

Chapter 8 : ANIMAL IDENTITY

Whereas Chapters 2 and 3 were personal experiences which i attempted to explain rationally; Chapters 8 and 9 may be considered as hypotheses.

So, for animals, what is identity - what is constant, what is security, 'what am I?'.
 I have no proof, but i suggest being in touch with the taste and smell of their body, and the feel of their own bodies from the inside, is a very intimate sense of being. This connection with inside warmth, vitality, and a general sensory awareness inside the body is, i believe, central to an animals identity.

BASIC SELF-IDENTITY

Chapter 4 discussed the inside touch of our bodies. Chapters 6 and 7 discussed the internal awareness of tastes and smells. I obviously have no proof, but i suggest being in touch with the taste and smell of their body, and the feel of their own bodies from the inside, is a very intimate sense of being. This connection with inside warmth, vitality, and a general sensory awareness inside the body is, i believe, central to an animals identity.

Smell, breath and taste stimulate and are regulated by the lower brain. These basic senses existed long before animals developed eyes and ears. Animals are far more in touch with and reliant on their lower brain. I feel sure this connection with the lower brain has a far greater significance than i can describe, experts in the field would know more.

Added to this internal self awareness, animal identity involves the territory and the sense of belonging to a social group, - the absolute bonding and devotion which some animals have with their partners or groups. All these factors have remained unchanged, even in modern times.

MODERN STRESS

The world is a terribly insecure place for animals. And apart from being eaten alive, hunger and cold; for the last 100 years it's been even more difficult.

Humans have become very loud and smelly, overpowering senses which are totally essential to many animals survival. Firework nights, road works, beat music, helicopters and recently, air blowers, are all terrifying. Night lights confuse the rhythm of life. The skies and oceans are no longer safe refuges. Homes and territories are destroyed with tarmac and concrete. Human rubbish dumps used to be so nourishing, but have now become plastic and poisoness. The list could last for pages.

Animals have experienced arguably more disorientation in the last hundred years than humans have. The sheer immensity of new problems they have now is unimgainable. How have any survived? How do they manage it?

Animals don't have abstract thought. Otherwise they would go crazy with the injustice, grief and worry of it all. In the face of such senseless tyranny, humans would become dysunfunctional loonies, terrorists or junkies.

SURVIVAL

So, animals have one big advantage over us: they are not lost in abstract thought about their wants and needs.

To have survived their billion year old battle against angst, hunger, cold and pain, - animals needed to be aware and present now, every day, sometimes all their waking hours, and to sense the world with all their senses.

And everything they want, like a child, has to be now. Life is immediate. There are no hopes or thoughts for tomorrow or regrets for yesterday. They would never have been able to survive if they were lost in abstract thoughts.

TOGGLING THE MODES

And they have two different sensory systems for being aware now of the outside world. Focussing and broadband. And due to the ever present dangers, animals have to and can swop between these two modes spontaneously.

Their lives depend on balancing out their selective focussing, by alternating between this, and using the senses in a broadband way.

I repeat: Just notice how any blackbird pulling at a worm, continually checks for predators. ([watch for the first 25 seconds](#)).

And I repeat: Even when dozing, [the hare](#) turns [his ears open](#) for sounds, and [sleeping birds have one eye open](#).

And in the same way as : how we sense our world, defines our relationship with it, and how we understand it and ourselves, - an animals sensory abilities and perception, defines their relationship with their world and their identity in it.

Broadband sensing evolved over billions of years because it is an efficient direct connection with the world outside. It was probably only able to evolve, because of the absence of abstract thinking.

With the broadband way of seeing and hearing, animals feel more involved and integrated, more a part of everything they sense. There isn't the same clear distinction and solid defining relationship of a subject sensing an object. The subject is still there but it does not have such clear borders. This is a direct result of broadband sensing being purely receptive to the outside world, it was built that way; unlike focussing which developed to do or to plan things, and thus involves a doer and a done to, a subject and object.

So i believe, in the few moments animals have when they don't need to fight for life, they are far more practiced than we are, with letting go and turning off their wants and desires, either for a few seconds with their active use of broadband sensing, or for a few hours when half-sleeping.

And once they've turned off, they are much more able to just be and feel their bodies warmth and reality. And so when dozing they have far more chance of success than most humans, with feeling content and finding a sense of oneness in and with the world.

And this relationship with the world, belongs to an animals experience and sense of self-identity.

THE BALANCE

The use of both focussed and broadband sensing is a balance, and they often need to use this balance, every minute of every day.

The success of this model of existance - no abstract thinking but awareness now, both focussed and broadband;- can be seen in animals all over the world.

Modern day humans feel and see their body and the world around them quite differently to other warm blooded animals. But, i believe this experience of our bodies and the world outside, was also our human reality. We have changed at least 150 million years of warm blooded habit .. relearnt it overnight - with our brilliant new creative scientific understanding of life ... all good! ... but where is the balance?

We'd have imagined by adding abstract thought to our basic sensory abilities, we would be far more successful than animals. For a short three million years it seemed to be working out well. But suddenly we seem near to destroying our environment and ourselves.

Simultaneously our modern trained and educated, focussed and often brilliant ability to handle abstract thinking, has completely usurped, blocked out and overpowered, our broadband abilities.

Our culture hasn't even got a name for broadband sensing. The lack of a name always indicates a lack of recogniton. Our culture has not recognised this, probably because animal trainers and researchers are only interested in studying how animals focus and learn, and to what extent they can develop memory and abstract thought.

Could redeveloping our natural but ignored talent for broadband sensory intelligence, bring us and our world back into balance?