

## **Imagination for no reason: the nature of the beautiful mind**

In 2010 the brilliant documentary-maker and story-teller Werner Herzog presented “Cave of Forgotten Dreams” showing for the first, and probably last time the Chauvet caves of Southern France and their content, the most ancient cave paintings ever found which are around 32,000 years old. There is an essence that this documentary and the paintings evokes which is deeply beautiful, even for the viewer who is less interested in the visual. The images of the cave are a very similar mix to that between the simplicity and raw expression of a child and the honed technique of an experienced craftsman. The combination is of an untainted beauty, represented somewhat in our era by artists such as Paul Klee.

Various paleontologists, archeologists and scientists looking at the art of course had many explanations as to how or why the painting was done, in an attempt to somehow unravel the formation of an image. This analytic quality is very much the nature of modern psychological approaches, attempting to understand the images in dreams and suggesting that dreams have intrinsic *meaning* and that therefore images and following the imagination is a vital connection for “self”-understanding. Jungian psycho-analytics/therapeutics is based on much of this kind of ideology, i.e. the understanding of symbols and the meaning of dreams. This of course was not Jung’s own original idea, throughout thousands of years efforts have been made to find a meaning and a reason. However at 30,000BC “meaning” really wasn't part of the expression. In a way the modern approach of analysis began just after the pre-historic era, perhaps at around 10,000BC where one finds the first signs of deeply religious ideas and the process of finding-meaning. Jung and others are really continuing this tradition, but that which is as old as the cave paintings pre-dates this kind of mental processing, these pictures tell of a different story where expression had no intent or end, there was no need for imagination to be anything other than images.

Towards the end of Herzog’s documentary, an archeologist who has been touched by the paintings in a way he cannot really understand tells a story of a meeting between a fellow archeologist and a north Australian aboriginal cave painter in the modern day. In his rendition of this meaning we are told that the cave painter goes to the place where cave art has been created by his predecessors for many thousands of years and notices that the walls are covered with paintings that have not been well-maintained. It was usual that paintings were “touched-up”. Saddened by the lack of connection to this place, he begins to re-form the art. The archeologist onlooker asks him “*why do you paint?*”, the painter answers “*I am not painting, this is the hand of the Spirit*”, and he continues his work.

This most profound statement, along with other explanations of the nature of the way of sensing and feeling of indigenous and pre-historic people alike and their connection which are also explored in this film makes it of key interest. This is not to say that modern indigenous peoples have not also been warped into dis-ease states of meaning-finding but this occurs far less than with modern peoples. When westerners as exemplified in the life of Jung come across artwork and images, the immediate question

is “why” or “how”, there is never a situation that allows the image to just be that and for there to be no reason for it.

At around 30,000BC the nature of the human mind was less complex than it is today. This complexity has simply come about through the nature of the human moving from a position of living from the 1<sup>st</sup>- Person view and then shifting to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective of being able to “see-oneself”, so to speak. This is where the mind gets caught up in “self-image” and an identification with “myself” being separate from “yourself”. Although this was likely to be happening 30,000BC it is unlikely that self-perception was as it is today. In fact those uncontacted tribes within the Amazon who today essentially live very similar lives to those of the cave-painters of 30,000BC, are the ones who are truly still living from the 1<sup>st</sup> Person perspective and are unlikely to be in the state of suffering/dis-ease of the modern human (which they might describe as “the human condition”) who is most commonly eccentric, in the sense they are off-centre, seeing themselves almost like looking at a mirror image constantly.

When a child or an infant, an indigenous or a pre-historic person does something, it isn't coming from the perspective of the “self” with idea, intention and direction associated with whatever they are doing. Art from these hands springs directly from the imagination, from the images in the mind onto the page or wall. Direct from “spirit” means simply “directly” there is no-one doing it. This means that actually it is utterly meaningless, it has no relevance other than what it *is* and as such it has a profundity of beauty that cannot actually be created with intention. Jung and others believed that for adults dreams held an important connection to “sub-conscious” processes that were occurring. The symbolic nature of the art was important, symbols being keys to meaning, but it was symbols that came after the image. Just as words are the dis-ease of music and sound, so symbols are the dis-ease of pure image. Just as we can go to an art gallery and read into art what we think it should mean, or just try to find meaning in it, and there are even artists who create *meaning* in their art, so we can view things from an analytic perspective and as such categorize or symbolize things that cannot truly have meaning.

The true difficulty is our belief that the images and dreams are there to express meaning, that there is a cause and an effect and moreover that there is a way of unraveling things to a basic mythology, something that Joseph Campbell spent his life doing, seeking for the basic mythology that unites all peoples, under the influence of Jung. However the nature of images is not symbolic, symbols are placed onto the imagination, the imagination is simply occurring. The mind expresses like a fountain of images from the seeming past and the present, weaving into each other in the moment. The nature of the mind left as it is is utterly beautiful, the images that arrive at the formations and interweaving colours are totally as they are. The key is the nature of ownership. The ultimate difficulty is not in the image itself, however fearsome or worrying to the onlooker, but in the nature of the belief that the image is owned or is occurring in, or to, a separate individual. Even if they are horrific images in and of themselves do not hold meaning, or they only hold meaning to the one with a theory applying meaning, in themselves they are totally as they are - meaningless, or reasonless.

The warping of the nature of images from just being images to the nature of images being owned is literally the difference between health and dis-ease. The paintings on the French caves tell of a time when even images were frightening, the images of lions and other predators that could well have being fearsome for humans, but are simply expressed as they are seen. They express an awesome energy, naturally fearsome to the human, but this is neither a personal fear for “me”, nor a terror that has happened to “me”. It is simply the image coming out of the mind and being expressed on a wall. The mind is not “mine” and so the image is not “mine”, it is just Mind or Imagination, there is a universality about it, it isn't from anywhere that can be identified as “self”.

This might change our view not only of art, but of all of life. Trying to find reason or meaning in all things (or labeling everything with words), to allow things to be as they are is something that seems very difficult. The nature of the “self”, or the one who feels separate, is in a world of utter chaos where all things need to be identified and symbolized and allocated in order to be able to “understand their meaning” and make them “safe”, or identified as an enemy and fought or defended against. The whole of life becomes a panic, a race to the finish, timed and organized even, a situation where the “I” can always run out of time.

Beauty is something that is revealed when the mental process of judgment drops away, when all interest in finding meaning is let go. This letting go is not to be “done” by anyone but unfolds in its own way. Images and expressions of the mind will never stop, it is the nature of the human that the mind and its images occur together. But these images hold no meaning, no symbol showing the way, or direction to the next step. Just as in the cave there were times where a person will draw on the wall and then 5000 years would pass before another person would draw a response to the image, so time no longer holds meaning either...time in fact doesn't exist. It is as if the pictures were created yesterday, and this too was the case for the people who knew the caves for generations. Time was not on there minds. In the modern era we are told by much of the new-age fraternity that it is via the intent and imagination and the directed dream that can be created to form another reality for human kind, the imagination it seems holds the key “mind over matter” so to speak...but this again assumes the place of the “self” who is now assumed to have the breadth of foresight to be able to create an Eden instead of the world we see today. Unfortunately what is missing is the realization that “self” is the fundamental illusion, that in fact the whole of the universe including the modern human with there imaginative ideas of grandeur and “ability” to direct or focus the mind in order to intentionally “do” something, is all part of a much larger expression. The world still goes around without the “I” being there. Like waves on an ocean who have forgotten they are part of the ocean and believe they are separate from it, the human is caught in unending spirals of self-belief be it with the “imagination” as the prize possession or the scientific proof...both are red-herrings. The point is that its all uncontrollable, anything “I” think “I” control is not controlled by anyone!

Instead of finding meaning in images and dreams the real question is who owns them. The answer does not come from the feelings and sensations of the past, but who is experiencing them. It isn't in how to get enlightened but who it is that could possibly be

enlightened? These questions are being posed back-to-front. They are finding the original premise of the argument before getting involved. In this way we avoid becoming entangled in history that is fathomless, in a past that cannot be unraveled because it is perfect in every way just as it is, and of course ultimately in time itself, which doesn't truly have a past or a future as there is only the singularity of the present moment 1<sup>st</sup> person perspective, which Douglas Harding calls "headlessness" please see <http://www.headless.org>.

At the end of the film Herzog finishes with the brilliant idea of the doppelgänger (German: "double walker"). This word has profound ancient connections and is a situation of meeting one's mirror image, which in most ancient cultures was actually considered a "bad-omen" or intrinsically something that is followed by death. The whole nature of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective is the nature of the doppelgänger, the double who is an illusion, the "self" that is completely unreal but seems to possess a story of itself which is always a tragedy of separation, much like the situation of being pushed out of paradise. We all know there is an infant sense within ourselves of total oneness with all things, yet the "adult" burden of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person cannot find the "way" to get back to it, we feel images and symbols might somehow take us back. But the simple truth is nothing has ever been lost, it is already where we sit, where we look from. When it is truly realised that the doppelgänger is not "me", there is freedom from the known. When image can be expressed as it is, when art is for art's sake, then all analysis can offer is further confusing and complicated entanglement with a construction of "me" that really doesn't exist. When the base structure of the house of cards evaporates, the tower falls. It isn't "meaning" that is beyond words, it is that beyond words there is no requirement of meaning.

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