

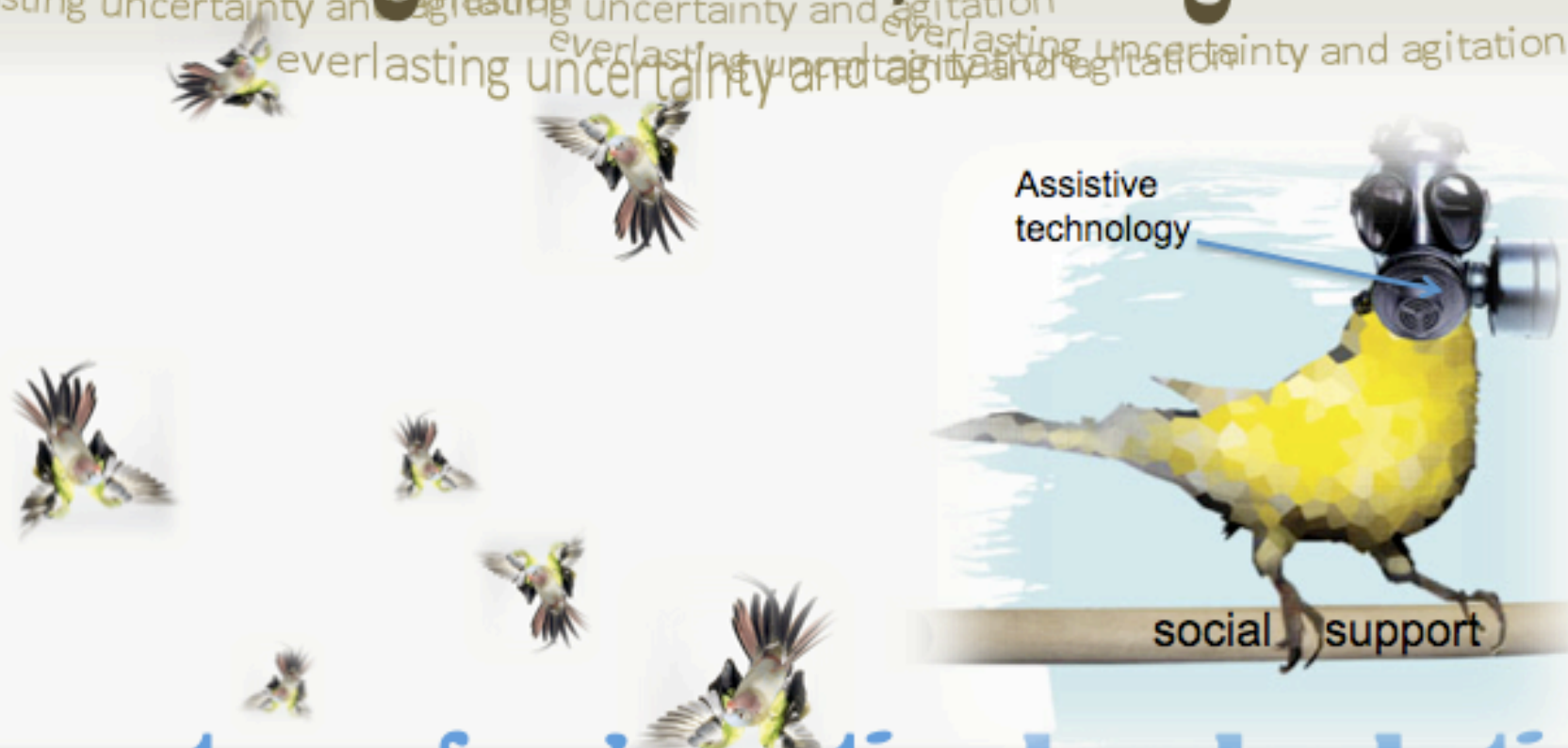
post talk insert

this is the talk I gave at Autscope on August 21st 2009, sadly without Matt Hawkins who couldn't make it.

I have added three slides after this one to reflect and respond to the discussion on the day. They are each headed as this one is “post talk insert”.

Mad world...

everlasting uncertainty and agitation



icy water of egotistical calculation

*Predicted by Marx & Engels in 1848,
"everlasting uncertainty" and rampant "egotistical calculation" create a toxic and disabling social environment*

Could have called the talk,
“Mistakes I have made”

basics

- interests
- alignment
- turbulence

**all living things are
sets of directed
energies**

directed interest

away – towards

attraction repulsion
[drawing]

interests

- areas of arousal that lead to action
 - passions
 - obsessions
 - missions
- focal areas for use of processing resources
- collections of related information, concepts, schema
- values
- points of view

current interests

set of current interests =
agenda

agenda = that which is to be
acted on

alignment

interests flowing in the same
direction as others' interests
– shared agendas

we need this for effective
action

alignment

- the better aligned anyone's interests are with the people around, the more likely their actions are to be effective, the less energy will be lost to turbulence
- the better aligned any creature's interests are with the other creatures around, the more likely their actions are to be effective, the less energy will be lost to turbulence

...particularly true of pack animals

We are pack animals

turbulence

nothing happens without
turbulence

[drawing]

aligned interests reduce turbulence

The Autistic Me



post talk insert

- going with the flow with music & dance
 - some of the most enjoyable, socially mutual and harmonious ways of being with other people and creating artful turbulence
 - singing rounds together is to me a radiant example of social alignment and harmonious mutual output control (see below)

go with the flow...or not

- turbulence is inevitable
- reduce turbulence as far as possible
 - use turbulence for good energy
 - withstand the flow and reduce harm from turbulence
 - be conspicuous without getting into trouble

knack for making people uncomfortable

- trying to get it right but still
 - ruffling their feathers
 - rubbing them up the wrong way
- some tips for
 - reducing this discomfort all round
 - what to do when high turbulence is inevitable
 - how to withstand it
 - how to put it to good use

Obstacles we encounter

- arrogance
- ignorance
- hypocrisy

Everybody has those flaws

- herd arrogance – We know best
- maverick arrogance – I know best
- universal partial ignorance is unavoidable (though constant truth-seeking eternally reduces it)
- hypocrisy through inconsistency
- hypocrisy through failure to apply rules to self one applies to others – “Judge Not! before you judge yourself...”

**fix the ignorance and fix
the arrogance &
hypocrisy?**

correcting ignorance

fix one's own first

- eternal pursuit of truth and clarity
- find out as much as possible about the other person's agenda
 - specially as it overlaps with one's own
- find out as much as possible about group rules (I'll come back to this)
- be aware your correction may not be welcome
 - “Don't truth me!” – Sirens of Titan

unwelcome corrections

- people do not always want to know the truth
- it often makes them uncomfortable
- they have other priorities
- we cause them turbulence; we make them feel bad because they didn't already know and/or they feel they are meant to do something
- they feel pressure; they experience us as heavy; they become flustered and defensive

we tend not to realise the impact of our factual statements

- facts not always welcome
 - a factual statement of a preference may be seen as an attempt to manipulate the hearer
 - drawing attention to a contradiction may be seen as showing hostility or contempt
- NTs much more tolerant of internal inconsistency, much influenced by cultural narrative – even from toddler play
- many co-active interests – only partial overlap

post talk insert

- “a factual statement of a preference may be seen as an attempt to manipulate the hearer” – how does this work?

I gave the example of saying I want to go to a particular sort of restaurant, expecting a ‘response among equals’ and being treated like I had commanded everybody else. It was pointed out the reverse can happen too – someone saying what they would prefer and her preference being comprehensively dismissed. This is the flip side of the same thing.

In both cases it is the hierarchy-creating potential of the situation that is stirring people. They tend to try to make me Chief; in the reverse they are relegating the suggester to low in the hierarchy. Why do they tend to elevate me? could be I’m tall? could be my accent? could be my self-confidence?

I don’t know but I think this is what’s going on....

language

- demanding
- heavy – use with care

We are likely to be more effective if we “lighten up” – ie if we make a less uncomfortable impression.

language

Wittgenstein 1 –
language as logical means of telling
the truth

Wittgenstein 2 –
language games

language game of alignment

- ‘reversible meaning’ so
potential for manipulating interest systems –
one’s own and others’

words are penetrating devices designed to get
into our heads and do things there... ie line up
other people’s interests with our own

overlapping agendas and negotiation

- identify common interests
 - signal that you have identified them
 - nurture those before addressing any change you wish to make – Stroking!
- remember the non-overlap
 - reduce expectations
 - reduce pressure

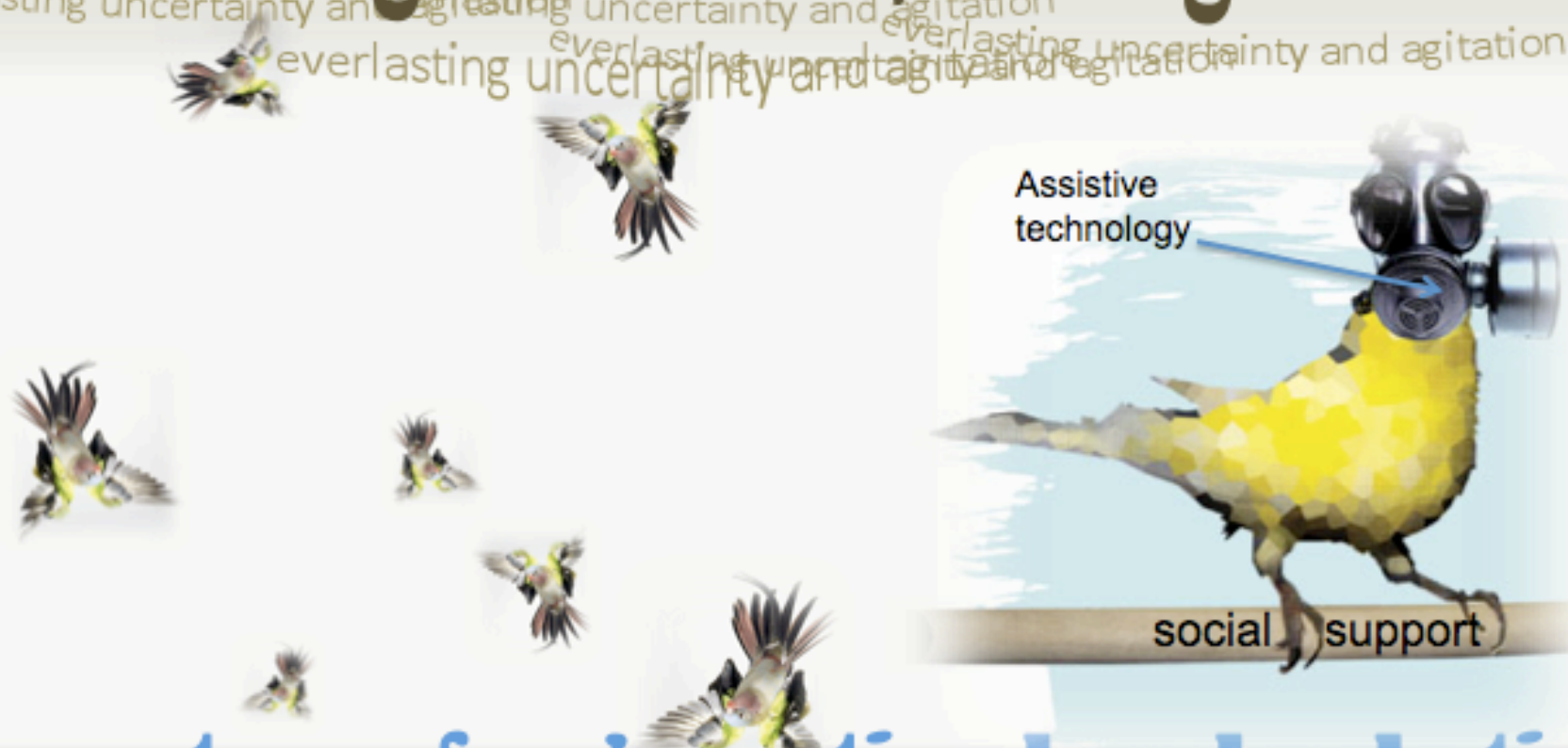
role in cultural narrative

NT agendas spontaneously include

- presentation of self
- prestige of self
- desire to further their careers
- desire to play correct role in hierarchy
- desire to be fashionable

***Beware of having a negative impact
on any of these – your priorities will
be swallowed up in those icy waters***

everlasting uncertainty and agitation



icy water of egotistical calculation

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**we need to make a positive
impact on the cultural
narrative: herds change
direction**

**we need to take control of our
output**

to withstand the herd

- try to be inconspicuous
 - carry on regardless (minimal attention sought
minimal turbulence caused – without even
noticing, the herd may eventually be aligned with
you)
- use reason (good luck! see above), know rules
- get group strength – a little help from your friends
- do performance art

post talk insert

- art implies taking control of one's output, & being *seen* to have taken control
- art wins respect, eg. if you can play an instrument as well as Philip does you can entrance an audience
- street performance, dance, juggling, etc
 - stand-up comedy
- as well as creating art one can perform another person's art, and learn communal skills eg
 - acting a part in a play with other people
 - live role playing games
 - playing an instrument or singing in a group
- OR just be magnificently, unflinchingly, yourself

if you're going for inconspicuousness...

Avoid:

- greasy hair
- smelly body
- dirty finger nails
- stained clothes
- 'shouting'
- staring at people
- talking over other people

these are the sorts of thing you get taught in social skills groups – they make you easier for other people

those social skills are just ways of hiding in the herd

- you may find your own smaller herd somewhere else (groups – more below)
- you may not want to be hidden!
 - you can't communicate without getting attention...
 - you can't change anything without creating turbulence

if instead you choose to stand out

- you may cause bad feelings, unwanted turbulence
- BUT you can also choose to do it with flare – make it performance art...

raising autism awareness



from Matthew Hawkins' Facebook page

- This interesting gentleman was raising awareness of Autism, although his method failed a little when, as he talked about Autism, all you can think is "don't look down don't look down don't look down"....

to sum up re using turbulence

- when possible avoid and minimise turbulence
- when unavoidable, make turbulence useful
 - make it interesting, provide good information, address ignorance without making people feel stupid or intimidated
 - be entertaining, be fun or funny or beautiful and graceful, or alarming and thought-provoking - do performance art

allies and friends = fluid groups

- more fluid
- no clear rules
- allies and friends do not have to help
 - we may need to learn cajolery and persuasion
- treat gently, or risk loss
- observe the basic rules of politeness – use phatic communion

taking control of output

- lightening up language
- using phatic communion...
- creating a performance

Negotiation & Diplomacy

Using Language with Care

lightening up - being tentative

- demand - request
- instruct - suggest
- be convinced - wonder if

these less insistent speech forms “cut some slack” - leave room for alternatives, thus room for manoeuvre

- a phatic expression is one whose only function is to perform a social task, as opposed to conveying information.[1] The term was coined by anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski in the early 1900s.

from Wikipedia

the point of phatic communion

- remembering to say Hello Please Thank You and Sorry, etc reduces turbulence
 - reduces unpleasant feelings
 - unpleasant feelings are obstacles to effective communication
 - because they absorb processing resources instead of the main message
- &
- because they generate negative and / or avoidant impulses

change our expectations:

Do NOT assume

- people are interested in the truth - they have lots of other concerns that may over-ride it
- people share many of your interests – even close partners only have overlapping agendas [drawing]
- people will be as committed as you are
- people will do what they say they will
- any individual (even a Chief) has much power
- it is okay to pressurise people if they do not do what they say they will

post talk insert

- I should emphasise that
 - [not assuming that P] \neq [assuming that not P]
 - ie on any given occasion it may be safe to make any or all of those assumptions on the last slide
 - your listener *may* be as committed, as interested in the truth and so on.... But it is generally safer not to rely on it.

Even if other people fail you, they still want to feel you value their good intentions

to be effective seek overlap of interest

- *start* on interests already comfortably aligned with the Other
- good day! – greetings are a human (and pack animal) universal
- remember
 - phatic communion is not pointless (but is smooth and soothing)
 - rather than expounding proposals and propositions, offer suggestions: maybe, possibly, perhaps this might be worth thinking about... that way you cut them some slack

just shut up...?

- talk later – find a better time and a better way
- we have to cause *some* turbulence and harness it
 - because all change is perturbation
- harness it to the cultural narrative
- negotiate
- go for it, and turn yourself into a ‘take it or leave it’ art form

negotiation, diplomacy

- “cutting people some slack”
 - I may be wrong...
 - is it possible that?
- allowing enough time, not pushing and rushing people (remember they have other priorities)

reflection, time, slowing down, prioritising

- give yourself a break
- reassure others and yourself
- give other people a break
- re-visit possibilities
- consider alternatives
- listen!

slowing down to access other interests

- one's own at different times
- other people's
- time to digest

different points of view

reality checking – expectation checking

what are My priorities?

- what are my leading interests and concerns?
 - ie what really matters to me?
- does my sense of urgency reflect what really matters most?
 - is there any harm in slowing down?
- conversely is there any harm in rushing?
 - does that email really have to go?
 - maybe 24 hours later it will look different, not such a good idea?

What are Our priorities?

- you can find groups which exist because of interests you share
- nowadays belonging to such a group is much easier thanks to the internet
- real life groups have many more implications and consequences re rights and obligations – these are what concern us here

what is a group?

- A group can be defined as two or more humans that interact with one another, **accept expectations and obligations as members of the group, and share a common identity....** Characteristics shared by members of a group may include interests, values, ethnic or social background, and kinship ties.

from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_group

group membership

- speaking as representative of a recognised group confers special status
 - you are likely to be more influential
- being a member of a group
 - gives you access to points of view close but not identical to your own, often useful
 - should mean access to support for common goals
 - often means access to fierce criticism – since *rights and obligations go with membership*

groups & rights & obligations

- clear rules in formal groups
- shared agenda, common purpose
- licensed pressure: it is officially OK to be 'heavy'
 - though not always a good idea
- blurry rules in informal groups do not license heavy pressure

calling on obligations

- public – in group – private
- choose **private** to minimise turbulence
 - remember all those co-active concerns...
 - potential disgrace, loss of face etc
 - loose rules – cut some slack
- in-group rules: obligations can be called upon
 - tight rules
 - flaws to be discussed in-group, not outside it
[private to group]

create your own group

- rules to suit you
- common purposes you care most about – making those explicit
- conform to NT expectations
- see <http://www.autisticorganisation.co.uk/>

make videos! total
output control...

Something About Us

[http://video.google.com/videoplay?
docid=1373348481069145464](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1373348481069145464)

points to remember

- other people have other interests & agendas
- having others' interests aligned with one's own is essential for effective action
 - so seek overlap of agendas as your base
- other people's views are worth hearing
- there may be gentle options for persuasion

- friends and allies deserve to be treated gently
- the less fixed or formal the group the lighter the rights and obligations, and conversely
- a feeling of urgency should be questioned
 - almost always better to take your time
- one can take control of one's output in some contexts better than others: performance art and videos can be hugely effective

science & philosophy

- stubbornly sticking to the pursuit of truth and justice can be of great benefit to the cultural narrative
- “they need us!”