

Creativity and Reality

By George Y. Fujita

In sharing my ideas about creativity with various professional groups, I have been asked, "Why did we neglect the study of the creative process until only recently?" And yet, the creative process has been a concern of man for a long time (Thoreau, 1893). Persons who ask this question are, of course, reacting to the generation of a whole series of studies beginning with the pioneering work of Guilford (1950, 1951) and with the recent, intensive work on the creative abilities of children by Torrance (1962). But it is characteristic of our contemporary society that men such as Thoreau (1893) and Rogers (1961), who are subjective men, do not make an impact on society on the magnificent scale that modern man requires. Society began to take note of the creative process only when men such as Osborn (1957) began to demonstrate in "brainstorming workshops" that the creative potential was important to industry—indeed that you could put dollar and cents value on it. Swept along with this tide, men like Guilford made their impact when they objectified the process by sophisticated scientific manipulation. Having proven its value economically and having been blessed with scientific respectability, it became possible for this aspect of reality to become a proper concern for modern man.

This brief history of the development of the "consciousness" or recognition of creativity by our contemporary, materialistic society has many parallels. In the area of love, it is epitomized by the statement of an

adolescent who said, "Don't give me this jazz about love, man. Give me sex. To be real, I've got to feel it, smell it, touch it."

Having been trained at a university that prides itself in being called the "dust-bowl of empiricism," I will be the first to say that the pioneering efforts of Osborn, Guilford, and Torrance are valuable contributions to humanity. And greater scientific rigor, sophistication, and optimism is needed in order to advance this valuable line of work. The point I wish to establish is that there is a limit to this method of looking at reality. The scientists who are engaged in this work fully realize that they are attempting to objectify and intellectualize something that can never be fully penetrated and understood. By its inherent, human nature, the creative process is difficult to penetrate. The scientists were able to begin their work only when they affirmed this fact by giving *value to mystery*. In most creativity tests, you are given a score for giving mysterious answers—answers that offer one possible solution among many possibilities. This divergency reflects the deep conviction of creative persons that the given, surface nature of anything is not to be taken very seriously.

Once the scientist affirmed the mysterious nature of the creative process, some aspects of the creative process were revealed to him. But because the scientific process will admit into reality only that which is non-random, non-chance, non-mysterious, the basic nature of the creative act will always remain virginal, or

even if the right hypothesis were raised, the empirical investigation will result in the relegation of the essential factors to that large mystery that we call the random process. The scientists fully realize that what they are able to objectify is but a synchronized shadow of the real process of creativity. For instance, intensive and imaginative research efforts will reveal whether persons are more creative under conditions of cooperation or competition, under conditions of relative quiet or excitement, or whether intelligence is related to creativity, but the elemental nature of the creative process is human and will always remain naive and impenetrable and will always elude scientific manipulation.

The scientist, by profession, must abide by his strict rules. He must continually strive to use the techniques available to him to penetrate the mystery around him, but we are not all scientists and are not bound by his rules. We have the freedom to approach this experience subjectively. All of us have, at one time or another, felt that exhilaration that is peculiar to our creative efforts. The problem for us is to believe it, to hope for it, and to make it possible for others to experience that same joy.

Rogers, the great humanist-scientist, has asked the question, "What are the conditions within me that are most closely associated with my creative acts?", and has come up with the following: (1) Openness to experience, and (2) an internal locus of evaluation. Before elaborating these experiences, let me share with you

first an experience that I had this past summer. It brings into focus the kind of difficulty or impasse in communication that is inherent in attempting to communicate subjective experiences.

It is extremely difficult to talk "about" subjective experiences like creativity so whenever possible I try to co-experience the conditions of the creative act with whomever I am trying to communicate. The audience in this particular case was a group of language arts teachers in a pre-fall workshop on creativity in literature. In sharing my feelings, I tried to be as open as possible and tried to create a milieu that made them as open as possible, and we were somewhat successful in achieving this condition. Afterwards, as we broke up the sessions, one of the leaders of the conference came to me and said, "I never expected anything like this from a scientist. More so because you're a Japanese male. We were so emotionally involved." I feel that what he was trying to tell me was that he and I were able to "shuck off" the need to imagine and categorize and that we were able to share and communicate experiences at the subjective level of reality.

In counseling students who come to the Counseling and Testing Center, I am becoming more and more convinced that this openness to experience can rarely be achieved alone. Each of us must within ourselves experience openness, but we can rarely do it when we are alone. What I mean to say is that the experience is essentially a poignant, idiosyncratic and lonely one, that we alone can really experience it, but we can rarely come to this experience in a vacuum. To be free, we need free and freeing persons around us who by example and concern for us show us that we need not manipulate, we need not be defensive, that our thoughts,

feelings, and actions are wholly justifiable and of worth without explanation. I think that we are approaching this openness when we are able to say, "You know, I feel sort of nutty and crazy."

This openness to what exists means simultaneously that more data is available to the person and that the data is more alive and usable. A close analogy of this experience is known to us in our work with tachistoscopic reading. When an extremely fast exposure is used, the subjects can "see" a 9-digit presentation of numbers but cannot write down all 9 digits. Proof that they indeed "see" all nine digits is demonstrated by the fact that they can put down on paper the center three digits at one time and the outer two digits at another time. They literally do not "believe" what they see. In the same way, many aspects of reality before our very senses are not sensed.

Another condition, probably just as important, if not more important than openness, is that which Rogers has called an internal locus of evaluation. "Does it express a part of me — my feeling or my thought, my pain, my ecstasy?" Once, everyone of us could evaluate hunger. We squealed! Today we eat when others eat, eat what others eat, and some of us do not even know whether we are eating the right food in the right atmosphere, with the right people, with the right smiles. Most of us when we fall out of cadence, dance a crazy jig and scramble back into rhythm. It has been said that Emerson, finding his friend Thoreau in jail, asked him what he was doing there. Thoreau replied, "What are you doing out of jail?" Few of us have experienced that sureness of spirit that Thoreau had so that we sound off *our* cadence against the marching masses.

Torrance has documented this sapping of the creative power in children by noting that peer pressure and teacher domination puts a dent in the developmental curve of creativity some time during the third and fourth grade. For many of us, this is the price we pay for becoming socialized. I have a suspicion that this is intimately related to the Oedipal situation that Freud described. Somehow, in order that life become tolerable, we as children had to give up the sureness of our squealing and more besides. Like a slave who slowly begins to live with and abide by the muck and mire that surround him, we begin slowly at first but with greater and greater acceleration to abdicate our selfhood. We lose our identities until we can no longer laugh when we want but must "ha ha ha" because others laugh.

How can we recover our selfhood, our freedom, our identity? There are no simple answers. For one thing, some have not had to give up their identities, for they were always loved as children and could love in return. Others accept their slavehood and live "lives of quiet desperation." I am becoming more and more convinced that for most of us we gain our identities through rebellion.

A mother comes into the restaurant with her son, and the waitress proceeds to take her order of breakfast and then the waitress turns to the young man and asks, "And what will you have?" The mother begins to dictate, "He will have eggs, sunny-side up . . ." "And what will you have?" "He will have eggs, sunny-side up . . ." "And what will you have?" "He will have eggs, sunny-side up . . ."

And what will he have? One day he speaks, and at that moment awareness is born. As Camus (1956) has said, "Awareness, no matter how

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