CREATIVE FACTORS IN EDUCATION

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It is a simple matter to assert that no one knows where the creative act comes from. It occurs. At a given point a string of words is put down, clusters of sounds and silences are arranged, a shape is made, feelings are summoned up, ideas are organized into modes of expression, and there it is—a new public statement with private origins.

In a large sense, it does not matter where the creative act comes from or what is its explanation as long as it comes. Analysis of how it happens may damage, inhibit, and falsify. The artists have defenses against that kind of analysis, and have been known to cherish, deepen, and falsify their neuroses, to indulge in and to cultivate a madness which frees them from the responsibility of becoming anything other than what seems at the time to be a good idea. They stay away from psychiatrists, scholars, analysts, and anyone else who might change them, or ease their tensions, or spoil the pleasure of possessing emotional or personal difficulties and remaining unself-conscious about them. Assertions of one's own being are part of the way in which the self is formed, and the self of the artist is formed by what he does with himself, in his own terms. Never mind the analysis.

In another sense, it matters a great deal that the circumstances of the creative act become better known, because there are things which need to be done to make the creative act possible on the largest possible scale for the greatest number of people in the greatest number of circumstances. In what I have to say in this paper I want to discuss the psychic and cultural circumstances of the creative act as a prelude to saying something about how educational systems must be reorganized to induce new psychic states and to make a wide variety of creative acts possible. To do this I want to identify the student and the artist as one person, and to redefine education as the means through which the liberation of intelligence is accomplished, and to redefine all learning as a series of creative acts by the learner who uses the materials of learning

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and experience as the medium for psychic, esthetic, and intellectual action.

It is a matter of special urgency that this redefinition should take place now that we have produced a world system of education based on opposite and obsolete concepts, and in so doing have alienated the world's youth from its own educational institutions. These institutions concern themselves not with the release of life into new insights and discoveries by the learner, but with training in analytical and practical mental skills, with the development of the academic intelligence and the acquisition of an official culture and an official knowledge. As a result, we are now seeing a world-wide revolt of youth against the cultural, political, and social regimes represented by the universities in their present form, a revolt which differs from culture to culture—the French from the Czech, the Indonesian from the Japanese, the American from the German—but which contains common elements. At the center of these elements is a rejection of bureaucratic control by the knowledge-makers and managers of the knowledge industry, and the assertion of a radical subjectivism through which youth is stating its own values and testing out its own life-styles and political structures. In some cases, the youth are striking at the existing societies through efforts to destroy the universities which represent them. In other cases, they are making an effort to reconstruct the content and form of university learning in order to create a new cultural and psychic environment in which their own interests and needs can be more fully realized. Although the efforts of young revolutionaries to change society by destroying the universities is a matter of the most serious concern, I would like to deal more specifically with the reconstruction of the institutions of higher education than with their possible destruction. It may be that by reconstruction of the institutions, the psychic and social energies of youth can be deflected into the creation of new forms of social and environmental change rather than into frontal attacks on all existing forms of cultural and social order.

It is for this reason that some sort of inquiry into the educational conditions favorable to creativity and the creative act now becomes necessary. In the past, most research into education has been based on conventional assumptions governing psychological and scientific investigations, with the cause-and-effect relationship between phenomena established through the control of variables, statistical analysis, and the general methods implied by the classical models in the philosophy of science.

The result has been that most research into psychic phenomena in education has been literally useless in explaining anything of very

great interest or importance, since the controlled experiments of the educational researchers make an artificial environment out of the natural conditions for learning, and the predictions—for example, the relation of test scores in high school to academic success in college, or the relation of the learning progress of children in Head Start programs to success in elementary school—are for the most part irrelevant to the most important questions about education itself. These questions have to do with the way in which the educating environment can be arranged to develop persons who are creative, independent-minded, capable of taking the initiative, of continuing to learn on their own, of understanding themselves and others, of changing the environment, of extending the dimension of consciousness, of attaining an authenticity.

These are not questions which can be answered by most of the methods practiced by educational researchers. The questions have to be asked in a very practical way, in the way a novelist or a poet asks questions of everything he sees in his life, gathering information which then emerges in the novel or the poem, having been transferred into art by what the writer does with it. The genius of Eric Erikson and R. D. Laing in their reports and generalizations based on research in human behavior lies in the fact that they have succeeded in penetrating into the lives and character of the subjects (patients) who give the informational content to the research, while dealing with their subjects sympathetically, one at a time, and drawing conclusions from sympathetic observation rather than from controlled experiments.

A. H. Maslow works in the same way, and introduces a philosophy of science based on the organic relation between every element in the cultural, political, social, intellectual, personal field in which the subject operates. ". . . I tried to get to know one single person after another as profoundly and as deeply and fully as I could as unique, individual persons to the point where I felt I understood them as whole persons. It was as if I were getting very full case histories of whole lives and whole people *without* having particular problems or questions in mind, that is, without abstracting one aspect of the person rather than another. . . ." [1]

To transpose this into a generalization about the approach to creativity which joins together the learner and the artist, I link Maslow, Erikson and Laing to Virginia Woolf, in her famous remark about novelists and what they do.

"Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day," says Mrs. Woolf. "The mind receives myriad impressions, trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms, and as they fall, as

they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there, so that if the writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write about what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in accepted style." [2]

If the learner and his teacher were both free men in a free situation, they would learn and teach what they chose, not what they must; they would base their work on their own feeling, not upon convention; and there would be no systematic divisions of knowledge, no organized lecture system, no regulation text-books, examinations, requirements, academic credits, grades, and hierarchies of professors, researchers and institutional managers. Instead there would be free voluntary association of learners with teachers and learners with learners, each in part a teacher by the fact that each had something to do with the learning of the others. The content of the curriculum would be the creation of the learners and teachers who together would use resources of every kind, including the concrete experience of learners and teachers in whatever life they had led before coming together, the books in the library, the information in the texts and minds of scholars, experience in the laboratories, experience in the theatre, in dance, painting, sculpture, poetry, in society.

Out of the life the learners lived together with their teachers would come a variety of forms of knowledge important to them all; a structure of knowledge and methods of acquiring it would emerge from what they did together. It would not be necessary to prearrange that structure or method, since the main effort of the members of the community would be to create their own knowledge through the forms of experience they found most valuable in the community. Since they would not be preparing themselves for a specific role in the society into which they "graduated," they would be free to indulge in those intellectual and cultural experiences which were of greatest concern to them. Their teachers, as scholars and persons of experience in the field of their interests, would extend the range of possible choice, would provide the resources through which the learners could learn and could teach each other, and at that point when something had to be learned of a specific kind—in mathematics or in physics or in philosophy in order that the learner could undertake practical or theoretical studies which took him further into a given field—arrangements could be made to undertake that kind of learning. Certain forms of learning and kinds of content would be organized, not as a necessity for all students in all schools and

universities, but for *these* students in *this* place at *this* time with *these* teachers.

The difference between an ordinary mind and an ordinary day and the creative mind in its own time lies in what the mind does with what it receives. The universities of the world have constructed a model for learning that is anti-intellectual and anti-creative. That is, the university decides that what the ordinary mind is to do on an ordinary day is to receive what it is told, and the myriad impressions of which Mrs. Woolf speaks are not allowed to shape themselves into the patterns natural to their own qualities. If educators looked at life as the material for art and education, then the whole of life becomes eligible for both, and a new mode of perception as to what is relevant for educational purposes, for art, for instruction, for intellectual satisfaction is introduced into the educational system.

Allow me to present an example. In an experimental project designed to invent a new kind of world college in which some of these ideas could be tested, twenty-two representatives from as many United Nations countries across the world came together with five distinguished scholars from five continents for a four-week period in the summer of 1963. Although the students were officially approved by their sponsoring governments, they came as volunteers to the experiment, as did the members of the faculty. The intention was to see what could be done to make a world community of learners and teachers in an environment designed to acquire knowledge of the world by creating it.

There was no curriculum established in advance. Instead, the first college assignment was for each member of the college, learners and teachers alike (the learners were all students who had a command of English, and sufficient academic background as graduate students or undergraduates to give them a body of knowledge of their own) to write an account of his personal history, with emphasis on experience in education, to say what in the judgment of each were the major issues in world society with which a world college should be concerned, what knowledge of these issues each of them could bring to the curriculum of the college, and what was the status of these issues in the countries from which they had come. The responses from each member of the college were mimeographed and distributed to the others, and furnished the beginning materials for the structure and content of the curriculum.

The content of the curriculum then became almost completely personal. It was created from the psychic materials already lodged in the consciousness and unconsciousness of representative youth from the world's variety of cultures. The materials of learning then depended upon the relationship between one person and another, the

willingness of each to open up his mind and his feelings to every other member of the community. In place of ideological conflict between systems of thought and politics, in place of courses of instruction based on established texts and positions to be argued, the entire curriculum became an exploration into the personal lives of the community members, each of whom possessed a unique body of knowledge and a set of personal skills for developing further additions to that body from the knowledge available in the community in written and spoken form. The questions for consideration then became: How do I look at the world? What is the view I take of myself and my culture? How did I come to think about myself and my world as I do? What is the reality of my own existence, and how does it compare with reality as perceived by those raised in a different culture, by different parents and teachers, by different methods, and under different conditions?

If there is a universality in man, a kind of psychic identity which links the whole of mankind into one race, one consciousness, and one world, what are its characteristics? I submit that these characteristics can only be known by investigating the individual moments of experience and psychological states which reflect the culture from which they originate, and that to study the culture out of relation to its manifestation in personal terms is to falsify the data. To study international relations by studying the structure of governments and their relation to each other, or the history of foreign policies as developed by nation-states, is to miss the most important elements in the relations between peoples. What is more important is to study the acts of individuals in each culture, the acts of the artists and citizens, their esthetic and cultural products in relation to the force they have exerted on their own environments; or, to put it broadly, to learn what individual men have done with the materials of their own lives in the physical and emotional environments they have created.

To return to the world college experiment, following the initial stage of personal statement, three major issues were chosen by the college for examination and concern. They were the problem of war and peace, the problem of ideological conflict, and the gap between the world's rich and poor. Each day the students and faculty members met together for three hours in the morning to present a range of topics in symposium style, sometimes with two students and a faculty member, at other times with a single student or faculty member, depending on the topic and the ability of the students and teachers to deal with the topic under discussion. In the afternoons, students and teachers worked together in small groups and tutorials on individual research projects chosen by the students. Everyone wrote. Whatever was written was

mimeographed and distributed to the others. Books, short papers, notes, memoranda, memoirs, and documents of relevance to the work in progress were collected as needed. Those with talent in the arts performed for the rest. Poetry and recorded music of all kinds were presented. Most of all, the students and the teachers worked together closely, and each contributed to the others to the degree of his talent and ability. There was no need for prescriptions, requirements, examinations. The entire atmosphere was one which brought out the most in each; everyone taught everyone. What needed to be taught and learned was decided by the learners and teachers, and the range of contribution made by each in the research studies completed was a tribute of an extraordinary kind to the validity of the idea.

Another example can be drawn from some of the new learning communities being organized in the United States by young people, some of whom have left college to live together with others of common interests, to teach each other and to work together on projects in social change, with each person contributing what he can to the others, cooperating in the maintenance of the community and its style of life, reading together poetry, philosophy, sociology, or anything else of interest, talking about belief, contemporary politics, social action, reaching a deeper understanding of other persons, reducing the anonymity of contemporary education to its component parts in the relation between individual lives and persons.

The task of making these experimental communities into the models for a new kind of university for world youth is in my judgment the most important educational and social task of the future. All that it is necessary to do in order to understand the importance of that task is to consider what happened in Paris in the student revolt of 1968 and what has been happening in the universities of the world since then. The exhilaration of free forms of expression, all the way from the wall slogans in Paris to the educational excitement of football stadium meetings at Harvard, could not have been possible without the breakout by the students from the conventional forms in which educational ideas have formerly been expressed. In place of polite reports about current matters in the curriculum there were take-overs of buildings, sit-ins, demonstrations, non-negotiable demands. In place of deadly classroom exercises there were free and open discussions about everything to do with contemporary life, inside and outside the universities. The common testimony of the students, radicals, moderates, and conservatives alike, in the United States and around the world, was that the student revolts gave, for the first time, genuine vitality to the intellectual life of the university. What this amounts to is the fact that at

last a way has been found to release the psychic energies of youth into something vitally important both to them and to their society.

Let us return then to the idea that there is already in existence in world youth a world-wide collective unconscious, and that, in ways previously unknown on a world scale, there are psychic connections between individuals and movements on each of the continents. There are some fairly simple explanations as to why this should be the case. The first of these is of course the advent of intercontinental electronic circuitry, through which, ready or not, mankind has been linked, and what is known in one part of the world, never before known in the past, is immediately known in all the other parts. When I talked to Italian students in Rome about their opposition to the Italian university system, I found that they had known what had happened in the student revolt at the University of California in Berkeley in 1964 and in each of the years since then.

Directly connected with that internally-connected communication system is the fact that the speed of change has been so fast in the societies of the world that the mythologies and customary ways of thinking about how societies can and should be organized have been shattered, and that the educational systems of the world are no longer in touch with the realities of those changes. In previous years, the sources of information available to youth and the public were limited to what could be learned from official sources of culture and education—the schools, colleges, universities, and government information services. Now it is almost impossible to maintain a closed society as far as world-wide information is concerned. The result is that public figures can no longer rely on being believed when and if they make public statements at variance with what comes through the international communication system. Whereas the nineteenth century Western elites who controlled the world could work in comparative secrecy to administer and conceal their policies, there is very little possibility of disguising for long the actions of one power against another without a general dissemination of the facts according to which the world's public can make up its own mind. The recent invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union is a case in point. No matter how the Soviets presented their case publicly in justification of military occupation, the observers of world affairs in each of the other countries of the world were aware of the reality of imperialist control by an authoritarian state over a culture and society not their own.

In this situation, it has become a necessity for the advancement of mankind to form new and internationally connected instruments for truth-seeking and information-disseminating, through which the world's

intellectual community, especially among the youth, can find ways of joining forces within its own membership. The artists and the scientists have already shown the way to the creation of these instruments, through the international dissemination of their findings and the use of the language of science and art to communicate forms of truth which cut through the political and social mythologies to the reality underneath.

The truth about the physical universe cannot be subverted even by the most willful of propagandists, and the truth about man and nature as it appears through the arts cannot be concealed even by those whose business it is to repress ideas. This argues for the use of the universities as the world's central nervous system, and the use of television, films, and the arts to send the messages along the nerves to the nerve ends and the skin of the world. What is needed is a way in which the new psychosocial atmosphere created by the world's intellectual community can become the atmosphere of the whole of society.

That atmosphere is created by what people choose to believe, and what they choose to believe is what fits the contours of their own experience, what they learn to accept intuitively as the outcome of tested knowledge. The conditions for such belief at its truest and best lie in the way in which people come to be sensitive to each other and to learn from each other. Again the analogy between the artist and the learner becomes the basis for new educational thinking. To produce an environment out of which creative ideas come with the naturalness of the growth of flowers, it is necessary to provide for a free flow of emotion and an empathy between persons, an empathy of the kind felt by dancers as they dance together, or actors, or musicians. The cognitive act is esthetic, intellectual, emotional, voluntary and involuntary, all at the same time. The choreographer who composes his dances by working with dancers in movement while he sees what the movements mean—and the dancers by their movement suggest other movements and forms not seen before and not meaning *that* before—is committing a cognitive act. It is time to define cognition in esthetic terms as the comprehension of feelings and impulses which, by an effort of will combined with an involuntary reaching out to the recognition of symbols, puts a certain kind of order into the flux of experience. The cognitive act then becomes a creative act and the whole of one's intellectual life becomes a way of entering into a gratification of the senses and the fusion of feeling with items of information. This is as true of the intellectual acts of mathematicians as it is of choreographers, and it remains to complete the analogy by turning the educational institutions into free learning situations on the model of the choreographer's stage.

REFERENCES

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