CREATIVITY, ECOLOGY AND BECOMING A PERSON

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Some Greens say that we can and should start by changing ourselves first, and through that get ready to change the system. But this is still building on the view of a human being as a soul separated from the body and the environment. Instead of observing from a safe river-bank, you should step into the river, be grabbed by the current, and forced to learn how to swim. It's then that you have a chance of being shaken so that you are changed, and through that you change the system. That's when you learn to accept that nothing is permanent, that everything is time, and that time is creativity. Only then will initiative and responsibility replace passivity (Kvaloy 1990).

1. What is Creativity?

Psychologists have long recognized the importance of creative expression to every individual. Jung classified creativity as one of the five main instinctive forces in humans (Jung 1964). Rogers described it in his essay *Towards a Theory of Creativity* (1961):

> ...there is a desperate social need for the creative behaviour of creative individuals...there is no fundamental difference in the creative process as it is evidenced in painting a picture, composing a symphony, devising new instruments of killing, developing a scientific theory, discovering new procedures in human relationships, or creating new formings of one's own personality...the mainspring of creativity appears to be...man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities... This tendency may become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defences; it may be hidden behind elaborate facades which deny its existence; it is my belief however, based on my experience, that it exists in every individual and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed.

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation attempted to define creativity in a recent report (1989) on *The Arts in Schools*:

> Industrialists and politicians lay great stress and invest much energy, time and money on promotion of creative work and creative thinking...it has become one of those terms which can mean all things to all people...it would make a distinct advance in educational concern with creativity if it were generally recognized that: a. creativity is not a special faculty with which some...are endowed and others are not but that it is a form of intelligence and as such can be developed and trained like any other mode of thinking; b. creativity is something which requires discipline, previous experience and firm grounding in knowledge.

2. Creativity as a basic human need

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1954) begins with physiological essentials such as food and water, followed by safety needs (security, stability, structure, order, freedom from fear), then the need for a sense of belonging and love, followed by esteem from self and others. Finally there is the need for self-actualization, the full development of individual potential. Needs at one level must be met before a person can deal with needs at the next level. Maslow accepts that perception and expression of needs varies between individuals and cultures, particularly with regard to self-actualization, but considers his hierarchy to operate universally.

Clark (1986) argues that "an adherence to the idea of a hierarchy of needs has the double effect of both obscuring the derivative and socially constructed nature of need and at the same time underrating the complex interrelationships between different needs". In particular, the hierarchy of needs implies that there is an inbuilt association between needs and motivation towards action to meet those needs.

Kirkwood (1990) reminds us that "A human being consists not only of needs, but also of aspirations, interests, preoccupations, consciousness, conscience, creative potential... The prime need...is to be treated as wholes, as integers, and not as a collection of needs."

It can be argued that creative expression is a basic human need, both at the level of individuals and of society, that is frequently unrecognized and unconscious in modern society and education (Braden 1979).

Community Educators share the vision of a more open organic system of education which recognizes the need to develop human potential and a belief in the importance of every individual. They are concerned to increase people's capacity to listen, to learn, to make reasonable decisions, to care, to love; in short, to live and work together with a sense of fulfilment. This means encouraging a wider definition of success not only in academic learning but also in terms of creativity (Ringrose 1985).

3. On Becoming a Creative Person

'Children must play in order to grow up normally' most of us accept as fact. When we are young, it is the natural way to understand and express very basic feelings about our lives. As we mature and grow older, however, most of us 'forget how to play'... We need other methods and means to recapture our powers of spontaneity and creation - so we do not 'forget about living'. Drama and dance, music, visual art, and writing - all these art forms can provide

outlets similar to those of play when they strengthen our capacities for self-expression. Actually, we might call them nonprescriptive 'medicines', because they can heal; they can treat lethargy and depression with only the most positive side effects. Individually or in combination, the creative arts are guaranteed to induce alertness, enthusiasm, a sense of fulfilment and joy - especially when taken regularly and in large doses!

So closely allied with play and spontaneity, creative process is different from imitation and all that is associated with meaningless busy-work. It has to do with the innermost cravings of the human spirit, the anima, to express often unreleased, unheard of feelings kept captive since childhood... For many of us, an early connection has been made between the pleasure principle and creativity. To our detriment, we are bidden to put away childish toys in adulthood, and by doing so are often barred from the use of our fullest, active creative powers.

Authentic creativity means...the expression of one's innermost, highly individual experiences through whatever media is natural... It must be emphasized that creative approaches are used mainly to facilitate process, not being about product. (Weisberg and Wilder 1985).

4. Community Art and Environmental Education

It is being increasingly recognized that arts-based projects have a particularly effective role in enabling people to develop a relationship with the environment, both natural and built (Braden 1979, Miles 1989, Clifford and King 1990).

The community arts movement of the last three decades has attempted to bring art back into people's daily lives, through taking artists and their wok into communities - preferably at the invitation of the community itself - and involving people in creative processes as participants rather than observers (Braden 1979, Poulter 1990). Community artists work in a very wide range of media - song, dance, storytelling, drama, creative writing, poetry, painting, collage, murals, sculpture, textiles, photography, etc. - with many projects using several different media.

Community artists work with people not for them, breaking down barriers between the esoteric art world and the ordinary person (Braden 1979). The emphasis is on process and participation not on product, and it fits well with the aims of community education, community development and community work generally (Pouter 1990). Participants are encouraged to recognize and develop their own creative potential, a crucial stage in self-actualization (Rogers 1961, Jung 1964): "...art is a way of coming to terms with experience. Here we are brought face to face with the mystery of the self which is shaped in the act of shaping material things, and created anew in the act of creating... The capacity for producing and enjoying works of art is, as it were, built into the

human structure at fundamental levels...we *need* to operate thus and are *deeply satisfied* in doing so" (Robertson 1963, author's own emphasis).

Many adults are either completely alienated from the art world or remain passive consumers of art, labelling themselves as "not artistic" (Braden 1979). Most people stop developing artistically at around age 9 because our educational system places far more value on academic and literacy skills than on visual and artistic ones; there is however strong evidence that everyone has the ability to be creative and artistic given the right conditions (Edwards 1979). Community education has an important role to play in offering people opportunities to develop their creative potential, and community arts projects have been an important first step in this for many (Braden 1979).

Art and nature have a long and intimate relationship, going back to the earliest evidence of human creative activity. Art began not only using natural materials and nature for inspiration, but defining human relationship with nature through art (Robertson 1963). This heritage has a vital function in our unconscious minds which we need to be able to access to develop our connection with the natural world and our creativity (Jung 1964, McQueen 1991).

Jung was deeply disturbed by the loss of a spiritual relationship between people and nature, long before most people were aware of the approaching environmental crisis: "As scientific understanding has grown, so our world has become dehumanized... No voices now speak to man from stones, plants and animals, nor does he speak to them believing they can hear. His contact with nature has gone, and with it has gone the profound emotional energy that this symbolic connection supplied" (Jung 1964).

Seonaid Robertson found clear evidence that this symbolic connection with the natural world is in fact intact in the unconscious mind, and can be accessed through art (Robertson 1963). During many years experience of working with adolescents from deprived backgrounds and adults with no artistic training, mainly using clay modelling and painting, she observed that certain themes seemed firstly, to induce in the individual a state of intense concentration, and a level of satisfaction "not usually evident among those less skilled" with what they produced; and secondly, to produce work which others found particularly interesting to look at, regardless of artistic merit (however that is judged). These themes related mainly to natural or mythical subjects, the symbolic archetypes Jung considered an essential part of our unconscious (Jung 1964) (Table 1).

Initially the themes arose spontaneously in those Robertson and her student teachers were working with; it was only after observing their reoccurrence and effects literally hundreds of times that she began deliberately introducing the themes and found they still acted powerfully on people: "these images...have the possibility, not so much of *extending* our vision by projecting someone else's in front of us as a *deepening* it to levels which were always there in us but of which we were hardly aware...the painters and modellers emerged in some way

changed, renewed, *more centred*...these Themes had the potentiality of focussing meanings and associations far beyond their overt subject". The cave theme, for instance, was used to explore "not only their own memories of actual caves, not only the dragon-haunted treasure-guarding caves of our literature, but the sensations of darkness and enclosure, of losing one's daylight personality in finding a way into the earth, 'mother-earth', and into hidden and lost experiences of the individual and the race".

Robertson believes: "When we are going to draw something we must open ourselves and go to meet the object with a fresh perception - with as few pre-conceptions as possible. We must go out of ourselves into it, to get the feel of its life and structure from the inside... Once having come into such close contact with an object we can never be quite the same person again - nor do we ever see it again as we see other objects. We have a special and intimate relationship with it."

Table 1: Themes used in pictures and models (Robertson 1963)

> Natural subjects caves, caverns sea, pools, waterfalls woods, forests mountain peaks Artifacts harbours, lighthouses tunnels, mines gardens labyrinths People and gods kings, queens, princes, princesses mother and child, family group ceremonies giving of gifts (e.g. 3 kings, harvest festival) Animals and birds bulls, horses, cocks Mythical creatures phoenix, unicorn, dragon, monsters

> ...through the rites and forms of art we made contact with the infinite. The moments of contemplation and the moments of creation fertilize each other. We must give every single person the opportunity to be themselves, which is the experience of the artist... In such moments the intellectual awareness (though intellect is not uppermost), the bodily coordination (free from self-consciousness of the body), the intense aliveness of heightened emotion, are apprehended as an exquisite sensation of wholeness" (Robertson 1963).

Suzy Gablik sums up the case for art in environmental education: "In the past, we have made much of the idea of art as a mirror (reflecting the times); we have had art as a hammer (social protest); we have had art as furniture (something to hang on the wall); and we have had art as a search for the self. There is another kind of art, however, which speaks to the power of connectedness and establishes bonds; art which calls us into relationship (Gablik 1991).

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