**First Impressions**

A sudden realization that all things are not one; that what I am experiencing is not ‘whole’ - that there is a splintering of reality into individual components - ball, table, mommy, doorknob - all of these things did not immediately respond to my requirements.

The awareness of this frustrated me - made me slowly understand that I was alone in the universe and that everything else around me had to be grasped, figuratively and literally, in order for me to do things that I chose to do. I expressed my discontent vocally, physically, as I was able.

I suppose this ‘first growing up’, the awareness of otherness, of absolute separateness from ‘everything else I am aware of that is external of my body’ is something most of us just consider ‘identity awareness’. I found it devastating.

Apparently, where I ‘came from’ I had it all, my whims or needs simply required a shoulder shrug or a bit of a body fidget. Now? I have to struggle just to not be hungry or uncomfortable, minute by minute… apparently forever. I realized I needed to improve the transmission of my requirements.

I steadily rated the success of each attempt to have my needs met. Crying did grant some attention, screaming brought the granters more quickly, but often they seemed frantic, unable to grasp exactly how to meet my requirements, and I noted that they became easily frustrated when I attempted to only communicate with these loud protests.

They kept making particular sounds over and over - mostly with their mouths.

One day it occurred to me - I should make those sounds - perhaps it would work better than the screaming requests - just make the same noises they do - and see if I get fed, changed and rocked any more efficiently… and it WORKED!

The better I echoed the noises the granters made, the more successfully my needs were met. I was figuring out how to survive, how to succeed, how to move through this place full of external things that I couldn’t directly control. Mama & Dada started me on this new idea for expressing my hungers and needs more effectively.

Eventually I started stringing together more and more of these mouth-noises the granters made, delighting them with my ability to move the order of the sounds around differently, to attach additional meanings to these sounds - meanings that even the granters had not attached to the sounds previously - and this effect absolutely delighted them, mesmerized them.

I found that if I moved the sounds around just right, I could bring people along with me on a ride - an adventure, a story about what was, and what was not, just using these sounds effectively, shiftingly, to craft a way of perceiving a thing, an event, an idea, a stance that they would follow along with me as I painted.

I could direct these sounds in ways that made the granters laugh and laugh. This special noise they made somehow offered me magical access to their inner circle - they would let me sit and listen to their ‘words’, their ideas about things, because I could entertain them with my ‘words’.

Words became the most magical things in the universe; this golden key to granting all sorts of access - to things, to places, to people, to ideas, to food … “May I have an apple?” “What time is dinner?” “What is your name?”

It was a time of wonder - that so many things inside my mind could be propagated to other entities, and that there was so much data to be gained by asking these entities (who seemed to know so much more than I did) what the heck was going on.

Then, so soon, I was exposed to the largest of all magic - these mouth-sounds could be recorded, or WRITTEN DOWN and then recalled later on.

~wait, you mean I don’t have to remember everything everyone, including me says, I can just write it down and then later it will be there for recall? You mean - if ANYONE has anything important to relay they can write it down and then all I have to do is READ IT and I will KNOW IT TOO? ARE YOU KIDDING ME???!~

It was like going from being in a kiddie train that went in an oval track for a few hundred yards to a continental Amtrak adventure. I could learn whatever I wanted by simply READING about it. wow. So I did.

I wanted to know everything. So I read everything. Yes, sometimes I played with kids - the granters kept making me ‘interact’ with other humans, cutting deeply into my research of Everything, but I still gobbled up data at a rapid clip - reading from 2-10 hours a day almost every day.

For over 20 years I Hoovered data into my young skull full of mush.

Slowly, too slowly it dawned on me that not all data had the same value. There was inaccuracies, myths, conjectures-as-truth, suppositions and lies. These confounded me, and made learning The Truth much more difficult.

I naively imagined that all people wanted all other people to know The Truth (never mind that during these years, I spent much time concocting untruths - stories - and invented explanations that routed punishment around me whenever possible!) - and dealing with this ‘degree of untruthyness’ was very frustrating for me.

At 21 years of age, I felt stuck - as though my computer-mind had lots of un-weighted data points that did not allow me the luxury of plucking any given set of them out of my repository and using all that powerful data to bolster this perspective or that stance.

All seemed to be indeterminate and free-floating in an continuous sea of possibilities. Without some fulcrum and lever to determine the value of any given data, what was the point of the data? I floundered for some time with this quandary - how to judge the data I had acquired in a way that was profitable?

Words, which I found to be my salvation, were now my problem - as this vast scattering of ideas had no judgement system, no value assignments to give them heft, or send them aloft as very light ideas.

The data in my head was a moras of information that had no central crux of formulation. Unforged ideas. Useless data. I had no idea how to proceed, how to somehow wrestle order and some sort of hierarchical structure to all of this data.

I started reading books about how to think critically. How to successfully weigh our impressions and glean the best ideas from these experiences. One of the best was Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance - where much is made of word choices and how to divide the world in different ways inside the mind.

This allowed me to conceive of a sort of … internal library of ideas and thoughts - not really cataloged exactly, but the untested data would all go to the basement until further data could be found to make them worthy of further consideration.

This library of ideas would require an inventory to determine what valuable data needed to be prominently displayed, and what should be relegated to the basement. This took some time.

In the middle of all of my angst and confusion about what is accurate experience, what is real, what is true, and how can we know it - someone made an extended argument for me having no idea what is really going on.

They gently opined that forming my thinking in this ‘misguided way’ may not be as fruitful as some other methods smart people have used to help them break through some of the quandaries that I keep discussing. The problem of not understanding what the hell is going on, and what can actually be accomplished, and what is pure bullshit.

I, of course, told that person and several of their cohorts that they were living in some utopian dream land, and obviously did not have the sort of reverence for their mind that I had for mine, as unsure as it might be about everything At This Moment; that consuming a few hundred micrograms of some psychotropic molecule was NOT the solution to everyone’s problems, regardless of how much FUN they had frolicking around with it in their tangled minds.

They, at times smugly, at times with very large hearts, continued to assure me that I was so far off the mark that most of my mouth-noises were inconsequential. This actually started to irritate me.

Their superior, Oh-well-I-just-happen-to-know-the-secret-to-the-universe-and-you-DONT’ attitude just about made me want to strangle them at times.

They gently offered me more books by other idiots who had foolishly done the same thing - crossed that no-man-may-cross-back barrier where you hand your precious and only one of a kind mind over to some howling vortex for TWELVE FUCKING HOURS at a time - and hope you come back in one piece.

It was as frightening as any astronaut being launched in a ‘first try’ rocket ship - the difference was - IF the astronaut survived, his trip was a success, whereas I could come back down and spend the next 40 years ‘unsuccessfully dealing with the journey’.

They kept purring about the journey being so worth the terror that does not manifest.

Eventually I fell under their spell and I consumed the potion (see article). I was forever changed in that night, and by the next day, my library had been somehow weighted and stacked by some unfathomable method and I saw what mattered and what didn’t - what was valuable and what wasn’t. And my life has been so much better for that shift - as far as I know.

I attempted to restrain myself around others - OH MY GHOD, I KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON AND IT IS SO INCREDIBLE I HAVE TO EXPLAIN IT TO EVERYONE - the stupid smugness that had so clearly irritated me when glimpsed was plastered all over my face. I babbled like a brook about the wonder of existence, the unlikelihood of a universe, and other useless drivel. I was insufferable for weeks.

Slowly, the glow faded and I could mostly behave ‘normally’ around other humans, but I still wanted to shout at them - WAKE UP AND PAY ATTENTION - problem was in trying to figure out a way to communicate exactly what it was that I felt folks NEEDED to pay attention towards.

All I knew was that life was this vibrant, thrumming aliveness that called to us all each conscious moment, and it felt like so many of us were sleepwalking through the mystery and wonder of those preciously poised potentials. I wanted to shake everyone awake. I still do.

The whole point of being alive is to experience it as completely as possible.