

Jeff Hottinger - MSOD 612 - October 20, 2016

Reading, Writing, and Reflection

The various and building metaphors that David Rock used to explain how the brain functions were nearly all very interesting and useful for me to absorb. I will be revisiting them as a tool to self-diagnose my own chaotic mind and make the best of this brain's abilities and to navigate the seas ahead. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I am drawn to some of the insights shared in the *Turning Enemies into Friends* chapter because it aligns with my recent challenges and self-observations at work. Lately I catch myself demonizing the actions of some colleagues who I would like to work better with and when I notice this I wonder what is involved in this behavior I am exhibiting. In addition to the self-awareness that Rock delves into many aspects of elsewhere in *Your Brain at Work*, I found his discussion around friend or foe reflexes and the tendencies to classify others as enemies if there is a chance of threat or even just an absence of a friendly gesture to be reassuring. Similarly, Rock's brief acknowledgement that people have deep social needs helps me continue to consider ways to interject friendly tones to help sway potentially quite positive relationships at work towards friendly interactions and to meet my own and my colleagues' needs for social connection in the work we do and hope to do together.

The complexities of the mind revealed in *Mindsight* are in some ways so overwhelming that I worry I cannot properly harness them to provide insight on the workings of my own mind. However, if I approach the topic differently and think more atomically of using some of the insights in *Mindsight* separately as individual tools to better understand some specific mental behaviors or patterns I exhibit one or a few at a time I, then feel I have a rich set of tools available to translate and map my own mind. When I consider trying to build and maintain my curiosity and openness to new ideas in general as well as specifically about myself I am drawn towards using awareness more to witness how my own mind works and responds to challenges I will encounter along with these efforts. I am sure there are times when I will feel defensive, as I often feel defensive, but I will enjoy the challenge of watching how I became defensive and "seeing" what process my brain followed to do this and hopefully understanding some of the connections underlying these responses. I think I will be able to use this awareness and Siegel's

perspective to remind myself that my identity has been composed of many parts and many stories that I have told myself over many years to build what I have now.

The term marriage itself describes the core of my ambitions for each of the three marriages of my life as described by Whyte, as I seek to tie and combine my true self with my relationships to others starting with my wife, with my connection to my work and all the work I hope to do, and in awareness and exploration of my evolving self and the self I might chose to express as this awareness grows. In each of these areas I have and hope to increase the degree to which I challenge myself to express my truest form while also opening myself to the full aspects of the others I will be forever engaged with in life.

My actual marriage is the modern core of my life and my wife and I both try hard to specifically create this marriage in a different shape to the familial marriages we were exposed to in our foundational family years, although each of our families had different expressions of marriage that we are trying to create alternatives to. Lately this partnership has been very productive as we have twice moved across the country in pursuit of work and study and now settled into a home and area (with a dog) we hope can be a base for us for many years to come. Yet as much as we have drawn strength from each other, there are clear challenge that we admit to in moments of bravery and clarity in the shape of our marriage. A graph comes to mind when I think about this, but then it quickly evolves beyond what I can envision. First the Y-axis is time and it is at the bottom of an X-axis ranging from 0 to infinity, but then I quickly realize that the graph would have to go below 0 with a negative area to represent the struggles and occasional backwards progress. When I consider what variable the X-axis should track from engagement to sexuality to giving to listening and beyond is when the dimensionality quickly spirals beyond a graph I can hold in my mind. My goal for the continued evolution of this marriage is for me to be able to contribute more of my true self to it with attention and courage to let down my guard to better actualize the potential my wife and I both see in our continued partnering. This is a more expansive but similarly themed vision for what I hope to further strengthen with my long-term friendships as well.

When it comes to work my goals are the same. I can see more distinct seasonality in my engagement and feelings of accomplishment as I look back over my marriage to work than I see in my relationship marriages, but I have a similar ambition to contribute my honest self more fully to work. In the current phase I believe this will likely take shape as an assertion of my beliefs amongst a management and leadership team which feels agreeable but insufficiently unified to make the most out of our collective impact. The specific way I am envisioning my increased impact is by building my capacity to do emotionally difficult work with the (not insignificant) energy I have to give to my work marriage without overcommitting to this marriage at the expense of my relationships and self.

Lastly, my marriage with my self is one that I have historically retreated to when encountering difficulties in relationship or work. In that sense I am comfortable in some ways of engaging with myself and my needs and my emotional states. The area where I have ever so slowly increased my focus and pressure is in balancing soothing my hurt self and challenging myself to open up, be braver, try to push past fearful areas with a sense of confidence and willingness to be true and honest without labeling efforts as failures or other self-defeating patterns I have allowed in my history. I think recently this marriage has become more two-directional in a way and I like what I see happening if I can persist.

The mere title of Quinn's book *Building the Bride as you Walk on It* is conceptually a little terrifying to me as my need/desire for expertise conjures up the exact opposite approach to leading change. Instead of constructing a path I'm already walking, can't I just hide away for a bit and study and consider what will happen and thereby become better prepared before I even begin? Happily, reading through actual content past the cover I found many ideas I could already relate to and several parallels to work I've already been doing. In particular I found the ideas about increased awareness and authenticity to resonate and articulate some efforts that I have already been practicing and considering in my work. This gives me not only confidence that I'm doing the right thing, but more tools and ways of looking at these efforts that will help me get more from them.

Looking forward though, I will admit that there is still significant challenge within Quinn's guidance on change leadership that will not be easy for me to embody. The first notion that I know I am already engaged in thought in but still avoiding in large ways is the full depth of the idea of the Fundamental State of Leadership. While I have many instances in my history where I know I assumed the role, responsibilities, and state of leadership there are still some in my current situation where I am avoiding it. Sometimes I let my current boss work in ways I disagree with or find potentially counterproductive and harmful and I have not expressed the sense of responsibility I would otherwise articulate to step into a state of leading in these cases. My justifications are not unfounded, but I think I will have to examine how much they let me off the hook and be emboldened by Quinn's book and the work I will do on this intensive when I return to my work afterwards.

Of the types of inquiry that Schein describes, I find that I do a lot of diagnostic inquiry regularly at work and that I'm most comfortable with this type. I also have an awareness that at times I can revert to this diagnostic inquiry inappropriately such as when pure inquiry would be more appropriate for the other party to express their concerns or feelings if they are not asking for me to help solve a problem. Confrontational inquiry sounds on the surface like something that would be uncomfortable or challenging for me by name alone, but I feel that I have some familiarity with this form from my work as well and that my real challenge and an excellent opportunity would be to become more adept at process-oriented inquiry and the insights that could be gained from such questions. In fact many of my reflections for other areas of this writing and previous writings have had elements that might best be resolved by following a process-oriented path of inquiry.

After absorbing and digesting and much as has thus far been able to penetrate the shapes of my brain before the beginning of this in-person intensive, I have found great interest and excitement from the readings but a curiosity that is drawing my attention away from the fascinating topics of the reading and towards subject matter that has yet to be addressed. I am comfortable exploring many aspects of the self and using self-knowledge as a tool, but I find

myself yearning for more techniques and methods of organizing and advising teams and related subjects. I'm not entirely sure if this is impatience or a fear of an incompetence in the areas I want to study more that I am trying to address, but there is a possibility also that I am avoiding a deeper dive into the self. I can certainly see the value of staying with this topic long enough to better consider and absorb the manifold lessons and implications here, so I will endeavor to train my focus on the many aspects of the self that these readings have focused on. I also have a concern with my own understanding and retention of so much information juggled in such a short window of time. For me expertise is an important if not always achievable goal and while I have enjoyed all the assigned readings for this module, I do not feel I have achieved much mastery of covered concepts except perhaps in areas I already have some exposure of familiarity with. However, I think the opportunity to work through the topics again at the intensive with others and some revisiting of the texts along the way can address my worries here.