

Some Things I Have Learned

Michael Mendizza

Maturing during the Viet Nam atrocity, a close friend returning from that nightmare called his x-girlfriend, when she answered he pulled the trigger, the public murders of King and the Kennedy brothers, Nixon, followed by Reagan and Clinton's cocaine, Trump to Biden, need I go on. Corruption is ever present, enhanced and expanded by technologies. See Whitney Webb, "One Nation Under Blackmail," two volumes.

Reading the biographies of "Cleopatra," "The Lives of the Stoics," "Alexander Hamilton," and "Ulysses S. Grant," skipping lightly from 150BC to 1885AD, reveals; very little has changed. Corruption destroyed the Roman Empire and it is destroying ours.

J. Krishnamurti notes; "the inner is the outer." Morality, virtue, or goodness, "doing the right thing," or, not being corrupt, is developmental. Sure, a few rise above and transcend horrific beginnings. Most do not. Imaginations are skewed, twisted by incomplete or outright abused sensory and emotional development. And upon this, cultures spawn.

Imagination, that miracle of inner image-making, lifts humanity to new heights and possibilities. At the same time, seduces with endless opportunities for self-deception. Most fail to understand the fundamental nature of this rare capacity, fewer still distill its use in ways that negate reification, believing and treating concepts or mental images as independent things or reality. I am a human being, embedded in nature, not a Democrat, Muslim, American, or a machine. Imagined mental images are theater, pure play. To mistake play, the mental image, for one's identity "is the beginning of 10,000 things," self-deception and conflict, as described by Lao Tzu in the first stanza of the Tao Te Ching, 6th century BC:

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.

The name that can be named is not the eternal name.

The nameless is the beginning of heaven and Earth (the ground of everything).

The named is the mother of the ten thousand things (self deception and delusion).

The named, what can be told, described, verbal based thought, is symbolic-metaphoric imagination. But we forget, and forget, and forget, mistaking the image for a reality that is not an image. Exploding reified imagination is the apple Eve plucked from the Tree of Knowledge, casting humanity into a Dark Age we have yet to escape.

Friend and colleague Darcia Narvaez, PhD., describes in "Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality, Evolution and Culture," how 99% of human evolution was spent in small bands of hunter gatherers, and how *their* experiences provides the 'species typical' ground for wellbeing and development, not the past 10,000 years of conquest, violence, and trauma. From this longer view, what we consider normal and typical – is not.

Domestication, owning and hoarding stuff, epigenetically changed the human brain and with that, our self-world-view, who we think we are, and our relationship to the living world. The more stuff one owned or commanded, the greater our feeling of power, the more separate, isolated the reified ego-image grew. In strange but obvious ways, stuff, and its control, transformed the human mind, abstracting the forces of nature as alien, celestial, 'Gods or God in the sky.' Delusional 'conquest-patriarchy' raped the divine feminine, embodied nature, obediently serving as ego's violent prostitute. The murderous crucifix, suffering, pain and torture, was twisted as the high road to goodness. "Spare the rod and spoil the child." The antithesis of our 99% evolutionary history.

The dominant culture has forgotten evolution's pathway to wellness that comes about through meeting humanity's basic needs (animal, mammalian, social mammalian, and human needs), shaping a well-functioning psychosocial neurobiology, heart centeredness, and thriving that lead to wise, sustainable, and earthcentric lifeways.

Our ancestors worldwide followed this pathway for millions of years in a cycle of cooperative companionship. Instead, with the rise of static hierarchical civilizations, the dominant culture eroded the wellness pathway, increasingly following a cycle of competitive detachment. The dominant culture follows a trauma-inducing pathway by not meeting basic needs, beginning in infancy when 75% of brain volume grows, fostering stress reactivity and minimal psychosocial neurobiological functioning, leading to illbeing and narcissistic destructive lifeways. The multiple planetary ecological crises are a result of the trauma-inducing pathway that has been passed across generations through colonialism and globalized capitalism. We start back on the wellness-promoting pathway by providing children with our species-evolved nest.

Beyond Trauma-Informed: Returning to Indigenous, Wellness-Informed Practices
Darcia Narvaez

Darcia brilliantly describes how incomplete or malformed ‘nurturing dependent’ neural structures alter what we call consciousness and its reality. Once formed, during nature’s optimum developmental windows, these perception-interpretation structures are hard to change.

Anthropologist E. Richard Sorenson (1998) noted a “preconquest consciousness” (versus postconquest consciousness in westernized nations) among the different Indigenous Peoples with whom he lived around the world over decades. Among those with preconquest consciousness, Sorenson documented the shifting descriptions of self, others and places, based on context. There were no fixed identities. So, for example, a person could have multiple names that came or went, whose use shifted with the desire of mates or context. With the lack of fixed or rigid identities, the overall sense of the world was not static but dynamic, with actions changing and dependent on foregrounding, activity, season and mood, rather than on fixed cognitive thought.

The Missing Mind:
Contrasting Civilization with Non-Civilization Development and Functioning
Darcia Narvaez and Mary S. Tarsha

Appreciating how identity is fed by imagination...

When Imagination Gets Involved

Our executive functions, capacities that include self-control (and the full range of thought and imagination), must be well-educated, like our emotional system... When imagination is taken over by survival reflexes (primitive reflexes and lack of emotional maturity), it (what is imagined), is caught in the past and trapped (controlled) by prior experiences (limited or failed attachment).

Narrowed, categorical thinking is characteristic of intellect, as a subset of imaginative capacities. Although it is a tool useful for solving hypothetical and other abstract problems, it is not so good for ongoing human relationships.

The full development of the frontal lobe requires supportive early care. Inappropriate, negligent, or traumatic care during the scheduled development of the right hemisphere may be a primary cause of underdeveloped or malformed imagination and later (mature) reasoning capacities.

Vicious Imagination

When combative morality is deliberate, moving out of the present-moment reactivity, it becomes vicious imagination... Vicious imagination describes those moments of intentional separation from others – a painful divorce from engagement (nurturing relationships) based on deep-seated anger and fear. It involves presumed opposition, “me versus them,” and self-aggrandizement, with the ego believing in its superiority, and using intellect to dominate overtly and covertly. Whether “helping” through *missionizing*, obtaining justice through *aggression* or *manipulating* others for one’s own purposes, there is a deep mistrust of the flow of life, and a need for *control*.

Superiority

Superiority (also known as pride) is perhaps the king of dangerous ideas because it cascades into many other dangerous ideas... vicious imagination operates when a person feels superior to another, and takes action on that basis – to put down the other, to best the other or to objectify, analyze, or dissect. As is documented in numerous studies, when one feels superior, one is less sensitive. (The classic definition of *violence* is an inappropriate use of *force*.)

Resentment

Holding grudges is a form of maintaining a feeling of injustice (for being rejected), on which a person is likely to act on when the time comes... Resentment can be a way of not taking responsibility for one's own actions or a way to turn bad luck into targeted malevolence... Resentments do not have to be extreme to have an effect on moral behavior. Just a small resentment can turn you away from helping someone when needed.

Narratives (Personal or Culture as story)

Narratives, the stories we believe about ourselves, can promote particular emotional states and beliefs that lead to dangerous ideas... Narratives can foster or at least maintain vicious imagination and justification for maintaining dominance or even perpetuating violence against others – for moral reasons.

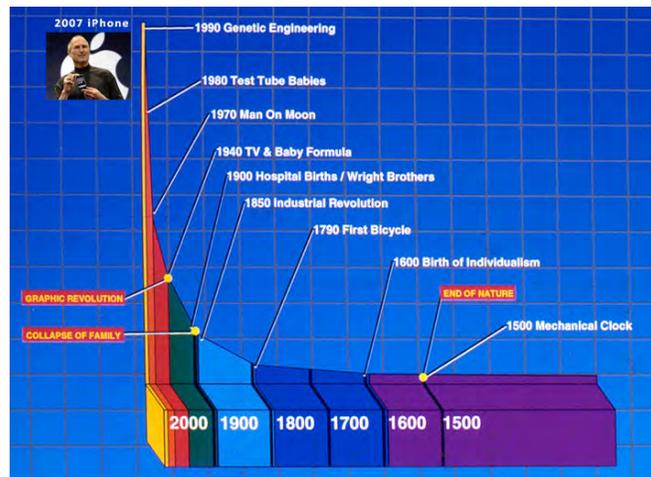
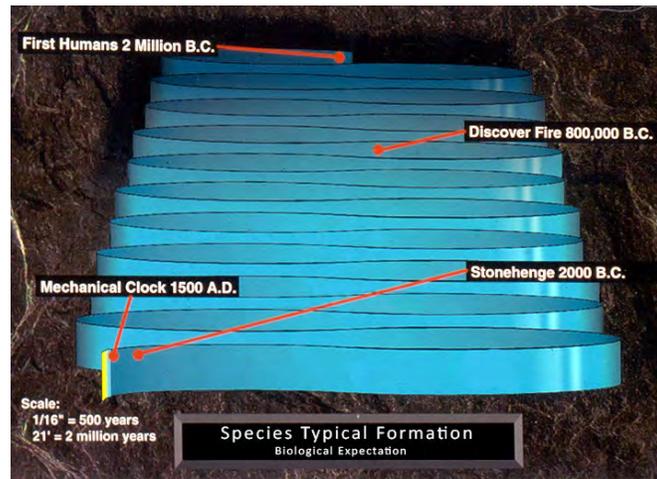
Compared to our 99% species typical pre-civilized childhood, (see Jean Liedloff's, "The Continuum Concept.") the post domestication, conquest culture experiences that define childhood are traumatic. Lloyd deMause, founder of *The Journal of Psychohistory* describes the "The History of Child Abuse," in what we call civilized societies;

We have provided extensive evidence that the history of childhood (in conquest cultures) has been a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken... where children have been killed, rejected, beaten, terrorized and sexually abused by their caretakers... Indeed, my conclusion from a lifetime of psychohistorical study of childhood and society is that the history of humanity is founded upon the abuse of children... Most historical families once practiced infanticide, erotic beating and incest. Most states sacrificed and mutilated their children to relieve the guilt of adults. Even today, we continue to arrange the daily killing, maiming, molestation and starvation of children through our social, military and economic activities.

Lloyd deMause

Darcia focuses with Gabor Maté, MD., physician and author of numerous books including "The Myth of Normal, Trauma, Illness and Healing in a Toxic Culture," "In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts, Close Encounters with Addiction," "When the Body Says No, the Stress Disease Connection," and others, on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Biological switches flipped during ACE events increase a child's risk for nicotine, alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness and suicide, impaired immune function, heart disease, cancer and dementia later in life. ACE experiences known to impact health include – psychological, physical and sexual abuse, domestic abuse, living with household members who are substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal, early death of a parent, living in a household in which a member has been or is imprisoned, neglect, separation and divorce, bullying, social media violence and addiction, and more. As Darcia and Gabor describe, the entire culture is violent, abusive, and guilty of prolonged neglect when viewed through the lens of our 'species typical,' needs Darcia documents. A recent study by the CDC estimates that 1 in 3 girls have seriously considered suicide.

The graphic below crudely represents the 99% of human evolution experienced by pre-civilized Small Band Hunter Gatherers and the exponential rates of epigenetic change experienced in recent centuries or even decades.



Toxic ‘memes,’ ideas that infect entire cultures, spread and normalize violence and abuse. As technologies enhance the spread of ‘memes,’ the normalization of abuse expands. A few thousand years after ‘civilizations’ emerged, approximately 10,000 years ago, *The Diamond Sutra*, a Buddhist book from around 868 A.D., was printed in China. Later a German goldsmith invented movable-type in 1440, kicking the Printing Revolution down the hill. In 1962, a scientist from M.I.T. and ARPA proposed a “galactic network” of computers that could talk to one another. Personal computers emerged in the 1970s. Given our genetic history these world changing developments are blinks. None very long ago. So quickly have these counterfeit image making technologies changed the physical world, and our brain, precious few perceive what was lost, as we clamber and scramble to keep up with the new abnormal-normal, concealing even more what is missing.

Physicist David Bohm (1994), articulating the new physics of interconnection, described the universe as a dynamic holonomic implicate order in which an explicate order, the concrete manifestation we call the physical universe, is enfolded. Bohm explains how quantum reality overturns the static dualistic, subject-object worldview. Instead of separable elements, the world is unbroken and in dynamic interactive flux. Participation is entwined with observation. These notions are apparent in eastern traditions where *wu*, non-being, no-knowledge or wordless participation in nature, reflects approaches to life such as the Tao (Lao-tzu, 1963). *Wu-wei*, unmotivated, spontaneous action through nonaction or unforced action, attends to the unfolding of life in the moment.

This intersubjectivity is a co-creation of being through the interpenetration of various centers of subjectivity, a holistic and organic mutuality (de Quincey, 2005). Insight-intelligence taps into transrational reality, the deeper consciousness within the implicate order (the unmanifest), what pre-conquest consciousness and *wu* appear to access routinely. In the industrialized, westernized world, this form of thought typically only comes to attention in sudden “eureka moments.”

According to Bohm, only the transrational form of thought is orderly and creative whereas thought-in-the-mind can get stuck in its own feedback loops, even culturally shared loops, losing connection with the deeper consciousness. **In Taoist terms, *wu-wei* is missing.**

Species-Typical Phronesis for a Living Planet
Darcia Narvaez

Lost in our reified, often media induced, feedback loops, we fill our days as one learned Tibetan described; “housekeeping in a dream.” Perhaps more accurately, hiding in a self, culture and technology imposed nightmare. Compared with our genetic ancestors, yes, qualities of mind and therefore identity and relationship defining forces, are missing. Mechanical, reflexive, and far too often not-rational thought has displaced other ways of knowing, leaving human consciousness increasingly toxic, extending to its basic operation and structure.

We are faced with a breakdown of general social order and human values that threatens stability throughout the world. Existing knowledge cannot meet this challenge. Something much deeper is needed, a completely new approach. I am suggesting that the very means by which we try to solve our problems is the problem. The source of our problems is within the structure of thought itself.

We're not aware of how thought works and how it's really disrupting, not only our society and our individual lives but also the way the brain and nervous system operate, making us unhealthy or perhaps even somewhat damaging the system. We recognize that thought, rational, orderly, factual, such as in proper doing science, is valuable. The kind of thought that is so dangerous is self-centered thought.

One might wonder why self-centered thought is so bad. If the self were really there, then perhaps it would correct to center on the self because the self would be so important. But if the self is a kind of illusion, at least the self as we know it, then to center our thought on something illusory which is assumed to have supreme importance is going to disrupt the whole process and it will not only make thought about yourself wrong, it will make thought about everything wrong so that thought becomes a dangerous and destructive instrument all around.

David Bohm

We think the crisis is out there, in the world, social, economic, political.

The crisis isn't out there. The crisis is really inward, and we are unwilling to face this.

J. Krishnamurti

The above takes us ‘back to the future.’ We need to grow and nurture the neural structures during childhood from which moral identity and behavior emerge and depend. In addition, as Bohm notes; “we're not aware of how thought works and how it's really disrupting, not only our society and our individual lives but also the way the brain and nervous system operate, making us unhealthy or perhaps even somewhat damaging the system.”

As very few traditions have embarked, systematically, we must undertake a distilling and refining of the nature, use and structure of imaginative thought, which includes cultivating the direct, non-rational states Darcia and Bohm described above, including practices such as mindfulness, challenging and negating reification and reflexive ‘psychological’ memory as it arises, and the purposeful use of lucid imagination, free of egoistic and cultural distortions, in holistic and creative ways. Negating our pervasive misuse of memory, returns the ‘natural order’ of human consciousness nature designed, where conditioned thought is used as a tool, but not the default state. This natural order of the mind might look something like this:

When reflexive, conditioned memory is absent, the state of the mind still, empty, attention habitually trapped in mental images (mechanical thought) is freed, intensifies, not being distracted, and expands.

Receptive openness embraces more than human-only interactions, perceiving sentience all around... One is perceptive of all relationships in one's vicinity, those whose lives one's own life “touches,” from human persons to animal persons, plant persons, river persons, and so forth. It is a kin-centric orientation of practical cooperation, rather than an abstracted ethic.

Practical wisdom from this perspective displays an interconnected, nonegoic stance attentive to mindset and manner of being. Attending to relationships means attending to virtue, which means attending to manner—of respect and acknowledgement... Communities purposefully engage in practices that emphasize connection to “all our relations” including the other-than-human.

Non-egoic action embraces inclusivity, aware that all is sacred and interconnected... Humans consider themselves younger members of the biocommunity who have much to learn from the rest—whether tree beings, winds, or specific animal beings of the local landscape. To act otherwise, is to be imprudent.

Practical wisdom is guided by meaning-making narratives and root metaphors but also by what is believed to be rational. According to William James (1912), rationality has at least four dimensions: **moral, aesthetic, intellectual and practical** (appropriateness). To judge rationally means to maximize all four dimensions simultaneously. Indigenous sustainable wisdom aligns with this view, adding in a transrational or spiritual dimension. According to Native American traditions, to live fully and well means to cultivate these dimensions and their interdependence throughout one’s life.

Species-Typical Phronesis (Practical Wisdom) for a Living Planet
Darcia Narvaez

These qualities of mind are lived, spontaneously, moment by moment, not mechanically or reflexively. As nonliving media and technologies expand their attention addicting influence, they diminish each individual’s capacity to flip, as we are suggesting, the default state of mind to this “kin-centric, quiet, expansive orientation of practical cooperation,” from exclusively human persons to include animal persons, plant persons, river persons, the sky, mountains, all of nature, and from this ground, to use thought as a creative tool for wholeness and wellness for all.

To a great extent what we think of as our personal identity is imagined, a concept, reflected in the mirror of cultural expectation and judgment. When that internalized image is absent, non-active, silent, identity cease to be a fixed. Rather identity becomes intense, sensitive attention, flowing and relating with the winds of life’s eternal movements. Even the capacity to be embarrassed evaporates in this sensitive movement, freeing even more attention to connect and relate with empathic appropriateness and care. Attention moves from limited and relatively fixed ‘concepts’ to flowing sensation, from being a victim, look what is happening to ‘me,’ to what is ‘happening in relationship’ from noun-me, to verb-flowing presences.

Focusing attention on me-noun-concept, evokes a response from the same order of conditioned memory, “oh, poor me,” a victim. When this reflexive trigger is absent, the default nonegoic state and perception expands, opening to direct capacities of knowing often excluded by preexisting conditioning; a state of interconnected attending, expanding to transpersonal-transrational realms, inviting different orders of appropriateness. Krishnamurti described this quality of attention and direct knowing as, “freedom from the known.”

Feeling threatened, and of course, threat, punishment and shame are culture’s most effective mind control agents, squeezes the amygdala, again and again, driving attention from flowing transpersonal knowing back into victim fight-flight, most often beneath the level of conscious awareness. As Bohm notes; the activity of the brain is so quick, this shift happens before we are aware it has happened, often resulting in self-centered, reflexive behaviors.

Appreciating this, the Buddhist tradition cultivates mindfulness, what G. I. Gurdjieff called ‘self-remembering,’ raising the quality and intensity of attention out of the reflex system. J. Krishnamurti goes further. “With complete attention, he notes, “there is no observer,” a state of Choiceless Awareness. The difference is subtle but profound.

Will and choice imply an observer willing and choosing. The existence of an observer, the concept of ‘me,’ implies at least some attention is split, reflecting back, observing what is taking place. Complete attention negates this split between the observer and the observed. There is only attention, including, but not limited by one’s conditioning.

The critical understanding being; direct perception, sensing, experiencing is a form of 'knowing' not filtered or limited by concepts, including selfishness, a state Bohm, Krishnamurti and Joseph Chilton Pearce call "insight." Free from the observer, the concept of 'me,' awareness expands to include transpersonal-transrational responses that are infinitely more inclusive and therefore appropriate than self-centered reflexes.

Mindfulness may begin with an observer, an internal witness, and often does, which involves will, a goal, something to achieve, becoming. As mindful attention expands, the fallacy of the observer is revealed. The search, achieving, efforts to control disappear, leaving pure unfettered attention, without the observer-intellect distracting and everything changes.

Darcia describes in "Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality, Evolution and Culture," in line with Joseph Chilton Pearce, James Prescott, Ashley Montagu and others, how the prerequisite for transcendent, egalitarian virtue and goodness, is full development of the brain and its perception-imagination structures upon which these nature-given qualities rest. And that happens very early, nurtured by the experiences each child is given. More precisely, by the modeled behaviors we express every day.

We are the future our children will become. We are completely responsible for the capacities they embody or not, and to a great extent the moral or corrupt choices they will make. The future is now, and we are it.

Michael Mendizza