

CHILDHOODS EVERLASTING KINGDOM

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" I TRY TO BELIEVE IN AS MANY AS SIX

IMPOSSIBLE THINGS BEFORE BREAKFAST "

The most active philosophers are to be found among the children. Children constantly ask the question why and they wonder what people mean by what they say. The driving force is curiosity but the philosophy dies when all the questions are answered and adult conformism takes over.

When we grow up, we are expected to follow social structures and norms. As children, we have greater freedom to explore our world and test our way forward. In a child's world, the line between reality and imagination is blurry and the world is a playground full of possibilities.

According to Matti Bergström, cognitive neuroscientist, the brain has a centre of weightlessness that is particularly strongly developed in children, stronger the smaller the child. Hence the child's desire to constantly move, run, jump and swing. The will to live after the pleasure principle.

"Great knowledge does not lead to great wisdom"

-Herakleitos

Aristotle argues that all are born with a natural need to know. Children bubble with curiosity and meet different worlds within the one of our's with open eyes. Stunningly new, mysterious and interpreted worlds. However, come adulthood, many become strangers to their own innate curiosity. To view life as a timeline comes natural to most of us. From the beginning of life until the end of life. We are born as babies and die (if life goes as it should) as elderly people. This makes it very natural that we, as children put those older than us, with more experience, as role models. To look to those who have already wandered the path we're on to know how we should think and how we should act.

But what would happen if we as adults now and then looked at the children's way of being and instead put them as role models for us? Is it possible to retain a childlike curious mind in a adult world limited by societal rules and structures?

Freud's research showed us that our childhood is important, and in some respects decisive, for our character in adult life that follows it. This raises serious question of principle for any account wishing both to describe the specific motivations and general nature of adult life and to acknowledge the continuity of that life with childhood. Granted that the child's early development has a profound influence on adult life, how, in principle, is that principle possible?

Do we maintain a child's naturalism in adult life?

Psychologists have often spoken of learning in the child as though relations with self, world, and others originate in contemplative knowledge. Yet ordinary experience shows that, in imitating others, in learning to walk, in becoming familiar with an environment, what occurs cannot be explained by the notion that there is first an intellectual act of "knowing" rules, maps, or worlds and then a more to use them. Intellectualism alternative to naturalism in explaining the nature of childhood existence as well as its influence on adult life.

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" With our thoughts we

make the world " - Buddha

Way out at the end of a tiny little town was an old overgrown garden and in the garden was an old house and in that house lived Pippi Longstocking. She was nine years old and she lived there all alone. She had no mother and no father and that was very nice because there was no one to tell her to go to bed just when she was having the most fun and no one who could make her take cod liver oil when she would rather have caramel candy.

Once upon a time Pippi had had a father that she liked very much. Naturally she used to have a mother too, but that was so long ago that Pippi barely remember her at all. Her mother had died when Pippi was a tiny baby and lay in a cradle and scream so loud that nobody could go anywhere near her. Pippi was sure that her mother was now up in Heaven, watching her little girl through a peephole in the sky, and Pippi would often wave up at her and say, "Don't you worry about me. I'll always come out on top." Pippi had not forgotten her father. He was a sea captain who sailed the great oceans and Pippi had sailed with him in his ship until one day her father was blown overboard in a storm and disappeared. But Pippi was absolutely certain that he would come back. She would never believe that he had drowned; because he was so fat she was sure he had floated until he drifted upon an island inhabited by cannibals. And on this island he had surely become a cannibal king and he walked around with a golden crown on his head all day.

" My papa is a cannibal king; it certainly isn't every child who has such a stylish papa," Pippi used to say with satisfaction. " And as soon as my papa has built himself a boat he will come and get me, and I'll be a cannibal princess. Heigh- ho, won't that be exciting! "

Imagination & Reality

Pippi is a storyteller who knows no limits. She tells story after story and you can never tell where truth meets fiction or if its all in fact fiction. For if there is something that Pippi has its a vivid imagination. She is a genius of language with a reading and writing disability. She is a lonely yet care-free child. She is the strongest girl in the world and her greatest strength is her power to transform everyday life in to something magical. Baking gingerbread cookies can be an act of anarchy and for a thing finder an old rusty can is a treasure. Through Pippi's eyes we can clearly see that our imagination is the most important thing we have. In extreme cases our imagination can be what keeps us alive, what allows us to exist in an other world when the actual world around us is more than we can bare. Pippi could easily have fallen into despair after her dad fell overboard and surely drowned. But in Pippi's imagination he is alive and well. For most of us imagination is what keep us growing as individuals. The source of wonder and innovation.

During childhood imagination and fantasies are vital, they nurture our creativity and invite us to discover the world. In childhood our mind is in a state full of imagination, dreams and an desire for adventure. As adults we often lose touch with this natural childlike imagination, and so the child thinks that certain things they powerfully believe in are unacceptable in the adult world. Thinking back to our childhoods, we all began our lives with curiosity and wonder. The ability to invent new things and extend the use of already invented things with new functions in new ways came naturally to us. We could easily transport our selves to a new world. By just rearranging the chairs around the kitchen table we could be out on a pirate ship on the caribbean seas.

This wonder and ability to imagine fades as we grow older and we begin to spend less time in our imagined worlds and more time in the " real world. " According to Dr. Stephanie Carlson * kids spend as much as 2/3 of their time in non - reality - in imaginative play. As we age we often lose our playful curiosity and imagination. Studies have shown that kids natural tendency to daydream and wonder declines sharply around the age of ten. Dr. Carlson names lack of practice as the simple reason. We are forced to turn our attention to logic, reason and facts. By this we spend more of our time and brain power in reality and less in imagination.

As we age, our sense of wonder and imagination doesn't abandon us. We abandon it.

As we abandon our lives with imagination we begin to live more and more in the reality that is usually perceived at the real world and real life. Many adults abandon their imagination so to that extent they only visit their world of imagination while asleep. Reality is described as the conjectured state of things as they actually exist, rather than as they appear or might be imagined.

The original way of thinking that comes from childrens play is the same as expressed in art, music, dance, theater, and other cultural expressions. And they come from the same space in the brain as the one Matti Bergström* calls the child brain - the more primitive part of the brain that develops before the left and right sides of the brain. Bergström is through a lifetime of research of the brains function convinced that creativity and imagination require that we nurture our child-like brain. The part in us where fairytales, dreams and imagined worlds roam freely. The part of us where everything is possible.

Philosophers, mathematicians, and other ancient and modern thinkers, such as Aristotle, Plato, Frege, Wittgenstein and Russel, have made a distinction between thought parallel to reality, coherent abstractions (thoughts of things that are imaginable but not real) and that which cannot even be rationally thought. With this existence is being restricted only to that which has physical existence or has a direct basis in the same way thoughts do in the brain. This is the world we are so often expected to live in. Somehow we treat a physical existence as more valued than and more real than that in our minds.

This often appears odd to free thinkers when physically we are limited - whilst mentally we can do anything - achieve anything - be anything. However, as amazing and magical as our imagined worlds may be its important not to loose grip of our physical reality. By living in both our world we can have the best of two worlds. **Our imagination is not an alternative to reality - Our imagination is our reality.**

Logic will get you from A to Z; imagination will get you everywhere."
- Albert Einstein

"I existed on my own terms
life. Some called me diverse
dictable and unconformable
of the majority. I called myself
found purpose in the mad
I didn't allow other people
feel or act. I learned there
tion because history had s
the power to change persp
world. This is when I realiz
sibility. This was the day

BLESSED

- Shannon

s. I was different my entire
ergent, wild, crazy, unpre-
d - an apostate to the rules
myself God's creation and
ness. When that day came,
le to dictate how I should
was no shame in imperfec-
shown being different had
objectives and eventually the
zed that flaws had respon-
that I learned I was truly
SED."

n L. Adler

One day as Pippi, Tommy and Annika strolls around town they pass by a perfume shop. In the show window a large jar of freckle salve stood and beside the jar was a sign, which read: DO YOU SUFFER FROM FRECKLES?

" What does the sign say? " asked Pippi. She couldn't read very well because she didn't want to go to school as other children did. It says, " Do you suffer from freckles? " said Annika.

" Does it indeed? " said Pippi thoughtfully. " Well, a civil question deserves a civil answer. Let's go in. "

She opened the door and entered the shop, closely followed by Tommy and Annika. An elderly lady stood back of the counter.

Pippi went right up to her. " No!' she said decidedly.

" What is it you want? " asked the lady.

" No, " said Pippi once more.

" I don't understand what you mean, " said the lady.

" No, I don't suffer from freckles," said Pippi.

Then the lady understood, but she took one look at Pippi and burst out, " But, my dear child, your whole face is covered with freckles! "

" I know that,'" said Pippi, " but I don't suffer from them. I love them. Good day."

She turned to leave, but when she got to the door she looked back and cried, " But if you should happen to get in any salve that gives people more freckles, then you can send me seven or eight jars."

Common sense & Nonsense

Pippi is unlike anything the people in this small town know. She lives by herself and has a pet monkey and a pet horse. She does not live by anyone's rules but her own and she is completely fine with being a bit different. Instead of asking for a gift on her birthday she gives presents to her friends. She regularly throws bullies and rude policemen up in trees. She never does things as expected.

In Astrid Lindgren's books about Pippi Longstocking we meet a young girl who is independent, free spirited and has a curious mind. She's a rebel, a childhood liberator who opposes the demands of the adult world. In a rational world of common sense she reasons nonsense.

To be a sensible adult can have the effect of closing the capacity to experience something new and unexpected. Common sense has both feet securely invested on Earth. Therefore, it also stands still. Pippi rarely has her feet on the ground, at least not both at the same time. She rather stands on her head, climbs, or fly's through the air.

Pippi's critique of common sense expresses itself in her entire attitude and way of being, her counterexamples against an ethnocentric bigotry, a knowledge without experience and a superficial education. She exposes common sense's distorted pictures and sees it for what it really is. A fear of the unknown and need for control. Kierkegaard argues that genius is like thunder: it runs against the wind, and terrifies people.

According to both Socrates and Pippi Longstocking true knowledge is something that is already within us. Lack of knowledge is nothing but oblivion, and knowledge is remembrance.

“ To know what you don t know, is also a kind of wisdom ”

- Piet Hein

Common sense teaches us that the world is exactly as we perceive it. There are no mysterious substances or another more real reality behind what our senses perceive. This is something that Alice from Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland has been taught from adults (Apart from her father who taught her to believe in the impossible) her entire life. As she falls down the rabbit hole to the world of nonsense she tries to reason with the common sense she has been taught. But in a world of nonsense common sense makes no sense.

Children often experience adults' appeal to reason as ambiguous. They understand they have to appropriate the adults sense to be able to capture the world as their parents did before them, but at the same time find it hard to do so as they experience the world from a different view.

Nonsense is most often used with a negative connotation, often considered as synonymous with absurdity or ridiculousness. We often diminish things children say and do by calling it nonsense. But what some consider to be nonsense others see as thunder and chaos. By Kierkegaard referred to as genius. According to Matti Bergström chaos and order are the two basic forces that control human minds. When these two meet both mind and society develops. Enthusiasm and imagination has its centre in the brainstem and its in the child's wild and spontaneous games this power of chaos is active. In the cerebral cortex - which is developed after the brainstem - we receive sense impressions such as sight, hearing and touch. This is also where we gather all our knowledge. In our cerebral cortex there is order and common sense. According to Bergström our dreams, ideas and imaginations arise when we collect impulses from chaos and disorder - nonsense. Without this inflow no creativity could take place. As we grow up and develop new experiences and more functions in our brains it is therefore important that we don't allow our knowledge to take over and kill our childlike mind. Children must be allowed to be children and adults must be given space to be childlike while at the same time being adult.

If we live in a society controlled by too much order our creativity is blocked, our ability to observe limited and we become hostile to knowledge. Same as what happens to children who are too strongly controlled by adults.

On knowledge and order our society suffer no shortage, however, on the second and complementary pole, chaos. The contact with new aspects with that which goes beyond our perception, our knowledge, from where we find new information - where new ideas are born - the place where we expand. Also as adults we already have all the order and knowledge we need what we need more from is chaos and nonsense. For when we allow our adult minds to meet our childlike thoughts we allow our selves to live in the best of two worlds.

“ Give the children love, more love and still more love -
and the common sense will come by itself. ”

- Astrid Lindgren

come true is to wake up. " - Muhammad Ali

" The best way to make your dreams

" What are we going to do now? " asked Tommy.

" I don't know what you are going to do," said Pippi, " but I know I can't lie around all day and be lazy. I am a Thing-Finder, and when you're a Thing-Finder you don't have a minute to spare."

" What did you say you are? " asked Annika.

" A Thing-Finder." " What's that? " asked Tommy.

" Somebody who hunts for things, naturally. What else could it be? " said Pippi as she swept all the flour left on the floor into a little pile.

" The whole world is full of things, and somebody has to look for them. And that's just what a Thing-Finder does," she finished.

" What kind of things? " asked Annika.

" Oh, all kinds," said Pippi. " Lumps of gold, ostrich feathers, dead rats, candy snap crackers, little tiny screws, and things like that."

Tommy and Annika thought it sounded as if it would be fun and wanted very much to be Thing-Finders too, although Tommy did say he hoped he'd find a lump of gold and not a little tiny screw.

Dreamers & Realists

Its not hard to see that the world that we live in today was shaped by the dreamers of yesterday. But the older we become the fewer of us stay dreamers. More of us choose the path of realism, and so the dreamers become the minority. Early in life the opposite is true. Throughout childhood we are all encouraged to dream. There are no limits to what we can achieve.

When children are given the question " what do you want to be when you grow up?" Their answers are pure and honest. Maybe they want to be a space - cowboy, a princess, a football pro, or maybe they even want to be a dolphin as they grow up. Children often see a future with no boundaries - no limits. As we get older the answer to the same question begin to reshape. Not necessarily because we no longer want the same things, but because we have been told this is not realistic, or not even possible. At this point we enter a world where decisions are made with our brains rather than with our hearts.

We enter a world where results are measured in immediate physical evidence rather than the limitless potential of opportunity. In a society so full of limitations its not easy to be a dreamer. You are constantly held back, often told that your dreams can't be reached. The realists have far less expectations than the dreamers. They are quick to deny ideas and choose live within the lines,- not looking beyond the horizon.

As a dreamer you must establish a sort of tunnel vision. There will always be doubters amongst the individuals who ridicule or make fun of your dreams. These are the people who could have the power to keep the dreamers from fulfilling their dreams. The moment the dreamers entertain their negativity is the moment they start to question themselves. With this in mind the conclusion that realists are doubters is not a far stretch. This however is not necessarily true. Most of the time the realists are the reason the dreamers ideas become comprehensible. The realists are able to focus on the project at hand while cautiously mapping out the idea to execute. Without the realists dreams may never become reality. The realists however also need the dreamers. Without the dreamers there is no vision, nothing to strive for. Dreamers want to change the world because they truly believe they can. What would our world be without the dreamers attitude that anything is possible? For every dream there was someone there to laugh them of - until they became reality.

Dreamers are simply those who never give up. and maybe also those who never grow up.

People often say that its best to get all of your carefree dreams out of your system during youth, before life responsibilities completely manifests themselves. Your 20s are supposed to be your selfish years where you push yourself from your comfort zone and find yourself. Once dreamers reach their 20s however, they are usually still trying to find themselves. Dreamers strive for their visions to become reality and search their entire life to find people to share their visions with. While dreamers may feel alone and unsupported by doubters, they derive their inspiration from within. Dreamers don't allow their fears to consume them. They fail time and again, but they never give up. realists adhere to a schedule or a plan. They want to have everything under control. Realists follow our social structures in the way of going through life step by step. After graduating collage they stick to the expectations of what is next. - Going to graduate school - getting a job that leads to the next checkpoint in life's path.

While dreamers may be considered to be more on the impulsive side, realists are often more stubborn. Of course realists have dreams too, these dreams however are more rooted in ambition, drive and determination. Realists understand that progress requires more than ambition and drive, but also, connections.

"I believe in eve

anything until it's disproved. So I believe in fairies, the myths, dragons. It all exists, even if it's in your mind.

Who's to say that dreams and nightmares aren't as real as the here and now?" - John Lennon

Beside Villa Villekulla was another garden and another house. In that house lived a father and mother and two charming children, a boy and a girl. The boy's name was Tommy and the girl's Annika. They were nice, well brought up and well behaved children. Tommy would never think of biting his nails and he always did exactly what his mother told him to do. Annika never fussed when she didn't get her own way and she always looked pretty in her small well-ironed cotton dresses; she was always careful not to get them dirty. Tommy and Annika played nicely with each other in their garden, but they had often wished for a playmate. While Pippi was still sailing the oceans with her father, they would often hang over the fence and say to each other, "Isn't it silly that nobody ever moves into that house. Somebody ought to live there somebody with children."

On that lovely summer evening when Pippi for the first time stepped over the threshold of Villa Villekulla, Tommy and Annika were not at home. They had gone to visit their grandmother for a week; and so they had no idea that anybody had moved into the house next door. On the first day after they came back again they stood by the gate, looking out onto the street and even then they didn't know that there actually was a playmate so near. Just as they were standing there considering what they should do and wondering whether anything exciting was likely to happen or whether it was going to be one of those dull days when they couldn't think of anything to play - just then the gate of Villa Villekulla opened and a little girl stepped out. She was the most remarkable girl Tommy and Annika had ever seen. She was Miss Pippi Longstocking out for her morning stroll.

Pippi Longstocking is forever trapped in childhood

Tommy and Annika lives next to an abandoned house called villa Villekulla. What they wish for most of all is that a child for them to play and be friends with will move in. The day after they return from a trip to their grandparents they discover that a weird strange girl has moved in to the house. Pippi Longstocking is everything that Tommy and Annika aren't. She acts in a way they could only dream of. She does not follow conventional rules and she always does as she please. But does she exist anywhere else than in the minds of the well behaved proper children Tommy and Annika? Popular theories today would like to make that a truth. And with that Tommy and Annika transforms from being normal well behaved children to being two delusional minds nurturing each others insanity. Is this a theory that adds an interesting twist and layer to the story, or is this simply a theory we make up as adults to a story from our childhoods because not even in the world of fairytales will our imagination allow something as remarkable as Pippi Longstocking to be real?

Children have a natural way of believing in almost everything they see, hear and are told about. If an adult allow themselves this freedom of belief they are considered naive. This is clear in our physical reality but reflects even in to how we perceive movies, books, theater, stories and so on. When a child is viewing the movies about Pippi Longstocking or reading a book about her there is no doubt in their mind she is real. When they are watching Alice in wonderland they don't think that wonderland is a place Alice dreams up. They believe what they see and with that they enter a magical world full of possibilities. When we grow up and see they same movies or read the same books as we did when we were children we start to notice and read in new interpretations to the stories. In best cases this brings new excitement and levels to the stories, i worst cases it limits us and makes us unable to travel in to a magical world even for a short while.

In the last chapter in the story of Pippi Longstocking Tommy and Annika are standing at home by their window looking in to Pippis house. Pippi is sitting with her head leaned against her arms and are staring at a small candle in front of her.

**“- If only she wanted to look this way, we could wave to her, said Tommy.
But Pippi just kept staring in front of her with far - off eyes.
Then she turned off the light “**

In this moment Tommy and Annika grows up and says goodbye to their (imagined) childhood friend. But Pippi Longstocking will never grow up, she is forever stuck in childhood during this one year that the stories about her take place.

And to me also, who

to appreciate all life, it seems that the butterflies, and soap bubbles, and people who are similar to them,

are the ones who know the most about happiness. - Nietzsche

Childhoods everlasting kingdom

Pippi is driven by a freedom ideal that in many ways reminds of Swedish social democratic ideas during the 30 & 40s. Based on Sven Markelius, Alva Myrdal and Frances Ilg idea that one should free the mothers from their children and the children from their mothers. The idea being that this way both mother and child could develop themselves without anyone having to be responsible but the society. The premise being a safe society that does not limit the child due to the conviction that nothing bad lives in it. But with all this freedom there is also a price to pay. This price being higher for the child than the adult, and Astrid Lindgren knew this all too well. You can sense this already as Pippi speaks about her lost father, for behind her boast lies fear. The price is obvious in her radical quest for amazing extravagance. This radicalism that we all know and love with Pippi would not exist without defiant melancholy. Still Pippi refuses to be victimised for being an orphan. She always manages to find something good or amazing even in the most awful situation. Pippi is the strongest girl in the world. Not only is she strong enough to lift her own horse - she is also strong enough to stand up against society's rules and structures on how to be and how to behave. Why sleep with your head on the pillow for instance when you can sleep with the pillow under your feet?

To retain a child's eye when walking through life is to see the world as half magic, half horror. Old age seem to bring back this childlike clarity of vision. With this children and elderly have an understanding, a bond, united both by a sense of being out of time and by the amazingly reckless lack of responsibility that adulthood brings. This allows them to see things as they really are. Many of the things from our childhoods are things we still like, an impact on who we are as adults. This is when we started to develop our ideas of what is good, bad, wrong and right. Things that children like are often the same things that old people like. Things you never get tired of. Maybe after going through everything life throws at you beauty is all that remains. Children and elderly people seem to share ability of seeing passed the our surface and immediately see to who we are on the insides. Often they seem to share the same natural connection to their emotions and compassion. One more thing they have in common is time and lots of time. Time for reflection, time for wonder, time for imagination. In our elderly days we have the same amount of time and freedom as we did as children - maybe this is why we as elderly have a way of finding the path back to our selves. Our true selves without the impact of societal norms.

Someone once said that in between the lives we live and the lives we dream about living is the place in our heads where most of us actually live. And maybe this is true. Maybe it is also in this state where we all meet. In a land between reality and imagination dreamers and realists can become one.

Here's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... the ones who see things differently — they're not fond of rules... You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can't do is ignore them because they change things... they push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do.

- Steve Jobs

* Dr. Stephanie Carlsson, expert on childhood brain development at the university of Minnesota

* Matti Bergström - professor in physiology and neuroscientist (1922 - 2014)

* Piet Hein - scientist, mathematician, inventor, designer, author & poet (1905 - 1996)

* Friedrich Nietzsche - philosopher (1844 - 1900)

