

Re-Introduction

“How does it feel to be you?”

Asked the child

“How does it feel to be a tree?”

What does being a stone feel like?

What does being pregnant feel like?

How does it feel to grow old?

How does it feel for wood to be made into a chair?

How does it feel for fuel to burn inside a motor engine?

What does being water feel like?

What does being sunlight feel like?

Being earth?

Being plastic?”

When I was a child
Each new day was an adventure into the unknown
Everything moved me, excited me, stirred me
I was often frightened, but always enthusiastic

All the while it seemed as if the adults took it all in stride
Going along with their plans
Treating everything very casually...
Too casually

Since I was so overwhelmed by life's events
Their apparent indifference bewildered me
I attributed it, as perhaps many children do
To their great wisdom and courage

It was only many years later, during my thirties
Past the turmoils of my teens and twenties
That thanks to the peace achieved through Yoga and therapy
- I had realized that at some point I had joined their ranks

I was (and still am) indeed a "Grownup"
Yet not as wise and courageous as I imagined I would be

Somewhere along the way
I had misplaced my sense of wonder

And as far as I could tell
By the rarity of the appearance of a sparkle in their eyes
The infrequency of the tone of enthusiasm in their voices
So did most other Grownups

There was
There is
Something affecting the majority of mature adults

A sort of social affliction

This coincides with a growing understanding nowadays
That we humans must reconnect –
Reconnect with our emotions
Reconnect with our bodies
Reconnect with each other
Reconnect with nature
Reconnect with a deeper sense of meaning and belonging

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Life is wonderful

Every moment is magical

But sometimes the magic gets lost, dissipated

Like the atmosphere of a refreshing and nourishing vacation
As we return to tackle the chores and duties of a daily routine

Like the enchantment of a special, romantic, intimate night
By the noisy daily hustle of a new working day

Magic may even be forgotten

Barely memorable

The sense of wonder greatly diminished
Exhilaration and inspiration rarely occurring

And it can happen to anyone

Both to a person
And a civilization

It takes wisdom and courage
To admit it
To pick up the pieces
Rekindle the cinders
And allow magic to shine within you once again
As it did during childhood

.

During my thirties I had discovered and re-discovered
Many habits and practices that made me feel more joyful,
more fulfilled

But the many avenues and methods to ‘Reconnect’ –
New Age, Alternative, Esoteric, Holistic –
Have often seemed to me like fragments

Pieces that are related to one another

Once part of a single, greater whole

A comprehensive, sustainable, alternative way of life

Not just something to supplement or alleviate “modern life”

An environment

A community

A world

One can immerse into completely

The source of origin

A source which has never been sufficiently emphasized

Highlighted

Animism

For approximately 250 thousand years
Our human ancestors lived as hunter-gatherers, foragers

They gathered plants and hunted animals for food
Made their own tools and clothing
Sheltered in the wild and migrated with the seasons

Their way of life preceded agriculture
That ten thousand years of rapid change later
Lead to the emergence of ‘civilized’ cultures
And our modern way of life

Not long ago
Members of technological, industrialized western societies
Might have ruled out practices and beliefs of ancient tribes
As irrelevant, outdated, savage, un-evolved

But then something snapped

Was it shock at the proliferation and *use* of weapons
of unimaginable destruction?

Was it outrage at the inhumanity of empires?
The enslavement and genocide of unprecedented numbers of
people culminating in the World Wars?

Or the growing evidence of a breakdown of the environmental
conditions that sustain us all?

All this has led many of us to realize that civilization has
“gone too far”

Has somehow caused humanity to fall out of equilibrium
Perhaps like other now extinct species on earth before us

And so in recent decades

Aspects of pre-historic ways of life have begun to trickle in
Many practices adopted because they seem healthier than
many of our modern practices

Our forager fore-parents enjoyed:

More suitable, varied, local, seasonal diets

More physical activity as well as more leisure time

An equal division and more precise assignment of labor, re-
sulting in less stressful daily schedules

A safety net of social ties that assured a sense of security

Each was profoundly knowledgeable in local botany, zoolo-
gy, meteorology and basic astronomy

Mastering a vast range of skills like hunting and diving

Stone and wood work, tracking and tanning

Preparing food and clothing, fire and shelter¹

But beyond all of these more practical aspects of their lives
Yet inseparable from them

Lay the dominant “world view” of our ancient fore-parents:

1 For further reading: Sapiens - Yuval Noah Harari

Animism

Animism is considered to be the mother
The predecessor
Of religion

Yet Animism is not a religion

There were no commandments, no scripted prayers,
No holy days, no specific places of worship

There are and have been many Animists within most major
religions, such as King Solomon and St. Francis of Assisi

Animism is a perception

It is the perception that:

Everything is alive and conscious

Just like us

Everything speaks and listens

All sorts of dialogue occur between all things

Our fore-parents used to wander around in the wild

Speaking with everything and then listening to everything

Understanding and being understood

Animism produces
In the beholder
A sense of participation and reciprocity

The notion that everything is alive
Including inanimate, still beings

That everything is responsive, communicating with me
Often willing to accommodate my needs and wishes

Much like our fore-parents -

Our children experience life as Animists
During the earliest stages of childhood
Regardless of cultural differences –

Evident in children's books
Where a cloud, a flower or a car
Are portrayed with faces
And conduct dialogues

And this brings us to the equation
Between innocence and Animism

For is not this perception, this “sense”
The original Innocence in the biblical Garden of Eden?

The innocence lost after eating from the tree of knowledge?

The “primitive” innocence in Eden,
Based in a life of foraging, gathering
Preceding a “banishment”, “exile”
Followed by a life of agriculture and herding?

And yet

Though in the biblical garden
It is the ideal state of human existence
From which we were banished due to the sin of knowledge

Though it was the dominant perspective
From time immemorial, during human pre-history
More widespread and long-lasting than modern religions or
ideologies

Animism lies mostly unmentioned and unknown

Dismissed and discarded

Because the dramatic shift
That occurred during the agricultural revolution

A shift in human perspective and experience of life -

Made Animism seem at the very least childish

If not utterly ridiculous...

The Book of Life

In this book you shall find an examination of reality
Perceived by an Animist

How life in general is perceived
How the life inside us is experienced
Our interaction with beings around us
And our relationship with the greater beings beyond us

I chose a form of short stanzas
With minimal punctuation

To allow your mind some breathing room between ideas
To enable your attention to shift and wander
To indicate a rhythm and flow, like poetry

Comparisons are often made
Between modern and Animistic perspectives
And the effect of both on individuals, society and the environment

Interspersed short stories relate experiences by non-human beings

And the occasional exercise
Invites you to first-hand experiences

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It is important to mention that this book, written in words
Might be, or might have been, considered by Animists
Who did not develop written languages
As both futile and dangerous...

Futile because we are part of an ever changing and transient
whole

In which whatever should endure is recorded in tree rings,
soil layers, rock formations and DNA strings

Dangerous because truth is always partial and subjective
And words narrow truth down even further

Words are always spoken by a specific person
Addressed towards a specific audience
At a specific place and point in time

The meanings of words are so temporary, so fragile
That having them written or engraved
Might cause them to limit and/or mislead the reader
If taken out of context

For Animists

The experience of reality is often direct, sensual and tangible
And remains largely undefined, allowing a scope of mystery

It is the unrefined notion coming from within us
Or a sign, an omen, emerging before us
That guides us throughout life's unmarked trails

Not the words of some person who lives across the ocean
Or who has passed away years ago

Every single thing we sense or feel
Is a message communicated to us

Like a word in a sentence
Part of a scene, a chapter
In our personal story

Whether it is a bird call, a footprint
A bowel movement, a scent
The changing shape of a passing cloud...

Modern people forgot about the living book
Replaced it with a myriad of human texts
Stopped following the infinite ongoing tale that is nature

They forgot how to interpret the words and sentences
Uttered all around their natural environment
And from within their own physical bodies

Until the only form of communication
Most can currently speak and understand –
Or even realize there is in existence –

Are representations of literal human language

Talking pictures, written texts, signs and banners

Life itself is a book

Zooming in –

Our own personal story is the central plot

Progressing with the rhythms of our breath, our heartbeat

A story in which you – are the hero, narrator and interpreter
of its events

Everything you feel and sense

Is the dialogue and storyline

The score and the decor

Zooming out –

The story of the whole universe consists of all our stories

Interwoven together

Pulsating in an ever changing universal frequency

.

Even though this book contains explicit statements on various issues

Animism is a very open ended perception of life

Just as there are infinite forms of life

There are an infinite number of ways you can perceive life

Perceive the universe

Perceive yourself

Each religion, each ideology, each theory
Each solution, each question

Is at once an authentic, absolute truth -
As well as one single aspect of the whole truth

No one story
No one truth
Is more important or more accurate than another

They all just add up
Like colors in a picture

They all show different sides
Facets of a prism

And if we manage to stay open
Open to one another

Our perspectives shall expand
Our experiences shall deepen

Enriched by each other

.

So dear reader

You are the only one who can truly come to know your own
unique universe

It is your blessing

And to catch a glimpse of what it's like to be you

Is your gift to yourself - and to the rest of the world

Let the words in this book not substitute, nor discourage
An expression of your own feelings and ideas

Not interfere with your own celebration of yourself and the
world

Or even with some spontaneous tune which suddenly comes
to you

Let the words in this book not hinder you,
Not distract you from noticing

The melody in some child's laughter
The exuberance of a birdsong nearby
The play of leaves with the wind
Or the sight of a lizard rapidly ascending a tree

These words compose ideas which are but

An awkward representation of the profound wisdom vibrating through the mere presence of rocks

A mere hint of the bountiful inspiration available by simply looking up at the sky

A swift shadow passing across the body of boundless, compassionate wisdom -

That is our planet Earth