

Emergence Home Page	Emergence Therapy	Learning & Teaching	Healthy Relationships	Weight & Fitness	Additions & Recovery
		Love & Forgiveness	Human Nature		

the Emergence Explorer

Questions for the Week of January 15, 2007



"What Are Thoughts?"



- What are "thoughts?"
- Is knowledge limited to "thinking?"
- Are pictures on the screen of the mind considered "thoughts?"

Do you know?

This Week's Questions

[These questions were posed by Gary S.]

[Question 1] Can knowing *about* emergence only be learned *by* emergence?

[Answer] The simple answer? Yes. However, it would be important to know why.

Begin with that my answer here is rooted in the word, "knowing," a word which seems to appear, in one form or another, throughout your questions today. Moreover, my answering your present question requires I have a sense of what the word "knowing" means to you. You see, as far as I know (no pun

intended), there is no way to define this word comprehensively. At least, none that I am aware of.

To stop being a pain in the butt though, I can informally state that, yes, Emergence, as a theory and as a practice, can only be learned through having emergences. Moreover, while momentum definitely has its place in this learning process, parroting the group of ideas which I refer to as the principles and practices of Emergence will, at best, result in mechanical results. Nothing more.

Even so, if you can then use these experiences wisely, even your parroted phrases can lead to genuine learning. How? By watching for when you go blank as you speak these phrases. In other words, if, when you parrot these phrases and words, you notice, in real time, where you lack a personal picture, you'll have many of these ideas emerge in you. Or at the very least, you'll clearly define where you need to do your work.

[Question 2] Does knowledge learned by momentum have beauty?

[Answer] All of life has beauty. Mostly, though, we do not notice this beauty. Why? Because, though experiencing startling events, we become unable to picture what some of this beauty looks like. Herein lies the answer to your question.

Does knowledge learned by momentum have beauty? Yes. However, because, by definition, this learning is transient, any pictures we gain will remain accessible to us *only* while we are in the stream of this momentum.

Voicing this idea a bit more technically, we could say that knowledge learned by momentum is simply whatever we currently picture in our mind's temporary memory. Moreover, these pictures exist only for as long as something keeps referring us back to them in an ongoing way. Thus, when the reinforcement stops, we lose our access to these pictures, and these memories quickly fade.

Finally, stating this in the more human sense, we could indeed say that knowledge learned by momentum has beauty. Unfortunately, this beauty is merely a passing experience, whereas the beauty in an emergence, and our access to it, lasts for a lifetime. All this without effort and with no reinforcement whatsoever.

[Question 3] If I cannot understand a question, and if I cannot picture what it means or the questioner's intent, how can I tell if the problem is with me or with the question?

[Answer] Another great question. Let's begin by breaking down what you've just asked me into some "sub questions." [1] What is a question? [2] What is a question's meaning? And [3] what is a questioner's intent?

[1] Let's start with the word, "question." What is a "question?" The technically accurate answer? Something you'd like to know but cannot picture. Thus logic alone is never a real, authentic answer to a question.

[2] What is a question's, "meaning?" Answer. Your personal experience of the pictures you see when asked this particular question. In other words, your personal, human meaning comes from your visual experience of these personal pictures. As opposed to being derived from the static, abstract, literal answer to the question.

[3] What is a questioner's "intent?" Here, I'd say, the best thing to do would be to ignore this question. Why? Because motive is, at best, a labyrinth. In effect, peoples' reasons for asking questions are, at best, temporary, and for the most part, unknowable. Moreover, since the answers to all questions are rooted mainly in what you can see, even determining intent is something which requires we have a picture. Which makes knowing motive more the sidebar to a question than the main event.

Now let's look at your original question. If you cannot understand a question, how can I tell if the problem is with you or with the question? Here, the answer lies in whether you can or cannot picture what you are being asked. So can you? If so, then the problem becomes how to resolve any differences between your pictures and the questioner's pictures.

To add to this the Emergence Personality sense of this question, all comprehensive answers must address the question in all ten Layers of personality. Or at least, in a good portion of these ten Layers.

Sound difficult? It's not. You see, all pictures which *move* on the screen of the mind (as opposed to pictures which are still, dead, snap shots) include all ten Layers. This means all real questions are rooted in the search for a moving picture. Not simply any old picture but rather, a living, breathing, moving picture. A real "occurrence." An "authentic action."

So how can you tell if the problem is with you or with the question? The answer? The problem is always, in part, with you. How can this be? Because your finding an answer always requires you find a picture. In addition, this picture should answer the question and, in some sense, mirror the questioner's picture.

For instance, say someone were to ask you, what is "love?" What would you answer? Most folks, without realizing it, would derive their answers by unconsciously referencing their first accessible picture for this word. In other words, they would be asking themselves, what is my picture for "love."

What is my first picture of the word, "love?" A four year old boy being leaped upon and jumped all over by a litter of ten beagle puppies. Laughing, human, "boy with a dog - dogs with a boy" love. My first picture.

And yours? What is your first picture?

This picture is where you find the answer to your question.

And if you have no picture?

Then you have no answer. And you need to divide the question into, visual, sub questions, similar to what I've done here. Literally, you need to take the question apart, word by word, until you find the non visual word or words. Then you need to discover pictures for each of those words.

And if you have no pictures for the words in a question?

Then you need to do whatever it takes to find some pictures for these words. Only then can you begin to seek your own answer. Which means one thing. If you can't find an answer, it is always you, first, then, at times, the questioner second. If at all.

One more thing. You did not voice your question as how do I find the questioner's answer, or the "right" answer, or the "correct" answer. Should you have voiced your question with these words, my answer to you would be different. In those cases, it is certain the problem lies with both people. Even here, though, the problem rests entirely in the lack of pictures, either yours or the questioner's or both.

[Question 4] Can teaching by momentum lead to emergences in students?

[Answer] Gary, rarely does learning happen any other way. In fact, in a very real sense, we could say that life is one long learning session wherein we continuously lose and gain our educational momentum.

On the other hand, you seem to be asking your question more specifically, as in, "does teaching by momentum lead to the emergence of specific ideas or behaviors?" Here, the answer is a great big, "maybe."

Also important to ask would be, "could a person learn something, say, Greek, without learning by momentum?" My answer? This depends on the amount of Greek you were trying to learn.

For instance, learning to speak Greek as a functionally integrated language without using momentum? This is simply not possible. Momentum is always a key element in integrating any new learning.

But learning specific Greek words and phrases? In this case, this is possible. In fact, these kinds of thing occur all the time. Mostly, by accident.

For instance, I, myself, have experienced moments wherein I a Greek speaking friend suddenly said something which caused a Greek word or phrase to emerge in me. For instance, I remember the time wherein the Greek word for "today" emerged in me. This Greek word roughly transliterates in English to "simera." At the time, I was standing at my friend Andy's deli counter and had asked him if he would teach me "the Greek word for the day." A Greek word. Any word.

In truth, what happened was complicated. Why? Because a whole lot more than this one word emerged in me in that brief exchange. What I'm saying is, while I did, indeed, learn the Greek word for "today," I more remember being amazed by the fact that when you ask people to teach you an unspecified word, their minds go blank. Especially if you are asking them to teach you a word in a language they do not normally speak. At least, not in this particular setting.

I also learned something even more meaningful to me. Something I have since observed many, many times. What? That asking someone not born in the US to teach you a word in their native tongue can often make the person smile, and feel flattered, and feel personally connected to you.

This, in fact, has become one of my favorite things to do. And something I frequently indulge in with many of my foreign born friends. In fact, recently, I was in my friend Luigi's deli, and after having asked him to teach me a word in Italian, he said to me, out of the blue, "I wish you and I could speak in Italian."

Now consider what this means about momentum and learning. Both deli owners are men I am fond of. Both are foreign born.

In both cases, my asking them to teach me words in their native language has, over time, created very warm, caring bonds with me. And while I had indeed previously enjoyed some level of friendship with

both men, it seems my asking them to "be my teacher" significantly deepened these friendships. Which says a lot about teacher / student relationships. As well as implying that the most important momentum in learning is not the facts communicated, but rather, the personal connections created.

[Question 5] Is knowledge limited to thinking? What are thoughts? Are pictures on the screen of the mind considered thoughts?

[Answer] Three questions, Gary. All very deep. I'll take them one at a time.

Is knowledge limited to thinking?

Gary, even for a man whom commonly asks deep questions, this is a deep one. I'm not sure I even have a way to answer this.

What I'm saying is, philosophers have, for all of recorded history, sought an answer to this question to no avail. To wit, no one to date has come up with an answer that satisfies all people. Me included.

Why not, you ask? Because there are simply too many unsolved questions here, beginning with, what is "knowledge?" Is it "knowing" in the conscious sense? Or is it simply that we become aware something exists? Then there's the question as to whether "knowledge" is limited to what we humans know, or is it something which exists outside of us entirely. Something, we, on good days, dip into; a fountain from which we drink, so to speak? This, in fact, is one of the consummate philosophical questions. And one which underlies much of the life work of the famous philosophers, Heraclitus to Kant.

My point is, I'm afraid answering your question definitely exceeds my limits. Then again, who knows. Perhaps the question is more a Zen koan than a "knowable" question. For us humans anyway. The proof being even the little I've said is mostly circular logic and semantics.

On the other hand, rather than leave you with no answer whatsoever, let me at least say what I do know. This being that any answer to this question lies in having a personal picture for the word, "knowledge." Is it what a wizard knows? Is it what Yoda knows? Is it what a newborn baby knows? Is it what Buddha knew?

Thus, to at least begin to answer your question, no, knowledge is not limited to thinking. In fact, we know many things proprioceptively. Non verbally. Spiritually. And so on. Then again, these things could also be seen simply as non verbal "knowing." Which puts us right back to where we started.

What are thoughts? In Emergence's Theory of the Mind, we have an empirical answer for this question. This answer is found within our Formulas for Consciousness, specifically in our $M=I(T)$ formula; "Meaning" equals "Information" times "Time."

Here, "thoughts" are a kind of information. One half of all information to be exact.

And the other half? Feelings. Or, intuitions.

What is important to notice here is that the "Information" referred to in this formula comprises one third of what makes up human consciousness. "Thoughts" and "feelings" then are each one half of this "Information." Now please allow me to elaborate.

Start by taking apart the word; "Information." How many pictures can you find?

"In-form-ation." Here, the first picture is the "in" part of the word, where "in" refers to something which enters into our minds, something which becomes conscious in us.

Next, the "form" picture. This picture literally refers to the form or "shape" in which this incoming picture manifests. Specifically the shape of what we picture on the screen of our minds. This, then, is the "what does it look like?" part, the visual core of the word.

Finally, we have the "ation" part of this word. Here, "ation" is a suffix which refers to something which involves movement, an "action" so to speak which happens either to us, or in us. The point here being, Information can originate from either place. Either internally, or externally, or both.

Now putting all these pictures together, we can say that "Information" is what "in-forms" us we are alive and kicking, so to speak, where "alive and kicking" is the action part. No coincidence that in Plato's philosophy, we know we are alive because we can sense the ideal "forms" from which our imperfect world is derived.

In other words, Plato, and many of the philosophers of his time, believed that everything in our world stems from some perfect, other worldly realm, a place Plato referred to as, the "Realm of the Forms." Within the realm were found the essential ingredients from which all in our Earthly world derive.

Of course, in our world, these forms can manifest only imperfectly. None the less, every form in our world is somehow an imperfect copy of a perfect form. More important, when he uses the word, "form," he is referring to the visual aspect of life, the "what we can picture" part of what we can know about our world.

Bringing this down to Earth and we could say that "Information" is "what informs us that we are alive." Moreover, this information can be said to exist in two specific forms, the visible and the non visible; thoughts and emotions.

Know that my dividing Information into thoughts and feelings is more an artificial act than anything literal, in that anything you can and cannot picture will, in theory, evoke in us both visible and non visible components; both thoughts and feelings. Moreover, since human consciousness (and everything else in our world) is based on light, what we see and what we sense without seeing IS simply what informs us we are alive.

As I said, thoughts are one half of this thing called "information," that which informs us we are alive. "Thoughts" are the mental half. Feelings, then, are the other half. The intuitive half. Which makes "thoughts" our sense of what we can actually or potentially see, and feelings, or "intuitions," our sense of the things "we can never see," the things we must sense without seeing.

Are pictures on the screen of the mind considered thoughts?

As I've just said, thoughts are but one half of the information we use to create what exists on the screen of our minds. Feelings are the other half.

This then begs the question, can you have a picture on the screen of the mind which contains only one of these two kinds of sensory information? The answer? In theory, yes. In fact, a good way to picture what this word, Information, means is to picture a bathroom sink wherein the cold water faucet is filling the basin with thoughts and the hot water faucet is filling the basin with emotions. From this picture, then, it is easy to see how both faucets filling one basin would fill this sink with an infinitely variable mixture of both cold water and hot.

The same thing happens in the mind. Only the screen of the mind is the basin and "Information" is the "water." Thoughts and feelings then are the two incoming streams of water filling this basin. Or filling the screen of the mind, if you will.

Obviously, then, you can, in theory, be filling this "basin" with only one kind of water, either only hot or only cold. In reality, though, these words, in and of themselves, are mere references to relative terms. Which makes this answer more a "gist" kind of an answer than any real, specific response.

And yes, pictures on the screen of the mind are considered, "thoughts."



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