

## Imaginal Experience

What is this place, this interior realm, this inner self? What is this happening, that asks us not to believe nor even to think, but to experience and to know? It is only the conceptual faculty of the mind that asks this question, the question of what internal experience is or means, or what validity it has. It poses this question from its own need for assurance and validation. It poses this question as though it, the conceptual faculty of the mind, were the arbiter of truth, capable of objective analysis.

The problem with the question is of course that it asks a nonlinear, nonrational occurrence to “prove itself” in linear and rational terms. The need for assurance and validation that the conceptual mind experiences is that particular category of suffering that “modern” man is subject to. It is widely thought that prior to the modern era, human beings had not yet developed the faculty of perception that enables conceptual subject-object differentiation. It is also generally accepted that human beings, even in modern times, do not develop conceptual subject-object differentiation until around nine years of age.

The thoughts and behaviors of young children who are in the throes of pre-rational experience are typically dismissed as incoherent attempts at rationality. The same is true of thoughts and behaviors exhibited by adults who are in the throes of pre-rational experience, whether those adults be members of “primitive” cultures or members of “modern” cultures. Such incoherent attempts at rationality exhibited by children are thought to be silly and cute, those by primitives are thought to be unevolved, and those by adult moderns are thought to be pathological. Therefore they are often dismissed as invalid, unimportant, immature, or worse yet, insane, psychotic, pathological.

What of this pre-rational, pre-linear, pre-conceptual experience? Is prerational experience simply rational experience that is not yet developed or organized enough to be valid? What if we try to answer this very rational question in terms that apply not to its rational or linear validity, but rather to its origin, function, and purpose?