

Prof. Rex Li's Writings

Category: Psychology

Sub-category: Human Understanding

Code: Psy 03-012

Title:

More Ideas on Romantic Understanding

Year Written: 2021

Summary/ Abstract: This is a summary and review of Egan's ideas on romantic understanding.

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More Ideas on Romantic Understanding

Chapter 3

Point 1 Different Question from 5-year-old vs 10-year-old

To fairy tales

R: It's not that 10-year-old believe in fairy tales but they want more substance, elaboration to predict what is possible vs what's not. They want to relate it to the real, and see how it exceeds the limit of reality.

Point 2 My View on Child's Stories

- (1) A story may start with a simple unspecified background and people. Then a main character (protagonist) emerges.
- (2) Children's questions are "what happened next"
- (3) Event triggers imagination and feelings.
- (4) They want to identify with main character.

Point 18 Reason, Religion and Acceptance of Human Limits

R: Reason to define reality is problematic here. When there was no rain, ancient people resort to mythic explant and ask the:

- (1) Tribe chief to pray for it. Reason in what sense? They believe in super natural force
Writing don't change reality.
- (2) Science develops within power strie!
- (3) How about China without Plato?

Apparently the issue is to overcome the deep-seated belief of omnipotent supernatural power: Environment (Nature) is big and an individual is small, living within nature and environment. It is eased create to believe in God than not to (拜火, 拜日, 拜牛, 拜神.....) next 信天, 信命, 信自然....

Answer to my point 18, Ha ha, again binary thinking

A: God / magic controls universe

-A: Nothing supernatural. Things can be understood by the rational mind.

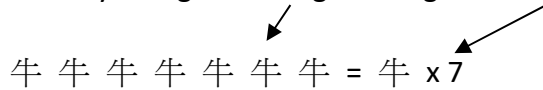
A' - theory of change, co-existence with nature.

Point 20 Hippocratics – health is balance of 4 humors (sky: 3, earth: 1)

Thucydides – unquestioned, subterranean, structural, underlying” myth below reason

Point 21 Literacy → sign for things and sign for words

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Point 28 Literacy generates reality without reason

Put simplistically, literacy generates conceptions of reality, and the mind explores reality by trying to grasp its limits and extremes; we see the same process at work in cultural history and in students today. By grasping at the limits and extremes, we set in place a context that establishes more ample, clear, and “realistic” meaning to the details and experiences of our everyday world.

R: When orality anchors reality in memory by sounds / speech / rhythm, literacy is a big step to represent / anchor reality for more objective / efficient access. But how does it relate to reason / rationalism? Literacy is used to create and preserve text / rituals rather than reason. Literacy does generate a more orderly reality, but not rationality.

R: Reason develops in international conflict, such as ancient Greece and Egypt, 7 kingdoms in Chinese history, without hegemony of power. Competition of ideas, etc. So is Descartes in the decline of Catholic power.

Point 29 Transcendence within reality by heroes:

manages somehow to transcend the constraints that hem us in. The mythic gods who transcended the constraints of nature at will were swept away by the rational drive to represent the world accurately. (Such a romantic image! “Rationality sweeps away the old gods.” It could be a theme—it probably

was — for one of these reasons — (Egan, 1997: 88). But while the gods might have disappeared from early rational narratives, they left a template that gives form to early rational attempts to make sense of events. In the place of the gods and their will, we find heroic figures and their will.

(1997: 88)

R: According to Egan, Heroes = eviction and action to break real life constraints

Point 31 R: A word on history

Even in 18th century, many historians saw history as kings, nobles, wars. It leads to the idea of history created by heroes. Edward Gibbon (1707 – 1770) wrote about the fall of Roman Empire and took it as overspending on religion.

Point 32: Understanding is “amenable to ever increasing clarity” (p. 91)