

INTUITION: A BRIDGE TO THE COENESTHETIC WORLD OF EXPERIENCE

The concept of intuition is relatively unestablished in psychoanalysis, where it is often associated with narcissistic meanings and vagueness. But intuition, as an integrated mode of archaic coenesthetic thinking, should be kept conceptually free of those connotations. Its capacity of undifferentiated delineation supplies an instinctive general means of dealing immediately with various rationally indistinct phenomena, such as forms, shades, and multidimensionality, regardless of the boundaries between sensory modalities. It may be impossible to translate intuitive experiences into lexical form; these languages are incommensurable. Intuition as a preconscious nondiscursive thinking process is needed in creativity, as well as less conspicuously in countless everyday activities. In speech communication, intuition rapidly specifies subtle shades of meaning in linguistic content and all the prosody. In psychoanalytic work intuition is like radar, creating preliminary contacts with the inner world of the analysand. The observations gained require, however, rational consideration to be confirmed. Intuition is an essential instrument of the psychoanalyst, and also functions in the service of tact to create working space and adequate forms of interpretations. Clinical vignettes reflecting some problematic fates of special intuitiveness in creativity are presented from psychoanalytic work with artists.

It is easy to imagine but difficult to comprehend the immediate certainty with which an artist may in a flash find the right form to convey the aesthetic message of a work. The line of the golden section cannot be drawn just anywhere. It is often born directly as a definitive solution, a correlation you just have to know. Strict but strangely vague, revelation-like experiences characterize such moments of intuition.

Training and Supervising Analyst, Finnish Psychoanalytical Society.

This study was supported by the Signe and Ane Gyllenberg Foundation. An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Finnish Psychoanalytical Society in January 1996. Submitted for publication December 10, 2000.

The intuitive experience may be impossible to explain, and frequently there is no need for verbal reasoning. As Beres (1980) stated, intuition “is the result of unconscious mental processes which reach consciousness with the suddenness of a revelation and, as in other instances of unconscious determinations, carry the conviction of the infantile unconscious mind” (p. 9). Many discoveries have originally manifested themselves as intuitive insights—in Bion’s words (1967), as “the coming together, by a sudden precipitating intuition, of a mass of apparently unrelated incoherent phenomena which are thereby given coherence and meaning not previously possessed” (p. 127). Many artists and creative scientists regard the nonverbal but largely conscious character of their working process as self-evident: new integrations are just allowed to surface out of rationally illogical relations.

The intuitive processes of art and science fascinate us. Yet intuition is a central aspect in all thinking and experiencing, including our work as psychoanalysts. When meeting another, we immediately make assessments of the person’s emotional state and attitude. We might think, for instance, that for some reason this person appears clearly suspicious. Still, there may not be anything in the person’s literal words that could rationally justify our thought, at least at that very moment. These kinds of impressions and insights occur in a flash, even if their validation requires consideration and more accurate knowledge in the course of time.

Long before the days of psychoanalysis, intuition had—and it retains today—its own position, if not an undisputed one, as a philosophical concept. The term is derived from the Latin *intueri*, which means *to look inside*. According to Castrén (1911), a Finnish philosopher and contemporary of Freud, *intuition* refers to immediate perception and apprehension by revelation, distinct from discursive consideration proceeding step by step through various thought functions: “In intuitive apprehension the thinking spirit immediately and autonomously conceives supersensual things. An artist, for example, may just perceive immediately at first sight what is essential and valuable in a certain cluster of phenomena that might appear confusing and disorderly when following discursive consideration” (p. 1039).

Among the great philosophers I will quote only Locke (1690): “sometimes the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas immediately by themselves, without the intervention of any other: and this I think we may call intuitive knowledge. For in this the mind

is at no pains of proving or examining, but perceives the truth as the eye doth light, only by being directed towards it. Thus the mind perceives that white is not black, that a circle is not a triangle . . . [T]his kind of knowledge is the clearest and most certain that human frailty is capable of. This part of knowledge is irresistible, and, like bright sunshine, forces itself immediately to be perceived . . . and leaves no room for hesitation, doubt, or examination. . . . It is on this intuition that depends all the certainty and evidence of all our knowledge.” (Bk. IV., ch. ii., § 1, pp. 176–177).

Even if intuition thus originally denoted a mainly cognitive process, it now seems to have acquired emotional connotations, often referring to object relations. In contemporary standard language, as well as in scientific discourse, intuition may also be associated with mystical idealization or skeptical disparagement. In standard language, intuition often tends to emphasize the ability of the subject to experience deeply and instinctively, sometimes in an uncritical and even complacent manner. Similarly, in psychoanalytic language, the intuition of the analyst may be described as a primarily narcissistic reaction, incapable of validating critical assessments in a clinical situation. As an example of this usage, I quote Blanck and Blanck (1974): “Intuition . . . remains a mysteriously acquired and [compared to empathy] much less reliable capacity. . . . To react to the patient with one’s own feelings of the moment . . . provides no assurance of the correctness of one’s technical behavior. . . . [Intuition] would be a desirable gift only if there were none else” (p. 14).

The aim of this article is to underline the original meanings of intuition as a mode of spontaneous, nondiscursive thinking. I will suggest that conceptually it be kept separate from various defensive connotations, even if they are often attached to it. I define intuition as an integrated mode of archaic coenesthetic thinking. After reviewing the position of the concept of intuition in psychoanalytic literature, I will present aspects of artistic creativity to illustrate the intuitive thinking process, and then extend these ideas to clinical, developmental, and linguistic realms.

THE CONCEPT OF INTUITION IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

The concept of intuition has remained relatively unestablished in the psychoanalytic literature. The term has been in fairly common but varying use since Freud. It is included in the indexes of the *Gesammelte Werke* and the *Standard Edition*, though only a few instances of its use

are cited. Even to date, the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* rarely notes the term in its annual index. It is included as an entity in *Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts* (Moore and Fine 1990), a work published by the American Psychoanalytic Association.

Freud himself seems to have greatly valued intuition and artistry, placing them beside reason and scientific theory in his method, which he compared to “the noble game of chess . . . [where] only the openings and end-games admit of an exhaustive systematic presentation and . . . [where] the infinite variety of moves which develop after the opening defy any such description” (1913, p. 123; see also Friedman 1986). Freud recommended that we not be too concerned with cognitive mastery of the patient’s data and in fact implicitly suggested that we rely heavily on intuition—that is, the immediate knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reason (Beres and Arlow 1974). Freud once told Reik (1948) that in vital matters of human life decisions “should come from the unconscious, from somewhere within ourselves,” from “the deep inner needs of our nature” (p. vii).

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Explicitly, however, Freud did not set much value on intuition as a scientific concept worthy of definition. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in a discussion of “‘symbolic’ dream-interpreting,” one of two procedures used historically in “the lay world” to make sense of dreams, he remarked that it was “impossible to give instructions upon the *method* of arriving at a symbolic interpretation. Success must be a question of hitting on a clever idea, of direct intuition, and for that reason it was possible for dream-interpretation by means of symbolism to be exalted into an artistic activity dependent on the possession of peculiar gifts” (Freud 1900, pp. 96–97). In a footnote added to this passage in 1914, Freud referred to Aristotle, who had remarked that the best interpreter of dreams was the man who could best grasp similarities. According to Hartmann (1964), Freud regarded intuitions as the result of mostly preconscious observation and induction (p. 310).

Since Freud, intuition has come up in the texts of several writers, comprehended in various ways but seldom defined. Following are some extracts from the psychoanalytic literature, arranged in non-chronological order along a kind of continuum, beginning with more skeptical viewpoints. A few authors emphasize the unreliable aspects of intuition, particularly from the perspective of narcissistic counter-transference. From these references the survey will progress toward more neutral and “positive” meanings. Some writers see intuition as a

function of the observing ego, a preconscious thinking process, which is expressed in the analytic work as part of the analyst's skill, as well as in all comprehensive thinking and in social life in general.

According to Kohut (1971), intuitive perceptions, reactions, and judgments differ only in speed from other mental activities. A gifted and experienced clinician may diagnose a patient in a flash by using largely preconscious medical knowledge. Talent, training, and experience may combine to produce results that strike observers as intuitive. These embarrassing activities may acquire grandiose meanings. Belief in magic links the performer of the act with the beholder: archaic omniscience arouses childlike admiration and deference. In psychoanalytic interaction these constellations may contribute to problematic resistances and narcissistic countertransference positions. It is important to make a distinction between intuition and genuine empathy. In Kohut's view the concepts are not generally related to each other: "the successful analysis of a narcissistic personality . . . will increase the analyst's empathic ability, while it often, simultaneously, tends to decrease his former intuitiveness" (p. 304).

Tähkä (1993) stresses that the intuition of the analyst often seems the result of a potentially premature "too quick understanding," which is related to insufficient capacity to tolerate puzzlement and delay. It is true that rapid unconscious integrations may provide useful raw material in clinical work, but they may also represent major reservoirs of countertransference elements. Often associated with masked feelings of elation and omnipotence, intuition may be "treated by its host like a miracle, and there may be considerable resistance against challenging its nature as 'the truth', and against submitting it to a closer analytic scrutiny and testing it against concomitant rational responses and already existing knowledge . . ." (p. 204). The integrity of the analyst's professional self-image increases his patience, which may result in "less frequent moments of omnipotent elation accompanying sudden flashes of intuition, but they are more than fully compensated for by the deep satisfaction inherent in an accurate and genuine understanding of the other human being's inner experience" (p. 205).

The formulations by Moore and Fine (1990) are based largely on Arlow's "The Genesis of Interpretation" (1979a), the only reference given. They define intuition as the "faculty of quick apprehension or cognition. . . . [It] involves the ability to organize and integrate silently and with seeming effortlessness (i.e., preconsciously) many different

observations made over time. The process arrives at understanding without conscious awareness of the intermediate mental steps involved; thus the knowledge acquired has a sudden, unexpected, and therefore surprising quality. Knowledge acquired via intuition requires validation by purposeful and objective cognitive effort” (Moore and Fine 1990, p. 104).

At the background of Moore and Fine’s formulations concerning intuition vs. empathy are similar views presented by Greenson. According to Moore and Fine, “Intuition is related to and sometimes not adequately distinguished from empathy. Usually empathy involves shared emotional experiences, whereas intuition refers to individual thoughts and ideas that may or may not be communicated at the time they are arrived at. Empathic responses are information upon which intuitive understanding often is based” (p. 104). Compare the following quotes from Greenson: “Empathy often leads to intuition. The ‘aha’ reaction is intuited. You arrive at the feelings and pictures via empathy, but intuition sets off the signal in the analytic ego that you have hit it. Intuition picks up the clues that empathy gathers” (1960, p. 232). “Empathy and intuition are the fundamentals of the *talent* for grasping the unconscious meanings behind the conscious material; the best therapists have a goodly supply of both. . . . The ability to be intuitive makes for dexterity, but without empathy it can be misleading and unreliable” (1967, p. 370). Moore and Fine eventually arrive at the same conclusion as Greenson: empathy appears to be a function of the experiencing ego, intuition of the observing ego.

Beres and Arlow (1974) put it this way: “Empathy involves identification, although transient, with a mental activity of another person. Intuition does not involve identification; it is an immediate apprehension of an idea, a thought, or a fantasy. Empathy furnishes the clue which alerts the therapist to the emergence of the correct interpretation. The intuitive understanding of the therapist follows his empathic response. . . . Empathy . . . facilitates the emergence of intuition and leads by way of interpretation to insight” (pp. 45–46).

According to Arlow (1979a), the analyst’s intuition is related to the analyst’s concurrent use of a variety of verbal and nonverbal communication patterns. Modes of behavior, expressions, gestures, posture, voice, rate of speech, choice of metaphors, configuration of the material—all transmit meanings beyond words, and either augment and elaborate or contradict the verbal messages. Edelson (1975) has shown that the analyst’s clinical skill in interpreting these manifold messages

derives to a great extent from an internalized linguistic and semiological competence whereby symbolic entities and meanings are grasped without conscious awareness or even the ability to explicate how this occurs (p. 63). Intuition is “an end-product of the psychoanalyst’s disciplined preconscious decision to permit himself to hear all the possible meanings of the analysand’s language, no matter what particular meaning seems dictated by an immediate context” (p. 23).

Reik’s *Listening with the Third Ear* (1948) clearly deals with intuition, even if the concept itself is hardly mentioned in an explicit manner. He does refer to it in a passage concerning certain “psychological moments” requiring human sincerity of the analyst: “Some intuitive knowledge decides the what and the how of the analyst’s communications” at such moments in treatment. “Every argumentation, every reasonable consideration, every well-founded theory or logical thought is disturbing at such a moment” (p. 325).

The informative value of intuition is emphasized by Sharpe (1937), who states that “intuitive knowledge is experienced knowledge, and that the unconscious is a storehouse of experience which we may have forgotten but have never lost” (pp. 85–86). Noy (1982) defines intuition as “the ability of the ego to utilize affects as sources for information about others and their conscious and unconscious intentions . . . —the ability of humans to appraise and apprehend others through direct insight or cognition that goes beyond the information conveyed by manifest communication” (p. 156).

Waelder (1960) describes intuition as a social capacity determined by factors of individual sensitivity: “Social life is largely the constant mutual reaction of people to each other’s feelings, as swift and, as a rule, un verbalized, as is the reaction of drivers to each other on the road” (p. 20). Intuition is not absolute; we differ from each other in our intuitive abilities to see or to relate to others.

INCONCEIVABLE INTUITIVE ABILITIES

We are indeed not born with equal qualities of sensitivity. After all, we have to admit that some people possess abilities we do not even understand can exist. Someone discerns shades of color I don’t discern; someone else grasps symbolic entities and meanings I cannot get in touch with. We might know “seers” among us, whose intuitiveness we turn to in certain situations. Such gifts do not easily unfold to rational

scrutiny. It is difficult to tolerate something that is incomprehensible, and so we tend to bind it to some conceivable form. It is given various explanations; it may be called marvelous and admirable or odd and indefinite. The very concept of intuition may acquire these vague meanings. To quote Spitz (1965), “we even condemn intuition, we scoff at it in scientific discourse. And this scoffing, the sarcasm, the jokes in such matters, betray our uneasiness before what we cannot explain” (p. 136).

One example of a special kind of perceptual sensitivity in the area of intuition could be absolute pitch, which, incidentally, is a relatively rare quality even among professional musicians. It is a structural ability that enables its holder to immediately identify or recall the pitch of a sound without a point of comparison. Not just music but other sounds, too, such as human voices with their tones and melodies, may be represented in a way impossible to comprehend absent this capacity. Pitch, and also intervals and harmonies, often contain certain affectively cathected meanings that may be intuitively experienced as moods, lights, colors, qualities of warmth, etc. This quality does not seem extraordinary at all to the holder, since it is a question of a primary, ego-syntonic mode of experience. But many such people have found their special intuitive ability problematic in their relation to the outer world.

A musician described how his “sound language” had already aroused attention when he was only a year old; he was marveled at like an object of exhibition. He had been drumming or singing while hearing music, and had imitated all sorts of sounds from the outer world. But he also remembers how desolately disconsolate he felt as a child, not being able to share his sound world with anybody. Neither of the parents was interested in music. That is why his own innermost self, his sound language, was shut out from interaction. In the psychoanalytic situation he would listen to the music of the analyst’s sentences, and often made astonishingly accurate intuitive observations from beyond the words—but at the same time he feared being ridiculous. It is true that this wordless activity did serve as a resistance whereby he avoided handling conflicts verbally. But to interpret the hypercathected observation of the nuances of the sound language as mere resistance would have coincided with the patient’s expectations of disappointment in the transference, as the analyst himself, like the adults of the patient’s childhood, would have proved as disinterested as they were in his true experiences in the area of intuition.

Intuitive abilities are not restricted to creativity; they are integrated inconspicuously in countless everyday phenomena. Psychoanalytic work with artists offers, however, a particularly good opportunity to study the often fateful meanings of these kinds of qualities for personality development. In my work I have recurrently noticed how an artist, from early childhood on, may have felt a lack of adequate reciprocal interaction in regard to a particular intuitive sensitivity. Such special talents are often a source of archaic shame (see Ikonen and Rechartd 1993). Even in adulthood, these qualities may produce experiences of destined loneliness and strangeness, reflected in the transference as well.

The musician went on: "I am an odd fish, few people understand my thoughts. My life has been protecting others from my own shameful peculiarity. I hear things others don't seem to hear. I need to cover up this knowledge, although I am certain of it deep inside me. If I express this certainty to someone, I will be ridiculed, if not for any other reason than trying to pretend to possess some sort of extraordinary talents. I've always been an actor in other people's plays, performing my own skills on their terms. If I can cheer them up I may continue to exist in some way. But no one has listened to my true self. . . . 'Come on and listen to our wonder child, he's so small and so clever!' . . . The cause of my shame was identical to the cause of pride of the adults—pride in something they did not even hear themselves. Shame has been a precondition for love."

Some artists describe how difficult it has been for them, from childhood on, to defend themselves against the interpretations of others. In the adult the child's strange ability arouses defensive reactions: narcissistic admiration, but also disparagement or a need to find rational explanations. To the outer world, the child's observation may be only a fantasy. The realistic intuitive experience may be annihilated, because "such a small child cannot grasp something we grown-ups don't understand." This may result in the child's having an embarrassing feeling of disappointment in adults, who seem to deny matters so plain and obvious. "Adult people are incredibly stupid," one analysand reported having felt as a child. To a child, a special talent often implies hidden loneliness, a feeling no one would understand anyway. Seeking refuge, the child may find it safest to resort to apparent sociability and activity. An exceptional talent also offers an opportunity to retire into the self-sufficient world of one's own coded language, locked to others. This may take place in a very inconspicuous manner.

A similar fate follows many artists into their professional development. Even at moments of great success, their inner life may be overshadowed by a more or less conscious experience of desolation and shame. To cope with the problem of being shamefully strange, they may withdraw, like the mimosa flower, into themselves or into the protection of others of their kind, or hide themselves behind ostensible sociability and public performance. It is only now and again that the outer world is given cautious signs of personal existence in the form of a new work of art. A witty sense of humor, which is also characteristic of many artists, often conceals what is really true. Sometimes we hear an artist make a seemingly facetious remark: "Nobody understands this anyway, but let's do it for posterity." Hiding the shame from the present generation, the artist may thus still maintain the hope to be understood sometime in the future.

My own experiences with artists, in clinical work as well as in the realm of musical activity, accord with the observations made by Nass (1984). He discovered, interviewing composers, that they have a refined capacity, often largely conscious, to remain open to developmentally early, nondiscursive modes of thought and states of body awareness, to experience and reexperience early separation trauma, and to face new ideas with courage and imagination. This openness, rather than being conceptualized as regressive, is used in the service of creative art requiring and testing the ego strength to experience, tolerate, and re-synthesize archaic functions. Nonetheless, the exposure of these experiences to the outer world may mean tragic vulnerability, often involving extremely intimate aspects of one's self.

In my view, the nondiscursive intuitive mode of thought used by artists forms an integrated bridge to the archaic coenesthetic world of experience described by Spitz (1965). This hypothetical sphere of early impressions, dominating particularly during the first six months of life, is marked by vague, comprehensive categories—tensions, equilibriums, temperatures, postures, touches, vibrations, rhythms, durations, pitches, tones, etc.—in which neither perception and affect, nor somatic and psychic, have yet been differentiated. In general, the adult is hardly aware of them, and they are difficult to express rationally. In coenesthesia "perception takes place on the level of deep sensibility and in terms of totalities, in an all-or-none fashion. Responses to coenesthetic reception also are totality responses, e.g., visceral responses. . . . The coenesthetic system responds to nonverbal, nondirected, expressive sig-

nals; the resulting mode of communication is on the level of ‘ego-centric’ animal communication” (Spitz 1965, p. 134).

According to Spitz, it is along the comprehensive categories of coenesthetic experience that the interaction of primary care occurs, but the same undifferentiated modes may be used by specially gifted people. In their work, artists may provide clear examples of having preserved useful bridges to the world of coenesthesia. I think, however, that we should view this phenomenon more broadly, as a universal human capacity concerning our everyday life, as well as our creative activities. I presume that it is this rationally inconceivable ability to use archaic modes of comprehension as integrated functions of the ego that is inconspicuously expressed in the intuitive thinking of all of us, all the time.

Before proceeding further, I would like to enter a caveat. We must not lose sight of the fact that all our verbal inferences about mental functioning during the earliest stages of life are of a more or less speculative and metaphorical nature. The archaic wordless world is easily mystified, and its theoretical formulations may acquire hidden grandiose connotations of certainty. We do need metaphors to conceptualize something hitherto unknown or incomprehensible (Arlow 1979b), particularly when trying to outline vague and archaic modes of thought. “Coenesthesia” is such a useful metaphor, but despite its fairly established position as a theoretical term, it is not an established fact. We also have to note that along with the necessity of using metaphorical expressions in the area of archaic experience, there remains a risk of appearing reductionistic. In reality, however, in our efforts to formulate intuitive modes of comprehension, we are dealing with quite a complex and theoretically vague topic, which certainly leaves room for manifold viewpoints and opinions.

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INTUITIVE THINKING AND LANGUAGE

Psychoanalytic discussion today often concentrates on the wonders of the earliest stages of psychic development. Thanks particularly to the widely acknowledged explorations of Stern (1985), we now know how a small child, to form a sense of an emergent self, actively seeks interaction from the earliest days of life, and is capable of surprisingly developed functions. Infants appear to have an innate capacity to form and act on abstract representations of amodal perceptions transcending

the boundaries between sensory modalities: intensities, shapes, rhythms, motions, etc. From the first weeks of life on, infants are able to grasp synchronism and similarity of form in perceptions made in the field of different sensory modalities. They are able to connect an approaching or a receding visual image with a correspondent sound; they can associate the intensity of a sound with a similar intensity of light as accurately as can adults. According to Stern, in addition to the ordinary emotional categories, the infant possesses vitality affects expressed by kinetic terms, such as “surging,” “fleeting,” “explosive,” “crescendo,” etc. These affects are elicited by changes in motivational states, appetites, and tensions, and it is through these qualities that much of the earliest interaction takes place (see also Spitz).

Referring to psycholinguistic explorations, Amati-Mehler, Argentieri, and Canestri (1993, pp. 138–140) have stated that a baby is able to perceive and interpret phonetic differences and prelingual meanings in the linguistic environment from the very first hours of life, owing to a developed discriminatory capacity present at birth. A four-day-old baby can distinguish the mother’s native tongue. Among people speaking in this same language, the baby shows a preference for the mother’s voice, provided the mother speaks in her usual timbre. But if the mother reads a phrase backward, with no expression and making no sense, no reaction is elicited from the baby.

Results of experiments with infants may occasion amazement and admiration. We may adopt an attitude toward the inconceivable abilities of a baby similar to what we feel toward those of artists or, as mentioned by Spitz, acrobats. But do we ever marvel at the coenesthetic abilities intuitively available to every adult in verbal communication all the time? Let me give a couple of simple examples. Why, largely irrespective of our own mother tongue, do we immediately grasp which of the nonsense words *takete* or *malumma* would be round and which sharp-edged in its corresponding visual form (Lehtovaara 1948)? Or why do we at once realize that a person’s look or voice is warm and soft, and therefore friendly? How could vision or audition mediate qualities of temperature or touch, on which we base our interpretations of emotions? Nevertheless, this is what we do all the time. It is a question of experiences that take no heed of the boundaries between sensory modalities, and that a linguistic metaphor brings us in touch with.

Long before the psychoanalytic “baby boom,” Spitz (1965) stated, in describing the coenesthetic world of experience (pp. 134–138), that

it is not only small children who have access to the undifferentiated, nonverbal mode of thinking. It keeps on living in each of us, though mostly hidden, much as the primary process generally remains at the background of thinking in regard to consciousness. Spitz draws a parallel between primary process and coenesthetic organization, and between secondary process and diacritic organization. This last includes perceptions mediated by the peripheral sensory organs, is more localized and discrete, and manifests as cognitive processes, including conscious thinking. The perceptual system of the infant gradually shifts from the dominance of the coenesthetic mode of reception toward perception through the sensorium by the differentiating diacritic organization.

According to the polemical view of Spitz, “average Western man has elected to emphasize in his culture diacritic perception both in regard to communication with others and with himself” (p. 136). This has led to the supremacy of diacritically perceived semantic symbols at the expense of intuitive coenesthetic communication. Deeper sensations are easily considered threatening, due to the vagueness of their boundaries, and may be ignored or dismissed as childish or rationally meaningless. Nevertheless, the experiences of many creative artists, for example, offer an opportunity to examine archaic modes of thinking integrated into the ego or, in Recharadt’s phrase (1987), archaic bodily meaning schemata integrated within the symbolic process.

For artists, the language of coenesthesia is part of their thinking, one of their tools. The amodal mode of experience is not concerned with limits or distances. That is why it involves the ability to comprehend new totalities, to create surprising connections, and to tolerate ambiguity.

A musician described in his analysis how his associations and dreams were often manifested as merely musical images: melodies, harmonies, rhythmic structures, and corresponding sensations of lights, colors, movements, something being filled or emptied, etc. The meanings of musical themes emerging in his mind were sometimes reflected in their names as well. The song “A Diamond on the Snow” by Sibelius, for instance, re-created a contact with the disconsolation of his childhood, also associated with an experience of omnipotent control, which could then be analyzed.

Ehrenzweig (1967) has described how intuitive thinking creates “order in chaos,” unifying incompatible fragments into abstractions. Referring to Bergson, he states that intuition is “a faculty for visualizing

several incompatible images occupying the same spot in space. In true intuition the normal differentiation of time and space is suspended and events and objects can freely interpenetrate. Such intuition is needed in order to overcome any contradictions and inconsistencies that will still exist in our fragmented picture of the world. . . . This ‘seeing together’ of a cluster of fragmented images and concepts involves a high degree of near-oceanic dedifferentiation, much in the way in which abstraction in art needs an undifferentiated matrix” (p. 132). Many an artistic masterpiece has been described as having emanated as a crystallization of chaotic ideas.

A thinking process that takes place simultaneously along many dimensions or chains of associations is characteristic of artists. “All artistic structure is essentially ‘polyphonic’; it evolves not in a single line of thought, but in several superimposed strands at once. Hence creativity requires a diffuse, scattered kind of attention that contradicts our normal logical habits of thinking” (Ehrenzweig 1967, p. xii; see also Noy 1978). In work with artists, I have repeatedly found that parallel with verbal thoughts, and perhaps equal in awareness, there are often other trains of thought, either verbal ones or processes to be identified in some other way, as rhythms, melodies, colors, movements, play with spatial relations, etc.

Throughout his analysis, an orchestra conductor time and again remarked how problematic he found the question, “What does this bring to mind?” He felt it forced him to make a distinct choice from several parallel and equally practicable alternatives or lines. Naturally, the resistance behind this ambivalence was interpreted primarily. But, as this problem so frequently comes up with artists, it has continued to occupy my mind. Incidentally, the work of a conductor surely requires a demanding, multiform capacity to handle totalities and their parts separately and together in different groups at the same time; an ability to move, intuitively and largely consciously, in the auditory space at various levels and in several directions simultaneously.

Naturally, we have to consider that all of us, not just artists, possess these “polyphonic” capacities, though we differ from one another with regard to the conscious attention we pay them. What would make us presume that thinking, on the whole, always takes place along one line at any given moment?

The spatial thinking of an artist illustrates the coenesthetic mode of functioning. But the instinctive ability to conceive dimensions and

directions is crucial in countless human activities. A simple example: when entering a new room and orienting ourselves in it, we comprehend in a flash the spatial relations in all directions in the physical reality opening around us. The world we deal with constantly is really three-dimensional. Correspondingly, in abstractions we may, for instance, connect expert “orientation” with spatial qualities, with an ability to understand matters in the right perspective and in the right scale. Numerous linguistic metaphors refer to spatial coenesthetic configurations in which neither physical and psychic nor perceptual and affective experience can be differentiated. We speak of viewpoints, of dimensions, of creating space, and of going in the right or wrong direction. We may characterize people as open-minded or closed in; we may feel cramped, etc. Thus we continually look for spatial structures to which to bind our vague perceptions and reactions; we keep on searching for their forms in these metaphors, in an effort to express our affective impressions, which ultimately are closer in form to the nondiscursive language of art than to verbal logic, as Langer (1953) has described. Language has inherited these rich spatial metaphorical expressions from the coenesthetic world. Thus is it more experienced than is the conscious mind of its user.

Indeed, under the rubric of intuitive thinking, myriad mental functions occur preconsciously in relation to space. High-level creative processes unify incompatible fragmented images into crystallized abstractions (Ehrenzweig), while at the other end, also in space, automatic responses are deployed intuitively in everyday physical and psychic activities. Intuition as a “faculty of quick apprehension or cognition” (Moore and Fine) is an instinctive general means to organize and integrate multidimensionality, concretely as well as in abstractions; it functions along the amodal modes of the coenesthetic matrix, which lacks differentiation between somatic and psychic. That is why there remains a vague and broad demarcation area between intuitive functions and cognitive, reflex-like processes.

The auditory space of experience is of special significance in regard to intuition, because, unlike other senses, audition is continuously observing movement, sound streams that cannot be described in static form (Piha 1998). The movement of sound in the flow of time requires intuition to make itself conceivable in the first place. We cannot confirm or redefine our perception of a sound afterward, as we are able to do in the case of a static visual object. Hence in the auditory

flow of experience we must always rely intuitively on what we once heard in a moment that has already passed. This is a strain on our ability to tolerate uncertainty and to trust our own audition without confirmation by other observers. The auditory space of experience comprises an immeasurable number of simultaneous, different, overlapping, and interpenetrating subspaces (Jauhiainen 1995). Speech and music are attempts to bind these spaces into one and the same comprehensible picture, into integrated connection with one another (Piha 1998).

The spatial thought mode supplies an opportunity to deal intuitively with divergent movements in relation to one another, to space and time. Concretely, circulation in traffic, for example, requires an ability to deal immediately with very complicated situations that would be impossible to resolve in a temporally practical way by reasoning. Another physical example is offered by a ball game played by teams. We may speak of a player having a good “eye for the ball,” referring to his spatial sense of movement, approach, distancing, and velocity. Behind the learned schemata, it is the intuitive ability of the player in motion to instinctively grasp and anticipate extremely small and rapid movements of the ball and the other players in exact relation to time. A more abstract example is offered by the game of chess, the dynamics of which are regulated both by the player’s conscious consideration and by a spontaneous preconscious ability to simultaneously comprehend divergent forces and balances related to each other and to space, as if they were physically controllable occurrences. Many top players refer to their inability afterward to logically reason their solutions.

In fact, all our social life continuously requires an intuitive sense of temporal and spatial relations. In human communication, these subtle functions form a sort of wordless setting, a fundamental field of experience “one just has to be aware of.” We are connected with each other by an invisible network of similar experiences and ideas of the human body, the surrounding physical reality, temporal periodicity, and countless events in the course of individual life. We have shared knowledge in time and space, and common individual skills are required from each of us. Still, in terms of our sense of reality, we are very particular about the appropriate demarcation of this instinctive collectivism and the individuality of its interpretations. The subtle boundary line of reality may be violated all of a sudden, but it may be impossible to explain where the line actually is. This kind of phenomenon may, for example,

occur in a situation in which a person we meet in the street may choose, in terms of our social relationship, a slightly inappropriate language register or tone of voice, or may stand just a bit too close or too far away. The impression of inappropriateness or even unreality registers in our awareness immediately, but the grounds for this convincing perception depend on our impression of the situation as a whole.

Where would the instincts disappear in the course of evolution? Intuitive human capacities can perhaps be considered rudimentary derivatives of phylogenetically earlier instinctive functions. Our life is maintained by many modes of elementary coenesthetic reaction that are so automatic and well integrated that they generally escape notice. The integration of these archaic behavioral schemes takes place along with the expansion of ego autonomy and is regulated by appropriate age-specific stimulation offered by the environment.

Reik (1948) speculated that we might receive many vague impressions through rudimentary and weakened senses that have their origin in the evolution of our prehistoric forebears. Many of the animal senses have lost their significance in us, but “there are other senses of which we have completely lost consciousness and which yet retain their efficacy, that is to say, are able to communicate unconscious impressions to us” (p. 138). Referring to observations about collective and simultaneous behavioral reactions—inconspicuous to the human eye—spread by a single individual in simple animal societies (“hyper-individual group soul”), Reik discussed the possibility of rudimentary direct communication among human beings. He reminds us of Freud’s assumption that in the course of evolution the original, archaic means of communication has possibly been replaced by the superior method of communication by signs. Still, the older method may survive in the background, and human beings may revert to it under certain conditions. The return of senses that have become alien to our consciousness may sometimes give rise to the impression that there is no sense perception at all. “Possibly these unknown senses work faster than those we know, can communicate their perceptions to the unconscious faster than the senses developed later, and so seem to act through the air. . . . [T]his action upon secret feelers of which we are unconscious belongs mainly to the realm of instinct, so that we may speak rather of instinct-reading than of thought-reading” (p. 139). What Reik had in mind, I suggest, comes close to the ideas presented here about intuition as an integrated mode of archaic coenesthetic thinking.

To understand intuitive experience more comprehensively, we should explore the interdisciplinary bridges between psychoanalysis, biology, and neuroscience, though I touch on this work only briefly here. McLaughlin (1978), for instance, has dealt with the relationship between the different formal modes of thinking attributed to the two cerebral hemispheres and those assigned by psychoanalysis to the primary and secondary processes (similar, respectively, to the functions of the recessive and dominant hemispheres). The hemispheres are specialized to perform complementary but different modes of cognition and handling of information, differentiated in ontogenetic development and coexisting throughout life.

In ontogenetic development, there may remain bridges to the archaic modes of cognition, which may continue their specific differentiation throughout life. This applies to the development of language as well. We have formerly suggested (Piha and Jauhiainen 1993) that the symbolism of language is multilayered. Our primordial mother tongue cannot be read as literal lexical symbols. It is heard and felt as extensive sensations in early bodily interaction with the primary object. The messages transmitted by this rhythmic-auditory, coenesthetic sound language cannot be accurately defined or described verbally, or be written in words. It is only much later that the words acquire their graphic representation. We may come to think that the original sound language of speech must be more primitive, due to its archaic origin, and come to privilege the later “high-level” messages of words. Still, the wordless sounds of speech form in fact an equally developed communication system, though one different from the lexical language. The nonlexical features of speech keep on living as prosodic elements of spoken discourse, as rhythms, stresses, melodies, and tones supplying verbal sentences with their coloring, depth, and affective timbre, conceived intuitively as a kind of music. As a matter of fact, intuition is specialized in the rapid specification of these subtle shades of meaning.

The human being’s surprisingly accurate intuitive sensitivity to tones of speech was demonstrated in our empirical experiment (Piha and Jauhiainen 1993), in which six hundred high school students interpreted meanings of twenty-four mere “hmm” sounds, deliberately produced differently and heard out of context. A major number of the approximately twelve thousand verbal responses in a closed-set, forced-choice listening task corresponded exactly or closely to the meanings the speaker had intended to communicate by the

“music.” All the different stimuli seemed to have their own specific response profile, if often overlapping. The stimuli could be arranged into semantically logical groups characterized by linguistic descriptions.

The archaic language of coenesthesia, I presume, contributes not only to the prosodic music of spoken words, but also to the organization of basic structures, rhythms, and forms of the lexical language itself, affecting its semantic meanings as well. This may be identified in the phonetic sound symbolism of many single words associated with bodily fantasies, for example; let us imagine what the words *soft*, *wide*, and *cut* feel like. The same logic may appear more extensively in variations of syntactic structure. In my native language, Finnish, even small, seemingly insignificant changes in word order can produce quite considerable alterations in shades of meaning.

For example, the words in the short sentence “I will do it” can appear in various orders in Finnish, and in each case imply a somewhat different message with divergent connotations. We can put the object *it* at the beginning of the sentence (“It I will do”), in which case the object acquires a particular but suggestive stress. Or we can move the subject to the end of the sentence (“It will do I”), which in turn places emphasis on the subject; it is I who will do it and nobody else. A similar kind of connotation is conveyed by putting the subject followed by the object at the beginning of the sentence and placing the stress on the word *I* (“I it will do”). It is also possible to begin the sentence with the predicate (“Will do I it”), in which case the speaker reluctantly consents to do what is required. The subtle connotations of the various word orders can further be intentionally regulated and defined by the prosodic features (i.e., how the combination of words is uttered).

In oral language, these shades of meaning are generally specified without hesitation, intuitively and simultaneously with the message heard in the syntax. In communication they give the listener direct information that can be shared by any one speaking the same language. The speaker knows that the listener intuitively understands what is meant by these seemingly vague expressions reflected in the form of the sentence. It is possible to find some grammatical regularities in these kinds of phenomena, but their fundamental character is certainly difficult to explain by linguistic means alone. This would really be a worthwhile object of interdisciplinary study.

The written lexical language and the uttered nonlexical language in the music of speech are simply not commensurable. Even within

linguistic structures there may be hidden “musical” layers behind the lexical message. We might, for instance, “hear” the aesthetic form of a touching poem we read. The incomprehensibility of intuition in general is based on the fact that there will ever remain a difficulty in translating wordless semiotics into semantic words. How, for example, can we explain that the melody of a song or of another person’s speech sounds melancholy? We just feel it.

FORM, STYLE, AND TACT

The “language of form” is a common term in many fields of aesthetics. The apposite form of an artifact, for example, tells us a great deal about the structure and functions of the article. It contains the interpretation in itself. The amodal character of intuitive thinking enables us to interpret the form as such, on its own terms, in a moment. It need not be translated into words, and in fact cannot be without converting some of its meaning. The meaning of form in general—be it in art or in social behavior—is preliminarily interpreted as a coenesthetic experience, in which perception and affect cannot be differentiated. A more accurate and conscious evaluation will naturally require a longer process of rational consideration.

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Our intuitive world of everyday experience is full of undifferentiated impressions about form that are based on archaic symbolism. For example, once sitting on a bus, I was gazing at a huge abstract sculpture with sharp projections. A young mother with a three-year-old was sitting in front of me, and I heard the child ask, “Mom, why is that so scary?” I had myself come to think the same thing. The large sharp forms of the sculpture evoked threatening impressions in my mind, too.

We are instinctively sensitive to this kind of symbolism, but as we are living right in the middle of these phenomena every day, we do not often pay conscious attention to them, unless we feel there is a conflict: if, for example, soft, warm words are uttered in an embarrassingly sharp and cold tone of voice.

We may immediately get an intuitive impression of the essential nature or “being” (*Wesen*) of any kind of object—be it a human being, a landscape, or a piece of art. It is conceived primarily as a totality; the sketch-like perception is not differentiated from the affective experience. Numerous everyday expressions describing these kinds of impressions

are rationally indistinct, yet ultimately quite exact, illustrating aptly the quality of depth and totality probed by intuition. Due to a certain vagueness that can be interpreted ambiguously in multiple ways, words of this type are vivid and alive, free from the coercion to create static images.

Seemingly superficial factors related to form are incredibly important in numerous connections in human life. It is not at all insignificant in what kind of aesthetic environment one is living and what kind of basic patterns one uses in all activities. Personal identity includes various wordless styles, which characterize one's essential nature and can be recognized immediately: speech, clothing, motions, gestures, and other aspects of individual behavior. We may also use expressions of form when describing a person's character: straight, angular, open, etc. Even the form of handwriting is regarded as a personal characteristic, one generally recognized immediately in an inexplicable way among numerous other styles. It is very difficult to deliberately change these features in a genuine way. One's style of speech, for example, remains surprisingly unchanged throughout life, and this goes for both vocal and linguistic expression.

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A number of far-reaching conclusions are often made on the basis of one's sense of style. This area of the self, intuited by the outer world, is vulnerable, and can easily be offended. Patterns of style often unite or separate people in a very sensitive manner. When criticizing a person's sense of style, we come to criticize that person's very core. The individual sense of form is part of one's archaic self-experience and self-ideal. It is a gift and a capacity, but also a destined means by which some of the vulnerability of self-esteem may be hidden. To do this, early experiences of disappointment and rage will be bound, more or less creatively, to undisguised demands of the severity of form. This can be seen, for example, in the works and working styles of many artists, which reflect a strict, archaic moral superego in quite a bare way.

The individual stylistic patterns of a solid personality remain fairly unchanged. But even in a most unstructured personality one can detect certain stable features connected with the innermost style of the self. It is the rhythm, the basic core of the bodily self (Hägglund and Piha 1980), that maintains the ultimate experience of stability and security, remaining even when the representation of continuity is in danger of being annihilated. Rhythm is a very basic psychic function, experienced mainly in the preconscious area of intuition.

Even little children may have a surprisingly accurate sense of rhythm, although the ability to handle time-related tensions and continuity is still defective. It is to be noted how innumerable, largely physical rhythms, from birth on, form a kind of silent setting for individual development and daily functions. The instinctive sense of physical rhythms is like a foundation of body awareness in time and space. This basic experience generally becomes an object of conscious attention only if its integration fails. The collapse of the sense of rhythm is a sign of a physical or psychic state of emergency—take, for example, the dissolution of breathing, walking, or the rhythm of speech. But even less dramatic disturbances, such as minor mistakes in social tact or timing, small “wrong gestures” in interaction, may be signs of the threatening disintegration of the psychic sense of rhythm. These phenomena are experienced directly by intuition.

Tact implies the subtle ability to respect another person’s dignity. The core area of one’s self is not meant to be communicated as such; there are many aspects in interaction that “just have to be understood,” touched by intuition. These features may be clearly observed, but interference is easily interpreted as intrusion in the other’s innermost world.

Tact and timing play an important role in the “acoustics” of the psychoanalytic situation. Well-timed and well-formed interpretations require from the analyst a versatile intuitive ability to delineate and organize matters in space and time. Tact can be manifested in various ways in the choice of the analyst’s verbal expressions. Besides the apposite linguistic form, the analyst needs an affectively complementary, appropriate semiotic form behind and in between the words, consisting mostly of subtle prosodic factors in timing and timbre—it is almost solely in auditory contact that psychoanalysis takes place. There are moments, for instance, when analytic comments potentially capable of arousing strong resistance can be presented under the cover of more easily acceptable prosodic features without provoking or disturbing the analysand. In this work, wordless aspects of tact are often more crucial than the verbal: “the words matter, but the music may matter more” (Poland 1975, p. 158). The analyst’s intuitiveness works also in the service of tact to create a sufficiently soft space within which the analysand can recognize hard facts within his or her psychic reality. Tact is meant to protect the other’s self-esteem: “Tact and analytic progress are mutually interdependent. Interpretations can never be successful if they violate the fundamental integrity of the patient’s sense

of himself” (Poland 1975, p. 161). Besides empathy, I would include intuitiveness of the psychoanalyst in the basic requirements of attaining this aim, finding the right form of communication with the analysand.

The birth of the form of a tactful interpretation is often a revelation-like moment. According to Arlow (1979a), the “thought that first appears in the analyst’s mind rarely comes in the form of a well-formulated, logically consistent, theoretically articulated interpretation. More often what the analyst experiences takes the shape of some random thought,” a few lines from a poem, for example (p. 199). (I have noticed that the forms of my own associations often coincide with forms characteristic of the analysand; in the case of a musician, for instance, they may be melodic themes.) Arlow states further that connections between the processes of analyst and analysand are created right after the analyst’s initial impressions and his or her associations to the patient’s material, and it is at this point that the analyst’s inner experience is transformed into an interpretation. Occasionally this moment is marked by startling suddenness and spontaneity suggesting magical insight, particularly if the patient’s ensuing productions coincide with the analyst’s yet verbally unexpressed thoughts.

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THE CONCEPTUAL VALUE OF INTUITION

In my view, intuition is based on an extensive, archaic mode of experience in which neither perception and affect, nor somatic and psychic, have yet been differentiated. Through intuition it is possible to read forms of the coenesthetic matrix, which are featured in speech and perhaps in the linguistic system as well. In the preconscious, one is intuitively able to perceive many kinds of undifferentiated forms, such as rhythms, tones, and melodies of spoken words reflecting psychic meanings. In terms of discursive thinking process, these delicate factors are perceived with incomprehensible immediacy and cannot accurately be translated into lexical form.

In the psychoanalytic situation, intuition is like radar in the front line of our thinking, used to probe and explore preliminary connections with the inner world of the analysand and with our own inner experience. Intuition provides immediate views, which are not proper knowledge yet but may be leading to it. As such, intuition allows uncertainty, imprecise boundaries, and the dimension of depth in our perceptions.

At the same time, intuition is unconditional, like the primary process in general. It does not recognize time, consideration, and compromise; a strange, immediate impression of certainty often characterizes an intuitive experience.

Intuition forms a bridge to the grammar of the primary process, whose structure is far from primitive, though it is of archaic origin. Intuitive thinking takes place in an area where the primary and secondary processes are integrated with each other without conflict or hierarchical juxtaposition. I agree with Noy (1969), who proposes that both processes are equally developed, structured, and refined, their difference being only a functional one. The “reality-oriented” secondary process serves perception of reality, control of behavior, and interaction; the “self-centered” primary process serves the self in its needs for assimilation of new experiences, accommodation to reality, and maintenance of integration. Both mental activities develop throughout life, continuously supporting and complementing each other (see also McLaughlin 1978). Creativity and insight are based on a synthesis of the operational modes of both processes (Noy 1978). I suggest that these different modes of thought complement and reflect each other in the very experience of intuition in general.

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Intuition with its capacity of amodal delineation is needed to integrate multidimensionality in thinking. In this way one is able to coordinate in a flash perceptions occurring in the areas of different sensory modalities. An intuitive experience also involves ambiguity characteristic of the primary process, referring to different directions at the same time. Rationally, this keeps on testing one’s capacity to tolerate vagueness and unobjectivity.

In psychoanalytic work intuition may be an interpreter of many experiences requiring amodal comprehension in particular. We can, for example, detect from mere tones of voice that the analysand clearly sounds disappointed, even if nothing in the actual words points that way. Yet it may be difficult to explain rationally what gives rise to this immediate experience in us. Its authenticity cannot be proved. It may be confirmed in the verbal analytic interaction, but we may also be mistaken.

The intuitiveness of an analyst may, of course, also serve defensive purposes and, as a problem of narcissistic countertransference, constitute an inconvenient obstacle to the analytic work. Wordlessness is so often fascinating. Because of its archaic meanings, intuition may be

idealized and mystified, and thus acquire connotations of omnipotence. Intuition is a good worker but a poor master.

I suggest that the conceptual value of intuition as a spontaneous, nondiscursive thinking process should be kept separate from various defensive meanings that may be attached to it. A new intuitive connection is often surprising and arouses enthusiasm: "That's what it is! Eureka!" Naturally, we should add a self-critical clause: "At least it very much looks like it right now." The very delight of discovery is relevant, reflecting genuine emotional involvement and dedication to the open expectations aroused by the new integration.

Psychoanalytic work relies mainly on the language of spoken words, but accurate understanding also requires the more immediate probing of rationally indistinct features both of the words themselves and of the various nonlexical messages in the communication. As an integrated mode of archaic coenesthetic thinking, intuition furnishes an essential instrument for the psychoanalyst, and also functions in the service of tact to create working space and adequate forms of interpretations.

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Tuohikuja 8 B 4

02130 Espoo

FINLAND

E-mail: heikki.piha@fimnet.fi