

Tales of the Intuition

BY RICHARD LEVITON©1996

Here are two tales of the intuition, one inspiring, the other cautionary. They both vividly show how intuition can work in our everyday life and how important it is to heed that “inner voice,” yet they also illustrate how we must exercise discrimination and clarity in following any advice, no matter its source.

A friend of mine went out one Saturday morning for groceries. She is a homeopathic physician and generally practiced in the art of heeding her intuition. She drove past a church advertising a metaphysical fair, where astrologers, palm readers, and psychics would offer visitors little glimpses of insight for a small fee. It wasn't the kind of event Marinda would normally pay any attention to, yet she felt unaccountably *pulled* to the church parking lot. Once out of her car, she stood before the church door, hesitantly, trying to figure out why she felt so strongly drawn to enter the fair.

Once inside, Marinda strolled down the aisles until she came to a booth offering 5 minute psychic readings. Marinda had no particular interest in this yet the magnetic attraction that had pulled her off the street into this building seemed to come from this booth. A woman about her age greeted her and started to examine Marinda's palms, then dropped them and asked her quite urgently if she was a healer. Marinda said she practiced homeopathy. Do you ever work with clients who are a great distance away, the woman asked. Yes, said Marinda, adding that the bulk of her practice was over the telephone with clients she had not physically met.

Even more urgently, the woman asked Marinda if she had ever worked with somebody in a coma. Marinda said she had, through long distance meditation and prayer. The woman immediately relaxed and heaved a great sigh, saying, “You have been sent to me. I have been praying all morning for somebody to come and help my sister who is in a coma.” Marinda worked with the sister that afternoon—she had been comatose for one week already—and soon she woke up.

What is intriguing here is that one woman's prayer for intervention resulted in another woman's intuition sending her to help. Here the intuition acted like a kind of psychic telephone between two people who had never before met. In either case, for it to work—to ring, as a telephone—required both women to *trust* that it was possible and that it could work and to be sufficiently silent within to make the call and hear it ring when it came through.

Another friend of mine was undergoing metaphysical training, a little along the lines of Carlos Castaneda's famous accounts of Toltec shamanism in Mexico. His training at this point dealt with learning how to listen for guidance from within. Thomas was staying at a retreat center by the ocean, and one day he went for a long walk along the cliff trails. He came to a lighthouse which had an iron ladder running up its side to the great sweeping light on top. Nobody was at home in the residency attached to the lighthouse. Thomas heard a voice say to him: “There is a packet of money on a table inside the top room of the lighthouse. It was left there for you. You could take this and pay off your rent.”

Thomas was living on an extremely fixed (if not deficient) income at the time, and was behind in his rent payments at the retreat center. This was an appealing prospect, the answer to many of his current financial problems; even better, it was coming from “inner guidance,” which meant that it must be morally right with his highest interests in mind—“pennies from Heaven” if you will. Thomas started climbing the ladder and made it nearly to the top, then stopped as a shudder ran through him. This is wrong, he declared to himself, as if waking from a trance. Immediately he climbed down. As he took his right hand off the last iron rung, he noticed there was blood all over it, yet on examining his hand, there was no cut. Whose blood was this?

That evening Thomas consulted his instructor, relating the incident. "This is a most sensitive issue," the older man explained. "While I don't wish to discourage you, you must be skeptical of any guidance that is not from entirely altruistic motivations. You must be prepared for an inevitable degree of distortion relative to the degree of sensitivity you have already developed. You must learn to trust your intuition yet not be fooled by other forces trying to speak through you or imitate that which is good."

What are we to make of these two examples of the "sixth" sense, as intuition is often called? In one case, an inner sensing led Marinda to a situation in which she was able to help someone, but for Thomas, an inner voice led him to almost commit an act that could have got him in considerable trouble. Both followed their intuition. When is it safe to listen to the voice within and when should we be circumspect? Hebrew tradition offers us a way out.

An ancient quasi-Biblical text called the *Shepherd of Hermas* explicitly states that every human has two guardian angels. There is a good angel for guidance to do good and a dark angel who tries to seduce us into committing evil. The *maggid* to our right comes from the Side of Holiness and inspires us to perform good deeds while the *maggid* on our left nudges us towards evil acts and is from the *Sitre Ahre*, the Other Side. How can you tell them apart? On the forehead of the good angel God's Name burns like a white flame, says Jewish tradition, but it burns like a black flame on the forehead of the dark angel.

You could also explain it in Jungian psychological terms. The good angel leads us towards the Self while the dark angel represents our Shadow, all the unwanted, rejected parts of the psyche that must be confronted and reassimilated before you can pass on to wholeness. Developing your intuition requires that you learn how to tell these two guides apart, or as C.G. Jung would say, to hone the intuition, deal with your Shadow otherwise it will distort most things you hear.

Quite often, the dark angel (or Shadow) speaks through your body, giving you little clues in the form of thoughts, symptoms, twitches, accidents, or maladies. A prominent Jungian therapist called Arnold Mindell, Ph.D., travels the world teaching groups about the "dreambody." By this, Mindell is pointing to the way in which the unconscious (or Shadow) uses bodily sensations as a way of dreaming into the flesh, trying to establish communication, throwing a bridge across the chasm between so-called waking consciousness and the deep unconscious.

Symptoms are a statement of dreaming trying to become conscious, and symptoms are dreams happening in the body, says Mindell. In either case, all of your senses and even different parts of your body can become intuitive antennae. There's always some kind of unconscious growth process trying to happen, and bodily symptoms are the intuitive way the dreambody talks to each of us.

Mindell's job is to be intuitive on his client's behalf, showing people how to do it for themselves. A woman had been a minority social activist all her life, Mindell explains. Whenever she had to speak in public, her asthma came up so strongly as to almost choke out her voice. Mindell asked her how she would create the asthma symptoms in him. She squeezed his wrists, giving him that same cramping feeling she had in her chest. Mindell realized this was the creative energy behind her asthma; it was her dreambody speaking.

Can you use this same squeezing energy in movement, he asked her. She stamped her feet, then sang, then suddenly spoke spontaneously in a different, passionate voice. Her asthmatic symptoms disappeared. "The energy behind her asthma is *passion*," Mindell announced. "You need to connect the meaning with the energy behind the body symptoms. It's an energy that's trying to do many things."

Sometimes, intuitive work with the dreambody takes us right out to the edge of the known—that is, we we know about ourselves. The edge is the limit of our identity, the edge of the cliff of our being, says Mindell.

He worked with a woman who felt she had a witch inside her. Mindell asked her to dramatize this witch through her body. She made claws with her hands and a frightful face. Then

Mindell asked her what those clawlike hands wanted to do. "This brought her right to her own edge. She moved her hands, grabbed with them, then danced, played, and giggled. She just wanted to feel like a playful child, a side of her she'd never given enough attention to. This information transformed her and she went right past her edge. There was no witch anymore. Her cliff edge disappeared." In other words, when the dreambody's symbolic communication is comprehended, symptoms and illnesses assume their inherent meaning, and the intuitive message, spoken through the body, is received.

A vitally important question we must ask at this point is this: What is it that steers our actions most of the time? Our body has a language of its own, too; often our thoughts and feelings come from different body states, such as hunger, desire, exhaustion, or irritability. All of us have many wants and desires; we can presume these come from our personality, formed since infancy. Most of us have a few darker interests, such as revenge, retribution, envy, dislike, greed, hatred, and others, and these we may reasonably attribute to the Shadow. We are still responsible for the actions that arise from the urgings and inner voices that come from this spectral region of ourselves, but we are less likely to be always aware of them as they enter our mind.

C.G. Jung spoke of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. These are deep and ancient symbolic images and feelings constellated around certain primordial human themes. As Jung explained it, these come from a time long before any of us were born and live within each human psyche as a kind of psychological residue from the past. Here already, we sense that at least some of our urgings and compulsions may come from things beyond us.

Rudolf Steiner offered a similarly transpersonal perspective. As he explained it, consciousness is actually made of numerous layers or streams of the deeds and awareness of different hierarchies of celestial beings, or angels. This means that part of our everyday awareness and dreambody life might be cosmic and angelic in nature. Perhaps from time to time, an intuitive message we become aware of comes from this place. So there are many layers in the psyche, many underground streams running through us, all with messages for our intuition to receive.

This brings us to an even more critical observation. If we accept that intuition is real and that it can bear messages of consequence for our life and how we relate to others, doesn't this say that life itself has a meaning and purpose? The classical word from Western philosophy for this purposefulness is teleology: it says there is a goal in mind and events are struggling to arrive at its fulfillment. Perhaps what we take as intuition, or the guiding voices from within speaking in our thoughts or through the body, have this evolutionary destiny in mind. What might such a goal be?

Again, using the terminology of C.G. Jung, we might call it individuation. Jung used this word to indicate the achievement of the fullness and awakened consciousness of the Self, of all that a human being can be. The American film *Field of Dreams* is a perfect example of this. A man named Ray Kinsella, who is married, a father, and in his late thirties grows corn on a farm he owns in Iowa. One day while inspecting his corn, he hears a voice speak to *him* out of nowhere: "If you build it, he will come." Nobody else hears this voice.

After some internal struggle, he agrees to the proposition—the "it" he has to build is a baseball playing field—and follows several other dictums from the invisible voice. It turns out the baseball park was built to be of service to all the unhappy people who were unable to fulfill their dreams while alive, and even afterwards, while dead. It becomes a place where people may complete themselves, through memory and through living out their cherished dreams. At one point, Ray asks the inevitable question: "I followed this voice and did everything it asked. I built the field for you. Now what's in it for me?" One of the spectral baseball players says to him, "No, Ray, you built it for yourself."

The "he" that comes because Ray built "it" is Ray's own father, who once played baseball and from whom Ray lived estranged until his death. One of Ray's long unfulfilled desires is to play baseball with his father and make it up to him, to be a loving son. In this way, he would be a more complete human, closer to individuation. Ray's intuition guided him from out of the cornfield to create the conditions that would make it possible to become whole, but in

so doing, because he acted in service to the good angel guiding him, Ray's efforts will benefit thousands of people who suffer similarly.

Although the movie doesn't say this, it is as if Ray's baseball field of dreams, which links Heaven and Earth, the "dead" and the living," is of benefit to the Earth itself. Just think: if more people had access to their field of dreams, surely there would be less suffering in the world, less war, less violence, brutality, and nastiness, because people would be more fulfilled in themselves and less likely to take their deep unhappiness out on their neighbors.

Might the Earth itself be sending intuitive thoughts to sensitive human ears? Might it be possible that a nuance of the voice Ray heard speaking to him in the cornfield was also that of the planet itself?

I'm thinking of the mysterious phenomena of crop circles. It is probably an outlandish suggestion, but let's entertain for a moment the possibility that in some ways these strange pictograms written in living crops in the fields of the British Isles, Europe, America, and elsewhere, might be communications from the Earth or even elsewhere, dreambody messages for our intuition to decode.

One day, sitting outside in the lovely sunshine, this thought came to me: *If you were an angel, how would you write your name on the Earth so people could read it? I mean, if you were an angel for whom a name is an energy, a sound, a power, and an assignment, how would you write a living letter to men and women who spend their days in worry and doubt?*

For you, a thought is a reality, an intention is an act, an idea is a creation, and you have all the thoughts, intentions, and ideas of the universe at your command. Let's say you have an alphabet of symbols and pictograms at your fingertips, like so many neon signs floating numinously in the ethers where you live. And let's say you wanted to impart the gentlest angelic kiss upon the face of Nature by swirling a field of ripe grain into one of your many signs but without breaking a single stalk. With your breath you will sculpt the seeds of life itself into a beautiful pattern, an invocation.

You know well that your heavenly beauty carries a little jolt of terror for us. Angels bring terror and beauty, said the poet Rainer Maria Rilke. "For beauty is only the beginning of a terror we can just barely endure"—the recognition of a "stronger presence." But you are so finely subtle. Your terror is really the beauty of awakening, the jolt of pure reality, and you say, making circles instantaneously in the grain, "Look, how close we are." And our intuition hears it, quivering in joy.

A Practical Guide to Developing Intuition

There are many ways to develop and hone the intuition, so the three I offer here are by no means exclusive. But I can assure you they will work.

First, if you are of a skeptical turn of mind, grant the possibility that intuition is possible and that it is easier than you think. Don't abandon your skeptical, critical mind, for these are valuable mental traits. Later, you will need these qualities to keep your bearings and when discrimination is vital. For the moment, take a deep, relaxing breath and affirm that it is possible and easy to be intuitive. Belief and conviction is of crucial importance in all undertakings of this kind.

Second, you need a Geiger counter or truth detector, some standard of reference against which to judge all the intuitive nudges you are likely to experience. Here is one that I find foolproof. Visualize a tiny pinprick of brilliant light two inches above your navel and a little bit inside. It is so small you can barely see it, yet it is so bright it is almost blinding. When you smile to it—or breathe with affection with this pinprick of light in mind—it will probably grow a little larger. It responds well to love and truth. Once you become familiar and friendly with this tiny blazing star inside you, the next time you experience an intuition, check it against this star. See if

the star gets bigger or brighter, or twinkles more, when exposed to the intuitive prompting you have received. Then act accordingly.

Third, as Rudolf Steiner so presciently explained, the spiritual worlds (from which, presumably, intuitive information comes from) are very *different* than our physical reality. In fact, Steiner said that one of the proofs of the surety of intuitively acquired information is that it seems a bit strange or comes in images that are quite odd. Among his many instructions to students for developing their intuitive sensitivity, Steiner suggested the following: visualize a shiny black cross with a red rose at its center. This is something you are not likely to see in the physical world, which means when your mind becomes adept at picturing this unworldly image with great vividness and clarity, you will be one step closer to a correct cognition of the supersensible worlds, that is, free of error and distortion.