *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicam-*

eral Mind. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

- Kesson, Kathleen. (2002). Contemplative Spirituality, Currere, and Social Transformation: Finding Our 'Way'. In T. Oldenski, and Carlson, Dennis (Ed.), *Educational Yearning: The Journey of the Spirit in Democratic Education* (pp. 46-70). New York: Peter Lang.
- Lederwasch, Aleta. (2015). Complementing Causal Layered Analysis with Scenario Art: To develop a national vision and strategy for Australia's minerals industry. In S. a. M. Inayatullah, I (Ed.), *CLA 2.0: Transformative Research in Theory and Practice* (pp. 143-162). Tamsui, Taiwan: Tamkang University Press.
- Macy, Joanne. (2007). *World as Lover, World as Self*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.
- Markley, Oliver. (2012). Imaginal Visioning for Prophetic Foresight. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 17(1), 5-24.
- Markley, Oliver. (2015). Learning to Use Practical Intuition in Futures Studies: A Bibliographic Essay on Personal Sources, Processes and Concerns. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 20(1), 119-130.
- Markley, Oliver. (2015). Introduction to the Symposium on 'Intuition in Futures Work'. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 20(1), 83-90.
- Miller, R. (2015). Applying Intuitive Methods in Explorations of Preferred Futures. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 20(1), 101-110.
- Oldenski, Thomas., & Carlson, Dennis. (2002). Yearning of the Heart: Education, Postmodernism, and Spirituality. In T. Oldenski, and Carlson, Dennis (Ed.), *Educational Yearning: The Journey of the Spirit and Democratic education* (pp. 1-9). New York: Peter Lang.
- Ramos, Jose. (2015). The Inner Game of Futures. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 20(1), 91-100.
- Ricatti, Francesco. (2013). The Emotion of Truth and the Racial Uncanny: Aborigines and Sicilians in Australia. *Cultural Studies Review*, 19(2), 125-149.
- Runia, Eelco. (2014). *Moved by the Past: Discontinuity and Historical Mutation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sardar, Ziauddin. (2010). The Namesake: Futures; futures studies; futurology; futuristic; foresight—What's in a name? *Futures*, 42(3), 177-184.
- Sarkar, Prabhat Rainjan. (1993). *Discourses on Tantra* (Vol. 1). Calcutta: Ananda Marga.
- Sells, Michael. (1994). *The Mystical Languages of Unsayings*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sheldrake, Rupert. (2004). *The Sense of Being Stared at: And Other Aspects of the Extended Mind*. Boulder: Three Rivers.
- Young, James. E. (1997). Between History and Memory: The Uncanny Voices of Historian and Survivor. *History and Memory*, 9(1/2), 47-58.

