

## Eye Juggler: An Introduction

There is an old man, with long, black braids. He stands there, beside that tall cedar tree, singing a song. As he sings that song, what should happen..., his eyes pop out of his head. He continues singing that song and his eyes go up the side of the tree to the top branch. There those eyes look to the east. Then they turn and look to the south. The old man with empty sockets in his head continues that song. From the top of the tree the eyes look to the west. And then the eyes turn once more and look to the north, the fourth direction.

As the old man with long, black braids sings that song, who should come along the path there but Coyote, down on his luck. He sees the old man standing there and decides to pay him a visit. He's been out there in those hills a long time. But as Coyote gets a little closer he realizes that there is something odd about this old man. He's seen some strange things out there in those hills but nothing like this. The old man is singing his eyes to the sky!

Now Coyote, who's been down on his luck, realizes a good thing when he sees it. If he had this trick, he could go to town, stand on a street corner and sing his eyes out. He could juggle his eyes, and become...an "eye juggler!" He would certainly become rich then. That's what Coyote is thinking.

By now the old man with the long, black braids has completed his song, and his eyes have come down the side of the tree back into his head.

"Old man, teach me this trick," Coyote says.

"This is no trick, but a way of seeing the world. When I send my eyes to the sky, I look in the four directions and only the four. In

that way I show respect to that which I see. Never try to see too much," the old man says.

"That's fine, but teach me the song anyway," Coyote says.

Well, the old man with the long, black braids has a difficult time saying no to anyone, so he agrees to teach Coyote how to sing his eyes to the sky. And it turns out that Coyote is a pretty good student and he picks up that song.

But once more the old man with the long, black braids says, "when you sing your eyes to the sky, look in only the four directions. Never try to see too much."

"Sure, sure," Coyote says, and he's off. With that song, Coyote is eager to try out his new trick. He goes that way, into the forest and searches for a tall tree. No short tree will do. He searches here and there, trying out all the trees around. None will do. Over that hill, there he goes, now along that ridge, further into the forest Coyote wanders, looking for the tallest tree.

After a long and exhausting search, the perfect tree is found. It towers high, touching the clouds. Coyote begins singing that song, the one I told you about. And what should happen..., his eyes pop out of his head and go up the side of that tree. It works! From the top of the tree the eyes look to the east, to the south, to the west, and finally, to the north. "I'm going to be famous and rich. I'm going to be...an eye juggler!" Coyote says.

At the end of the song, the eyes come down the side of the tree and back into Coyote's head.

It's late, and you don't want to get caught in that forest at night. It's dangerous. So Coyote begins walking back to his camp. He goes that way. Then this way. But everything is so strange to him. Did he come this way or that? He goes to the top of a high ridge and looks everywhere. Nothing is familiar. He's lost! What's he to do?

Then Coyote remembers his special song. "I'll send my eyes to the sky again, and they'll see a way back home." Coyote sings that song. Just as before his eyes pop out of his head, and go to the top of the tree. One eye looks this way, the other that ways. In all the directions those eyes look..., and then some. And they see the way back to the camp. He'll be safe now.

So the song is sung to its conclusion. It's sung..., and nothing happens! The eyes remain fixed at the top of the tree.

He must've left out a word from the song. So very carefully, Coyote sings that song again. But when the song ends, the eyes are still in the top of that tree.

It's a hot afternoon, and the sun is beating down on those exposed eye balls, and they begin to swell up.

Coyote tries climbing the tree. But he can't see so well, and about half way up he misses a branch and falls to the ground.

Flies in great numbers are landing on those exposed eye balls.

He searches around on the ground and picks up a stone there and that stick here, and throws them to the top of the tree. But when they fall, the eyes remain there, and the stone and stick land on the head of...Coyote!

The crows have found those eyes and are about to have a little afternoon snack.

Coyote lays there, at the base of the tree, crying huge tears from his empty eye sockets.

Just then, Mouse runs across Coyote's face. Maybe he's after a whisker hair for his nest. But as Mouse runs across the face of Coyote, the tail of Mouse falls into the open mouth of Coyote and Coyote immediately closes his mouth tight on the tail of Mouse. Coyote pulls from his mouth that which he's captured. That Coyote is quick!

Now how many working eyes does Mouse have? And how many does he have? "Mouse, younger brother, give me one of your eyes, or that'll be it!" Coyote says.

Now Mouse thinks this over. He's a family man, with several wives and lots of kids. He has responsibilities. His life is very valuable. So very carefully, Mouse pulls out one of his eye balls and hands it to Coyote. True to his word, Coyote lets Mouse go.

Now that eye ball is pretty small. But Coyote puts it into one of his empty sockets. It fits alright. And what should happen..., he can see!

One slight problem. Every time Coyote moves his head, ever so slightly, that eye ball rolls around and around inside that head, and everything looks wobbly and blurred.

But the first thing Coyote sees is Buffalo standing over there. How many working eyes does Buffalo have and what size are they, and what does he have? So Coyote takes out his rifle and goes over to Buffalo. "Buffalo, younger brother, hand over one of your eyes, or that'll be it!" Coyote says.

Now Buffalo thinks this over. And just like Mouse, he's got several wives, lots of kids. He's a family man, with responsibilities. So very carefully he pulls from his head one of his eyes, and hands it to Coyote. True to his word, Coyote lets Buffalo go.

Coyote tries to put the eye in, but it's pretty good size. He turns and twists, but is just won't stick. It falls to the ground, and gets all dirty. Coyote brushes it off and tries again, and again. It just won't stick. So he goes over to a tree and begins pounding his head against the eye ball against the tree..., and eventually it sticks! But that eye ball just hangs there..., half out. And the other one, well, it just rolls around and around and around in that head.

There goes Coyote. You'll certainly recognize him if you come across him in that forest there.

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This Cheyenne story is often told to help explain why some people just don't see...eye to eye! The story's theme is, of course, about differing ways of seeing the world. With the Eye Juggler setting the tone of this workbook, I invite you to an adventure in eye juggling.

My premise is rather straightforward. As a humanity, *we are the stories we tell*.<sup>1</sup> In the stories we share with one another, we

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<sup>1</sup>"Story" refers to the fundamental symbols and values, and the distinguishing cultural character pervading a portion or the entirety of a society and its various institutions; what I have come to term, "cultural story." It can be inclusive of both "mythic" as well as "historic" significance. And embedded within our cultural story is the single most

define the primary qualities of how we came to be, our origins, and what we can become, our destiny. In the stories, we define who we are, what the world is and how we are to relate to that world. Our ways of knowing and our ways of motivating are found in our stories. Through the stories, we learn and re-affirm our basic cultural values of time and space, causation and being, and give meaning to all aspects of our lives. In the stories, *we are*.

We carry forth our stories and with them create our social institutions, our ways of behaving toward each other. Family, church, school, recreation, art, government, economy, science, technology, work are all animated, structured and given meaning through our stories. We celebrate our stories at every opportunity: in Sunday worship at church or at a football stadium, in a graduation commencement or each Friday after work at the local bar, in a class or family reunion, in a hard-earned job promotion or vacation cruise to the Caribbean. We tell our stories at each juncture in our lives: at birth, at each birthday, at marriage, at divorce, at our death. Our lives are inundated with our stories.

We carry forth our stories and with them create our view of the world about us and our ways of behaving toward it. How we define a landscape, the rush of water in a river, a sunset, a thunderstorm, the howl of a coyote, the flight of an eagle, the ant that walks across the kitchen table: all are predicated on the stories we tell. Our aesthetic, our religious, our economic and our scientific images of plant, animal, earth, star, and of their origin, dynamics and destiny are framed in our stories. The lives of others are inundated with our stories.

Simply put, our humanity and our world are defined in the stories we tell each other. Without stories there can be no human being, and there is no world.

It follows then that to understand how humanity sees itself and the world, we must learn something about the stories humanity tells. Through an appreciation of the stories, we have access to what

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important influence on the behaviors we exhibit and the worlds we create, our "values."

is most essential to humanity. To understand "wilderness," for instance, is to go into someone's story of wilderness, and not into a wilderness area. "Wilderness" does not have existence "out there," in nature, but in the symbols and values embedded in someone's story of it.

This workbook will descriptively present an assemblage of distinctive stories. The stories range from an Inuit (Eskimo) creation story to the stories of Pythagoras, Newton, Descartes and Maslow to the stories of quantum physics and cybernetic epistemology; from the story of the walls of Jericho to a story painted on the walls of an Upper Paleolithic cave to the story of Plato's cave. Many of our stories will be framed as "mythic" narratives, e.g., the Australian Aborigine story of Karora, a mythic being. While others are presented as "biographical" or "historical" accounts, e.g., Galileo's life and accomplishments or the theory of human evolution.<sup>2</sup> Some of our stories are to be seen in an artistic sketch, e.g., a drawing by an Inuit shaman, or in an architectural structure, e.g., the Greek Parthenon or a rock "medicine wheel." And still other stories are expressed in the words of a "poem" or "song," or even in the diagram of a mathematical theorem. There be a speech by an environmentalist and one by a "wise use" advocate. Our stories come in many forms, pervading all aspects of our lives.

While some of the stories may seem culturally distant and temporally ancient, I would suggest that they are in fact stories

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<sup>2</sup>The term "myth" refers to that which is considered as a "true story" and which offers exemplary meaning and value to life. Myth is not to be considered as "fable," "fiction," or "illusion." The "truth" of a myth is to be appreciated and is expressed metaphorically and anagogically as opposed to empirically. Hence myth is not bound by a history, as part of chronological time, but is considered "timeless," *in illo tempore*, and is imbued with aesthetic and often sacred significance.

The term "history" refers to those factual-based events that have occurred in chronological time. An historical event is necessarily a past event. The "factuality" of history is to be appreciated and is expressed empirically as opposed to metaphorically and anagogically. Nevertheless, like myth, history can offer exemplary meaning; lessons are to be learned.

reflective of the *foundations* upon which our contemporary world views are based. The motifs and themes within an Inuit creation story or the story of Pythagoras speak as much to their respective historic and cultural contexts as they speak to the context, shared among all peoples, of our common humanity. The stories attempt to shed light on many of the assumptions upon which you and I base our lives and give meaning to our worlds.

Specifically, I will propose that these stories are reflective of two very distinct value systems and ways of seeing the world, what I have come to term the *Looking Glass* and *Glass Pane* values. The Looking Glass (referring to a mirror) and Glass Pane (referring to a window) ways of seeing the world represent two of the most fundamental ways humanity has defined and continues to define itself. Both were found at the dawn of humanity. Both are found, though with varying emphasis, in virtually every community today. Both can even be found expressed by any given individual, you or me. But each is inherently distinct from the other. Each refers to contrasting ways of defining humanity and of relating to the world, of finding meaning and of enhancing well-being. The consequences of these two value configurations have far reaching implications for the quality of life for all in our contemporary world. I will outline my own interpretation of the Looking Glass and Glass Pane values in the Epilogue section of this workbook.

In selecting the particular story texts included here, I have thus offered discussion on several basic questions revolving around our values and world views. Among them are how do the forms of the stories we tell, e.g., mythic or historic, influence how we relate to the world? How do our definitions of "person," of animal and plant, and of the world influence our relationship with the world? Specifically, how do our definitions of "wild" and of "domestic" "persons," be they animal, plant or human, influence our relations with the world? And then, what are the "rights" of those "persons"? In turn, what are our ethical responsibilities toward those "persons"? How do our understandings of our origin, our creation, influence our relations with the world? What are our criteria for what is knowable? In turn, how do our definitions and ways of acquiring knowledge influence our relationships with the world? What are our primary

motivations and aspirations, and how do they affect our relations with the world about us? What are our greatest fears, and their consequences? What is it to be a "rich man," and what are its consequences for others, be they human, plant or animal? And what is wilderness? While this workbook can frame and pose such questions, their answers can only be suggested by those who engage its stories.

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As with any endeavor that seeks to represent and communicate a text, this workbook is made up of a *deliberately* selected assemblage of texts. Only certain stories were included. Furthermore, the story texts are presented in a *particular manner and style*. A particular assemblage of words was used. While my intention is to offer descriptive story texts, unblemished by bias, I acknowledge that something of myself, the describer, is within the story texts. In the very act of selecting only certain story texts and then selecting particular words to describe those texts, an interpretation has necessarily been made. The narrative texts and the illustrations in this workbook were originally part of presentations and lectures I had made in various class sessions and, in turn, themselves based upon particular artistic, ethnographic or historic sources, each of which is identified in the story text. As will be suggested when we turn to a discussion of methodology in the next chapter, any attempt at presenting a cluster of symbols, such as these story texts, involves a synthesis of what is to be described and who is describing. I can only hope that my descriptions approximate, in some close fashion, the intended meanings of the original story texts, from which they were inspired and which they now represent.

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The Looking Glass and Glass Pane values represent *contrasting* ways of defining humanity and relating to the world. Certainly other value orientations could have been considered. But it is in the contradistinction of the Looking Glass and Glass Pane



stories that we can facilitate our primary intention in this workbook-- that of *clarifying* and *interpreting values*. Let me elaborate our intentions.

FIRST, in offering these contrasting sets of stories, we will have an opportunity to explore and interpret the values of culturally distinct others and to gain an appreciation for the Looking Glass and Glass Pane ways of seeing the world. By gaining an appreciation for the different as presented in this workbook, an enhanced appreciation of and respect for the culturally "different" outside this workbook can also be gained. To communicate, to render services, and to cooperate with those of differing values, an appreciation and understanding of their perspective is an essential first step. In our ethnically diverse and culturally pluralistic world it is critical that we develop a tolerance of and respect for the varied world views of others. The vitality and integrity of our own society, and our ability to effectively function in our global community are directly related to the respect we give those with divergent points of view. With an appreciation of peoples who are culturally and ethnically distinct from ourselves we also acquire the best means to thwart the seeds of intolerance, prejudice and oppression.

SECOND, by offering an assemblage of varied stories, we will also have an opportunity to explore values closer to home, helping to reveal our own cultural and personal values. Despite their tremendous importance, we nevertheless seldom fully comprehend, no less articulate, our own values. By juxtaposing that which is overtly distinct and distant along side that which is immediate but often veiled and elusive, the configuration of our own story and values become that much clearer. Or put another way, in "trying on" another's story, the uneasiness of the rub or the comfort of the fit help clarify the shape of our own contours.

To effectively communicate and cooperate with those of differing values and to gain a respect for culturally-different others, we must know our own values. To appreciate another, we must also come to appreciate ourselves.

In knowing our own stories and values, we also become cognizant of, deliberate in and ultimately more accountable for our own actions. We can better see the implications of our values and

thus actions, of what had once only been veiled. We become the owners of our cultural values, and not owned by them. And thus in the revealing of our own values we can better celebrate or critically re-evaluate our stories and become accountable for them.

This is not to suggest that in the act of eye juggling that our intention is to appraise and judge, per se, the “legitimacy,” “worth,” or “truth” of our own values or the values of other peoples. This is not a workbook in ethics, morality, or epistemology. The questions of “legitimacy” or “truth” should not be applied as we attempt to interpret and clarify the underlying values in our story texts. Such would only succeed in distorting and biasing that which we seek to understand. But once our interpretations and clarifications are ventured, the implications of our values can and should be considered.

And THIRD, in offering a diverse assemblage of stories, we will have an opportunity to enhance our skills in critical thinking. Critical thinking involves the processes of revealing assumptions and exploring alternatives, and of making evaluations and formulating decisions. By glimpsing the breadth of the human experience, in all its rich diversity and in all its vast history, we are not only better able to appreciate our shared cultural foundations, but also challenge those false assumptions which are based upon a limited scope of our human existence. For instance, only after the human experience in its entirety is first appreciated is one in a better position to state, "it's only human nature" or "we're born that way." Far too often we postulate an "innate condition" as an "excuse" for a certain behavior, and in so doing, greatly inhibit the possibility of ever changing that condition and behavior.

In order to successfully approach this workbook and, I would suggest, life outside this workbook, we need to freely imagine and draw upon a full range of diverse and alternative perspectives and choices, as well as refuse to be bounded by narrowly defined and idiosyncratic view points. With an awareness of our own values and an appreciation of differing perspectives, we can better formulate and apply criteria for discriminating and evaluating life's varied experiential dilemmas.

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I have selected the concept of "wilderness" as the reference point for our values clarification. Some expression or implication of "wilderness" will be evident in each of the story texts of this workbook. "Wilderness" is one of those concepts that goes to the very heart of how we, as a humanity, define and relate to the world about us. Yet, in turn, it is a concept not easily defined. There is no consensus. In fact that which is considered "wilderness" has galvanized considerable discussion and debate, both pro and con, by those who advocate for "wilderness areas" and those who oppose such designations. The concept resonates with emotional conviction; it is certainly value laden. This subjectivity is in part a function of how we use the word. While the term "wilderness" is itself a noun, we most often use it as an adjective, designating a certain quality, a "ness." There are "wilderness areas." You can have a "wilderness experience." Because of its elusive and subjective character, and yet because of its pivotal role in revealing how we in so many different ways relate to our world, the concept of "wilderness" is particularly well suited for our exercise in clarifying and interpreting values.

This workbook will thus be made up of a series of contrasting and richly textured story texts, stories within which are embedded the values that have defined our humanity, stories with which you will have an opportunity to eye juggle.

