

## **The relative power of belief in modern and ancient culture**

It is commonly imagined that native and tribal culture is ‘primitive’ and the associated belief systems are inappropriate for our modern culture, based as it is in the lean-mean face of science which, as in my previous articles, I will call branch-science. The basis of the branch-science/economic perception is that we are ‘devoid of belief and see things pragmatically - as they are. However, what if the idea that we are “seeing what is”, is merely an illusion, the illusion being that science has the whole picture and that we are really seeing the world as it is.

This idea has been played out in numerous films but what about in real life? We are starting to discover that the way a human child views the world is utterly and completely different to the way an adult views it. We could justifiably say that birds and insects and other animals have different visual dynamics and we could even say that those closest to us in the animal kingdom, like chimps and bonobos, are 99% similar but not exactly the same. However, is it strange to think that a human baby, or even a two year-old, whose sensory functions are almost complete, should be so utterly different to the human adult? Why do the tantrums and traumas that occur in kindergarten generally last about a minute and in the adult world can stretch to court cases lasting decades, for the same poke in the eye! This simple way of being could be applied also to the nature of native cultures.

We have the notion that native peoples have based their cultures in rites and rituals, gods and goddesses, and in various ideas which are “illogical”. However, native peoples are generally connected to the deep pragmatism of what it is they are sensing directly, pure-observation or what I call root-science, based in natural instinct forming intuitive direction. This is the basis for all the native and tribal cultures. On top of this are layered their rites, rituals and beliefs. These will change and have changed throughout different cultures but always retain deep metaphorical meaning, whenever the question “why?” was asked. Most importantly, the question “why” has not much importance to these peoples, and the answers given are often to re-direct the questioner back to the understanding that questioning leads nowhere and Mother Nature is taking care of it, almost like soothing a baby after a nightmare. This is a huge difference between modern and native/ancient peoples. Rites and rituals and most traditions are a form of medicine, drawing the native people back to a connection with the environment, as it is innately known that in the madness of the heat of the human mind, questioning can easily overtake. When it happens that the rites and rituals become something in and of themselves, traditions take over and become idealised and dogmatic. It is then that the tribe becomes a civilization and from civilization there is the move to ruination. This does not occur in most tribal societies that have continued to the modern day, and so have been around for thousands of years. They have a grounding and a root-science or root-instinctual basis for all their practices, they are anchored, so to speak. While “civilization” looks like it has “all the benefits”, these” benefits” affect the top 10% of the population but which is reliant on the 90% below it to keep that 10% going. This is a deeply ineffective, inefficient society in the most pragmatic of views, and therefore what seems easier is far, far harder in the long run. Not being the human-animal but instead the human “individual” makes it far more difficult to resist nature in every possible way, than

it is to be part of the whole of nature and follow its movement. This is called going with the majority! Traditions were never observed in a dogmatic way, but rather following natural cycles, for example, the animals who migrate at specific times of the year, following the nature of plant growth and mating in specific seasons. These are the bases from which rites and rituals occur, born from instinct, not from mind.

The modern human is transfixed by the need to understand the fundamental, original question of “why?”, to have answers and be satiated by them, but of course he never is. Seeking for answers produces great pain and anguish, and is the main basis upon which society has expanded and fragmented in the way it has, into individualism and dualism. The problem is that the word “why?” has become the master, the Holy Grail, the foundation and the centre to everything. “Why?” is the religion, the God of science, worshipped and focused on. However, everything that comes purely from the questioning mind is considered a form of madness by people who have a deeper sense. There is a simplicity of resolution which has been taught through the generations and which points in the direction of the truth, but this would not answer or satisfy the insatiable modernist.

For the native people “why” is not an important question. The native tribesperson is not involved or deeply interested in the reasons why something occurs. This worries the modern branch-scientist (ironically, themselves within the dogmatism of Newtonian materialism), who concerns him/herself with the fact that these people could “move into dogmatism” and be led by rituals and rites that could turn them into “dangerous peoples”! However these people have trodden their path for thousands of years, they often know the power and limitation of these ideas and ways yet their main focus, the root nature of instinctual awareness, has remained intact and is the basis for all they do.

This is deeply opposed to modern culture, where the individual looks at nature separate from him/herself, and in fact is living within a dogmatism of the branch-scientific/economic model and doesn't see out of it. They have swallowed the idea, hook line and sinker. This is considered to be insanity by native people. Carl Jung understood this for the first time when he met with the Native American Indian Chief, Ochwiay Bianco:-

*“See,” Ochwiay Bianco said, “how cruel the whites look. Their lips are thin, their noses sharp, their faces furrowed and distorted by folds. Their eyes have a staring expression; they are always seeking something. What are they seeking? The whites always want something; they are always uneasy and restless. We do not know what they want. We do not understand them. We think that they are mad.”*

*I asked him why he thought the whites were all mad.*

*“They say they think with their heads,” he replied.*

*“Why of course. What do you think with?” I asked him in surprise.*

*“We think here,” he said, indicating his heart.*

*I fell into a long meditation. For the first time in my life, so it seemed to me, someone had drawn for me a picture of the real White man... This Indian has struck our vulnerable spot, unveiled a truth to which we are*

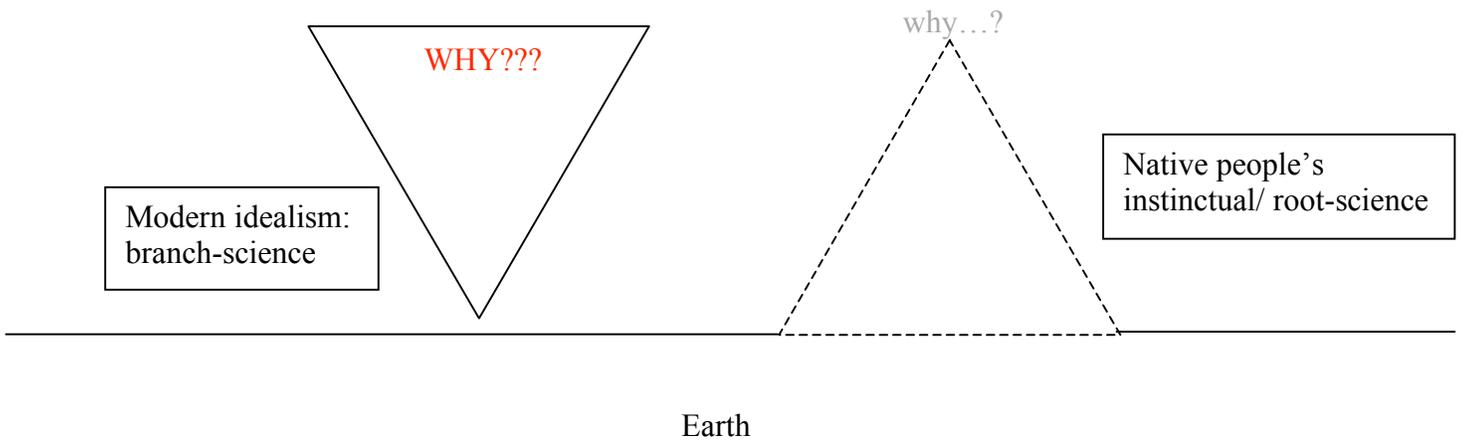
*blind....(from, Carl Jung: Wounded Healer of the Soul: An Illustrated Biography By Claire Dunne)*

In James Cameron’s film Avatar, the witch doctor of the tribe is told there is a stranger in her midst, he asks to learn from the Na’vi tribe, after consideration she says:-

*“It is decided; my daughter will teach you our ways. Learn well Jack Sully, then we will see if your insanity can be cured.”*

This “teaching” is really a learning about the natural environment; it is a re-connection of the senses, not an attempt to claim a hierarchical position, nor to be “enlightened”, but to feel at one with the tribe of nature, life itself. It is a way to earth, not a Babylon to claim Heaven, or a realization that to connect to what is above one must be anchored in what is below.

We start getting the impression here that a true matrix exists, though not in the way described in the film of the same name, rather in a quite opposite manner. There is a matrix of life underneath the one created by the dogmatic ideology of branch-science and the superstition of separation that all our principles are based on. The infrastructure of society is hanging balanced on thin strands, not on a broad base. Described graphically, we could look at native culture and the question “why?” in the following way and relate it to modern culture:-



Above we see the huge top-heaviness (in every conceivable way) of the modern idealist picture and the more natural way of the root-based instinctive based cultures. This does not indicate lack of connection with the sky, far from it. The nature of the apex of the triangle, is an expression of lightness at the top and anchoring at the base of the person. In this way one is always rooted in the yin, open to the yang. Intuitive clarity, sensing and ideas are then rooted at the base. They are simple directions, clear and not owned, just an inner compass of feeling that the native person expresses through his lifetime,

unhampered by the heavy burden of thoughts. The mind is efficient when used by the whole being, not focused on, the whole being a powerful antenna of heaven and earth. The Yin means not only the earth but the Mother of all. The sky is a manifestation from this root: it is secondary. As Joseph Campbell explains:-

*“This thing up here, this consciousness, thinks it's running the shop. It's a secondary organ. It's a secondary organ of a total human being, and it must not put itself in control. It must submit and serve the humanity of the body.”*

Episode 1, Chapter 12: The Power of Myth (1988)

This is not, in itself, an idealism of native peoples but these peoples have never formed “civilizations” or superstructures, whereas the Aztec and Incas, the Egyptians and the Roman Empires all collapsed because of the same mentality. Native tribal peoples are an ideal, not an idealism, they have understanding and clarity that extends beyond the dogmatic to the deeply important, which is fundamental for all cultures and all peoples. What is seen in one tribe on one side of the world, can also be seen similarly on the other. Though the region and customs may be different, the underpinning nature of understanding Oneness and instinct, as the basis of the culture and the cloud drift of “why?” every so often, is really the basis of peace.

Parents believe that it is important to supply the answers to children’s questions, for cognition to start as early as possible and they focus on the “why?” to explain everything, to offer understanding of the world. How many just allow the question to be unanswered, as Tony Parsons puts it; “to simply be answered by the silence it originally came from”? Native peoples are silent in much of what they do, not through command or reservation but because it is their nature to be so. There is stillness in their way, just as it is with most animals; even in the sounds they do make, there is silence within that. It isn’t an anxious rage of questions, “loud” and contracting in nature; not a “silence” that is not silent at all, and full of thought, with an insatiable seeking, but instead the stillness of Nature’s expression, being screamed at the top of Her lungs.

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