

# From Thinking to Zero Gravity to Paradigm Shift

Dominic Turnbull and Charles E. Smith

© June, 2016

It should be clear by now that you can't think your way to a paradigm change, to changing lanes, to a discontinuous shift in the direction you're going. Just as astronauts going to space reach zero gravity, we seem to need a moment where thoughts of the past and thoughts of the future are suspended, for a moment, leaving us with real choice, a place of "nothing" in which something new may be created.

## **Transition One: Pain is the Prime Directive for Getting to Zero Gravity.**

Learning is good, so we are told throughout our schooling and any further education. But can mountains of knowledge actually get in the way of thinking freely, seeking new possibilities, and shifting paradigms? If so, is there not a case for 'unlearning' in the face of challenges people deal with, in families, companies and other institutions? It is here where the pain resides in giving something up, whether that's an idea, an opinion, or a deeply held belief. I don't mean throwing the belief or the assumption away, but suspending it for a moment. Only by doing this can one hold a new possibility or go back to zero gravity. As a constant state, it's difficult to sustain. But for a moment, it can open up hitherto new ground for thinking, relationships, leadership and transformation.

So how does someone actually let go? As the American physicist Thomas Kuhn puts it: ***scientific advancement is not evolutionary, but rather is a "series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent revolutions", and in those revolutions "one conceptual world view is replaced by another". Think of a Paradigm Shift as a change from one way of thinking to another.***

Kuhn puts it rather strongly, but think of some views that you hold very firmly, and then think of the opposite and try to hold both at the same time, or even give the first one up for a moment. Until this happens unlearning remains unavailable, and new paradigms are not possible. I recall the situation of a Vice President I was coaching in a multi-national organization; he didn't trust his people. This dynamic underpinned all the relationships he had with those on his team. He was stuck in a paradigm, but desperately wanted to feel different. However, he was looking in the wrong place. He was waiting for members in his team to change before he would start trusting them. It was only then he realized that trusting them wasn't possible inside his existing paradigm; ***he*** had to change ***his*** point of view. It was painful, but only by doing this would he be able to trust his people. He had to go back to zero to

create something new. He did. Pain is a doorway to letting go for the sake of what you really want.

## **Transition Two: Consciousness Is Zero Gravity**

*“Between stimulus and response there is a space,  
In that space is our power to choose our response,  
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”* Viktor Frankl

<http://www.flixxy.com/first-person-view-of-felix-baumgartners-space-jump.htm#.Uu5KxEhDi7Q.gmail>

Is Thinking the Same as Consciousness?

True consciousness is a state of centeredness and presence that very few of us can master, particularly in moments of stress, discomfort or anxiety. Yet, this state can be the solution to such problems, or at least open up a new possibility. People who meditate deeply or practice yoga to an advanced level are capable of such states. But how can an ordinary person experience this?

I look at myself and ask, *“What is my consciousness occupied with right now?”* It’s occupied with meeting the deadline for this article, taking my daughter to hospital this afternoon, reflecting on the weekend I’ve just had, focusing on the busy week ahead of me.., and many more, even thousands of things that are present in my mind today, but have either happened already (past) or are going to happen (future). What about ***now***? How conscious am I to me, my body, my breathing and my spirit?

Thoughts seem to be objects, and objects can get in the way of our relationships, our work, and our ability to experience the ***now***. So how do we remove these objects? You may be able to remove a physical object from your desk or room to somewhere out of sight, and this physical object no longer occupies your attention. But thoughts aren’t actually objects. Thoughts are abstract and cannot be simply removed. Can we embrace our thoughts.., fully, really connect with them, and not be in the grip of them? Or, maybe thinking is not consciousness.

*Adapted from 'The Perfection of Awareness' by Burt Harding:*

- Consciousness is Primary - Thoughts arise in/from Awareness
- Consciousness does not Judge - Judgment arises in/from  
Consciousness as Thoughts
- Consciousness is Boss - Thoughts are Servants
- Consciousness is Passive - Thoughts are Active
- Consciousness does not come and go - Thoughts manifest and die
- Consciousness is Non-Reactive - Thoughts are Reactive
- Consciousness is Now - Mind/Thoughts create Past and Future
- Consciousness has no memory - Thoughts become mind/memories
- Awareness is Beyond Space and Time - Mind/Thoughts create Space  
and Time

- Consciousness can exist without Thoughts - Thoughts cannot exist without Awareness
- Consciousness is the real You - Thoughts are the fake You (Ego)
- Consciousness stays in Background - Thoughts come in the foreground
- Consciousness is like Ocean - Thoughts are like Waves in the Ocean
- Consciousness is Silence/Stillness - Thoughts are Noisy/Turbulence
- Awareness is Absolute Reality - Thoughts are Illusions

**Transition Three: Appreciate that the Whole of any situation is greater than the sum of its parts.**

This transition moves a person from a linear, past-based mindset to a place capable of imagining a new paradigm, to an awareness that the whole of a situation is not the sum of its parts.., and is always greater than the sum of the parts. Why then are most of us are stuck in dealing with the parts?

In the first place, dealing with the parts is not an obvious choice. In any situation, there is always a background awareness, and people automatically create clear images out of diffuse background and then act as if that's what's real. We then explain and justify that reality as the truth.

Preconceptions and beliefs determine how the world occurs to us; literally what we see happening. These preconceptions are embedded in memory. So long as I look into my mind and its preexisting images and language to make sense of things, the reality of whole being greater than the sum of the parts is inaccessible. For example, the CEO part deals with the marketing part and the financial part, and the relationship of the other parts to one another, but rarely considers the whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

This mechanism can be interrupted under some circumstances. Consider the Astronaut experience in looking at Earth and the universe from the moon, and from low earth orbit, and the experience of surprise mingled with admiration caused by something beautiful, unexpected, unfamiliar, and inexplicable.<sup>1</sup> It's a mystery and an experience of the whole. At the same time, there were exceptions, in those astronauts so focused on the job at hand or so embedded in an analytic mindset that they continued to have a pre-existing mind-driven experience, and could only be partially aware of the limitless

---

<sup>1</sup> Frank White, [The Overview Effect](#), 2014.

nature of the whole they were looking at.

This suggests that deliberate training and practice in present awareness and consciousness expansion (versus simply observing, analyzing and thinking), is needed to induce the experience of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. The automatic naming of what one is aware of utterly disguises the holistic, interactive nature of what we are dealing with. When we look at the stars at night, or at a company, what we are aware of is not the sum of its parts.

*“Reality is nothing but  
The sum of all the awareness  
As you experience here and now  
The ultimate of science thus appears...  
The irreducible phenomenon of all Awareness”*

Fritz Perls, 1969

Therein lies the insight that the whole determines the parts, which contrasts with the previous assumption that the whole is merely the total sum of its elements.

#### **Transition Four: Appreciate how a bottom line of Energy and Consciousness Expansion can resolve seemingly irreconcilable issues.**

Conventional wisdom says that form follows function, and most of the world is structured this way. Corporations are structured to make money. The military is structured to defeat an enemy. However, a different reality has been revealed which says that form actually follows consciousness, and systems with the most available energy prevail.

Shallow levels of consciousness are framed by anger, guilt, fear, shame, control and avoidance, while deeper levels of consciousness are framed by love, cooperation, creativity, and non-judgment. People operating at shallower levels of consciousness are contained within boundaries that limit their creativity, imagination, ability to cooperate and willingness to risk.

Deeper levels of consciousness are relational in nature. Energy expansion and consciousness expansion seem to go in hand in hand. Systems with the most available energy usually prevail. Relationships and projects that are failing have visibly lower and lower energy levels in their members. As a whole, Energy is a good predictor of success.

Leaders who can hold seemingly irreconcilable opposites in their minds at the same time are better able to provide direction for addressing complex,

interactive and conflictual issues such as corporate integration, global warming, immigration, improved bases for economic systems, long-standing tribal disputes such as the Israeli-Palestinian, Sunni-Shia, Conservative-Progressive, and other political-social impasses. We propose that shifting belief to an energetic and consciousness-based nature of reality will lead to a grand future for humanity by diminishing much of our prevalent either/or, right\wrong, win\lose mindset.

For the most part people are addicted to issues, interests, and especially the physical substance of what's going on. For example, in my son's sports team, the parents and the Board of Directors spent inordinate amounts of time concerned with superficial logistical issues such as how event name tags should look. Meanwhile, countless deep concerns about the quality of training, conflicts between the Board and the training staff, parental relations, and dysfunctional relationships within the Board were ignored as if they didn't exist. When attention was called to such issues, Board members' eyes glazed over and they immediately went back to content.

This content addiction usually prevails in corporations, communities, and government operations -- underlying problems about communication, conflict, and what's best for the client/customer are largely ignored. Such content addiction is very much like moving deck chairs around on the Titanic, thinking the issues that lay beneath can be resolved in the course of life itself. The iceberg always wins.

Getting to "what lies beneath" at the bottom of the iceberg always depends on the degree to which leaders are conscious of how they are using their energy. Failure to pay attention to this prevents self-consciousness, other-consciousness, and consciousness of the environment in which they are operating. Without attention to and responsibility for continuous energy and consciousness expansion, the past will repeat itself, like it or not.