

INDIVIDUALIST

PROCEDURES

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INFLUENCE

OWN

PEOPLE

PAST

PRESENT

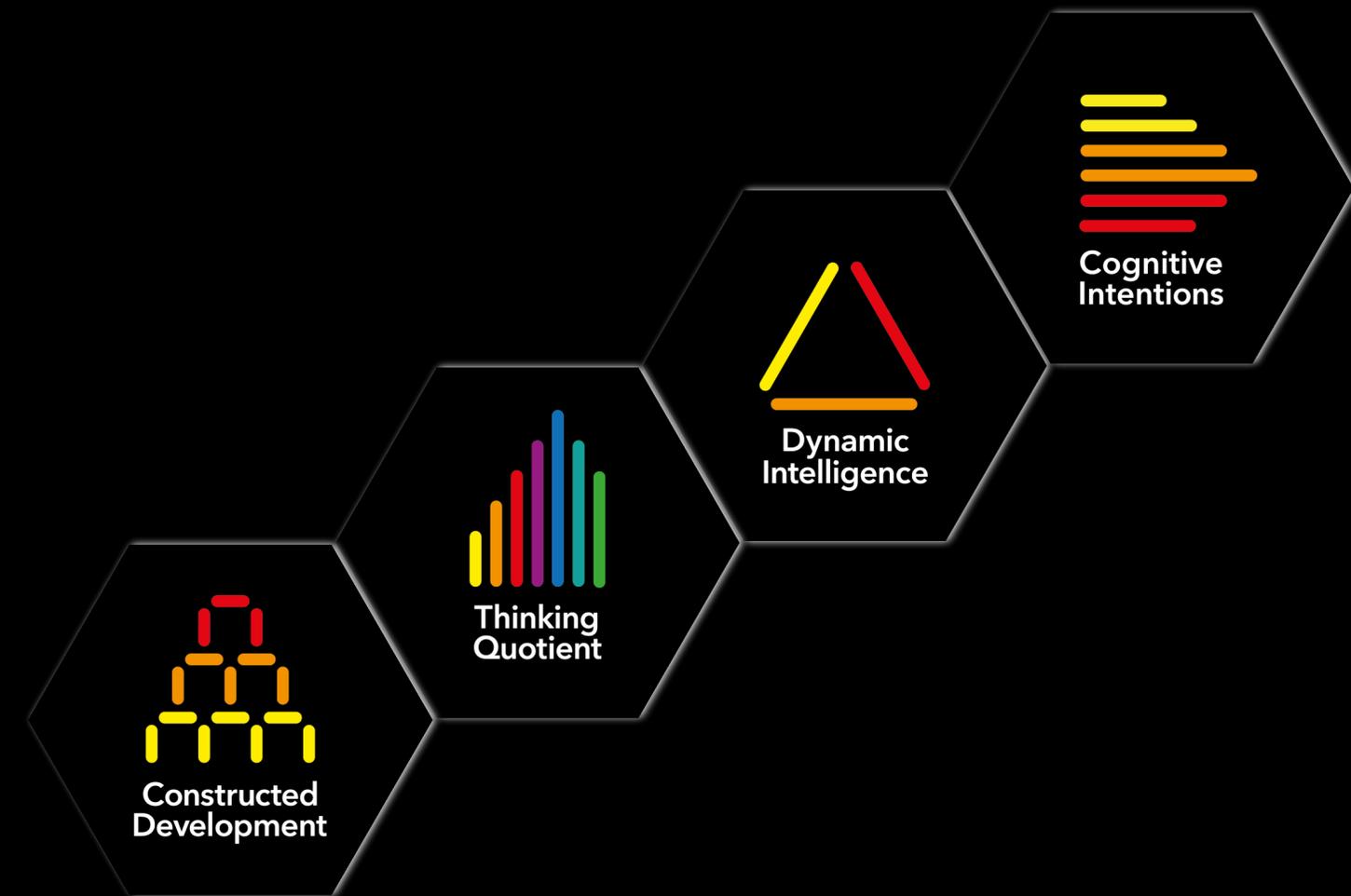
PLACES

RE-ACTIVE

RELATIONSHIP

COGNITIVE INTENTIONS

A brief introduction to your thinking shortcuts



Dr Darren Stevens



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WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

Meta-programmes were originally found in the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), which is a model of being in the world that was developed from cognitive psychology and linguistics. NLP was developed in the early 1970s by a computer scientist and a linguist. Bandler and Grinder (1975) respectively, defined NLP as:

'The study of what works in thinking, language and behaving'.

NLP has come under a lot of scrutiny in the past two decades and has been dismissed as pseudo-science by many, due to the lack of peer-reviewed evidence of the efficacy of the techniques used, and a lack of a generally-accepted definition.

In a systematic review, it was found that:

'the very fact that there is no agreed definition of NLP indicates how little evidence we have of its benefits. The study conclusion reflects the limited quantity and quality of NLP research'.

As a result of her review, Sturt could only use 10 out of 1459 NLP citations.

The low quality of NLP publication was also an observation of Witkowski in his 2010 review of NLP. A Delphi Poll is favoured when the views of experts are required, when the subject matter is complex, and a hierarchical structure of opinion is necessary. NLP was included in a Delphi Poll in 2006, assessing the opinions of psychologists on what they considered to be discredited psychological methods, with NLP scoring 3.87 where 4=probably discredited.

It was thus important to separate Meta-Programs from NLP sufficient to warrant individual attention.



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Although many people claim to have developed meta-programmes first, it cannot be firmly established in the literature, and as such it is believed that meta-programmes came about as Cameron-Bandler in the early 1980's discovered that sometimes, the NLP techniques she was demonstrating did not work, and the reasons why they did not work (based on how the audience received and sorted the data) formed the original list of meta-programmes.

Hall and Bodenhamer identified around 60 meta-programmes within five broad categories in their book, *Figuring Out People*. Arne Maus in his book *'Forget About Motivation'*, renamed meta-programmes to 'thinking preferences' and defined them thus:

1. Each preference must, at least potentially, be found in all people.
2. Each must have a pattern that consistently repeats itself.
3. Each must cover all possibilities.
4. Each must be relevant to the chosen context.

According to the literature, there are some common traits amongst the definition of what meta-programmes are and what they do:

- Almost all researchers refer to a Thinking Preference as a meta-programme, however the difference is clear when you consider Internal and External as Thinking Preferences, and their combination as a Meta-Programme called "Reference".
- There are 50 individual Thinking Preferences
- There are 20 Meta-Programme groups
- Each researcher refers to them as binary choices. For example, Towards is always opposed to Away From.



MOVING AWAY FROM THE NLP ARENA

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When taught as part of the NLP system, meta-programmes determine the form or structure of our thinking, the *'how we think'* not the what, and they exist at a level that is above, or 'meta' to our thinking. Some practitioners have referred to meta-programmes as 'thinking styles', however this does not correctly define them. The intention was clear in that each meta-programme was considered a thinking style, however, individually they are not styles *per se*. Instead, they are habituated patterns of sorting and prioritising sensory data in relation to response to stimuli, and as such, offer no 'style' until they are combined in a myriad of ways.

The ways in which the 50 Meta-Programmes combine produce very different thinking and behaving outcomes for each person, and as such, a specific combination could be considered a 'Thinking Style', as governed by the person's unconscious intention in the moment. Meta-programmes have been linked to various elements of psychology over time and are not without psychological foundation.

People use specific language and behaviours when communicating, and when one knows what to look for, meta-programmes can be identified. If the meta-programmes of two individuals are not matched whilst in conversation, there will be a certain amount of misunderstanding or disagreement.

When communication is impaired, it also impairs social interactions, especially within a social context such as academia. One idea is where a person is predominately 'Visual', they will use 'Visual' language, such as: 'I see what you are saying', but a person who is predominately 'Auditory' would use language such as: 'That rings a bell'. The mismatch in this one meta-programme can cause a mismatch in language, which can be a barrier to communication.

However, Stevens suggests it is not simply a mismatch in communication, but a mismatch in our meaning-making.

From this new perspective, it is no longer an NLP issue, but a developmental issue as we look at the meaning behind the use of each meta-programme.

We now have a map from meta-programmes to levels of adult development by researchers such as Robert Kegan and Otto Laske.



ALIGNMENT TO EXISTING THEORY



In psychology and cognitive science, a schema describes a pattern of thought or behaviour that organises categories of information and the relationships among them. Schema could also be considered a guide to our actions.

Although not expressed in the literature as such before now, other noteworthy equivalents exist between the notion of 'schemata' and the idea behind Meta-Programmes. They suggest that we hold schemata generally, from using a PC to tying our shoe laces, and interacting with our children.

Jean Piaget argued that to understand cognitive development, we must understand schemata as they can change over time as we experience new events.

These new situations alter our mental representations of and beliefs about our representation of the world.

If we consider the alignment of meta-programmes from a neuroscience perspective, investigations of cognitive processes have linked approach motivation ['Towards'] and avoidance motivation ['Away From'] with left and right brain activation using limited behavioural measures.

ALIGNMENT TO ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Another perspective on meta-programmes was noted by Scott Pochron in 2014 who suggested that meta-programmes might align to Robert Kegan's stages by way of habituated physiological states. Once habituated, these states become installed as meta-programmes, albeit at an unconscious level.

Utilising specific meta-programmes outlined in his Masters research, Pochron mapped them individually to Kegan's stages, hypothesising that meta-programmes as perceptual filters shift as individuals develop to higher stages.

However, although Pochron named a number of those MP's as 'developmental', he did not address the Intention and Awareness of the meta-state (implied at Kegan's higher stages) from a position of Choice by the individual, and thus omitted the full potential of combining meta-programmes to form unique Thinking Styles that map to levels of adult development.

Adult developmental research tells us that an individual's level of self-awareness is far lower than their own perceptions of it, and the need for external feedback is paramount if we are to grow.

Where this corresponds with stages of adult development is in the person's starting point for self-reflection.

A person at Kegan's Stage 4 (self-authored thinking) will have a more profound understanding of their relationship with their own thinking than someone at Stage 2.

However, these positions are not innate, and must be shown to the person through external guidance by a more complex other.

Stevens showed that a measure of self-awareness from a Meta-Programme perspective would be advantageous as a path to growth through the vertical development levels.



AN ALTERNATE PERSPECTIVE

From the literature on Meta-Programmes it is apparent that they have a multitude of applications and that there have been numerous studies by academics such as Brown and Daniels, that utilised them as individual and collective methods for determining how they are used in context.

However, Stevens demonstrated a potential to utilise them for more than what was covered in the literature, and an understanding of how they interact with each other, as well as a person's awareness of this interaction.

Up to this point, none of these were actually measured in any study.

From a position of self-awareness, Stevens showed that exposure to our unconscious meta-programme use had a positive influence on our self-awareness.

An alternate perspective on Cognitive Intentions is their potential for conforming to the definition of a perceptual set. A perceptual set refers to a predisposition to perceive things in a certain way. We often tend to notice only certain aspects of an object or situation whilst ignoring other details. This noticing directly aligns to the meta-programmes of 'Sameness' and 'Difference', whereby an individual initially filters for Difference in general.

What was not defined was whether an individual is capable of performing this 'noticing' with a conscious Intention, which further supports the need for a redefinition with a deeper understanding of what a meta-programme pair achieves from an awareness perspective.



A DEEPER DIVE

Perceptual experience is about our beliefs about our environment, in that it helps to justify them, and represent our world around us in what we see and hear. There are three questions that have motivated the study of perceptual experience that help us to deconstruct this:



1. The **Epistemology**-question asks how our perceptual experience justifies our beliefs and yields knowledge of our environment given that perceptual experience can be misleading?
2. The **Mind**-question asks whether perceptual experience brings about conscious mental states in which our environment appears a certain way to us: *'the map is not the territory'*.
3. Finally, the **Information** question asks how does a sensory system convert a myriad of informational input into mental representations that we then attribute to the world?

With these three questions in mind, Stevens demonstrated that the use of a cognitive heuristic based on our past experience of our environment is the key to our self-awareness in context.

What remained was to measure this self-awareness for future growth. In order to understand this new output, we need a capable profile tool.

Stevens chose the Identity Compass, as this is capable of measuring more than the standard definition Meta-Programmes. He showed that it was also measuring a person's Intention and Awareness, which leads to Choice and Response.

Consequently, Stevens argued that the label of "Meta-Programme" is a misnomer, and a more functional label for the fifty Meta-Programmes uncovered by the Identity Compass is: **Cognitive Intention!**



AQ Level

10,0

9,8

9,6

9,4

9,2

9,0

8,8

8,6

8,4

8,2

8,0

7,8

7,6

7,4

7,2

7,0



FINALLY, A MEASURE

Brining all the facets of his thinking together regarding what he now calls Cognitive Intentions, Stevens was able to determine that each profile output of the Identity Compass system was a client's unique Thinking Style. And based on their scores for each Cognitive Intention pair, he could determine a level of Awareness of the client's Intention, which leads to Choice in their Responses.

He converted these to numbers on a scale and the Awareness Quotient was born.

Thus, the score attained by each IC client (e.g. 6.6), is a scaled measure of their self-awareness, and their awareness of their use of the fifty Cognitive Intentions.

This awareness is then brought into the client's consciousness typically in the feedback process.

Finally, as Stevens' data suggests, there is scope for change in a client's habituated thinking patterns, (or Thinking Style) with the change of Cognitive Intention Awareness as the guide for this deconstruction.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

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Using Laske's and Kegan's work on levels of adult developmental thinking, Stevens separated the 50 Cognitive Intentions into those with social-emotional or cognitive foundations.

For example: if a person is predominantly 'Procedural', this is an indication of how they make sense of their actions, and as sense-making is a cognitive attribute according to Laske's Cognitive Development Framework (CDF). It was a natural assumption to align Procedure with Cognitive complexity.

According to the literature, the 'opposite' direction of Intention is 'Options' and would be considered an emotional response to a task, which is about meaning-making.

The same principle can be applied to the other 48 Cognitive Intentions in order to give a key to how we unlock our thinking in three potential ways: meaning-making; sense-making, and an over-all epistemic stance.

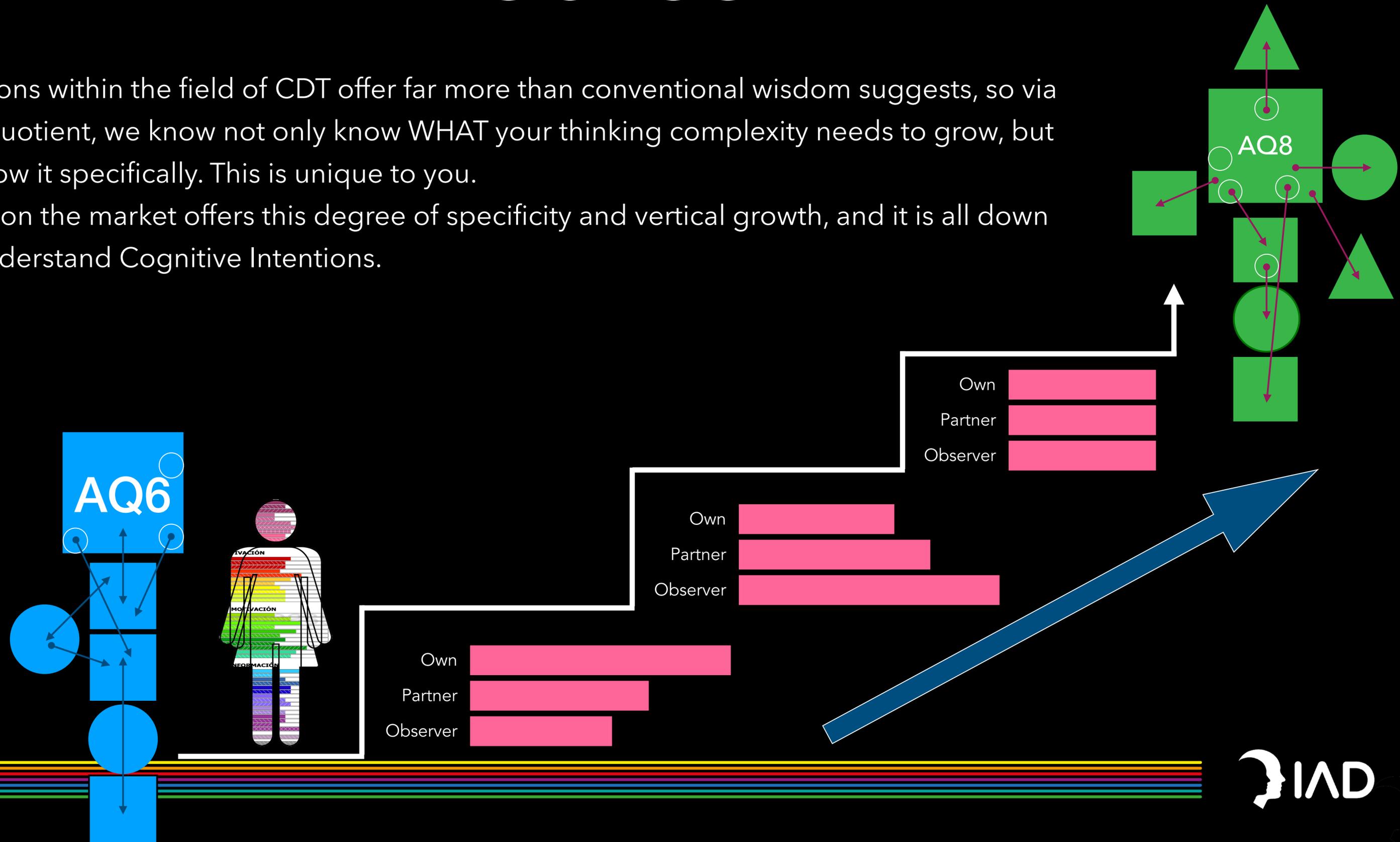
The AQ scale is thus a measure of our epistemic stance (or, awareness of our self-awareness).

A basic notion of the Awareness Quotient, based on developmental levels is that there are certain thinking capacities (in context) that are available to people at the higher levels of complex thinking that are not available to the lower level thinkers. This was evidenced in the factor analysis in Stevens' studies, and thus the Awareness Quotient foundations are supported.

THE OUTCOME

Cognitive Intentions within the field of CDT offer far more than conventional wisdom suggests, so via the Awareness Quotient, we know not only know **WHAT** your thinking complexity needs to grow, but also **HOW** we grow it specifically. This is unique to you.

No other system on the market offers this degree of specificity and vertical growth, and it is all down to the way we understand Cognitive Intentions.



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Contact the IAD today to discuss your
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