

Active imagination: The dis-ease of focused over-stimulation of a child's imagination.

Currently there is a mainstream of culture that attempts to encourage and focus on the imagination as being a vitally important function of the human being. We consider those who are imaginative as being “creative people” and those who aren't as “unimaginative” and therefore stuck in a rut. However there is great confusion concerning this particularly around the ideology of encouraging children to “imagine”.

Most expressions of imagination are part of the hallucinatory experience of being a human. Initially, there is a sense of clear and crisp *as-it-isness*, then pasted on top of this is what's going on in the head, i.e. those images which trigger our memory banks, which are as fathomless as time itself. This makes the human highly vulnerable, for simply to be caught in imaginary abstractions obscures what is going on right this moment in the senses. Therefore simply by being human, we have very active imaginations. These images can't be invoked by intended action but appear for no reason. After about the age of three the child's mind becomes extremely imaginative and activated, whereas prior to this it was not sufficiently developed to perform this function, in fact prior to this the child has for the most part been crawling on the floor, sitting, generally rolling around. After this there is an exponential mental expansion and with this comes the hallucinations of images triggering other images and a huge *mélange* of colour and light which can be bewildering at times as they activate dreams and other internal fantasy expressions. However after about the age of three, much of the imaginative material becomes attached to another imaginary and sensory feeling of “being separate” and so essentially the freedom of imagination becomes squashed or contracted by a feeling of separation. This is the beginning of the paranoia of “self” and the plethora of imaginings that come from this.

Science, art and all forms of “culture” believe that to be imaginative and for the mind to be “active” is fantastic and to be encouraged. But the most imaginative and so-called creative minds in the world, “geniuses”, often find themselves in the predicament of being deeply unhappy and finding life very difficult. Those people who have less stimuli from modern life around them actually imagine less and as a result feel more alive. The indigenous people of course have imaginative expressions but these imaginings are not encouraged or discouraged they are simply seen to be the way they are and are used to express metaphors and understand life in many ways. The Brazilian Shamans use the images of imagination and exaggerate them with the use of Ayahuasca or other hallucinogens to make images very alive and real in order to cathartically draw them out of the body, in this way stuck images and fantasies are “exorcised” from the person. The same is true of many Tibetan rituals that use vigorous sounds and colours to irritate and exacerbate the mind to a climax that is broken by the contrast of immediate silence to break the imaginative and then see the real behind it.

The point is that while in the modern Western world the imaginative is seen as “intelligence” emerging or something “special”, in the indigenous cultures it is not considered remarkable, but known to be part of the human being. It is also recognised as being problematic when it is attached to a “me”, which is actually the cause of immeasurable dis-ease and suffering.

This is not to say imagination is good or bad, but very often in the Western world when a child is in a process of imagination this process can be used as a surrogate for parents who are not present, or connection to a tribe or to nature which are not present. Imagination is often a stagnation of the mind being over-active and going around in circles because the body is not being activated enough to root the energy within. The Western world is full of ridiculously skewed notions of imagination, where computer whizz-kids are hailed as super-heroes of creativity and permaculturalists are considered as a bunch of crazy hippies.

The Tao Te Ching points out the nature of so-called “intelligence” in exactly the same way as we can speak about imagination:-

Chapter 18

When what is called the “natural-way” is not practised

Naturally arises benevolence and Righteousness

When mental intelligence emerges

The great pretence begins

When roles of relation to one another are not adhered to

Natural genuine connection arises between people

When a nation is led into confusion and chaos

Patriotic ministers arise.

Chapter 27:

Natural walking leaves no tracks

Natural speaking cannot make slips

Natural reasoning uses no calculation device or analytic method

Natural locking requires no bolts, yet what has been shut cannot be opened

Natural binding uses no cords to knot, but what has been bound cannot be undone.

Therefore the Natural-human is One with all humankind, no-one can be abandoned

There is Oneness with all things, so no-thing can be abandoned

This is called: “following innate Truth”.

Hence the Natural-human is an expression that dissolves the suffering of a person who suffers

And the person who is suffering is that which is dissolved by Nature

Not to acknowledge the reality of the Natural-human

Or the person suffering

Though it may seem “intelligent”, in fact is a form of blindness

This is the crux of Naturalness.

What appears to be the greatest strength for the human in the West, the mind, the upper and the head, is totally contextualized by the nature of the indigenous. The true realization of connection is at the feet and the indigenous, not the head and the colonial, it is not mind that comes before body but body that comes before mind, they are in fact one but the order is key to realization of the tendency of one to take over from the other and that is the hallucination of the imagination taking off from the earth-roots. This is not suggesting that to be unimaginative is better or that we should aim to be “un-ambitious”, because this again would be another ambition. All this is

doing is describing the state of what is happening and how we see things and question this.

Our attention is often focused on children's head and mind, on making the mind "healthy", but importantly in order to do this the mind needs to be anchored, not over-stimulated. To stimulate the mind is akin to suggesting a child plays with a knife. It's completely inappropriate and something we wouldn't do if we knew the energetics of it, but we have forgotten this sense, we consider that the use of visual technology and head-orientated activity is the "best course of action for children" when all it does is excessively stimulate the mind and imagination. Books are the same, but the vital ones such as "Peter Pan" and "Alice in Wonderland" which adults would deem to be about encouraging a child's imagination are in fact pointing out that the world of the adults' imagination is utterly ridiculous and in fact suggest the child makes a run for it!

Rudolph Steiner, in his attempts to connect children to a true sensitivity, suggested that children's association with highly focused intellectual stimuli in early years actually impairs the physical functioning of the growing body, as it exaggerates a focus toward the head rather than to where the energy is naturally going, which is into development of the physical anchoring of the head and the body. This is profoundly true, but further to this and something that Steiner did not engage with, is that the de-education or de-intellectualization of children as they develop actually very often allows for much more development of instinctive senses. This is exemplified within a tribal culture, wherein it can allow people to be ever free from the situation of a weighty headiness and a weakened, deficient body.

Interestingly Aldous Huxley's book "Island" and other such expressions are altruistic viewpoints of how humans might come to know or realize the madness of the human imagination and past-future or "time-based" thought processes. But all processes endeavouring to "stop" this, such as so-called "mindfulness" and other practices are riddled with the "me" that is doing them and therefore these situations often end up by exacerbating the very thing they were "trying" to control.

Meditation is very much like dieting or exercise, you think it's really "good" for "you" but the process of doing it can often seem so unnatural. We fix ourselves into a certain opinion about "how much or what I should eat", or "what exercise is good or bad", or "how much I should meditate each day", but these are all processes of "improvement" and are all about ambition and getting somewhere. In fact the sense of knowing what to eat or how much to move is within, not without, it can't be practised. It's more as though it needs to be sensed, to be known, which simply happens with different people as time goes on because other things become less and less relevant than what their body is currently expressing, even if it requires immense pain as a trigger towards connection to the senses. The requirement to meditate is about "de-activating" the imagination in some cases, or in other cases it's about activating it and "going off somewhere", either way, there is always a "me" intending to do it all. Inevitably the body simply knows when it wants to rest and sit down, or to move and stand up, it doesn't need a regime or a rule book. It is only the "self" that believes it needs to meditate, that it needs a "teacher" or something to hold onto, because it essentially believes it is broken, that it is split away and requires crutches. UG Krishnamurti was famous for suggesting that he would never be a crutch for anyone

to stand with, he suggested the whole ideology of crutches perpetuated the pattern and that it was simply about a sudden undeniable realization that could not be brought on, that there is a natural realization, however fast or slow, that no crutches were ever needed as nothing was broken.

The nature of the human-adult should never be applied to the human child, this process is essentially a passing on of a message of madness, or offering a child that knife to play with. Why do this? When the arrogance of the adult steps back from the child and allows it to develop naturally, then much of the imagination will drain out because it is not required, for the world *as it is*, is wonder enough.

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