

Spontaneous

A spontaneous person is one who does –and likes to do--things on the spur of the moment, without advance planning. Such a person will wake up in the morning and say, ‘Why don’t we go to Cahokia Mounds for the week end?’ She or he will be hoping for a positive response, which will set off a week end of discovery and excitement. The spontaneous person will be elated if his or her friend accepts the proposal and jumps in the car, but will be let down if the friend brings up objections—who’s going to take care of the dog? didn’t we plan to rake the leaves this week-end?—and may well feel deflated, rather than quick to provide answers to the friend’s objections.

Examples

1 Spontaneity and reason

My wife and I used to combust simultaneously on Sunday afternoons, and without a plan, without even discussion, ‘go for a ride.’ I suppose that, during the period in which this rhythm beguiled us, we both sensed, as the week end approached, that some such spontaneous action was on the horizon. But we never discussed this likelihood, though I for one could feel it in my bones. Did we refrain from advance planning this Sunday adventure, so that we could preserve the semblance of spontaneity? In any case the chemistry of this particular spontaneity dissipated after a few months. There then came a time when instead of just picking up and going out on Sunday afternoon, we would discuss over Sunday breakfast what we should do for the week end. A semblance of reason replaced spontaneity. Was it like the Enlightenment following the Renaissance?

2 Writing a poem

The creation of a good poem requires spontaneity. You are walking along and some sequence of ideas or even syllables pops up in your consciousness. You jot it down, or keep it in mind, and when you get home you write it out and turn it this way and that to let the essential emotion-thought work its way to the surface. Did what seems to have been spontaneous have its roots in some internal logic? My first poem came to me spontaneously on a walk. The poem started:

Not in any known things,
Pond, stick, bent hill
Is farther subtlety than in is or was
But in the head, that gifted bone...

Was there a thought-thrust under that upsurge of mainly sounds? Yes, some kind of rumination on the miracle of mind. A mere thrust. Did the upsurge rise from the desire to express something, or simply as a testimony to the bubbling internal discourse of neurones?