

The enhancement of spontaneity and creativity

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Opinion

To live life as fully as possible, and to realize one's fullest range of potentials, necessitates that one live spontaneously and creatively. However, this article cannot teach you how to be creative and spontaneous. At best, it can only provide some clues or pointers. The "journey" must be made by you, directly. You cannot be taught to be spontaneous and creative any more than you can be taught to be sensitive or to love, for these states exist only when the mind is not rehearsed or patterned in any way. So no path, method, or formula can ever lead you to spontaneity or creativity.

No one can teach you the loss of the sense of separate self-awareness in the full absorption of communion with the moment to moment actual reality arising within and around one self, which is necessary if one is to be spontaneous and creative in living. It can never be the result of some deliberate effort or contrived act, for all such acts stem from the separate self as the one who acts, i.e., the actor. For that reason, the more effort you make to be creative, the less creativity and spontaneity can result. Creativity is not something to be pursued, but rather, it is something which comes to you when all effort-making and pursuing ends, for only then is the sense of separate self-awareness put at rest. Absence of controlled, habitual, predetermined, egocentric thinking and functioning enables new insights to arise creatively or originally, unrestrictedly, and spontaneously/effortlessly. To live creatively and spontaneous is to live without the filtering and controlling process of the ego, the seat or directing center of the separate sense of self.

Spontaneity

Spontaneity is quite often confused with impulsivity, and many who are really impulsive pride themselves in believing that they are spontaneous. The state of impulsivity exists when one's impulses push for inappropriate, reckless, intensely demanding, expression without the ego's consent, and are stronger than the ego in its role as the observer and controller of the impulses, pragmatically attempting to restrain impulses that might endanger one's continued survival and wellbeing. But in the case of spontaneity, there is no separate sense of self present acting as the controller. The self is absorbed in total communion with the challenge, and so there is no space between the awareness of the challenge and the response to the challenge, and as a result, the response to the challenge is unmediated by predetermined interpretations and goals. Spontaneity is action without the filtering process of the actor. Spontaneity is the response to a challenge which has been reacted to creatively. That is to say, when a challenge or a stimulus is permitted to impinge upon you and creatively, or unrestrictedly, non-selectively, elicit from you the response that it will, without any interference from a controlling self, then the act of interaction is said to be creative, and the response to this interaction is said to be spontaneous.

Most persons attempt to achieve a kind of immediacy in response, which they refer to as "spontaneity," by rejecting every option that contradicts their sense of identity, or their concept of self, so that their remains an internal feeling of consistency and clarity which

then permits a freedom to react decisively and unambiguously. For example, if you were subject to internal contradiction in terms of sexual role, that is, if you saw yourself as being consistent with both a male and female self-image, then you would find it very difficult to respond to a stimulus that necessitated the expression of your sexual role self. Inwardly you would question, "Should I respond as a male or as a female?" or "I'm anxious to show everyone that I am a male, but that is not quite the actual feeling in me, so I must now ask myself, 'how would a masculine male respond in this situation.?'". Thus a sense of internal contradiction or inconsistency makes it difficult to respond spontaneously and appropriately, if at all. As a result, you might repress the feminine component in yourself so that you would then feel the internal sense of consistency and clarity that all of you are masculine.

However, relative immediacy of response is not the kind of spontaneity to which we are referring in this article. A relatively consistent concept of self is not the same as responding without the direction and control of any self-concept. Spontaneity is flexible responsive action without concern about using the action as a means of being consistent with and affirming of one's self-concept, or one's self-defined sense of identity. In spontaneity, there is unrestricted, uncontrolled, true freedom of responsive action. With no defined sense of self acting as a controlling center which is concerned with conforming one's behavior to one's self-concept or sense of identity, then there is no sense of limitation, or restriction, in the range, or circumference, of appropriate options that one is open to considering and selecting. There can be no center, or no defined sense of identity, without there also being a circumference or a restricted range or repertoire of possible responsive options that are consistent with that sense of identity. The responses are not free to be inconsistent with one's defined sense of identity, otherwise, the sense of identity is contradicted, invalidated, and loses credibility. The limiting circumference represents the entire repertoire of responses related to the center, as the self-concept or defined sense of identity. The center or sense of identity is not free to consider and select options that are inconsistent with, or outside the scope (circumference) of, how it views itself, and its predetermined habitual modes of perception and reaction. In this sense, there can be no real freedom of response. The response is conditioned, predetermined, or restrictively influenced by its necessity to be consistent with a particular image of self that one wishes to portray and affirm to oneself and to another person. But when there is a center-less or undefined, uncontrolled, consciousness,

then there is true freedom, because there is then no restrictive circumference or predetermined limited scope of responses that are consistent with, and support, a defined sense of identity, and a related predetermined, habitual, mode of viewing and reaction. Only then is there true spontaneity.

There can be no genuine spontaneity when the self is fragmented, that is, when it is divided up into different components, concepts, and levels of consciousness. If the self is fragmented into various conflicting self-interpretations and competing psychological needs, then all of the fragmented and different aspects of the self, both conscious and unconscious, compete with one another in order to speak for or represent the self in its response to the challenge or stimulus. This internal competition makes spontaneity impossible. In order to appear spontaneous, one may then permit the most immediate or dominant aspect of self to express itself in an impulsive, inappropriate way.

What makes it impossible to be spontaneous and creative is the fact that you run from surrendering the separate sense of self, or defined identity. It is a very frightening prospect for most persons to consider surrendering the sense of self and being no defined thing, not because it is intrinsically terrible as an actual fact, but rather because the imputed connotation or label of being no-thing is so disturbing. It tends to connote psychological death, non-being, emptiness, extinction, worthlessness, weakness, vulnerability, etc. Because the connotations are strongly negative, you assume that the fact is also something absolutely negative, or totally unacceptable, and, therefore, you make no attempt to discover what it really is. However, with exploration, one may discover that, as a fact, being no defined thing is being ultimate simplicity, which brings a deep sense of joy and peace; for in being no-thing, you are then one with the movement of life itself. Because you are so terribly frightened of being simple, you try to make yourself complex by embellishing and elaborating yourself and your possessions, such as, in the way that you dress, the car that you drive, and the house that you live in, as well as by accumulating fancy or impressive conceptual interpretations of yourself, others, and reality. The emptier, inside, you fear that you are the more complex and embellished do you make yourself and the possessions with which you identify, including your psychological accumulations as well as physical possessions.

When you become bored and seek to change yourself, it is typically in the same realm of the complex, but not from the complex to the simple. Change within the realm of the complex is not true change at all, but only just alteration. Alteration is just a modified continuity, whereas real change involves a true transformation. Thus, for example, if you change from wearing a blue suit to wearing a brown suit because it will fit in better with the particular demands of your external environment, then you have accomplished an alteration but not a change. The wearer of the clothes continues to be essentially the same; therefore, there is only a modified continuity which has occurred. Changing one's behavior, which is really external to oneself, is basically the same as changing one's clothes. For there to be a real change, the wearer of the clothes and the actor of one's actions must, in some way, be transformed. True transformation is when the complex becomes the simple: That is, the real change is not when there is an alteration in one's concept, image, or idea of oneself, but rather, when identification with any and all concepts, definitions, and images of self is transcended. Then one is said to be truly transformed, really simple, as an undefined natural integrity or self-consistency of being. Many persons erroneously believe that being simple involves reducing the variability of their lives. Being simple is not the same as cutting down the number of activities one engages in. Thus, the

man who retires from his job may believe that he is simplifying his life, but really all that he is doing is altering the means by which he embellishes himself. Before his retirement, he used to embellish himself with business success, and now he embellishes himself in the form of being a success at golf, fishing, or other recreational activities. To be really simple, one's motives must be simple, and not necessarily just reducing the number of activities in which one engages. You can live like a hermit in a cave and still be complex if your desires and your ambitions are to psychologically expand or aggrandize yourself, in some way, such as, gaining a greater degree of spiritual elevation or sense of peace. Thus, there is true simplicity only when the acquisitive drive to make the "me" more is extinguished; only when there is contentment to be no-thing but the moment-to-moment reality, encountered directly, without interpretive and imaginative embellishment. This is the only way to end separate self-awareness, and the only way to be in communion with the moment-to-moment reality in its unembellished immediacy. It is only then that there is true simplicity, and, therefore, true spontaneity and creativity. Any other form of "spontaneity" or "creativity" is of a contrived nature, and that which is contrived is the antithesis of genuine creativity and spontaneity, which is that state when the contriving self is absent.

Creativity

Creativity, more specifically, is an open, passive, and receptive state of mind in which consciousness meets a confronting challenge without a rehearsed or predetermined conditioning, expectation, or commitment to that challenge. It involves permitting the stimulus to operate within you and trigger in you whatever it will without any interference on the part of the self to predetermine what its reaction or response should be. When consciousness is uncommitted or not put in a mental strait-jacket, then it is open and receptive to influences from the unconscious and, as a result, one has available, to meet any challenge or problem, relevant elements from both consciousness and unconsciousness. When only one's consciousness is brought to bear on a challenge or problem, then the ability to deal with it is always incomplete and fragmented. It would be as though a ship, traveling at night, were to consider only the surface part of an iceberg to be a threat, but take no account of the submerged aspect of the iceberg. Thus, when you are in a creative state of mind, you are bringing more of yourself than your conscious awareness to every problem and challenge in life. You come to every situation that confronts you as a whole person, with an integrated psyche of both conscious and unconscious relevant factors.

When the mind is pre-committed, then it is a closed mind, and unreceptive to what can intrude, from the unconscious, that could be relevant to the situation. The uncommitted mind is a consciousness that is not moving to get somewhere, or seeking to achieve predetermined goals, and to perpetuate and validate predetermined, habitual, modes of perception, interpretation, and functioning. It is not committed to becoming or achieving any particular predetermined thing. Therefore, approaching a situation with the hope of attaining some kind of goal prevents a creative interaction with that situation, or an unrestricted, flexible, way of viewing and responding to the situation.

Likely, you have noticed, for example, that if you had to make a public speech, but did so extemporaneously rather than from a prepared text, that it tended to offer much more opportunity for interesting nuances, associations, and illustrative examples to enter your mind, which resulted in a much more interesting presentation. However, usually your insecurity makes you over-rehearse, and you use structure as a crutch for fear that without it, you might "fall flat on your face". You are invested in some kind of image or concept

of adequacy, and you believe that over-preparation will guarantee your doing well, which will thereby preserve and confirm the image of adequacy with which you are identified. But invariably such a presentation turns out to be dull, boring, and lifeless. When there is no opportunity for creativity to enter in, then without that element of renewal being present or potentially available, one is sure to perceive what is being presented as being without vitality, and the almost automatic reaction to that realization is boredom and drowsiness. Learn to put your mind where your body is, and you will enter into every situation as a fully integrated and creative person. Usually your mind wanders because you feel too insecure and fearful to jeopardize an image or concept with which you are identified, so, as a result, your mind is busily engaged in trying to control, anticipate, and be one-up in the situation. This, of course, destroys the potential for a creative reaction to occur. Fear and creativity are incompatible.

Fear yearns for authority to lead, direct, and protect. It is a well-recognized truism that dictators and absolute authorities are more likely to come on the scene when the people are fearful. Insecurity insists on being given direction and structure. Authority forces imitative and copying behavior and imitation is antithetical to creativity. To be truly creative, one must be free of both internal and external forms of authority. Externally, forms of authority such as, parents, teachers, clergy, and political leaders are often designing blueprints or predetermined guidelines for behavior and thought, which are destructive impediments to the process of genuine creativity, involving unrestricted, uncontrolled, effortless, spontaneous flow of new insight. Internally, forms of authority such as, socially conditioned conscience (in contrast to the genuine conscience coming from our core integrity), idealized images or self-expectations, self-concepts, and various kinds of standards, principles, values, and beliefs all demand conformity to predetermined guidelines or patterns. One can be creative only when thought is free of patterning and conditioning. Only when consciousness is free-flowing can it light where it will. The sense of self-awareness, or the “me,” is comprised entirely of conditioned and patterned responses, and so creativity exists only when consciousness is free of the influence of its egocentric center, the “me,” involving predetermined interpretations of self and of particular situations.

The reader should not confuse creativity with the originality or uniqueness of some production. Being different or innovative is not necessarily the same thing as being creative. Creativity is a particular unpatterned or undefined, uncontrolled, unrestricted, stance that one takes toward all aspects of life. It may or may not eventuate in original or innovative productions such as a painting, a poem, or a musical composition, depending upon the person’s particular inherent talents or skills. Quite often what we refer to as a creative production is really dependent upon a narcissistic inability on the part of its “creator” to commune or relate intimately with others, which results in an intense drive, within him, for self-expression. But because he does not feel comfortable to express himself in interaction with other people, he uses only an extension of himself with which to interact. The musical instrument, the artist’s canvas, the sculptor’s clay, or the writer’s typewriter and paper all are extensions of the person himself, and he narcissistically pours out into it all of that pent-up self within him that he cannot share with others. Whereas the person who truly lives creatively is free of the tension which so often serves as the impetus for narcissistically motivated artistic production, because he is constantly giving the self over in the absorption of constant communion with every confronting reality. For this reason, he is less likely to have the tension of a pent-up self, unable to surrender itself to anyone outside of himself, except his artistic medium, and, therefore, need not

necessarily be driven to produce artistic creations, unless moved to do so as an expression of appreciative insight into particular aspects of life and/or as a caring gift to the human community. Individuals who are not driven by an intense drive for self-expression, (which is often termed creativity), can still contribute creative productions. They may do that, but the motivation will not be, primarily, the narcissistic self-oriented preoccupation of many artists, but, rather, will stem from the unselfish caring or love that they feel for others, and their desire to reach a large number of persons in order to share, and help others in some way to experience, that which they are experiencing.

Get yourself untracked

In order to live creatively, you must get yourself untracked, un-grooved. Just as the grooves on a phonograph record permit only one song to be expressed, so, too, the tracks or grooves of our own conditioned thinking also permits you to sing only the one song of self, i.e., predetermined thinking restricts the expression of our energy and experience to predetermined patterns or guidelines. If you are identified with your self-concept of being intelligent, for example, then you will sing that same song over and over to everyone you meet; essentially the words declare, “Hey, everyone, look how intelligent I am.” In contrast to the terminology as many young people use it, if your life is “groovy,” then you are truly in a bad way. Grooves and tracks lead only to the same predetermined station, and over and over again you make the same “journey.” Each time you make the “journey,” you pretend to yourself that your self-concept or idealized image has been so much more confirmed. In the true sense of the word, “groovy” is probably meant to imply, by young people (in the slang of the late 1960’s), that one is fitting in perfectly to the natural flow of life, but in truth, life is too capricious, unpredictable, spontaneous, and creative for one to always be able to follow its free-flowing movements. Only someone who is totally attuned to life, because he is not directed or propelled by some inner personal entity self, or restrictively defined, rigidly controlled, narcissistically self-preoccupied, sense of identity, can commune with life so sensitively as to be able to be with its every nuance and subtlety.

So, instead of being tracked and grooved like a phonograph record, learn to “sing your own song and play your own kind of music.” However, to do so, one must not be the singer but the song. Beautiful manifest phenomena do not intrinsically possess beauty in their own right, but instead, derive it from an un-manifested numinous great mystery Source that abides within and between those manifest phenomena. Gibran puts it, “Where shall you seek beauty, and how shall you find her unless she herself is your way and your guide?” (Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966, page 74). Therefore, let your own inner feelings be the guide for the song that it wants to sing.

All aspects of defined identity or controlled personality are a track, or a patterned conditioning which predetermines your behavior, perception, and thinking. You must not permit any track to mold you and monopolize your perception and responsive action, but only let the immediacy and the creativity of the moment spontaneously stir and arouse you as it will. You have nothing to fear from the new liberation and elimination of guidelines. The mind with a free-flowing consciousness is of great joy. The patterned and tracked mind, no matter how successful it is in attaining its goals, will never find the security it seeks and, at even its deepest roots, is so confined and restricted that it can never know real peace and joy.

However, an unpatterned mind is not to be construed as necessarily being the same thing as an anti-conventional mind. Many

young people believe that they are displaying a sense of freedom and un patterning through oppositional and anti-conventional behavior and attitudes, but this is not true freedom, but just another new groove, another new pattern that one has set for oneself. There is no genuine creativity and freedom when any form of rigid habit, compulsivity, or predetermination exists. If there is a “must,” such as, a compulsion to oppose and resist, then that is your new track, which blocks your consciousness from venturing into new territory, or new options of possible experience and functioning, beyond the scope of the ego’s predetermined patterns.

To gain some awareness of how structured and patterned your mind really is, try, sometime, to close your eyes and just let yourself be sensitive to what is going on deeply within you, and let that reality manifest itself as a song without words, and just sing out-loud, being one with that song and not the separately self-aware, effortful, singer. Don’t direct it, in any way, but, rather, let the energy within you sing its own song. Usually, when you feel sad or in love, for example, you usually turn to someone else’s song that has sad lyrics in it, or a love song, and you sing someone else’s words to fit your mood. This time, do not follow any song that you already know, but, rather, try to self-discover what your own song, or natural mode of self-expression, is. Don’t construct one in a contrived way. Instead, just let your deep inner feelings and energy, in communion with your voice, give expression to itself. Conscious thinking is energy-draining, but just listening is energy-gaining. That is where joy naturally abides.

Don’t be an imitator—make your own kind of music—each of us is truly our own song, or our own natural energy flow, expressing itself through various mediums or modes. Discover what your song is this moment; the next moment, you may have a different song to sing. Let it express itself. As you attune to the song within you, sad or happy, whatever it may be, you will find that, at some point, the singer will merge and become one with the song. You will lose the sense of self, or separate self-awareness, and it will bring a profound sense of wellbeing. If you are partial to the dance, then let that inner song within you express itself through your body in non-contrived movements of your own dance.

If you like to draw or paint, try this. With brush and paint, or ink, let your deep inner feeling guide your hand and draw a line on a sheet of paper. Do not hurry or rush, and do not have purpose or direction to your drawing. The brush is drawn over the paper, never pushed. The shape of the character drawn does not matter. Almost everywhere

these days, we find that the drawings or product is valued, but its creator is neglected. Things have become of more value than their maker. This kind of drawing or writing should proceed in silence. There should be no laughing or joking, for this is more than play. Just continue and let inner reality draw. With such practice, one easily becomes an artist in everyday living.

Another valuable exercise for creativity is to write poetry. It does not matter if it rhymes or not. The important thing is to enter into communion with what is called the creative or intuitive unconscious. It involves “thinking” with the heart instead of the mind. To write poetry, one must adopt a very sensitive awareness toward oneself and the world, and always ask, “What am I reacting to?” One must learn to listen to every subtle whisper within oneself and others. Beautiful, genuine, poetry cannot be written when one is committed to defending against the realities in oneself, so, therefore, writing poetry heightens the sensitivities, which makes it possible to be closer to what is most essentially genuine in yourself. Writing spontaneous poetry brings one in very close and direct contact with one’s most subjective experiential reality. To write about your depression, for example, you must dive right into it. You must soak yourself in it, and only when it speaks to you clearly will you be able to put it into the words of a poem. You will learn how to creatively articulate your feelings, and in this articulation, you will also be clarifying and understanding your true feelings. Writing poetry is also most essential for awakening the inspirational level of consciousness. The more it is exercised, the more vivid and intense it grows, and your capacity for experiencing great beauty, joy, and love will grow with it. But remember, don’t purposely write the poem as an intellectually contrived act, but rather, let it spontaneously unfold itself and reveal itself to your consciousness without effort and volitional control.

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