

# *Creative Balance*

A Comprehensive Guide

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# Preface

The Autobiographical Point of Departure

When I got the first intuition for writing this article, I had the intention to entitle it *Creation v. Production*.

But then, shortly after, and perhaps as a result of a kind of mental integration that had taken place in the meantime, the term *Creative Balance* came suddenly to mind. In fact, it is a kind of balance that I am searching for since I began publishing, a balance between my spontaneous creative impulses and the labor to work them out.

Before, I just created, in a carefree attitude and with an (almost) empty mind.

Now I am more and more preoccupied *presenting* the stuff I create. And that is sometimes hard work. Not that I did not follow my intuition when I work on designing web pages, but there is technique involved in that - definitely. And my spontaneous art is art *without* technique... That is the fundamental difference.

However, writing this article I found that the subject developed into a more general reflection about creativity and the fundamental conditions necessary for creativity to flourish on the individual as well as on the collective level.

*I found that creativity, as natural a human quality it is considered in democratic political systems, can be perceived as a thread to existing societal structures in cultures where*

*democracy is still in the building process.* Therefore effective training for companies located in different cultures may require different approaches to the realization of the human potential.

# Introduction

The Web's New Creative Reality

After some or the other web marathon, I leave my desk, exhausted, and take a rest, grabbing a book like *The Celestine Prophecy* by James Redfield, a book which is written just black on white, without special design, without images.

Not only do I relax my eyes, but take a deep plunge into the depth of purity.

Then I think with a bit of melancholy of the times I was writing myself and take a deep breath and a firm intention to re-begin writing, *creative* writing.

I *have* projects, but I must be watchful not to drown them in the massive attention I now give to the Web and its content.

I know there are people who still pretend that the Web's content was poor and insignificant. First, I thought the same, but with every day I browse the Web, I am more surprised. And more convinced that the very contrary is true! Honestly, it is amazing how quickly human creativity just blooms up once it has been given a free path for expression and unfolding. Not only corporations now take an obvious pleasure designing attractive pages for the Web, but also so many individuals, so many persons who let us see a bit behind their *persona*. Yes, the Web opens us up.

Many a company now offers much more information, much more support and many more products for free as they would do,

or did, in traditional marketing. And many an individual who would normally live covered behind the walls of conditioned behavior suddenly opens up to a softer attitude, offers linking, tells about himself or herself, even family problems, and will not be surprised to get emails with spontaneous advice or support - from strangers!

### *Paradigm Shift*

These are but the outside signs for something that is happening on a far deeper level. It is the symptoms of a *paradigm shift*.

In my *Webosophy Essays* I have pointed out to what extent the Web will change existing structures and ways of publishing.

One of the general traits of the era of *Aquarius* into which we are heading is a strong emphasis on *individualization* as opposed to the *collectivization*, if I may say so, of the Pisces era from which we currently recover...

This means that in publishing everybody will attain a considerable capacity of expressing themselves in public. All the tools will be at hand for those who are willing to free-lance themselves in the adventure of self-expression. And these tools will be free of charge or almost. The Web has already changed existing economic structures in our capitalist society. Forms of sharing have been



adopted within the recent years that have never existed before (if we spare out tribal cultures where sharing is an ingredient part of life).

The whole concept of *shareware* alone is not less than a revolution of our economic system.

# Creative Balance

The Balance between Creativity and Technology

My point is that, if we consider the overwhelming abundance of tools for creative expression today, we must make sure that we do not forget what we want to say! We basically need *one* attitude or capacity: *The capacity of keeping a creative balance between the presentation of our stuff, on one hand, and the quality of its content, on the other.*

To make it more clear, consider the following observation: presently on the Web the rule is that the more intellectual a site is, the more boring it looks. The less demanding a site is in terms of content of production, the better it is designed.

Of course, this is a *generalization*. Perhaps I should rather call it a *general tendency*. I am sure that this phenomenon is temporary though, because once high content providers on the Web discover that they too have to use new technologies responsibly if they want their stuff to be read, they will quickly find the tools to make their sites look decent. Perhaps then, we will forget about those sites with big boring default and a phone number at the bottom of the page? *Ever heard of e-mail, Doctor?*

An academic myself, I am sad to see this technical ignorance among us, so typical for people with university degrees. It is a kind of arrogance, because for an intellectual the excuse *I didn't know* is not valid. Especially not on the Web, for everything is

available. The info, the tools, the help, the encouragement - everything! And gratis!

I myself had no idea of web programming at the start. Yet I did have the strong intention to publish all my writings *in the best possible form*. And that is what publishers hardly ever do. They realize *their* ideas, their vision about your book. What about yours, the author's?

There are of course exceptions, and I congratulate every author who has had the chance to meet a comprehensive lector, a publisher who really values the content, not only the profit...

I did not have this chance yet and therefore had to take action! This action was to do *a service to myself!* And I learned lots from the experience. Now I think that only after you have served yourself you can serve others effectively. It is a bit the same with love, too. Who, despising Self, can love others?

The secret of creativity is contact with *Self*. Getting in touch with our inner Self requires the involvement of our right brain. Involvement of our right brain happens through consciously setting aside rational thought processes and engaging associative and image centered thinking.

Many people agree with this theoretically yet are unable or unwilling to stop the thinker for one minute only. They are so attached to their usual thought patterns that they block sponta-

neous and creative ideas from coming up to the surface of consciousness.

*Everybody needs to cut off the continuous flow of thought from time to time and take a leave from thinking and planning. Most of us are stuck in repetitive thought patterns, bored and lacking motivation for regular travels into the landscape of the right brain.*

You can use relaxation, meditation or Tao Yoga, spontaneous art or writing, whatever gets you more integrated will do. If you refuse to take regular leaves from what seems important to you, *you will get stuck*, and your creativity potential decreases.

More and more, and especially after promoting my human skill training approach among corporations, I feel that in some cultures or among certain groups of people, creativity is something like a threat. It threatens the establishment of the bored-with-life who try to dominate the rest of creative human beings with their blown-up mediocrity.

When working overseas, in Asia, I had to modify my training approach completely, i.e. to take out every single element that slightly reminds creativity enhancement, in order to get a minimal chance of customer interest. We should not wonder why the world changes so slowly for the better. As long as the deepest source

of our human potential is not only a desert land, but even disdained, we can fly a hundred times to the moon without ever grasping it!

The *real* flight to the moon is that of our imagination, not that of armored astronauts and robots who carry out the orders of bureaucrats who want to *make history*. History - with what?

The general lack of creativity that is part of every bureaucracy is especially destructive at the university level and, even earlier, at school. Children brought up in the tiring boredom of mediocre schools and idiotic *curricula* will never really fully access their deep-down creativity and originality.

As civilization progresses, creativity is more and more linked to technology. In my observation, universities in the United States, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore or Hong Kong that are deeply involved in providing the best in new technologies and new forms of learning are also very concerned about awakening and maintaining creativity in their students (and, first of all, their teachers!). For the rest, I question the general excuse that there is no money or no budget or no whatever.

In most countries, there is no creativity at the top government level. That is where the root of the problem is! Governments that are merely oriented towards problem solving or, even lower,

at the level of problem-maintenance, have no idea of what the potential of a creative government is.

The first step towards a creative government is not, as many believe, more money or more technology, but *more interest!* Without interest, openness and flexibility it is impossible to evolve on any level.

Interest is the fruit of motivation, and motivation, in turn, is the result of high self-esteem. The creative people I know and have heard of all share one common character trait: they are *curious*. They are interested. They feel involved. They have high self-esteem.

All uncreative people I know or have heard of share their general lack of involvement, their general disinterest in life, their lack of curiosity.

Curiosity and joy are very closely related. There is lots of joy in curiosity. And lots of sadness in people who lack this primary quality of humaneness.

# Creativity and Democracy

Why Creativity is a Threat to Stupidity



Creativity is true democracy. No dictator can rule a mass of creative people. Thus striving for more democracy means enhancing creativity in our pre-schools, schools and universities. S/he who has developed his or her creative potential, is an individual in the true sense. What is *in-dividus* cannot be divided, cannot be split off, and cannot be manipulated.

Therefore, logically, creativity is threatening dictatorial governments and, generally, stiff hierarchical systems. This is equally true for the private sector. Organizations and companies that put their trust only in a system of punishment and reward, considering their employees as machine wheels, will hardly achieve to motivate them to give their best.

By contrast, companies who adopt a person-first approach and stimulate the originality and creativity of their employees will definitely profit from the input their staff will provide, and prosper on many different levels.

Most of the Fortune 500 companies in the United States have given positive evidence to that truth.

Since creativity is deeply linked to the expression of our human potential, it is very closely related to self-esteem and self-value. It is impossible to enhance self-esteem among people without respecting their creativity. There is nothing more satisfying

and rewarding than to create and to express oneself within one's original talents and gifts.

This is true also on a political level. Governments who lead with policies that enhance creative living and favor new inventions, will make their countries prosper whereas those who belittle human creativity cannot seriously pretend that they are democratic even if their constitutions may say so.

Creative balance makes sense also on this general, political level. If we produce marvelous instruments such as the computer, radio, TV, home video and the Word Wide Web, without implementing policies to make sure that a large number of people have *access* to those media and can express themselves creatively in them, we have a democracy on paper.

Democracy and human dignity being interdependent, it is vital in an advanced civilization that the new media and technologies really enhance creative expression and do not just represent wonderful shells without content, or a content that is not worth its wrapping.

This opinion may seem unrealistic but please imagine how much more effective our school system would be if there was more space given to the children's creativity instead of wasting time and resources with working out boring *curricula* who satisfy only the

needs of bureaucrats rather than enhancing the effectiveness of learning.

And it is there where democracy begins: in the school, in the kindergarten.

Election systems are ridiculous inventions as long as the people who choose do not know what they choose or have no choice for a better alternative because all the political candidates play the same false game! Therefore it is vital for any democracy to reform the educational system and adapt it to the needs of the future.

In the present moment, there is no other alternative that is of equal importance with the need to set up a new creative and playful learning environment where the human potential is really put to the service of the individual and the community at the same time.

Creative balance in this context means to shift the emphasis from advancing in mere technology to a perspective *that is primarily oriented towards the enhancement of the natural human ability to create and to find new original solutions.*

We can have hundreds of management seminars that pursue this goal, but with a fraction of the investment of time and resources the same can be achieved on a much larger scale if we

educate our children differently, i.e. with more space and freedom to express their natural creativity.

Since free children in the sense of children without fear and neurotic blockages are creative children, we do not even need much input to stimulate their creativity.

What we have to do is rather to diminish the factors that block their creativity, for example authoritarian forms of education, stiff hierarchical structures in the organization of schools and the teaching staff, abandoning punishments (be they moral, psychological or corporeal) and, most important of all, the modeling of children after *heroes* or other figures of veneration.

The latter is perhaps the subtlest, most effective and most destructive form of dictatorship. It is what dominates for example the North American educational system and, to a certain extent, the whole societal, moral and behavioral system of the United States.

Many societies follow the example of the United States since they consider the American system as the most advanced.

What they often forget is the origin of the American culture, which is quite unique. Cultures are living organisms and grow organically. Societal institutions and all the ingredients of a civilization cannot be seen separated from the culture in which they

were born. It is therefore erroneous to just cut off a piece of flesh from a culture in order to feed another with it. Human history is full of attempts to deport not only humans but also systems or organisms from one culture into another. If the outcome is not a complete failure, something different of what was expected will be the result.

The Japanese, when they began their car production, thought their key to success was to copy the American car design. The result? *The Japanese car*.

After having to admit their failure the Japanese saw that their market was not within the large and expensive car range but in the small and economic one. So they set out to copy the European car design. The result? *The Japanese car*.

Now judge by yourself. Do Japanese cars really look like European ones? Of course not. Because through all the copying the Japanese finally saw that people, if they wanted to buy a Japanese car wanted a car that looked like a Japanese car and not like a European car.

Which meant in many cases that the Japanese car looked *better* (and often was also technically better) than a European counterpart of the same price range. So with the Japanese car market it was not a failure but the second alternative: the out-

come was totally different of what the Japanese had expected when they started out producing cars.

We all know abundant examples of technology transfer that falls within the first category. We do not even need to remember spectacular cases like some factories that India bought from Krupp in Germany without thinking that they also needed skilled workers to operate them - with the disastrous result that huge investments were done for nothing and India was sitting on their inoperable factories like the hen on the egg, only that *this* egg remained sterile.

It is everyday experience in a world that gets more tightly inter-connected that governments, organizations or private companies try to implement policies that work well in other governments, organizations or private companies in other parts of the world, in other cultures, without taking into consideration that cultures create their own bio-organisms within which certain things grow and certain others not. Even if they flourish elsewhere.

Creative governments, organizations or private companies will keep in mind that creativity is always connected to the human element, and they will therefore *value* the human element before all!

They will not so easily fall in the trap to overestimate technology and rather stay away from transferring technology or con-

cepts from one culture into another. They will rather want to enhance the creative potential of their own inhabitants, their own students, their own professionals, their own civil servants.

Creative balance will mean to them an important requirement to exploit the human resources they naturally have at their disposition, instead of propping their plants with the sprouts of other plants that grew in a different soil.

# Creativity and Individuality

The Creative Revolution from Inside



Creativity is directly related to individuality. This may be one reason that in cultures where individuality is belittled or regarded as a secondary value, creativity is not regarded as a primary value either.

Cultures that value the individual only as member of a greater unity such as the group, the clan, or political, religious and social communities, have little regard for the innermost potential of the individual.

Astonishingly in such cultures, one example of which is Indonesia, teamwork is not functioning better than elsewhere, but *worse*. This is a paradox since in those cultures education is much more community-oriented than in the West, and much less centered upon the individual child.

It took me quite a time to find out the clue for this seeming paradox. During more than one year I was carefully listening to dozens of hotel and bank directors, airline top executives, human resource directors, university rectors and government officials in many vital centers of Indonesia (Java, Bali, Sulawesi, Lombok) and heard everywhere the following unison complaints:

- General lack of effectiveness
- High level of miscommunication
- Lack of team stability and team effectiveness

- Lack of loyalty
- Lack of responsibility (response-ability)
- Lack of innovation ability
- Lack of flexibility
- Lack of personal profile

This valuable information helped me tremendously to adapt my training approach to the needs of my customers.

My primarily creativity oriented corporate training concept had to be completely modified if I wanted to succeed in this market. However, this information did not explain why teamwork was so difficult and communication so ineffective in the company culture in Indonesia.

I could not figure out how this was possible considering the fact that education in the family in this culture is highly clan-centered and community-oriented.

Was this not the ideal soil for socializing people, getting them to a point to be highly synergistic in the team?

It should be so. Logically. But it wasn't, in the opinion of most of the leaders of this country, and in my own observation. Why? I again and again looked at my previous research on the roots of creativity and personal effectiveness, in order to find the

clue to this rattle. *What is a team?*, I asked myself, repeatedly. What makes a team effective? What is it and where is it? Is it outside or is it inside? And suddenly it flushed through my mind that it is not outside, but inside. Inside where? Inside the team? No. Inside the individuals that make out the team? Yes.

So if it is inside the individuals is it perhaps something directly related to individuality itself? But, this cannot be, I thought, this would be highly, highly paradox!

The more somebody is individualized, the more is he able to function effectively in a team, the more he is socialized? No, that could not be. Could it?

I went again through my research into symbiotic relationships as I have summarized it in my essay *I am an alien*, and my extensive work with the inner dialogue as it is summarized in the Selfbuilding guide *Your inner landscape*, equally published in this collection.

Suddenly I saw it as clearly as a diamond in front of my eyes! There was no doubt that effective relationships on the outside level (with others) require effective relationships of the person *with herSelf*, with all our different inner entities.

With other words: somebody who has never built his *inner team* cannot function well in the teamwork with others. And further: somebody who is symbiotically attached to others, his/her

family, friends, siblings, partner(s) will not be able to work creatively with others because creative relationships require *space* for every partner involved in the creative relationship, space that is impossible in symbiosis or fusion.

With this insight, my original concept for corporate training in Indonesia was modified, and a basic voice dialogue and spontaneous art program was inserted in it. Later I saw that I had been on the right track with this, my training seminars being highly successful. However, success was only possible if I was able to *motivate* the group, on a deeper than conscious level, to take this journey or to at least give it a try.

There were groups, too, that were so much fixed in the traditional paradigm, so stiff and so little accessible that the work had been impossible with them. Fortunately, I had tested them *before* I signed a contract and thus quit my involvement on the spot - which saved me a lot of trouble later on.

Individuality still seems to be considered either a Western invention or a threat in most Asian societies.

In a way, I was running against walls with my approach, and the economic crisis saved me from a critical decision on this matter - since it stopped me completely in this new business. In hindsight I rather believe that I would have stopped anyway, not

only because budgets are now lacking for human skill training in most governmental and private organizations in Asia.

And this new orientation was not the result of a frustration. I had learned a lot from the experience, but I saw that I had to imperatively begin on a personal, and not a corporate level.

Society is formed by individuals, however cultural norms define the individual's involvement and behavior in the group.

That is why, serving the individual rather than the group, and focusing on enhancing individuality rather than group-adherence, group thinking and group progress, I serve at the end also the group and the culture by serving the individual.

It goes from bottom to top and from inside out - and not *vice versa*.