



Appreciating the Symphony of Experience, by Peter Senge

In the movie 'The Truman Show', actor Jim Carey plays a man whose entire life is a television show, broadcast to millions, unknown to Truman himself. From his point of view, he is just living his life. In the middle of the movie, a group of reporters interview "the director," the Godlike figure played by Ed Harris who literally determines Truman's life -- whether it's going to rain or be sunny, the plot for next week's story, whether or not things will turn out OK for Truman. One interviewer asks the director, "How do you explain that Truman has never figured out that his whole life is just a television show?" The director responds, "We all accept reality as it is presented to us." Like Truman, our awareness presents itself to us as immediate and unmistakable. A table. A book. A sentence or word. Yet there is always much more than we "see". In the table are also a factory and workers, a tree, a forest, water and soil, and rain clouds. Indeed, a book contains all of these as well. And a simple word or sentence that moves us speaks of a lifetime -- of schools and teachers, of questions and dreams, of current problems and possibilities. With just the slightest pause, we can begin to appreciate the symphony of activities and experiences, past and present, that come together in each moment of awareness. Yet out of the symphony we typically hear only one or two notes. And these, almost always, are the ones most familiar to us. [...] An empowering awareness of the whole requires a fundamental shift in the relationship between "seer" and "seen". When the subject-object duality that is basic to our habitual awareness begins to dissolve, we shift from looking "out at the world" from the viewpoint of a detached observer to looking from "inside" what is being observed. Learning to see begins when we stop projecting our habitual assumptions and start to see reality freshly. --Peter Senge