

## **Bare Necessities: The origin of tools and gadgets, and their relevance to simply living.**

We have all been told that we don't need half the things we think we do, which is undoubtedly true. "Requirements" in today's inner-city world are seen to be such things as gadgets and equipment, from specialist audio gear to the new turbo-charged 4x4 or the latest computer system, smart phone or absolutely must-have fridge freezer with extra storage, but none of these would be recognised as requirements by a tribes person. In fact they would probably be seen as burdens, just more luggage, or simply as "stuff" that has nothing to do with life but to do with a *concept* of how life is in modern times.

Let's for a moment we look outside the box of what we know and see the possibility of a mass movement towards a simpler basis for life, this is not necessarily going to happen on the large scale in our lifetimes but it is already beginning to occur in small ways. There is a growing realization that so much of what we have and think is heavily focused on such a narrow arena. It is in fact a massive amount of very narrow thinking. It is using the 0.001% of ourselves as a laser-like siphon for the other 99.999% of our energy, like trying to push the camel through the eye of the needle! This has contrived what we see around us today and as such we can't formulate a "new world" from the old one, it has to be a revolutionary shift in perspective that occurs before an actual shift occurs.

*"The world we have created today as a result of our thinking thus far has problems which cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them."*  
- Einstein

This revolutionary change is not some colonial hierarchical "improvement" on what there was before but is actually the end of the ideology of such a thing as "improvement", this is the revolutionary shift. It isn't about making things better but about seeing what there *is*. It isn't about fixing something but about realizing it was never broken. It's not making things "right" but realizing that there is no duality to form resistance.

When we get to this point we start to look at things differently. Looking at the human in comparison to other animals the one aspect that sticks out like a sore thumb are the tools we use. We use so many tools and rely so heavily upon them, in fact we have grown so accustomed to them that we don't even realize that some animals have no tools at all to use and get on perfectly well. For the humans the basic tool is a method of shaping the environment or situation to adjust it to our needs but in modern times this has taken off so that the tool increasingly makes itself, "improving" as it goes while no longer having any relevance to what it is the human really needs. While the genetics of modern day humans and those of our most ancient ancestors have negligible differences, there is a massive disparity in what the modern human believes he or she needs in order to "survive", in comparison with those same ancestors. This is where the dis-ease is, where the psychosis of society comes from. The tool has taken over, the human no longer is relevant, just as in James Cameron's "Terminator", the world run by machines is simply the world run by the humans gadgets that have now a "mind of their own" which means an expression separate from the expression of human-nature.

So if we look back, what could the first tool have been? It is likely that the first tools were similar to those used by chimps such as sticks and leaves for various purposes, but human dexterity has meant that from these beginnings more complex tools were formed. But what for? Primarily the first tools were extensions of the hand, as a way of grasping food in some way, extensions of the teeth to cut something, and extensions of the skin to shelter from the elements. As humans originally lived in the more tropical or hotter environments it was more the tools of hunting and sheltering that were key, and that's usually all they needed. Even for those tropical tribal peoples still remaining today, this is all the tools they require which therefore shows us the true nature of what one needs to live at the simplest level. However as humans migrated into the northern regions of the world so the tools needed to be extended. The environmental heat was a major difference. As temperature dropped food was more difficult to find than in the tropical abundance, it was a harsher territory. Of course all regions have their problems but the natural environment of the human had changed and so as the human adapts to the new colder climate his primary tool is fire. Fire is used to heat the food, to add to the energetic heat/sunlight, to the diet. "Fire" is consumed as well as the food and this mix helps the originally tropical human to live in more difficult environments creating a hotter human so to speak. Humans then change, the skin turn white as there is less sunlight, so adaptation alters the structure of the face and teeth, gradually over thousands of years the human becomes more used to his environment, now with the three main resources of food, shelter and fire as basic tools of life. These *are* him/her, they are not separate, they are extensions of his/her hand, without these necessities there is death. So in addition to the requirements of tools for gaining food and shelter is fire for heat.

These then become the raw materials of the tribal peoples of the northern regions. They focus their lives on these three expressions, these three adaptations to the environment and they reconnect. An example of this was the North American and Canadian Indians who lived easily with these kinds of tools and fashioned many different forms of expression in these three ways. So the addition of heat occurs when there is less sunlight and when there is more there is simply the need for food (drink) and shelter. For the human there is really very little else.

The language/ communication of almost all tribal peoples in the world today is very simple in its full vocabulary, but this "basic" is actually a form of total perfection and efficient relevance. Whereas the words of the modern English dictum much of the time have very little feeling but are more about finding or seeking meaning, for the tribal peoples it's the other way around, words are fundamentally about evoking a feeling and nothing to do with seeking for meaning which is considered to be a disease process. The point is that the tribal peoples don't classify things in their world such as plants and animals by a "formula" or a method of universal system of science, they simply are sensory words or expressions that give a sense to the listener in relation to the word or the nature of the quality of the plant or animal or insects being spoken about. In many ways the nature of the word has a quality of the plant or animal within it, similar to what we call in English "onomatopoeia". This is why words are very often considered to be far more key and vital in these cultures than in the modern culture where words are often nothing more than superficial.

Also the quantity of words has changed. Where in the modern West we use thousands upon thousands of them, the tribal peoples historically and even to today only use hundreds. This simplification is not a cutting off, or a splitting away, it is about using the root words, the root senses in a communication that's closer to the animal expression of the human than it is to an intellectual idea. When words are expressions of quality of energy rather than ideas, then they are almost not words but vibrations, more akin to music or song, which is often why Aboriginals relate through "songs of life". The point is that this way of expression is efficient, it's the most effective way to express things, far more direct and complete than the idea-based expression, it is visceral not mental. This we have mainly forgotten although in more expressive cultures this is still part of the language.

Even before language existed and the human communication was like the animals' expression, this was total connectedness, total immersion into non-separation with all of life, there was no need for classification. In the modern West we wonder how it was possible to prevent ourselves eating the wrong food, was it all by trial and error, did many people have to die before the right foods were known? But this never happened because the senses of humans could at that time identify the "right" smells, tastes, sights and sounds of their environment which have now been forgotten because the tool has taken over from the senses. (See a brilliant article on the importance of taste from Sam Thayer: <http://foragersharvest.com/why-god-put-those-bumps-on-your-tongue/>)

From the three basic necessities described above the human mind exploded and from this came all the tools, from the horse and cart to the plough to the use of bronze and then iron and then increasingly wide-ranging materials which have culminated today in the smart-phone. Yet the three basic necessities have remained the same, no matter how fancily they are dressed up, but crucially the tastes and senses have become dulled, the strength of the body weakened, endurance has been reduced.

How then do we find the way back to the Eden, or to return "home" to this? Well the process is called "transition" and no-one "does" it, it's just happening. We are now in the beginning of transition. As oil prices rise and the costs of living become impossible, slowly but surely, or even quickly at a critical point, humans will be forced to change the nature of how they connect to the things they can actually do without. The power to supply most of what technologically "works" today will be most likely be gone within the next 20-30 years, considering that the peak of oil production is already upon us. This means that methods which may be currently disparaged as being hippie or way-out such as permaculture, foraging, having a understanding of wild foods and herbs, knowing how to build a shelter and make fire, these skills will start to become far more important and necessary. Hunting skills and the ability to live in the outdoors will gradually becomes a real and possible alternative, as food production in the way of monoculture will simply fade away when there is no longer enough oil to power it.

The point is that through no wilfulness or even fault or blame, but just through lack of resources, things will change and much of what we think we need will drop out and a recognition of what we really need will come to the surface. This we might call the first part of what is a re-tribalization, a movement towards connecting in a far more "primitive" way, which is another world for efficient and authentic expression of the

human being, without the shackles of the tools we have made for ourselves which has caused us to forget the essence of what is real. From this transition point things start to fall away, things we think we need are left behind, highly prized materials are seen as unnecessary clutter or a burden, no longer having relevance or importance. Also as time goes on, methodologies such as those of the academic, the intellectual, the politician, the idealist or altruist, all these move to what they always were, a far more local perspective, the 3 basic expressions of food, shelter and fire, that the two hands as-one with this whole tribe can create. From the place the idealism of reliance on diets such as low-carb, fat-free, low cholesterol, raw foods or Neolithic, these all go out of the window. Then we are simply engaging with the tools that have never left us but are always in the background of our thought process about the concept called “me”, which are the 5 senses. These now come to the fore and fully function again which is an awakening process.

Taste helps us identify food from poison, smell points out fresh from dangerous, touch points to calmness or disturbances, hearing points to the hunter or the hunted. As time goes on senses gradually bring the human back into the sensory, to the true nature of what is happening in this moment. The difficulty is that very often the senses of the modern human have been dulled because there is no requirement for them, they have been locked away. There is no blame for this but as time goes on they will be needed again, with slow transition there will be a return to nature if there is to be a continuation of humanity. It is the tribal peoples who become our guides as for millennia they have held the ancient principles in the simplicity of their communications and in the aliveness of their senses, they still hold the key to the future of human beings.

Living simply isn't difficult, it's actually so easy that we have forgotten about it, but it is within us and can be re-ignited. The difficulty is that it requires peak interest which is not about taking the intellect into nature through classification or using mind-based materials to “work-out” or “label” or “classify” the world around us, but instead to feel it, smell it and taste it, to become one with it intimately so there is no separation. Tony Deis of Trackers Earth (<http://trackersearch.com/>) points out that tracking animals is about knowing your family, the animals are your family, they *are* “you” in fact, they are the blood that runs in the veins. This kind of expression is known as a deep truth, which requires no words but is innately known by all the tribal peoples of the world. The point is that in engaging at this level we lose nothing, we shed the dead leaves of the machine or tool, or the tumour of society, what falls away is the idea of “I am”. Under this is the truth that has always been present, of connection to nature as a birthright, as a human-animal, not as something better or more, but just as *this*, without addition. Anything added onto the very few words of communication required, the songs sung and the simple connection to the three basic necessities of food, shelter and fire are simply unnecessary, they are added-on baggage that is actually an enormous burden.

We know this, it has been said millions of times, even here in the brilliant poetry of Baloo of the Jungle book: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ogQ0uge06o>) yet it still seems so far away from what we experience day to day. However, there are the Ray Mears of this world and people in every walk of life who on the weekend enter into a different world, they leave their job in the city for two days and connect to ancient crafts and skills, from beekeeping to perma-culture, to foraging and

herbalism, to cooking gathered ingredients, to engaging in ways of connecting to each other as community without expectations. These kinds of connections are also happening and these people will eventually not be dismissed as the hippie dropouts or the “ones who couldn't make it in the real world” but those who had a sense that about what was happening around them was “warped” and who wanted to move in a different way.

The expression of Christopher McCandless illustrates this, the true story of a person who, without any experience or understanding, left modern life to go into the wilderness, but who died there simply because coming from a life of academia he was unable to connect to total sensory living in such a short time, he couldn't sense or adapt adequately. Yet the film “Into the Wild”: has had such a massive impact on a generation because, like “Avatar” and other smash hit movies it calls to us in ways we can't fathom in words, we want to go back but we don't know how, we know we used to be there amongst the trees and grasses yet they feel distant to us now and there is a longing to return. This is transition...McCandless is not the first and he won't be the last, it's a pioneering vision yet without any clue about its direction, he and others like him are trail-blazers of a more sensory-bound connection as we all move back to the wild.

But why talk about something that might never occur? Simply because the direction of this is the only thing left to engage our children in, the next generation needs to fundamentally become interested in this, it's how they can smell taste, feel, hear and see clearly, these are the gateway to keep connection to the child-expression and also to the indigenous expression which lies within us. This is not a road to an ideal of “happiness” but is an expression of simplification of the human back home to the truth that doesn't require anything of each other, just being what one is, is enough. This is therefore not a path to anything, it is the end of the road of dis-ease.

In The Tao Te Ching some 2500 years ago, Lao Tzu offers a vision of transition:-

Chapter 80:

*Reduce the size of the population of the state/country.*

*Though there are machines of war that have ten or a hundred times more energy than a single human, they are not needed.*

*The people will be reluctant to travel long distances without reason, for they have no requirement to.*

*Even if they have ships and carts, they will have no use for them, weapons and armour have no occasion to be worn.*

*One day people might return to the use of knotting strings and hand-weaving*

*They will relish in their food*

*And in the beauty of their simple clothes*

*And will be content in their simple abode*

*And happy in the simplicity of Natural existence.*

*Though neighbouring states/countries are within the sight of one another*

*And the sound of dogs barking and cocks crowing in one state/country can be heard in another*

*Yet the people of the one state/country might grow old and die without having had any dealings with those of another.*

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