David Grove on Boundaries

Introduction

This is an edited section derived from ‘A Emergent Knowledge Workbook’ by David Grove

Boundaries

Nothing can really happen within this work until the boundaries are crossed so the journey of Emergent Knowledge is initially all about how to negotiate the boundaries.

The first part of the journey is to find a boundary. This will usually be the one that surrounds our primary world because that is what we know. We then need to locate an observing position on the boundary and to ask questions from that position.

As the observer of the boundary, we do not know what is on the other side. The boundaries job is to prevent that information coming through to us. This process interrogates the boundaries until they confess their strengths and purpose.

As a consequence, we can align with the purpose and existence of the boundary allowing the possibility of influencing its mandate and thereby uniting the separated worlds.

The boundaries keep information separate and hold the logic for discrete worlds in place. By doing this they let mutually opposing logical ideas co-exist.

The boundaries control access to the information held within. They preserve and protect this information from being destroyed by other information that lies on the other side of the boundary.

So, what is the intelligence that sits within the boundary? This intelligence is under the control of the metaphorical landscape that resides within that which created it. The structure and function of this metaphor exercises the control, or is the vehicle by means of which the intelligence can control the boundary between these two worlds.

Boundary Phenomena

Boundaries protect the you and the world that are contained within them. Initially they will not be recognisable as a boundary, however as the work develops with a client the boundary will become more and more apparent. And by the time you have recognised it, you will notice that the client has been communicating this particular boundary throughout the whole session – and probably has been from the moment they walked in to see you!

There are a few common examples of boundaries that David proposed; he said that boundary metaphors can be something that is a separation for example:

- A line

- The horizon
- A wall
- A shield
- A stretching rubber membrane
- A glass enclosure

Clean questions are an efficient way to discover and interview the boundary metaphors.

Certain types of information can filter through the boundary from inside to out, i.e. from a secondary or tertiary world to the primary world. This is stimulated by the desire held within the secondary world to communicate. There are two triggers that play this out, exogenous and endogenous.

Exogenous Triggers

Are where the stimulus is within the external real-world environment. These are situation stimuli that trigger a response that allows our secondary world information to invade the primary world.

Endogenous Triggers

These come from our own thought processes that allow our secondary world to invade our primary world. Generated internally, the intrusive thoughts and feelings that are trapped in our secondary worlds want to get our attention.

It is these thoughts and feelings that are trapped within our secondary worlds that have as their prime objective to 'return back to the primary world'. But they are rejected, because they contain information that would disrupt the present primary world. There is a constant battle raging between the secondary world wanting to be re-united with the primary world and being rejected because the structure of the primary world cannot accommodate this information, without denying itself.

The end result of this happens in just a flash; it's suddenly there and causes us to respond in a variety of ways such as:

- To leave or avoid the environment
- To self medicate e.g. drugs, sleeping pills, alcohol
- To get depressed or experience fear and anxiety

Finding the Edges of the Boundary

Since problem domains and cosmologies are defined by boundaries we first look to locate the boundary. Once a client is at the edge of their cosmology, they may need a push to get them through the edge to the other side where they will find themselves in a different cosmology.

Finding the edge may require several adjacency moves, looking for the right clues. If the client presents a memory or references a space or object in one of their secondary worlds, we can begin to expand on their inner reality. The kind of questions we can use to do this are:

- "What kind of space is the space around you?"

- “What is around you?”
- “Whereabouts is the ‘white jug’?”

This kind of questioning will begin to take the awareness of the client outside of itself, discovering and developing the ‘hidden’ information held within that world. As an example, take the last question above, this question will generate more information with regards to the location of the ‘white jug’, and in this case it was on a table. The questioning continued (note that the client is also drawing each aspect of their response as well, then placing each aspect in space in relation to the other pieces):

- Client: It’s on a table
- Facilitator: What kind of table is that table?
- C: It is a thick heavy table, wooden.
- F: Ok, draw that table. Whereabouts is the thick, heavy wooden table?
- C: On the floor.
- F: What kind of floor is that floor?
- C: It’s a wooden floor.
- F: Ok, draw the floor.
- C: (during the drawing) There are just floorboards… and a hole, a black hole…
- F: Is there anything else about a black hole?
- C: …Yeah, that’s how I got in here!

The client then expanded outside the floor to darkness and then outside the darkness to the walls, we could go no further than that, this was the boundary of the world. We could now begin to question the aspects of the memory individually, taking note of the ‘hole’ which is a clue to a ‘portal’ out of the world.

Clues to Find the Edges

As a client moves between spaces they are downloading information that will work for them on several levels. They are linking parts of their life by viewing events in the past from different perspectives separated out in different spaces. Thus a network of perceptual positions is forming. As this process develops the client in time will drop a clue that the facilitator should pick up on and make the next move towards or through the edge to another cosmology and into a solution space.

David provided us with the following clues and detail:

Sweet Spots

Some spaces will give the client particular insight. These spaces are called sweet spots. The client will have such a view of the world that they have a different perspective on the nature of their problem and they may continue to talk for long periods of time.

What to do:

- Wait, and allow the client to ‘download’ the new information, giving them time to process and consolidate.

Weak Links / Ties – See also ‘Clean Answers’

Weak links are the off-hand comments or obscure gestures that might go unnoticed, for example, a word that’s repeated or a wave of the hand. The client might believe that they mean nothing but, if the facilitator picks up on these comments or gestures, they might find that they lead the client closer to the edge of the cosmology.

What to do:

- Over-Drive the gesture or word
- “What does that hand know?”
- “What does ‘it’s damn stupid’ know?”

The ‘I’ pronoun

We have discussed the two observer positions within each world. However, in the course of the session, the client may answer questions from the third person viewpoint. When moved to adjacent spaces they may change this view and become the person in the memory / picture. When they do this, they will use the ‘I’ pronoun. For example the client may suddenly begin to associate into the event or memory, when they do so they will begin to say ‘I’ instead of ‘the girl’. Take this opportunity to develop the secondary world looking for the edges of the boundary, windows and portals into another cosmology.

What to do:

- Develop the I and the world. Expand outwards.
- “What kind of I is that I?”
- “How old are you?” and “What could you be wearing?”
- “What is around that you?” – find out what is around the answer to this, then expand out again and again until the edge of the world is found.

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