

The Other Story

Being different, and not knowing it begins to reveal the as-toos and the how-fors of being treated as through strange. Not fitting in because one isn't a fit from birth is painful for both the child and the parents, both who will do anything they can to make it a fit, even though it imprisons the inherent nature of the child.

What damage is done when parts of one are shaved off, or lopped off in order for the fit to be made. "Ah, at last it fits," she said only to have the shoe burst open from the too large toes and the overwhelming heel. "Well, it fit for a second. Doesn't that count for something?" Sure it does if it's one's foot that one crammed into the too small shoe. Of course don't ask the shoe. It definitely has a different opinion. But who cares about the shoe? Well, the salesman does, who sits there unbelievably. One shoe in the box, and the other shoe having just been stretched into oblivion.

What of the child, treated like a shoe, who is supposed to take in what parents tend to offer as cultural food, only it isn't a fit? The parents innocent, just doing their appropriate cultural job...downloading the cultural training into their children, and the child doing its best to be downloaded, only the wires don't match. Oh, the friction!

Metaphor: What defines a culture is what it isn't. It isn't this, it isn't that, and what's left, is what it is. What makes one a Japanese and another French is what is left out and what remains. Imagine a pie with each piece of the pie being a different culture. Combined together and the pie represents humanity. Take each part separately and one has a part of the whole, and that part is distinguished by what it doesn't include, which is the rest of the parts of the pie, or the rest of the parts of humanity. Genetically, on a cultural level, the pie is the genetic potential of humanity and each culture represents such one subgroup of the genetic material that remains to be active when all the other genes have been turned off; the genes that go into all of the other parts of the pie.

Metaphorical Connection: True also for individuals. The culture in this case is the pie, and is far greater than any one slice, or individual of that culture. The individual is only one part of that individual's culture. The slices of any one cultural pie combine to make that culture and yet some people are born into a culture with genetically active material that is beyond the boundaries of that culture. This genetically active material is usually treated as a direct threat to the integrity of that culture's genetic foundation. The adults that coordinate that culture feel bound to excise that "alien" genetic material so as to sustain the cultural identity. This is the foundation of ethnocentricity. It gives rise to the urge to maintain what is called "racial" purity. It is a drive that exists in the cultural coding; the drive to maintain its ego identity.

Another Metaphor: It is most easily understood just in our common understanding of how our physical body defends its integrity through an immune system that seeks to eliminate any foreign entity that penetrated into our body system. It has defensive agents called antibodies that seek out these foreign entities and removes them from our bodily system. So too do cultures have antibodies that seek to eliminate outside elements that would alter the integrity of the culture. Unfortunately, many of these outside elements are introduced through its own offspring, in the culture's intuitive attempt to broaden its base. Simultaneously, the culture seeks to eliminate outside influences, while those very same outside influences are introduced into the culture through the newborn babies. Family first, then schools are the culture's premier antibody producers that seek to identify and to

eliminate the ability of these genetically broader beings from manifesting from within the culture. In more advanced societies the school drops these types of children into special classes where they are worked with intensively to set them into place through chemical and behavioral restraints. These classes are specifically designed to restrict the “undesirable “genetic material from becoming active.

It’s ironic how the drive to control and the need for a culture to stay “fresh and vibrant” are at odds with each other. To be born within the group of having the expanded genetic material is a special experience depending upon which culture one is born into. If one was born into an indigenous people before the coming of the European, the tribe’s cultural values being elastic expressively appreciated and saw the value in those born with unusual, beyond the culturally normal range of ability, and sought to include these children within their society. In some Asian cultures the people had the opposite response to these special children as the very rigidity of their society condemned these children to isolation and exclusion. The families of such children were often treated in the same way when such a child was identified. The choice the family had was to eliminate that child before people in the general community became aware of the special nature of the child thus resulting in the family living in shame.

The story is about what happens to such a child in the American Culture, and the change in the child’s life when someone enters their life who has gone through the experience of being special and having survived intact. The American culture is caught somewhere between the Asian cultural rigidity and the Indigenous People’s cultural flexibility. It is an unclear environment, not sure of itself or its real purpose, so in that way it intimately shares the story about to be told.

The story opens up with Josh a fourteen-year-old and Dusk, a man beyond ancient and common concepts of reality. The power of the story reveals through the empathy the two experience in the mutual sharing of their life stories and the gradual transmission of the philosophy, attitudes, strategies, and skills essential in order to survive intact.

The key to surviving intact is to know what it feels like. Basically, for the reader, it is the feeling of empowerment one feels when one maintains one’s uniqueness and simultaneously fits into one’s culture. In America, where the culture is mildly schizophrenic in that it both wants the expanded cultural material and yet it is fearful of it as it being something too overwhelming and frightening, to survive intact is in itself a schizophrenic experience.

To be both wanted and feared sets up the basic conflict that creates a growing wave of mental instability. It gains momentum through life unless one is saved by the good fortune of coming into a relationship with one who has successfully been there before. This is that story.

Josh’s home was always like that...chaos, cycles of swift coming together and falling apart all under of the tide of high emotions. The cheery part was its predictability; to know the future is a rare event, and in Josh’s life the future never varied...the events were totally predictable.

Going to school was no better. Josh being a bright child knew right from the beginning that school wasn’t for him, yet would anyone listen? No, of course not...school was where one stopped being in contact with reality and where reality became more abstracted year by year. Josh, being the kind of kid that grew in direct relationship to his exploration of the world, stopped growing somewhere between 3rd and

4th grade, somewhere where the whole was starting to be broken up into fractions. Never were fractions a part of his physical world, and suddenly someone decided Josh needed to know what a half of this was, a quarter of that...well OK up to that point, but what with the story of multiplying and dividing these fractions. One quarter times two thirds...where in his world did that exist, except in the imagination of the people who spent their whole life abstracting reality into meaningless symbols. Josh blanked out when education became irrelevant and lost his ability to spend significant time in the relevance of exploring his real world; so Josh basically was stopped dead in his tracks. The track went to nowhere, and Josh wasn't willing to go to nowhere...it just kind of took him there.

Josh, being bright communicated quite clearly with the powers to be about his feelings for school, "I hate school. It's boring!" The powers to be responded with absolute predictability, "What a dumb thing to say. Can't make it in life without school, dummy." Josh being quick, "But you made it. You got money and you never completed your education." The power responded, "Well, things are different today. Can't do it that way anymore in the world we live in. Don't you get it yet?"

Josh was wondering why the power always complain about how much the plumber makes, and how much the mechanic charges, and they look sloppy, and dirty, and unkempt, but the power says they have a ton of money, and they never went to college. Something is definitely wrong with all of this...and that wrongness is making Josh feel lost.

Now a man presents. Jonathan was wondering why he had been so fortunate, and how upsetting it was for so many people to be so less fortunate than he. He couldn't understand his good fortune, nor could he deny it, and every time he saw a homeless person, or saw the news showing film on the famines in Africa, or the slums of America he felt terrible. The homeless made him sorry, and he always gave a dollar to the Mexican looking lady in the white uniform outside of K-Mart. But...what?"

Jonathan having being married twice knew of the misery that could come from caring about people...nothing more intimately painful than to see the faces of his children during and after the divorces. The ultimate betrayal, divorce...where the children are absolute victims of the misguided power of their parents. "Its for the best. It for the best for the children, the divorce." What a crock. The children having no voice could only express it in years of warranted disrespect. "How can you talk that way to me? I'm the power. You're not allowed to talk that way to me. You're grounded." Tyrants and victims..."Oh my children are tyrants the way they speak to me. They never cooperate. They only think of themselves." I wonder where that comes from..."Its for the good of the children," the voice of the betrayer who fosters the goodness of divorce.

"But I didn't want the divorce. It was forced on me. I couldn't stop it." The impotence. The impotence, where strength and being the anchor was so locked-in up until then. What happened to that strength, that trust, the steadfastness? Gone, with a whish of the pen, the ink dries on the destruction of the family, and the years of resentment and bitterness that follows with the children mirroring the emotional distress of the whole situation, and the power saying, "It was for the good of the children, and everybody better accept that for their own good."

Yes, for Jonathan, life had been so good that he wanted to give something back now that his children were grown and living pretty much on their own. It had all worked

out in the end. Just look at their independence and ability to work, with their college degrees, they are well suited for American life. The education plus the strength forged through the fires of their dysfunctional home life, Ahh, what steel, what backbone, what a delicate balance of fragility and power.

Confusing, huh? Yes, it is all confusing especially how we reframe our lives...a bit distant from our actual experience. Maybe, even a bit schizophrenic...like our culture.