

Habit of a lifetime: Addictions and how they imprison with subtlety.

Constantly we are told that humans are “naturally creatures of habit”, seemingly the process of learning anything is about repetitive movements that forms a constant pattern of behaviour and these patterns essentially become more and more rigid over time. Habits and addictions are really the same thing, the process of constantly doing something, no matter what it is, forms an “automatic” reaction rather than a situation of in-the-moment responsiveness. This however is a warped process of the human-condition rather than being “natural”.

All habits-routines are in fact addictions, whether getting up with the alarm, brushing teeth, going for a run at a specific time, relationships to people even! Everything forms addictive patterns of behaviour that are essentially huge traps, as when one or other of these patterns becomes disrupted it can be a huge shock to the system. This occurs when for example a driver honks the car horn when we least expect it, or something “suddenly” happens, the suddenness is in fact because we are unaware of the external environment as the “self” draws the energy inwards in it’s contraction. The thought process of “self” needs a lot of attention, it wants as much time spent on it as possible. So during situations where there is a kind of “known parameter” or condition, the sensory functions reduce and the person can go for a run without needing to sense any of the environment. Those who frequent the gym will notice that the TV or music will constantly be drawing their attention so that the exercise isn’t felt and the body’s discomfort isn’t interacted with. This of course is how most injuries occur.

Habit-addiction is very much about allotting time for “what you’re going to do after you have done what you’re doing”. The process is always thinking about the next thing, or even past things, but always in the time-line story of “me”. Habits that are obviously very aggressive to the physical system like smoking, drinking and drugs are usually seen as the “real problems” but actually it’s all the same. Workaholics, food-aholics, internet-and-facebook-aholism, talking-aholism, thinking-aholism, all of these are processes of habit and a disassociation from the senses. People assume that there are “good” habits and “bad” habits but all habits are essentially an imprisonment. They gradually trap a person into a belief that they “need” to do x,y or z in order to survive, to be safe or grounded. Interestingly the habit is very often an attempt to counter the deep level anxiety and so while smoking is known for damaging the lungs it also deepens the breath and in a way can be akin to a mediation or a form of concentration on the breath that is calmative *in the short term*. Where as alcohol is known for damaging the liver, in fact *initially* the alcohol deeply relaxes the liver and the opens the blood vessels unblocking tension and allowing the “spirits to rise” also it unleashes the pent up emotions which English pubs get a taste of every Friday night. Chewing nails, cutting one’s self, self-harm type activities and pain based expressions are all degrees of releasing tension and emotion (Please listen to the brilliant Johnny Cash: “Hurt” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o22eIJDtKho>). The point is that it isn’t the drugs themselves that are the issue, in a way they are serving a short-term reprieve or release from the nature of “self”. They initially ease the tension, although cumulatively as the body blocks up with toxicity, one needs more and more to get the same relief and so this

is a death-spiral. Instead of passing judgment of this process, it may be better to realize the causal anxiety that creates this process of habit and the desperation that drives one to find a “way-out” in a superficial sense, but one that in fact cleverly allows for some immediate reprieve. Why judge that? (Please see the work of Scott Kiloby: <http://kiloby.com/>). Depression also is a by-product of habitual-addictive-obsessive thoughts based in a situation of held in energy, which is the same habitual angst that for other people will express in exteriorized habitual patterns or even manic behavior....all of it has a common root. Relief from this only comes when, even partially or marginally the sense of “separate-self” or “me” lets go a little as it is realized to be illusory.

Unfortunately it doesn't matter what kind of habit you learn or what new “programme” you instill in the mental process, until habit-forming or addictive behavior really comes to an end because there is no longer any requirement for this displacement, habits will always form traps. When the sense of separate “me” is no longer the foundation, as there is no-one called “me” then the whole bases of being anxious and so forming habits completely collapses like a house of cards. The nature of the wild animal never forms habits, there is a constant responsiveness to the environment in the moment. There is no addiction when nature is left undisturbed by human intervention. Fundamentally habits form in humans because they are trying to prevent the angst of the feeling of separation from coming to the surface. All activities that are habitual are to some degree preventative of the original sense of being “broken-off” from fully realizing itself. When we see very severe forms of habits forming, such as obsessive-compulsive behaviour, this seems very extreme, but yet there are some habit-forming activities that are encouraged. For example musicians and artists are encouraged to keep practising the same things over and over again, IT people are persuaded to write code all day long and RSI injuries are a common eventuality in both these situations. Those who involve themselves with sports are told that taking the body to the limit is the right approach.

The problem is that when we are “trying” to get somewhere and there is a goal in sight the habit is seen as a way of getting there. All these habits have the same root of seeking for something, of trying to find that which seems to be lost and in the seeking we form our-“selves” more and more strongly, we become the “seeker” who is not simply sensing the breath but who is “meditating”, the person who is not sensing movement but is “*doing tai chi*” or the person who has no sense of standing, but who is “*doing chi gong*”.

The process of habit is very much like a military operation, it is the regimentation of something so you don't have to sense it, you are trained to do something and you “just do it”. This becomes hard-wired into the body and the whole nature of existence is blocked by the process. The “self” is harsh, it is a harsh judge, a colonial interrogator and it requires numbness of the sense in order for total attention to itself. This is how people can do “terrible” things to each other, when something becomes habitual and idea becomes stronger than the sense of what's actually going on, then the habit overtakes and numbness rules, which is what occurs everyday with people going to work and also, as people march to war. It's all a fight, a habit.

Derren Brown the renowned hypnotist constantly points to situations where hypnosis can be induced when a person least suspects it, in fact when the hypnosis matches the habit or rhythm of the way of thinking of a person, and only then changes it to create behaviour that would usually be unheard of for that specific person. The implication however is that the person is already quite “asleep” within his/her world to begin with and as such these kinds of people are more easy to influence because their connection to the environment and what is actually going on right in this moment is not so acute. It may be of course that the hypnotist is the key inducing factor that actually draws one into a trance, but it is usually people who have an imaginary world that they go into which isn’t associated with sensory experience through the body who have more possibility of being hypnotized. This is why it’s impossible to hypnotize infants and animals, this does not mean to put them into a sleep state but actually to make hypnotic suggestions and to make them behave differently than normal. This is because hypnosis is very much to do with the so-called “higher-order” functions of the mind, rather than the more animal expression that is not linguistically arranged. It is our state of habit and the “self” that is so fragile that to some degree it can be quite easily influenced by persuasion and association. This is all quite reactive. The responsive expression occurs when the higher-order functions actually relax and let go and then natural response to the senses comes back into play.

This is generally what occurs in healing, and can occur in hypnosis when a person is calmed to the point where there is no further requirement of the trance state. The trance state being a portal back to the natural sensory perceptions as is exemplified in the work of Milton Erickson. The use of hypnosis to invent further imaginative worlds can be interesting and spectacular but this, as with Derren Brown’s performances, is to provide yet another illusion on top of the ones there already are. Trance is only a way back to sense, not a way to control and manipulate, the story-teller is useful only if he/she tells a story that ends with what is happening in the senses right now. Living in the imagination is something that like a film, it lasts while you’re caught up in it, but then perhaps you want to be there forever. The mundane world isn’t mundane when sensed directly, in fact it’s all the imagination could ever ask for.

As the “self” and habit-addiction are absolutely one, the nature of the non-addicted state is one of total responsiveness to the environment and a non-reactiveness. Everything is sensed and felt, everything is responded to, nothing is “taken for granted” or “assumed” to be in a particular place, or could, should or might occur in the future, or “did” occur in the past, there is a natural interest in what is going on *as it is*.

The macrocosmic perspective of the brilliantly simple arithmetic of Professor Albert Bartlett (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-QA2rkpBSY>) allows us to recognize that at this time in our existence history cannot be thought of as a basis for what is occurring economically or politically. We have never experienced a time like this, it is entirely new, as it always has been, but the traditions and habits of the past can very easily allow a person or a whole society to assume that things will always be the same or trends will continue, like the financial markets are assumed to continue to rise as “they always have in the past”. This is another assumption and habit-formation, meaning that reactions are

high and response is non-existent, which is why these things create financial “crises” or it is assumed that this is what they are.

As with all processes of life things don't change till they reach a peak of ripeness that we are now coming to. Marx expressed this same point when talking about the Communist State which essentially is a natural state that humans were in before the “progress” of “self” came into play. He suggests that Feudalism has to turn into Capitalism and then break down into Communism-anarchy, this is that natural cycle of things. So habits do eventually die off by themselves, usually when that which powers them runs out. This can either be a supply of fuel for a car, a supply of work that stops, or the death of a person who was intrinsic to the habit we were in, the end of a relationship, or it can be the change from a reactionary situation to one of responsiveness (not of responsibility, which is an illusion). The nature of habit is on-top or superficial to what is below it which is a state of health and freedom.

The human-animal is always background to the “civilized” human and civilization is always a structure that gets in the way of the true expression. Whereas Freud and psychoanalysis was very much focused in uncovering this underneath quality of the human, what was conceived of as a “healthy” human existence often contained very much of the repressive sensory expression as a “norm”. Jung’s interest in other more supposed “primitive” cultures pointed out that the Westerner doesn't get the whole picture and Sabina Spielrein of the same era realized the importance of child psychology, as the stem from which the corruption of the senses begins. The overall picture is one of realization of the human-condition, also the recognition that the habits and addictions of our lives only drop off when there is truly is a complete re-connection with that which we *are* behind the mask of “self”. Until then the habit is a numbing or armouring against the threatening world of individualism. This is a far cry from the wild, the indigenous intimacy and connectedness to nature and natural materials, where the senses are sharpened not through trying or becoming but because under the coat and gloves of the suit of armour still live the natural expression as it was when we were children and not a day older.

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