Link: https://shinyuu.net/2019/03/on-forcing-developing-the-consciousness/

“Can I create a tulpa only by passive forcing?” This question pops up constantly on tulpa forums and discussion groups. It often comes from a thought that “active forcing” requires you to dedicate time to your tulpa, and you ain’t got time for that shite (you still want to have a tulpa, though).

The separation between active and passive forcing is based on if we focus our attention on the tulpa specifically or only give them little attention while being busy with something else[1] — a concept similar to awareness and meta-awareness in psychology: to have an experience is not necessarily to know that one is having it.[2] And indeed, “active forcing” is hosts experiencing their tulpas while being aware of it; while “passive forcing” is them doing it while being unaware of the action.

The Western world popularised the “awareness” as “mindfulness” — a meditation technique where you maintain your awareness and meta-awareness (awareness of being aware). It’s easy to learn and hard to master, but people keep pouring thousands of dollars[3] into becoming better, citing increased productivity and overall wellbeing.

Our brain is a muscle that needs training. For it, focusing on a single task is hard; it’s an effort that increases its energy consumption and, as such, the effort that should be discarded as soon as possible. A special mechanism: a Default Mode Network (or DMN), makes sure your brain runs circles in a standby mode, wasting as little energy as possible when you’re not actively busy with specific tasks. Michael Fox, the Associate Professor of Neurology and the Director of Laboratory for Brain Network Imaging at BIDMC writes: “The default mode network has shown to deactivate during external goal-oriented tasks such as visual attention or cognitive working memory tasks, thus leading some researchers to label the network as the task-negative network.” While some tasks by their nature are part of DMN, its activation at a time of a fuzzy focus makes us daydream, think about future or past, and overall ignore the “present moment” of which the mindfulness is all about.

But let’s get back to tulpas. It’s common to think of them being the products of our thoughts, but what are thoughts, exactly? Buddhist traditions place thoughts next to the other senses, naming it a sixth sense, no different from sight or hearing[4]. Thoughts are the raw sensations of your brain. Applied psychology and Buddhism theories also define another concept that might sound dubious: “thoughts are not me”. Indeed, they both agree that in human life there’s no one specific self, no chief to run the show[5]. When a

thought comes into your brain, it's natural for the mind to associate it with you, after all it's *I* who thinks it, it's *my* brain. Practising tulpamancy creates a different perspective (and that's, maybe, why Buddhists came up with tulpas): if you're a tulpamancer your brain decides which *I* the thought belongs to. Training the brain to have the perspective to decide on the *I* is what active forcing does.

Forcing — in fact a meditation practice — is an exercise in focusing. Tulpamancers focus on their thoughts, carefully dissecting them and stacking them into several piles: "this is what I think", "this is what my tulpa thinks". The brain is the same and the capacity to create and sense the thoughts is exactly the same pre and past tulpamancy, what changes is the brain's capability to labelling the thoughts as being owned by someone else. Training it to do that is an active skill. Just like you can't develop muscles by staring at the gym equipment you cannot train the brain by only reading tulpa guides. In case of active forcing you focus on sorting through the thoughts, and to do that you need a capacity to observe the thoughts impersonally, objectively, without identifying yourself with them. You need to be aware of your observation. This is where meta-awareness comes in.

Active forcing is more useful than passive forcing alone: being a more intensive exercise for the brain it increases its capacity to associate with independent egos. But is there more to it? This is where our DMN comes back!

The Default Mode Network is ruled by stimuli — external and internal — fighting for your attention[6]. Most of the Buddhist traditions focus on diminishing the importance of the DMN in the daily life; the meditation practices teach you to be more aware, to spend more and more time knowingly. The concentration you muster while meditating plays a significant role in weakening your DMN. Yet in tulpamancy, the Default Mode Network is an important part of maintaining a tulpa (this is one of the major ideas where the traditional Buddhism and the modern day tulpamancy diverge). Tulpamancy focuses you on turning the skill of segregating your thoughts (which you learned through active focusing) into a habit (which you apply subconsciously), to where a part of your default mode network would be powered by your tulpa's emotional reactions, bringing their consciousness to life. Having the DMN to react in the context of your tulpa differs from active or passive forcing and it's a practice omitted by most of the guides, even though they mention the results it provides. For example, if you're busy with nothing in particular and you get your tulpa commenting on something you didn't pay direct attention to — that's the Default Mode Network prioritising the sensation so much it enters your awareness, while the brain categorises it as arising from your tulpa. The

tulpa “talking to you without your attention to them” directly results from the DMN assuming the persona of your tulpa.

Note that if you accredit your tulpa while trying to focus on something else it would still be active forcing — you consciously focus on your tulpa and you’re aware of that focus. Only when your mind wonders and creates the thoughts that feel like your tulpa’s — that’s when you let the DMN go plural.

The best way to train the DMN is switching. As it is a part of the subconscious thought process, the brain needs to take a different ego as a point of reference for the actions body performs, for the dreams and stray thoughts and being the fronter is the sure way to trick it. As tulpas develop and grow into the body, the brain segregates the subconscious reactions too: tulpas will have their own habits of reacting to a loud noise, their own ways to cross the street, their own ways to daydream. That’s why you might like your ice cream but your tulpa would hate it — as your subconscious preferences diverge even the reaction to a same taste will become different.

So, is it better to active force, or passive force, or switch? It’s a fact that exercises make practising easier and active forcing is a better exercise for the brain. Yet you can substitute it with a different set of exercises and practise mindfulness along the passive forcing. It will work too. Don’t forget about the DMN, though — if you want your tulpa to become their own person they need that tiny seed of subconscious for them to call their own ego.

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1. Tulpa.io, one of the major tulpa hubs defines it the following way: “Active forcing dedicates time and attention solely to a tulpa, commonly during meditation; passive forcing involves allotting attention to the tulpa while also doing something else, instead of solely focusing on the procedure of forcing.” ↩
2. To have an experience is not necessarily to know that one is having it. Situations such as suddenly realizing that one has not been listening to one’s spouse (despite nodding attentively) or catching oneself shouting “I’m not angry”, illustrate that we sometimes fail to notice what is going on in our own head. One of the overarching themes of the lab is the distinction between having an experience (experiential consciousness) and knowing that you are having an experience (meta-awareness)

(Schooler, 2002; Chin & Schooler, 2009, Schooler et al, 2011; Winkielman and Schooler, 2009, 2011) ↩
3. Not exaggerating. Check e.g. siyli.org ↩
4. It is important to acknowledge the mind as a sense organ of the thoughts as tulpamancy practices spin around mind-only entities. After all, if you can “sense” your tulpa, you must have something to sense them with.
   In Buddhist philosophy, Ayatana or “sense-base” includes the mind as a sense organ, in addition to the traditional five. This addition to the commonly acknowledged senses may arise from the psychological orientation involved in Buddhist thought and practice. The mind considered by itself is seen as the principal gateway to a different spectrum of phenomena that differ from the physical sense data. This way of viewing the human sense system indicates the importance of internal sources of sensation and perception that complements our experience of the external world. ↩
5. Joseph Goldstein, a well-known meditator and Vipassana teacher put it this way, “It’s just that the thoughts are arising and there’s a strong habit of mind to be identified with them. So it’s not so much they have the intent to reach out and capture us, but rather there’s this very strong habitual identification.”
   Based on the modular theory of the mind operation, different finely-specialised mind modules generate thoughts. Those thoughts compete for the attention and the thoughts generated by the strongest module — whichever it is at a given point of time — become “thought” thoughts; they enter consciousness. ↩
6. One of the modular mind theories suggests that the default mode network consists of the number of standalone modules that challenge each other. The module that manages to provide the more “important” thought is the one that reaches through into your consciousness. ↩