

Who You Are At Birth, We Need You

When I was young being raised in Western Culture I was taught that infants were born as a blank canvas upon which life is painted by experience. Gradually there was some growth in understanding of human development that introduced the concept that infants were born with a set personality. More recently there has been further understanding that genetic imprinting that encompasses parental and ancestral experiences contributes to the imprinting. Then there came studies that projected the environment itself can influence genes. These inclusions are now being seen as collaborative influences that contribute to the newborn's integration within the culture of their birth. In Eastern Cultures there is the belief of the inclusion of an innate spirituality that guides the path of the infant through life. This includes the concept that the infant is born to live out one's Karma incurred in previous lives and that living well determines one's fate in the next incarnation. In variations of indigenous cultures the spiritual foundation is based upon their direct experience that everything, whether animate or seemingly inanimate is alive and inter-related as integral parts of the Whole. Infants are born with this sense of connection and due to the cultural values the child grows up with this feeling of life itself being the extended family, a feeling that is missing in Western Cultures and to a lesser degree also missing in Eastern Cultures.

Critical in low technological indigenous cultures is the acknowledgement that one's intuition is the voice of Spirituality. Being receptive to this Voice, their cultures carry the Original Seed of Awareness that establishes Nature as the Parent from which they learn how to live in a healthy way. From their experience they know the importance of being in a family mind with all of life. By living outside of a hierarchy that establishes humans as the highest order of life they are able to witness themselves as one of many of Nature's children, no more, no less than any other aspect of life. As such all other life forms are their siblings within Nature's Family. Within this framework they live with the Supreme Being as manifesting in Everything.

Because Western advanced Technological Cultures exist in a highly defined hierarchical social structure based upon the framework that humans are innately manifested as the dominant life force, they experience an exaggerated feeling of entitlement. This leads to a belief in human dominion that justifies the right to excise from Nature an ever-increasing demand of resources. This feeling of entitlement blinds these cultures to the long-term consequences of their behavior as is currently being witnessed by global warming, the increasing extinction of species, and the increase in human disease and mental illness all of which is steadily undermining the health of all life.

The Personal Consequence in Western Cultures is the above-mentioned increase in mental illness and this illness influences decision-making that is ultimately self-destructive especially when the cultures themselves are supporting the increase of such illness through its core values. These core values that push unlimited and unregulated technology diminishes the relevance of the intuitive voice resulting in cognition manifesting through science as the Ruler of the Mind. Cognitive Mind is the King in Western Cultures and operates as a tyrant denying the inclusion of the many other aspects of mind that are critical to a balanced viewpoint of existence. With the Cognitive Mind in dominance there is no check and balance in decision making and with this development the decisions are lacking in long-term perspective. Consequently power-position

impulsive goal setting designed to achieve the benefit of short run results act to blind the natural navigating and energy distribution aspects of the mind resulting in an uneven distribution of essential nutrients. This means that some parts are getting too much and other parts are receiving too little. This overflow to the few causes them to become bloated, a state of being that in turn opens the Culture to increased dysfunction and a sense of desperation by those lacking. Instead of working as a cooperative team, dissention is prevalent and the culture's aspects are in conflict with each other. This can only lead to cultural disintegration. So what to do?

Let us explore the situation with the cognitive aspect of the mind in dominance as it inadvertently fosters psychological dysfunction in the following example. The specific area of this investigation is best demonstrated through a reference to Schizotypal Personality Disorder as described in the book titled, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, or DSM, which is the bible of Mental Health. The function of the book is to provide mental health practioners with the ability to diagnose categories of mental illness through their descriptive features. Based upon the diagnosis mental health practioners attempt various chemical, cognitive, and behavioral interventions to alleviate the symptoms.

The Schizotypal Personality Disorder is described as: "...These individuals may be superstitious or preoccupied with Para-normal phenomena that are outside the norms of their subculture. They may feel that they have special powers to sense events before they happen or to read others' thoughts. They may believe that they have magical control over others, which can be implemented directly...or indirectly. Perceptual alterations may be present (e.g., sensing that another person is present or hearing a voice...From 30% to 50% of individuals diagnosed with this disorder have a concurrent diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder when admitted to a clinical setting. There is considerable co-occurrence with Schizoid, Paranoid, Avoidant, and Borderline Personality disorders ...Schizotypal Personality disorder has been reported to occur in approximately 3% of the general population. Schizotypal Personality Disorder has a relatively stable course, with only a small proportion of individuals going on to develop Schizophrenia, or another Psychotic Disorder. Schizotypal Personality Disorder appears to aggregate familiarly...Schizotypal features during adolescence may be reflective of transient emotional turmoil, rather than an enduring personality disorder."

Such people, being perceived as deviant are interpreted as basically threatening to the Western culture's framework, a perception, which is likely due to the influence of Western orthodox religious beliefs. In the Bible one can come across such a person, being categorized as a sorcerer or diviner and as a consequence they are ordained to be eliminated. In present day Western culture, when such a person is so identified they are guided or if necessary directed to therapeutic treatment to prevent them from evolving into Schizophrenia. In this manner the traditional teaching of therapists reinforces the biblical view and only sanitizing it by substituting the category of mentally ill for sorcerer. Being a child of Western Culture, the therapist is unable to perceive these traits existing as natural gifts with which the person is born.

It is relevant to this exploration to view people with these traits not only in the perspective of a Western Culture. With this as a guide then let us view such a person, with a Schizotypal Personality Disorder being born instead into an Indigenous Culture. Let us wonder what role did these people contribute to Indigenous Cultures?" Being

receptive to intuitive insight they were Culturally framed as Shamans and as such were able to relate to and provide the community with access to what Western People term Paranormal abilities. The Shaman could communicate with their community's ancestors. Not being limited to people they were also able to communicate with animals. This allowed them to intuit where the game animals were most available. Being in an integral relationship with all life they guided hunting by setting limits to the hunting so as to keep the herds sustainable. Their basic teaching was to take only what was needed and no more. The highest recognition a hunter could achieve was measured by how actively they shared their kill with those most in need; the lone elder, the injured, the disabled. The Shaman also was able to communicate with plants and acquired the skills to harvest healing leaves, bark and roots and to prepare them as curatives. They were able to hold the stories of their people in memory and to tell stories that were designed to fortify the emotional and spiritual strength of the community. They guided the youths into adulthood. They also helped interpret dreams and were able to recognize omens that helped them anticipate future events.

So when a child with these traits was born into a family there was a sense of gratitude and throughout childhood there was a showering of benevolent appreciation of the unique and critical gifts that the child increasingly exhibited. The recognition of the child's personality traits allowed the tribe's Shaman to provide the child with the support and training to maximize the inborn gifts. In this environment the child grew into adulthood with a feeling of acceptance and this allowed for the youth to gradually assume the role of Shaman, a person of integrity. Assuming this mantle allowed the person to feel safe as well as needed and in return, the developing Shaman understood their purpose as being able to share their developed gifts in service to their people. Not a schizophrenic to be isolated and denigrated, but a person much needed and appreciated.

This suggests that people diagnosed with the Schizotypal Personality Disorder, which occurs in 3% of the Western culture, and is grouped familiarly, may be in a pre-stage of a Shamans. Unfortunately being born into a Judeo/Christian/Muslim culture the shamanistic child's parents sensing the difference act to inhibit its manifestation. Tragically, Natural Gifts once inhibited from manifesting culturally too often turn inward, and overwhelm the individual with co-occupant disorders as described above. Being misunderstood and repressed, it is easy to see how this person would develop Major Depressive Disorder, or exhibit Paranoid or Avoidant Disorders. Who wouldn't? "Who I am is under attack." The underlying assumption of traditional Western therapy is that the gifts of this person are not real; they don't exist except in the delusional state of the individual. The repression of one's gifts too often give rise to emotional issues that once turned inward to varying degrees manifest in delusional influences. This occurrence is truly a counter therapeutic outcome inadvertently fostered by the Western training of the therapists. Regardless of this misconstrued interpretation, at its core the repressed person's lived experience is real to them.

What happens to a person's natural power when it is not permitted to manifest? It explodes or implodes. It isn't difficult to make the leap that the cultural limitations of society creates from within, its own enemies. The victims of society are numerous, and too often, become society's enemies. Natural powers inhibited from manifesting culturally turn inward, and overwhelm the individual with anti-social or a-social behavior. Such a person, mistreated by culture, can develop excessive social anxiety,

become suspicious or develop paranoid ideation, develop fear of their own nature, and come to hate themselves. Worse, as they become adults, they may come to fear others with a similar nature, and view them as a threat. This can lead to their involvement with hate groups that target people who have been stigmatized by society.

In the Western monotheistic/technological society what encouragement does a child with the spiritual nature of a shaman have when their religion teaches that such children are possessed by a demon or by the devil and to “save” the child those traits must be “cast out” or eliminated? How does this child manifest? How does the child manifest their powers of clairvoyance, being able to read other’s thoughts, to sense events before they happen, have telepathic powers with animals, a relationships with nature; being able to call rain, or animals, or speak with plants to learn their healing properties, or have the ability to commune with ancestors, spirits, gods, etc? Is it not easy for me to witness how historically within Western monotheistic cultures that these children will be confronted by society, and how society will try to curtail the “preternatural behavior,” which is the same as shutting off his/her nature/power?

Do the shaman and the Schizotypal Personality not share the same traits? May I suggest that the Shaman Personality is the Navigator of Culture. When we strip our culture of such a person we are left to the whims of circumstances. Maybe along with the expanding acceptance of people of different physical and identities of intimacy we may ponder that there is also room for a Navigator. With this open perspective this suggests that certain Western diagnosed disorders may be viewed in another culture differently and definitely in a less threatening and demeaning manner. Would it be helpful to begin to explore such a core element of humanity as a person’s nature? In my experience it seems clear that people are born with different natures. We all accept this when we, in the West, say that a famous athlete was born with natural ability, or an artist as being gifted, or that person whose garden is abundant has a “green thumb,” or that a wealthy individual was born with a silver spoon, or a talkative child is a natural born politician. A person may be a natural born warrior, mother, hunter, farmer, artist, politician, adventurer, lover, dancer, etc. Can we also accept that a person may be born with a spiritual nature? Have we not heard of a special person being a saint, such as Mother Theresa or St. Francis? What is a spiritual person from the Native Peoples called? A Shaman. Didn’t Mother Theresa exhibit special healing powers for others, and in fact for herself? Would a shaman be any less a “Healer”, just because they are from another culture?

What of a child with the nature of a warrior? What happens to this child? Children with this behavior naturally seek aggressive interaction with peers, not because they are mean, or hateful, but because this is their nature. However, in Western culture, they can be diagnosed as having Oppositional Defiant Disorder, or if very aggressive, Conduct Disorder. Our culture does not provide schools for warriors, where a child with this nature can be nurtured, and guided, and appreciated. Certainly as adults we have room for them as police officers, and military personnel. Why wait until they are adults when if they are not recognized as children they will be in endless conflict, and being misunderstood, end up either in mental health treatment or in the juvenile hall, and later in the adult penal system?

Any culture has its strengths and its weaknesses. Its strength is how it encourages and appreciates people of certain natures. Its weakness is how it discourages and

condemns people with other natures. For a culture to thrive over the long term, it must mature, and learn how to appreciate people of all natures, and develop pathways that lead to their integration within society. Schools for warriors, artists, farmers, and shamans need to be developed so that children with these powers will have a place to grow, rather than to be placed within the existing schools, where their powers will be repressed.

For modern penal and therapeutic models to grow, it will be necessary for them to encompass their own culpability in creating their very reason for being. Just imagine the benefits of a style of intervention that starts out with an apology to the client or arrested individual, "I am so sorry that we have limited your ability to grow in a healthy way. We apologize for not developing a place for your unique powers in our culture. We were ignorant, and prideful in our ignorance. Please give us another chance to make room for you in our society in a way that encourages your nature, and allows you the respect and appreciation that you deserve. We need who you are. Without you we are limited, and we are functioning poorly without your insight and strength." Such a starting point directs the intervention into a healing path, with an optimistic outlook for everyone who participates. Awareness!!! It is liberating!!! Let us make room for everyone of all natures, just as we, in a democracy, seek to broaden our perspective so that there is a place for people of all cultures, race, political viewpoints and gender orientations. So too, do we benefit from making room for people of all inherent natures. We, as a culture, a society, are incomplete without them!