

Chapter 7

The New View of the World - Relationships Not Objects.



*The truth is out there!
Or is it in here?*

Neither!

It lies in the relationships between -

*And who we are
And where we are
Are not people
Are not places
But an instantaneous expression
Of what lives between.*

Demonstration #1

The following demonstration is often done when I teach courses involving scientific or conceptual themes. While the necessary materials are simple, I have found that the demonstration is both effective and surprising. It is impossible for you to experience this without first providing you with the whole picture, unless someone familiar with the experience is present to walk you through it. The description that follows provides you with the opportunity to 'live into' the described experience of the assistant.

When I conduct this demonstration as part of a course that I am teaching, I invite one of the participants to come up and be the assistant. After assuring her that nothing unsafe will happen, I continue with the following instructions. First, I have the assistant close her eyes and hold her open hand out in front of her. I then warn her that I will place something into her hand, at which point she is asked to grasp the object tightly. The assistant is then asked to hold her hand completely still while holding the object.

The rest of the participants have been instructed to remain silent. While they do not have an object in their hands, they are able to observe what is going on. The rest of the participants are able to see what is happening, while the assistant is only able to *feel* what is happening. No one has both experiences. What the rest of the participants see is that I pull out a long metal bolt about four inches in length. Attached to the end of the metal bolt is a series of five disks approximately $\frac{3}{8}$ " in diameter (just a bit bigger than the bolt) and each disk is about $\frac{1}{4}$ " high. These are stacked one on top of the other and point away from the end of the bolt. The object is placed in the assistant's hand, with the bolt end in her hand and the series of stacked disks facing me.

At this point I pull out five additional stacked concentric cylinders and begin to move them toward the assistant's stack on the end of the bolt she is holding in her hand. When the stack I am holding in my hand is pushed within about one inch of her stack (they are not yet in physical contact), the rest of the participants see that the assistant's hand moves even though the objects do not touch. With a reminder to the assistant to keep her hand still, this process is repeated to the delight of the observers, and often to the mild frustration of the assistant. At no time do the two stacks of disks ever come into physical contact. At this point, the rest of the participants have a fairly good idea what is happening. I continue to move the assistant's hand in this way, and then ask her to open her eyes while the movement is occurring. Upon the assistant opening her eyes, there is usually a moment of 'oh' as they understand what had been happening.

Commentary on Demonstration #1

As we review the experience, the assistant usually states that with her eyes closed she believed that the movement of her hand was caused by me grasping the end of the bolt and moving it around. When the assistant opens her eyes

and sees that this is not the case, there is an initial surprise as she sees that there is no physical contact between what is in her hand and anything in my hand. An invisible relationship has been established between the cylinders in her hand and the ones in mine. Almost immediately, the concept of 'magnets' comes into the observers' thinking and the mystery is solved. Or is it?

Now we begin a careful analysis of the demonstration, remembering that one group could see while another individual could only *feel*. In the first case, the participants can see that the 'objects' are moving, but that they are not touching. Upon closer examination, we realize that the observers are not 'seeing objects' but, instead, see images that they then conceptualize as being separate objects. They see an image and habitually associate it with the tactile, tangible quality of an object. In this circumstance, we expect that no movement will occur between the objects until we see the images touch. When the image of the objects in close proximity results in the untouched object and the hand grasping it moving, we are met with an unexpected observation. Some observers quickly deduce that the metal disks are magnets. Had we begun with an object whose image is red and u-shaped, most people would have immediately seen that image as a magnet. It is only because the form of the image and its color is more common that people mistakenly think that the objects won't move until their images are touching.

The assistant has a different experience. The assistant feels the tangible sensation in her hand and assumes that any motion of her hand is due to the object in her hand being moved. The assistant likely assumes that the tangible quality in her hand is solely the quality of an object. While she is correct in thinking of the initial tangible quality in her hand as being the result of an interaction of objects, the assumption becomes problematic when she assumes that the second tangible experience in her hand is also due to an object interaction. Upon opening her eyes, the assistant finds that the second tangible experience is due to an invisible interaction. The name we give to this invisible interaction is a magnetic interaction. In this second case, we have a tangible experience with no directly associated image; the space in between is filled with nothing or *no-thing*.

The distinction between the various types of visual and tangible interactions can be grouped together in the following manner.

Case 1- Images by themselves are real experiences

In our everyday world do we have 'real' visual experiences (as opposed to hallucinations, dreams etc) that have no tangible counterpart? Do we ascribe reality to images that can be seen but not touched? Usually with some prodding we arrive at such examples as rainbows and holograms. In both cases, an image is seen but with no tangible counterpart. If you have never seen a good quality hologram, you are encouraged to locate some, see them in person and

have the experience directly. It is a fascinating experience to see an image that has all of the visual attributes of a three dimensional appearance, but is lacking in any tangible experience at all. The key here is to recognize that no one will ascribe object-like status to the hologram, but people will agree that a hologram does indeed have a reality from the perspective of vision. Is a hologram a real experience? Yes, the hologram has a visual quality that can be repeatedly experienced! What makes the hologram a bit spooky is that the image has no tangible counterpart.

Case 2- Tangible experiences by themselves are real experiences

In our everyday life, are there tangible experiences (for example, experiences of pressure on the surface of our skin) that we have with no visible counterpart? Again, with a bit of questioning, people begin to give examples of magnetic interactions, some electrical interactions, and even experiences in nature such as wind. With further discussion, it becomes clear that almost every person has had the experience of 'feeling eyes on them' as they are being watched, often while walking down a road. Here we have a tangible experience (pressure), or the very subtle sensation of someone watching, with no visible image to support the idea that *something* has come into contact with us. We may be more at ease accepting the idea that the earth is one pole of a magnetic interaction with our handheld compass being the opposite pole. This experience is similar to the one described in the opening of the chapter. However, few of us consider the implications of such a way of thinking through to the end.

Case 3- Nothing – no tangible or visual sensation

In this case the situation is quite clear. While we can hear a sound or recognize a specific scent, without an experience that unifies both a visual image and a tangible counterpart to this image, we have *nothing; no-thing*.

Case 4- Things – When the visual and tangible sensations are both present!

Now we have arrived at a central point in our investigation. It has become apparent that we can only form the concept of matter, an object or a thing, when two or more of our senses are engaged in sensations. The two key senses for the concept of an object to arise are those of touch (we are aware of pressure) and vision (we experience visual opacity – one image appears incomplete as another image appears to take up the space in the visual field where we would assume the first image would continue). Even with transparent substances, we can observe refraction, a shift in the visual field. We also experience tangible pressure when the image of our hand is brought into intimate proximity with the lack of image of the invisible (transparent) 'object.'

What is important here is that the object does not *cause* the sensations; in fact, the reverse is the case. *We can only form the concept of object if we experience at least the two sensations of vision and touch.* The senses of taste, smell,

sound, temperature, etc. enrich our experience and will result in our forming a more distinct mental picture of the experience. However, we cannot escape the fact that only through an experience of a relationship, through the senses, can we form a concept of the *thing* 'out there' and simultaneously become aware of *myself* as 'in here.' The concepts of self and object arise from the same unity of experience, and ultimately arise out of relationship (recall the exercise in Chapter 1). Even more intriguing is the realization that the sense of self and object both arise from the same unity of relationship. While we can separate them conceptually, their origin in perception is non-existent. The world exists not as a series of objects, but instead we come to the concept of object as a result of relational experiences. *Relationship, or betweenness, is the necessary precondition for forming or knowing any aspect of existence.* The world-I is an expression of betweenness, where we express the poles of the experience as self and world. The idea (and it is an idea) that the world is fundamentally a series of objects interacting suffers from the fallacy that to form the concept of object I must have already (and in many cases unconsciously) passed through the precondition of experiencing. Experiencing is only relationally based and not separate under any set of circumstances.

Relationship is more fundamental than the object.

What is described above is not simply a trick of semantics, but a description of reality. I first began to investigate this type of thinking in 1999 and 2000. Then, in 2002, in the November 2002 issue of MIT's technical publication, *Technology Review*, an article appeared entitled, *Holograms in Motion*. In this article the authors describe how they began to do new research with holographic images, a visual image that is created in space but has no tactile counterpart. The researchers created an electromagnetic field around the holographic image such that the spatial area in which the holographic image appeared also had a strong electromagnetic field. If the image was then probed with a stylus that held a small magnet at the tip, the researchers observed a tactile interaction that 'felt like' an object. They could see an image and, when probed with the special stylus, the image had a tactile feel as an object does. The researchers then continued to make further refinements so that one could get a sensation when the surface of the hologram was probed, but also when the space of the hologram was penetrated. In a short time they had managed to create the sensation of tactile feel as when an object is cut with a knife. With a particular set of software, one could have the sensation of cutting through wood, with another butter, and yet another as if cutting through metal.

A related design has been created but, instead of using a pencil-like probe, one uses a special glove that is covered in many fine magnets. One could imagine that with a bit more time and sophistication, one could create 'objects' that work with the subtle bioelectric field of the human body. Or is that the system we already have in the case of the objects of nature? How will we know the difference? The last question here is significant and one that each of us should

investigate for ourselves. One key is to look for the presence of other sensations in the same spatial field as the 'object' in question. Are the sense impressions created by human technology as rich as those given in the natural world?

When considering the above question, I tend to use the example of a chocolate chip cookie. Upon approaching an area of space, I first experience a characteristic smell. It is usually accompanied by a distinctive round disk-like image. If I reach out my hand it comes into contact with a firm but not too hard surface. Perhaps it has a hint of being just a bit warmer than my body. The surface is somewhat dry but a bit soft and bends easily when pressure is applied, but does not snap or break (I expect a different quality with a ginger snap). If my tongue is brought into contact with the same spatial area, a new sensation arises that can simply be called wonderful (if the cookie has been prepared with careful attention to each of these sensory impressions!) Note the difference in your being when you read (and hopefully fully imagine) the description above or my simply saying imagine a cookie. In the first case your mouth may have been prepared to actually eat a cookie (change the flavor if you like), while in the second case many people simply imagine the shape of the object. The second case requires only a recollection of the sensations of vision and sometimes the tangible quality as well. The first engages your imagination more. In actually eating a cookie, you and the cookie become an intimate expression of 'cookie-ness' as experienced by 'humanness.'

Looking Forward

What would our lives be like if, instead of simply recalling the form and tactile sensation when we hear the name of an 'object,' we recalled the myriad sense impressions and relationships that we experienced when we first developed the concept? Imagine what our lives would be like if every experience we had was a full host of sensory impressions? This is the beginning of a new way of being. Life could be a series of relational experiences rather than the interaction of a series of objects. This is the New Physics, this is the new way of being on earth, this is a more fully human manner of experiencing existence. The world of objects is simply a set conceptual mind frame. The world of experiences is no less real, and in fact is the basis by which we form the concept of 'object' in the first place. The great error is that once we have had a certain amount of experience, we habitually shift to an object orientation and forget about the experience. At that moment, we stop participating in the world and instead experience the world as 'out there' and our self as 'in here.' At that moment, we lose the immediacy of experience we had when we were younger and begin to live in the abstract world of the grown-up (or is it grown-apart?)

The limitations we place on the world 'out there' are only matched by those that we place on our 'self' when we think only in object-like concepts. The thought of the separate self and the world out there are the direct result of a worldview in which it is believed that material is the causal element of all existence. We now

see that this is SIMPLY WRONG. We only form the *concept* of matter based on a synthesis of experience-based sensations. Even the concept of separate sensations falls into the same problem as being based on a combination of experiences, other sensations and concepts. And so we go round and round looking for a fixed system to begin. Once again, the fixed beginning is also a residue of a materially based conceptual system.

Another means of conceptualization is possible. The experiences themselves, the betweenness we habitually think of as world-I, can lead to WHAT? If we can let go of the what, new possibilities arise. It may be that only then, when we let go of the 'what,' we truly begin to live.

The exercise in the following chapter will give us an opportunity to actually practice this way of being