Growing Into Knowing

In the old days in Hawaii children were observed at play, games designed to teach skills. If a child was observed to have a particular interest or aptitude in certain areas they were invited to train with an extended family member who could develop those skills. Much of the training involved watching and absorbing through mimicking, guidance and questions. The specifics may vary depending on the type of skill and the particular traditions of that family.

These days, in the Western world, it's very rare to have the opportunity to hang out with *Kahuna* or teachers day in and day out for months and years to observe, bearing in mind that the observing needs to be focused by a desire to learn a craft of some kind. A Western equivalent might be a trade school or university but even this would not reflect the same level of immersion. That may, or may not, come later in a work environment. In Hawaii it was the day-to-day life of the student. In Western education, another life is usually intermingled with study life.

In my computer industry days I worked for a company that regularly employed university graduates who knew the programming languages back to front but had no practical skills in how to analyse a client's needs, design a system that would fulfil that need, select the appropriate tools and build it in a commercially viable time frame. Typically a graduate of a three year computer science degree, even if they graduated with high grades, might take another three or so years to develop a reasonable ability to effectively apply the information they learned in university. Some did it more rapidly and eventually became team leaders while some remained limited to "grunt work," coding components or building databases designed by someone else.

Long ago, when I first started in the computer industry, I was operating huge mainframe computers. At first I was taught how to follow a job schedule, start programs running and process printouts. I began to develop an ability to type in the correct command at the right time, how to respond to messages from the computer and sort output but I had little understanding of the how and why of it. I could do the job.

As time went by I picked up more knowledge of how the computer really worked, how to deal with it when programs "abended" (abnormal end). As my knowledge base grew I was able to begin to question how things were done and suggest improvements in the processes. My curiosity didn't allow me to just "do the job". I wanted to be able to do it really well. This involved watching other operators, reading manuals, taking courses and talking to programmers and engineers about the how and why of the processes.

Abraham Kawaii, from whom I learned temple style *lomi lomi* or *Lomi Kapalele* as he called it back then, taught through movement and experience. He talked of watching and asking questions during his training. He also talked of being given tasks to perform. On one occasion he was told to look into a pond and he would see his destiny. It took him a while to realise he was meant to see his own reflection, that he was the source of his own destiny. The lessons could be quite obscure. He also described his teacher, who he only referred to as Papa, keeping the students up all night and just talking to them. Later he found that "I knew stuff that I didn't know that I knew." He described a twenty year apprenticeship.

After I learned the *lomi lomi* back in the 80's I went to Europe and was lucky enough to connect with a group of people that enabled me to do a lot of *sessions* in a relatively short space of time, really ingraining the skill in muscle memory. What I didn't do, was try to analyse the process at the time so logic wasn't able to get in the way. This was quite alien to my computer programmers mind at the time but it was a whirlwind and I just had to go with it.

Through this I learned to focus attention to learn specific things but also to observe without focus so I could become aware of things that I would otherwise not have picked up on. One of the things I noticed along the way is that the language I used to describe my experiences influenced my progress in developing the skills and knowledge. It influenced the level of focus or openness I was observing with. Later I learned about confirmation bias and attention blindness or selective attention, and how this could influence interpretation. I wrote a bit about language in my article "*Negatively Speaking*". The process of developing ideas into skills and "knowing" is described a bit in "*Embodiment*."

Essentially, language anchors belief. Belief conditions observation, behaviour, interpretation of experience and understanding. Beliefs are basically rules that we have accepted as true. Someone said to me recently that *Ku* uses judgement all the time and after some pondering, I realised that wasn't the way I learned it nor an effective way of thinking about it for me. Judgement is more a function of *lono*, decisions about what is good/bad, liked/disliked, effective/ineffective etc. Perhaps this person has a different understanding of what "judgement" means? Context influences interpretation.

Ku basically follows rules, complexes of rules, much like a computer follows programming code. When we are in a situation, ku goes through its rules and chooses one that may have been used most often for that kind of situation or one with more emotional energy attached, even if they are only partially effective or not at all, the basic motivation being to move toward joy and away from pain within the known rule base. This choice can be influenced by the rules of people around us at the time as well. How these rules came to be is another story but they can be used by employing discernment/judgement constructively by *lono* (conscious mind) and choosing when to train ku in new, more effective rules where desired.

It can sometimes be very difficult translating the language people use to ask questions and framing an answer in a way they will understand, especially when a lot of my learning has been non-verbal. This is especially true with people with more academic backgrounds. There is a tendency to want to understand the information at an intellectual level and this can block the experience of it. They tend to want to be able to replicate results with a level of measurable consistency that doesn't really exist in world of a shaman.

This article is written in the context of personal/spiritual growth, learning healing traditions and esoteric knowledge but it works the other way as well. Through adverse experience people can come to "know" that the world is a dangerous place and decide that there is nothing that they can do about it. They can come to "know" that everyone is out to get them. They can become helpless and suicidal in the same way people who put their attention on confidence and growth can come to "know" that the world is a place of opportunity. Over time, working with Huna has helped me to change some of the "helpless" thinking patterns into more productive ones.

We see numerous versions of "specialized knowing" in various fields of expertise. There's the old story of the engineer called out of retirement to look at an obsolete machine. After inspecting it for a while he taps it on a specific point and to starts to run again. He gave the company a bill for $10,000 and when asked to explain this he said "$50.00 for tapping the machine, $9,950.00 for knowing where to tap." We can see how different careers condition the way different people think. They can often be very competent and confident within that field but often struggle outside of this unless they can learn to translate that confidence into other areas of life. Huna is what has helped me to do that and to help others to do it.

Another story that demonstrates this process. A fire crew were attending a major fire and just before the building had a flashback, where the fire basically explodes when a source of oxygen becomes suddenly available, he had an uneasy feeling and called his team out, saving their lives. He had built up a library of experience over the years and although he wasn't aware of it consciously, his *Ku* had put all of this together, the sound of the fire changing, the smoke starting to be drawn back into the building etc., and done its best to bring it to his conscious attention. Fortunately experience told him to act on the instinct, instinct developed over many years.

Other students and *Alaka'i* of Huna have had different lives focused in different ways from me and so their "knowing" is different from mine. There are some core principles, knowledge that we have in common but we may interpret and use them in different ways. This reflects the seventh principle, *Pono*, effectiveness is the measure of truth. This is natural as human beings in a subjective reality and keeps the door open for growth. The things we study most and pay attention to most influence the way we tend to think about everything else. I notice this in highly technical fields especially and this can be limiting if we don't develop enough awareness to switch mind-sets in different contexts.

I've been working specifically with Huna Philosophy for more than thirty five years now but this doesn't mean I know everything there is to know about it. It is a never ending journey of self-discovery and development. I've read the book "Mastering Your Hidden Self"[1] many times over those thirty five years and I am going through it again and discussing it with a group of fellow Hunatics and I am gaining far more insight from it than ever before. This is simply the process of absorbing information over time and allowing it to grow into understanding and "knowing".

Coincidentally, the book talks about these issues and has some good techniques to begin to consciously train *Ku* to follow more effective rules and create better and better experiences in life. Sometimes it's knowing without understanding and that's OK. As long as the focus is on the results we want, and we keep that focus with calm persistence, we will continue to grow in our abilities. The main thing is developing the skill of using the knowing, applied to healing and growth in the shaman tradition.

Graeme Kapono Urlich (May 2024)

Aloha New Zealand - *School of Huna and Hawaiian Shamanism*

1. *Mastering Your Hidden Self by Dr Serge Kahili King.*
2. *Huna ~ Learning experiences*