

Journey of the Soul

Australian Aborigine Sensitivity

Lesson 3

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*They say we have
been here for 60,000
years, but it is much
longer ...*

*We have lived and
kept the Earth as it
was on the First Day.
All other peoples of
the world came
from us.*

Aborigine Elder

The continent was Australia. White men called them by a less complimentary term, Aborigines—a Latin term meaning “from the beginning.” To early white settlers, the word Aborigine implied the most primitive backward people on the face of the earth. The time was the 17th and 18th centuries.

With the infringement by the white man, the pre-conception dream rooted in the Australian bush was on the way to extinction. Merchant servants sent by merchant princes were seeking new commercial prospects. Western religion, humanism, rationalism and science circulated around Mother Earth. Left-brain thinking would soon spread like a plague in the wind.

Aboriginal culture lived in comparative isolation for fifty millennia and developed a unique, sophisticated, and rich cultural tradition. Their development of a naturally coherent social and political fabric enabled them to escape many vices of European culture.



In *Ancestor Spirits*, Dr Max Charlesworth observes:

It has taken white Australians over 200 years to wake up to the fact that they have been living all that time side by side with another remarkable civilization which originated some 50,000 years before the first white people arrived. That civilization was a deeply religious one in that every aspect of life was governed by the "Law" that was laid down for each Aboriginal group in the creative era of the Ancestor Spirits "in the beginning."

It is inappropriate to generalize about the Aborigines. Deep differences existed between 500 Aboriginal tribes—politically, economically, socially and linguistically.

Aborigines encompassed all regions of a continent, slightly larger than the USA. Australian Aborigines were the last native peoples to be discovered on Earth. Dutch and Spanish voyages encountered Aborigines in 1606. European settlement began in 1788.

Ethnological observation began with Captain Cook's visit in 1768. Anthropologists were anxious to learn about Aboriginal world views before their culture was destroyed. Researchers believed Aboriginal life provided an opportunity to view what

man must have been like before he learned to read and write, domesticate animals, cultivate crops and use metal tools. But this view represented little more than a faint shadow of the truth about Aboriginal consciousness.

Aboriginal Knowing from a Distance

According to Aboriginal scholar/fieldworker, Dr. Elkin, the Aborigines had well-developed the art of inner contemplation. Life in the bush was tranquil and silent. A lifestyle free of time tables. Aborigines had time to reflect and enter a condition of receptivity.

Dr Elkin observes:

We are very apt to underrate the philosophical powers of primitive peoples, but the absence of clothes and complicated economic systems does not imply an absence of thought. Primitive peoples have more time than we for contemplation, and we err in thinking that when an Aborigine is sitting, apparently idle, looking into vacancy, his mind is necessarily blank.

Meditation, recollection, and reception played a vital part in Aboriginal life. Through dreams and formalized systems of higher sensory perception, the Aborigine intuited future events, such as: his employer is coming, danger is imminent, his wife is unfaithful, and so on.





In many tribes, parts of the body are mapped out to symbolize a social relationship such as father, mother, sister's child. Associations vary from tribe to tribe.

The body functions like a satellite dish receiving subtle consciousness signals.

If for example, an involuntary twitching or a physical signal occurs in a muscle associated with father, the Aborigine prepared his consciousness to receive a message about that person. Perhaps his father is coming for a visit or is in trouble.

At that point, the Aborigine discontinues activity. Letting his head droop forward, he becomes receptive and utterly calm. For minutes, his mind settles into a receptive state and tunes into distant events. One Aborigine paid attention to the ringing in his ear; then the thought came that his Uncle James had just died—which proved correct.

Europeans even confirmed their "civilized" Aborigine employees' clairvoyant power for knowing what was happening at a distance without warning, hundreds of miles away. An Aborigine may have been away on a business trip with his employer, separated from his people for weeks and even months. There had been no communication. Yet, suddenly he



knows his father has died, his wife has birthed a child, or there is trouble at home. The Aborigine requests to return at once. Later on, the employers ascertain that the Aborigine was correct.



Australian Aborigine Eternal Dream Time

The Aborigine concept of "Dream Time" is so incomprehensible and subtle that it suffers when translated into English. Neither "time" nor "history" is involved in the meaning of Eternal Dream Time. The Aborigines have no word for time as an abstract concept. The sense of history is foreign to them.

They live in two times:

- 1) Primeval Times, in which all life came into being
- 2) The Present.

There is no past, no history, and the future barely figures in their thinking.

Professor Stanner, in *White Man Got no Dreaming*:



One cannot "fix" The Dreaming in time; it was, and is, everywhen. Clearly, The Dreaming is many things in one. . . . it is much more complex philosophically than we have so far realized.

I greatly hope that artists and men of letters who find inspiration in Aboriginal Australia will use all their gifts of empathy, but avoid banal projection and subjectivism, if they seek to honor the notion.

Aborigines realized that the white man could not comprehend this abstract concept.

Muta, an intelligent Murinbata elder, poetically expressed Western culture's dilemma when he said with a cadence almost as though he had been speaking verse:



***White man got no dreaming,
Him go 'nother way.***

***White man, him go different,
Him go road belong himself.***