

TELEVISION

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The formation of inner pictures - an overview

Inner pictures arise from experience; they are always connected to emotions and closely linked to interactions. The ability to "image" is innate and begins in babyhood. Hence television does not have the power to "out-image" children, but it does have a high level of responsibility for providing supportive and not obstructive images.

Does television have the power, the negative potential to "out-image" children? Before adding a number of further considerations on the subject, it is worth looking at the way inner pictures actually come about and how they can be influenced by television (in both the positive and the negative sense). To begin with, I would like to invite you to create as many vivid and colourful inner pictures of your own as possible while you are reading this. Allow me to start off with a little quiz question:

"What has a darker shade of green - a frozen pea or a branch from a fir tree in winter?"

This is by no means a general knowledge question. It is more a suggestion how to become aware of the way we usually answer such non-memorizable questions in daily life: absolutely naturally and spontaneously we form an image in our imagination - you have raised the pea and the fir branch to the surface before your mind's eye -, drawing on a specifically human ability.

Your image relates to an everyday experience and is founded on both experience (in this case of a frozen pea and a fir branch in winter) and the ability to visualize, i.e. first you needed an external visualization in order to arrive at an inner one. You use your memory to remember and to evoke the memory. The human ability to organize a structure, a function of reasoning, eventually produces the correct liaison between the pea and the fir branch. As you can see, with the help of this little quiz we are now in the middle of our topic - and several crucial aspects of the inner pictures become clear: we employ this specifically human property to imagine something, automatically and virtually non-stop in everyday life. We create images. This is also reflected in the use of language. Before I invited you to "create as many vivid and colourful inner pictures as possible". We say, for example: "Just imagine that...". We have a brainwave, a flash of inspiration, we express a situation by means of an image, saying for instance: "Many roads lead to Rome" or: "That's all Greek to me", etc..

The beginning is experience

"Imaging" is a primeval pattern of behaviour - a phenomenon which philosophers discussed before the psychologists (Etienne Klemm 1999, p. 9 ff.). Kant put it very succinctly: All knowledge begins with experience. We experience something sensorially, physically, motorically, visually, acoustically by firstly grasping at it, by reaching out for it - in the real and figurative sense - in order to finally grasp it (Eisler 1994, p. 134). All thinking begins with images - with visualization. Sigmund Freud was the first to discover that we have two different thinking processes: on the one hand primary-process thinking in images: pictorial, integral, intuitive-imaginative thinking; on the other hand secondary-process, rational-conceptual thinking (Salvisberg 1997, p. 77). This was to be expanded by Jean Paul Sartre, who dedicated a well-known treatise on thinking in images, *L'imaginèere* (1940). We owe him our knowledge of the mutual dependence, the so-called interdependence between imaginative thinking in images and concrete-real thinking in concepts. In concrete terms, we can only think due to pictorial thinking and images, and we can only describe and reflect on our images and pictures due to conceptual thinking. The

human being can transcend reality via the imaginary, the imaginary inspires our thoughts, suggesting freedom and creativity. So we may say that "thoughts are free", as expressed in the immortal German folksong, or in this case "images are free".

In all the mind's images the memory (a non-verbal - non-language - and a verbal - language memory) plays a key role. And finally all imagination requires the faculty of ordering, structuring reason (besides intuition with its immediate apprehension), which constantly endeavours to establish a meaningful link between experience, the sensorially imagined object and its concept. The human being finds the correct connection by means of reasoning and is thus able to order and store his or her experience.

All experience features emotion. Mood and feelings are also connected with the inner pictures of the pea and the fir branch, surfacing as small scenes. All memory emerges together with its original feelings, which explains why all of our remembered experience and all of our mind's images always feature emotion. This phenomenon was pointed out and recorded by the two philosophers mentioned above many decades ago: every perception and mind's image is accompanied by an affective reaction, for via our emotions we can experience the world as being coherent and consistent. Development psychology and pure research in this field corroborate this connection; neurobiological / neurophysiological research, which has succeeded in mapping an exact plan of the brain's architecture and structure, similarly substantiates it with precise evidence. Indeed, this research has made this popular by many treatises on emotional intelligence: emotions are attributed eminent significance regarding perception, thinking, understanding and coping with everyday life. Thinking and emotion walk hand-in-hand in every situation: there is no discernment without emotion, no action, no perception, no remembering without emotion, and so forth. Understanding is not possible without emotion. Emotions are always linked to inner pictures, consequently no action, no realization, no perception and no remembering exist without inner pictures. Emotions appear in all interaction situations, whether they are of a social-interpersonal nature or a natural, material or even virtual kind; they also feature as a relationship aspect in all relationships.

Hence five fundamental aspects concerning inner pictures are evident, beneficial for all imagining human beings from infants, schoolchildren and young people to adults:

1. All realization begins with experience.
2. Thinking in concepts and thinking in images belong together as autonomous and necessary complementary functions.
3. The memory plays a key role.
4. Reason provides a structure permitting a meaningful connection between experiences.
5. All experience features emotion - all memories and images are linked to the emotions that accompanied the original situation and generate the current emotions.

The ability to create "inner pictures" is innate

It is both astonishing and exciting that the human being is able to start "imaging" - i.e. create images - from birth, that he or she starts creating mind images from life's very first moment, for all the conditions necessary are innate/inherent in the human being. There is reason to assume that the functions designed to create inner pictures, such as recognition memory, are active even prior to birth. A fine example is that of the musician and conductor who rehearsed a new score he felt actually familiar with, but did not know it consciously. It turned out that his mother - while she was expecting him - repeatedly played this piece on her cello, the music leaving a pre-natal memory trace.

What stimulates human beings to create images? What induces the formation process of inner pictures? In order to explain this formation process, I would like to briefly turn to the very young child / the baby. Naturally, we all know that babies do not represent the children's television public, but the faculty of having inner pictures, of developing and using them is already shaped in babyhood and infancy. This period is a so-called sensitive phase for mind images and is vital for the genesis of the inner pictures, even if they continue to develop a whole life long.

The very first step is experience, the very first step is the image. These experiences and images have to be put in some kind of order. The human being wants to order and structure his or her experiences to find an explanation for the world, to experience his or her world as coherent and consistent. He or she is born with a fundamental need for structure. The second great innate need is the need for relationships, i. e. the need as a social being to be integrated into social relationships, to be able to constantly recreate and maintain this social contact, and to know that one is surrounded by a lively environment even when one is in fact alone. These two needs induce the baby to start "imaging" - to enter into an inner dialogue

with him or herself and to exploit all the opportunities afforded by this specifically human property. The first inner pictures are copies of normal, everyday interaction experiences. They engraved themselves - before the acquisition of language - into the body memory, where they are stored. This explains why they have such a lasting effect even when we are virtually no longer aware of them. These inner pictures develop further and assume all the new additional abilities; they take on different forms, leading to the formation of a complex, varied system of inner pictures, generally a characteristic of adults.

Observing a baby in our mind's eye, we can see that this little human being is not only dependent and reliant on our care, but is already very active itself, autonomously taking part in the activities around it: watching its mother's smiles and beaming face, contemplating its own hands and its mother's in astonishment, reaching out for objects, attentively listening to all the sounds and noises, its own gurgling and crying, startling at a loud, intense argument. It soon becomes evident that the baby is having a good look at itself, its self- and body image, its opposite as a meaningful other person, as the person it relates to closely, i.e. at its little world - or the world in general. It collects concrete, real experience with every breath and every contact. During this process it is not completely inundated by all these impressions. It is not helplessly subjected to a whirl of events and experiences, but it sorts out its experiences and tries to classify them. It is a well-equipped interaction partner, capable of coming to terms with the stimuli received and of coping successfully with all kinds of impressions, experiences, perceptions and stimuli. According to Daniel Stern, an American infant researcher (Stern 1994), the human being's innate basic set-up - the prerequisite for "imaging" - comprises:

1. An early functioning nonverbal memory

The memory functions from birth onwards (the motory, perceptive, affective, reproductive body memory or, according to Piaget, sensorimotor patterns). This memory is not dependent on language - in neither the encoding nor decoding processes. It recognizes and thus confirms experience and perceptions, and at the same time its personal outer and inner world

2. The innate ability of integral amodal perception

This kind of perception is not reliant on one specific sensory channel. It can receive and store impressions via various modalities (seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling), allowing us to translate perceptions into feelings as well as to recognize and interpret them emotionally. This pre-formed ability to integrate experiences is a main feature of maturing and developing. Subsequently a coherent, "identical" image of our self, of the other and our environment can take shape.

3. An innate ability to structure

Structuring and classifying one's own experience (and consequently finding an explanation of the world) represent a key endeavour of the first days and weeks. The baby employs a simple, fundamental and obvious principle: it looks for constants in its experience against the backdrop of the varying events around it (the changing interaction partners, actions and places). The constant structures, the so-called "invariants", form the first classifying structure. At the beginning of life, they are the recurring and consequently recognized bodily sensations, the bodily feedback, which leaves behind all activity, behaviour and wishes, the vitality affects, the way of feeling and experiencing, the mode of emotions and the personal style of experiencing, which is one of the most stable features in a human being and which hardly changes after the second month of life: crying remains crying, laughing remains laughing, regardless of whether the human being is 2 months or 90 years old.

4. The innate and strong need for a relationship

The desire for a relationship is the real inner (development) motor, impelling the human being to re-create social togetherness and a personal order, and thus it is responsible for personal growth and self-development.

The I develops through Thou (Buber)

The external prerequisites for the inner dialogue are at first social, and later material, natural, virtual interactions. They open up external interaction and relationship spheres that allow the baby to collect experiences with itself and its environment. Providing they are sufficiently emotional, they can be internalized and thus become inner interaction spheres. Within these inner spheres social constructs such as the transitional object, the evoked companion, the animated person-thing etc. can come into being, helpful images and uniform explanation of the world can be developed. External communication thus stimulates inner communication. Growth means encounter - encounter enables self-reflection in others and as a result further development. The famous dialogist and encounter philosopher Martin Buber expressed this very simply: "The I develops through Thou" (Buber 1977). Of course, this also occurs in the interactions with children, which are normally not imperative but a natural phenomenon motivated by the human being's own relationship needs and by the fundamental life force, which generates all growth and self-development.

In short: Inner pictures are initiated by experience.

Experiences leave a physical and emotional memory trace. When repeated, they reactivate the first experience, which is in turn intensified by the repetition and then re-stored, resulting in a clearer internal representation. According to the criterion "known" or "not known" the baby gradually and systematically orders its experience and combines it. Step by step, invariant constellations of the self and the other emerge this way and become identifiable. When such a self-constellation assumes the form of an invariant, this means the emergence of organization - in everyday language we would refer to an aha-experience: aha - that's how it is. This experience of the emergence of organization is the real creative moment and the fountainhead of all subjectivity, of all creative and inventive experience. This is the foundation of our inner representations, our inner portrayal. Daniel Stern writes: "Every form of learning and creative activity originates from the sphere of emerging relatedness. Only this area of experience plays a role in the development of organization - the aha-experience, be it still in such a rudimentary form. It constitutes the core of creating and learning. It remains a whole life long and is activated by every new challenge or (development) task" (Stern 1994, p. 103).

Inner pictures as episodes

Experience is imaged and this opens up the possibility of new combinations. At a very early age the human being is able to group individual experience and perceptions to form invariants as well as to combine the individual invariants to form experience constellations, i.e. it is able to put them into a temporal, spatial and causal relationship with each other. In this way the invariants are accompanied by the emergence of the prototype expectations of an occurrence and the prototype interaction experience in this occurrence. They are reflected and represented in the memory as little episodes or, according to Stern, as a "coherent block of lived experience", as "islands of consistency". Little episodes are composed of various attributes or partial experience. For example, imagine a child's birthday with all the trimmings: singing "Happy Birthday", the candles, the cake and the games - and often highlighted by a specific birthday ritual. Without them the birthday is unimaginable, they really make the day. Similar to a molecular structure, the episodes link up to form an increasingly differentiated experience matrix, a complex network of organized self-experience. The experience matrix stores all our experiences, combines them and makes them usable for understanding and for explaining the world. It constitutes the cognitive and emotional basis for our thinking, for our subjective view of the world with our specific individual feeling for life.

Inner pictures as evoked companions

The inner communication makes the linking-up process possible - the inner dialogue commences as soon as the baby has a rudimentary volume of experience! Daniel Stern was able to demonstrate that the human being constantly and always simultaneously deals with both current events and interactions and his or her remembered interaction experiences. In a ceaseless inner dialogue he or she juxtaposes current and remembered elements, comparing, evaluating, adapting and re-storing them. It is an immediate act of comparing between evoked reconstructed experiences and current elements. Like the episodes, the evoked companions also emerge from the inner dialogue. They are a psychical construction, borne by the wish to revive and maintain the contact with a meaningful other person, i.e. to be surrounded by a lively environment even when one (the baby) is in fact alone. At the same time, even the baby can experience itself as creative and inventive.

The evoked companion is the inner image of a certain person, in a certain interaction context. Although

we can easily imagine the evoked companion as a person, it is actually more than a person, it is rather an interaction sequence with a specific emotional hue. Many such evoked companions populate our psyche and are brought into the arena by the attributes of the current interaction situation, they are compared, evaluated, adapted by an oscillating to and fro. This rapid oscillation to and fro is tantamount to a talk with oneself, being transferred further and further inwards. We can often overhear children having monologues and occasionally we can observe ourselves doing the same (Etienne Klemm 1999). The special thing about episodes and evoked companions is that they are evoked with both the original feelings and the past strategies for coping with the situation. They represent a sort of archive of the past, provide orientation for the present as well as means of anticipating the future by way of inner practice runs. This creates security, offers know-how, in addition to the continuity and presence of one's own history. Experience remains stored with its original emotions in the body memory before the clear conceptions or verbal representations - with lasting effect. For the emotions are also evoked or activated upon every reactivation of experience, thus preserving the affective, indeed virtually magic power of the inner pictures. The ability to construct evoked companions means the ability to develop inner companions in daily life, to maintain a relationship sphere and to feel socially integrated, even when one is actually alone. Evoked companions can also be brought about by television:

A girl told me that the moment she gets home, she always switches the television on. The explanation I received to my astonished enquiry was the following: the whole family are frequent users, a relatively typical habit among southern Europeans. This creates a special family atmosphere; the television suggests being at home and being together with her family. By switching on the girl reactivates this situation, brings forth the evoked companions of the family, and immediately feels more comfortable. She is no longer so lonely, but feels secure and supported in the company of the evoked family. And that is sufficient: she is not really watching, she is there with them.

This inner communication or continued confrontation between current events and evoked companions constitutes the leitmotif running through the entire development of the personality.

Language compels a new realm

With the acquisition of language new opportunities open up, which means a huge developmental leap forward for our capacity to create inner pictures. Language compels a new realm. From now on, not only can life be felt and experienced but also related. The actual make-believe activity can now begin; immediate experience is divided into real experience and related experience. A world of make-believe - buoyed by wishes and needs - is now possible; a wish can oppose reality and thus become an intensive inner image such as wishful thinking for the future or for a personal life-image. The human being now becomes a storyteller, the teller of his or her own story and the creator of his or her self-image. Wishful images can run counter to real self-images; they can be savoured in trial dialogues and actions. This is observable in children's role plays, for example, when they re-enact scenes from films or insist on the invulnerability and invincibility of Indian and cowboy heroes. As a result the inner pictures no longer represent only real, interpersonal interactions. From now on wishes and needs can rearrange the inner pictures; they can alter and modify them, accumulate them, motivated by the wish for satisfying needs, for excitement, entertainment, healing, meaningfulness, taking part in culture and society. Therefore the capacity for symbolic play, for an image of oneself, for an eccentric position and a meta-level begins with the use of language resp. actual make-believe activity. The inner pictures also accompany the development of the subjective view of the self and the world, i.e. the way we see ourselves and the world.

Summary: The formation of inner pictures

The inner image generator begins at a very early age, accompanying us for the rest of our life. Our first inner pictures are reflections of interaction experiences. They are continuously produced as a part of the normal human development process and are based on the baby's and infant's experiences as well as on those of later years. Inner pictures arise as a result of our life experience, our relationship experience and interaction experience - i.e. our experiences in daily life with the people we relate to most closely and with everything that means life. Inner pictures thus require social, natural and virtual interactions and inspirations for their development so that they do not wane. Inner pictures are the result of the confluence of the inner and the outer world. With the arrival of language fantasies and the corresponding resistance emerge, which can remould and alter the images recorded. In the course of development

more and more new and creative inner pictures of one's own are added, tinged by our own predispositions such as our temperament, emotional and cognitive capacities and vitality affects, motivated by our needs and wishes, prompted by encouragement and stimulation, by a stronger or weaker opportunity for interaction with the social, natural and virtual environment.

Image processes are a resource for coping with life. They are a powerful tool of the soul, a natural set of devices for the strengthening and activity of the self, for creating the self and the world, for experiencing joy, meaningfulness and creativity, and for experiencing and developing identity. Inner pictures are derived from experience and one's own history; they therefore often contain a highly personal solution to problems and a wish-fulfilling life perspective. And as they are committed to the primary-process logic even in adulthood, they do not need to resolve existing contradictions but can leave them as a development stimulus. Now I return to our initial question: Are television images capable of "out-imaging"? What influence does television have on inner pictures?

Television does not have the power to "out-image" children, since the inner image process is already in full swing

Once the image process is under way and the human being has entered into an inner dialogue with him- or herself, virtually nothing can stop him or her from being creative. Images never cease to be formed; first and foremost, they need opportunities for interaction, room for relationships and experiences in order to sort themselves out. "TV kids" already possess a repertoire of interaction experiences and hence inner pictures. They normally have quite a good command of the spoken language, can therefore fantasize, wish themselves something, act experimentally by means of re-enacting, trial dialogues and talks with their evoked companions. The inner image process and the inner dialogue have already started long before children begin watching television.

Television is, however, a powerful interaction partner, because a considerable amount of time is spent viewing; it also takes up a large space in the family's affairs, since the consumption of pictures does not require any special abilities. Once a young boy replied to the respective question: "No, I can not read, but I can watch".

The image grants children access to all areas of life, regardless whether it corresponds to their age and level of development or not. The introduction to life via prefabricated canned images is of course quite different from the one via one's own, accompanied experiences, by means of which children acquire the world themselves, creating it at their own pace and in accordance with their own process of development. Via television images the unconscious is imperceptibly being colonized. Television values often influence wishes, needs and one's conception of the world. Moreover, television images in all their perfection can have the power to cause the children's own images to wither and wane because they are apparently unable to compete with them. The world of television can be extremely dominant and correspondingly unhealthy, if there is a lack of real experiences and/or few compensatory real interaction partners who motivate the children to try out new ideas and put them into practice themselves - naturally, it cannot be solely the responsibility of television people to offer sound stimulation.

To achieve a sound flow of inner pictures, however, a good balance between prefabricated as well as independent, sensorially expressive experience images and the opportunity to grasp in order to understand. As television is an interaction partner, the television interactions are also imaged and internally represented. They accompany children through their daily life as inner pictures and evoked companions that are either good and supportive, if they are successful, or bad and obstructive. Children take an interest in real life and therefore like programmes that enable them to extend the borders of their everyday experience, to help themselves to a trove of new images, to feel addressed and integrated, and to receive inspiration from the stories for their own lives. It is self-evident that those working in television consequently bear great responsibility: it is part of their task to make sure that these powerful television images are good interaction partners relating to the children's world and offering entertainment as well as fresh knowledge, inspiration, stimulation, identification and development. It is also their task to offer television images that do not traumatize and become lodged in the children's minds, images that do not restrict and stifle the inner spaces necessary for everything creative due to oppressive external stimulation. Since television is not a one-off experience, it has a lasting effect and influence; as an interaction partner that can and does create inner pictures and evoked companions, television must be taken very seriously.

Television can assume functions promoting the child's development, for example as a supplier of experiences, images and stories - previously a role adopted by grandmothers and grandfathers, later by

books and radio. Television stories can adopt a positive function as a model for children, especially if their approach to delicate topics like violence and aggression is smart and humorous. It must be stressed that television is an interaction model, which lets children learn by observing and creating their own inner models. It is to be hoped that also in connection with television language compels a new realm, i.e. that television programmes are accompanied by supportive talks, successfully providing an ordering process via language and enabling the continual establishment of fantasy and reality. The conclusion is provided by an 11-year-old child: "A good programme must be exciting, but not so much that you get a belly-ache; it must be funny, but not too stupid-funny; it mustn't be too brutal and mustn't have an open end, otherwise you imagine the worst."

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