



*King Solomon's Masterclass:
Creative Achievement & Personal Success*

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INTRODUCTION

King Solomon's Masterclass

All that is now known, or that probably can be known, about creative achievement and personal success was discovered by King Solomon of ancient Israel -- the wisest person who ever lived -- or revealed to him by divine inspiration. It is not surprising, therefore, that recent research into the working methods of some of the most highly creative individuals the world has ever known strongly suggests that they all achieved their immense success, no matter what their field of endeavor, by the patient and persistent application of some or all of the common set of quite simple yet powerful principles he identified almost three thousand years ago.

Those principles — the Principles of Excellence — were in fact systematically taught as a Masterclass by Solomon, probably the greatest genius the world has ever known, and then preserved by him for posterity, because of their immense potential importance, both artistically and economically, in the often erotic passages of Hebrew poetry that make up the enigmatic "Song of Songs".

Solomon's inspired masterpiece, the significance of which has long been regarded as the greatest puzzle in all literature, now forms the basis of this short course in success and creativity which aims to make those powerful yet deceptively simple principles once again available to any person interested in discovering and developing their creative potential and achieving excellence in their chosen field.

Two Kinds of Creativity

Success in any field has to be created, and how such creative action can be initiated and controlled has long been regarded as a mystery, yet in the "Song of Songs", Solomon demystifies and simplifies this complex subject, without recourse to elaborate psychological jargon, by identifying and describing two key processes -- that might be called Inspired and Practical creativity -- both of which become easily understandable and deliberately manageable when we perceive, as he did, their uncanny physical parallels in nature, in the growth and reproduction of plants and animals, including human beings, as we shall see later.

This uncanny connection between mental and biological creativity is no accident of some mythical evolutionary process, but the result of deliberate divine design. According to the Genesis account of creation, when God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he gave them twin creative commissions: first, to reproduce and populate the Earth, after the manner of the plants and animals around them, a process of biological creativity; and, second, to use their minds to subdue and rule over the whole Earth, a process of mental creativity -- to investigate, hypothesise, design, invent, discover, build and beautify. These two kinds of creative action, mental and physical or biological, operate in uncannily similar ways, the former seemingly designed to illustrate and inform the latter, and so encourage man to continue the creative work begun by God.

General speaking, all the plant and animal life with which God beautifies the Earth begins with either conception or fertilisation. Likewise all human creative achievement and progress depend on two parallel mental processes. A gigantic business corporation, for example begins with a thought -- a conception -- in the mind of one person, and it is interesting that the word "corporation" signifies a body or organism, virtually a living thing which metaphorically has a brain, arms, legs, muscles, energy sources and all manner of internal systems that keep it functioning. Like a living creature, that corporation can also die but can also outlive person who conceived it. These two creative processes are recognized in inspirational books in the assertions that "Whatever you can *conceive* and believe you can achieve" and "Every problem contains the *seed* of a far greater benefit".

In essence, Solomon came to realise that the natural world, which he studied avidly, and lectured and wrote about, is in reality a sophisticated audio-visual environment, designed by God to illustrate and explain, among other things, the principles of excellence that would enable human beings to continue the creative commission given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden -- namely, to have dominion or rulership over the Earth and everything in and on it, and by implication to use their God-like minds to continue the creative process, to imagine and invent, to design, build and beautify, and so make the Earth a more interesting and exciting place to live.

Creative Excellence

But just what is Creativity? According to the Oxford Dictionary, to create means to involve the imagination in bringing something new into existence, for example, a poem, a painting, a piece of music, but possibly more importantly, a business, a product or service, a design, a scientific breakthrough, or an invention — and, by implication, to achieve excellence in so doing.

Creative excellence, which is the focus of the “Song”, is not a singular entity, but depends rather, like the flavor of a cake or a cup of coffee, on an appropriate blend of a range of factors — not just originality or novelty, but also elegance of form, effectiveness of function, economy and efficiency, simplicity and perfection of detail. Nor is creative excellence narrowly limited to the arts, but is applicable in any and every aspect of life.

It is helpful, also, to appreciate that creative projects can vary greatly in their complexity, from that of a simple slogan or a note to the milkman, for example, up to that of a technical encyclopedia or a novel -- from that of a simple jingle up to that of a symphony, or from that of an improved hair clip up to that of a new type of engine or computer, a vast range of diversity that is well typified by that manifest in the plant and animal kingdoms, which encompass the amoebae and the elephant, the lowly blade of grass and the mighty redwood tree.

The Creative Purpose of Everything in the Universe

Joseph Anderson, one time vice president of General Motors, observed that: “Creation seems to be the principle purpose of everything in the universe. The ground produces vegetation; every spot that can grow something, the crack in a walk, the unseeded field, the unused pavement will grow something even though the circumstances are unfavorable. If there is a predominating purpose behind it all, as most of us believe that there is, through God, it seems that the purpose is to create. It would then follow that man must have been placed on this earth to create.”

Human beings, made in the image of God, are by their very nature creative, and capable therefore of bringing into existence things that are new, unique, beautiful, and better, not simply in the arts and sciences, but in whatever area and activity of life their gifts lie. Every artifact, every organization, every business, every system, every mechanism, technique and process — and every life — can be raised to a level of excellence by the magic of the creative mind, which operates today as it has always done throughout the ages, and as it will continue to do in the future, according to the principles Solomon was divinely inspired to identify so long ago.

The Key to the Meaning of the Song

Although the true significance of the "Song of Songs" is still regarded by most scholars as a complete and complex mystery, the simple clue to its meaning is in fact to be found in the title, which makes up the first line of the text. That title, like much of the rest of the text, is deliberately susceptible to different meanings. It can of course simply be a superlative, meaning the most beautiful of all songs, which is how it came to be regarded.

On the other hand, however, it can also imply a song about songs, and the way they are created, which is its real purpose. Because songs can deal with any subject and convey both meaning and emotion and because every single note and word has to be a perfect fit, Solomon is in fact using them as a metaphor for all creative works of excellence in all fields.

It is interesting also that a song is actually a detailed plan of action -- a sequence of notes and words that trained musicians can readily produce in order to create a desired effect. A song also demonstrates other principles of creativity -- first the creation of something new by arranging known elements, notes, into a pleasing new pattern; and second the combining of music with appropriate words, a creative act of synthesis. Modern technology and invention relies on these two principles.

Multiple Meanings

Such was the depth of Solomon's wisdom and genius that each metaphor, it seems, is capable of sparkling forth a variety of insights, like a carefully cut diamond held up to the light experience, with the result that numerous insights into a very complex subject were able to be condensed into eight short chapters of poetry. Although I have attempted to point out what I see as the key principles in each section, I hope that you, the reader, will perceive additional insights that are particularly relevant and useful to you, with your unique experience and viewpoint.

Amazingly, it seems also that the original Hebrew text, which is composed only of consonants, is framed in such an inspired manner that different but complementary insights can be generated from the same phrases by the insertion of different vowels, which is why different translators often offer radically different, but complementary, renderings of the same verses.

As a result, the insights I have attempted to draw out in each section, constitute, I am sure, simply the tips of metaphorical ice-bergs of understanding, and the efforts of those who take the time to meditate more deeply, will without doubt be richly rewarded. Additional insights will appear as your experience prepares you to perceive and apply them.

Lost Knowledge

Although the knowledge of the principles of creativity originally revealed to the first human beings somehow became lost, they were rediscovered some three thousand years ago by Solomon, famously the wisest person who ever lived, and preserved by him for posterity in the eight short chapters of intricately woven and often erotic poetry that makes up the "Song of Songs", acknowledged by many as the most beautiful - - but misunderstood -- work in all literature. Although that poetry, also known as the "Song of Solomon", was preserved by divine fiat as part of the sacred Hebrew Scriptures because of its immense potential importance, both artistically and commercially, the knowledge of its true significance was somehow lost for a second time -- if indeed it was ever made commonly known -- most probably when the kingdom of Israel was destroyed and its people carried off into captivity soon after Solomon's death, and all but lost contact with their language.

As a result some of the language in the "Song" is extremely obscure, and a number of words occurring there are not used anywhere else in the Bible, a situation made even more difficult for the scholars by the fact that the Hebrew text consists only of consonants, leaving the reader to supply the vowels and draw out the meaning, based on an understanding of the context.

A Short Course in Creativity

As a result, his much admired masterpiece soon came to be regarded as an impenetrable mystery, described by scholars as holding "without question the first place among the puzzles of literature". Happily, that ancient puzzle has now been solved and Solomon's true intention rediscovered, showing the "Song" to be in reality a short course in creativity -- the most powerful but neglected inspirational/self help work every written. By studying his book of "Proverbs", said Solomon, the simple would be made wise, and even the those already counted wise could increase their learning. Likewise, by studying the "Song of Songs", those who are not yet creative can become creative, and those who are already creative -- even professionally so -- can enhance their creativity. Such is the subtlety and depth of the inspired writings of Solomon which now form the basis of this short course in the technology of creativity.

It has long intrigued me that all the principles of personal and businesses success promoted by popular inspirational books, from Samuel Smiles' Victorian classic "Self Help" down to Steven Covey's recent blockbuster, "The Seven Habits of Successful People", are in fact to be found in the wisdom writings of Solomon, and readily available therefore in any copy of the world's perennial best seller, the Bible -- confirmation perhaps that Solomon was indeed the wisest person who ever lived. I was not unduly surprised, therefore, to discover that the principles of creative excellence already mentioned are also to be found in the writings of Solomon, also in the Bible, but this time tucked away in the enigmatic passages of erotic love poetry of the "Song of Songs".

Discover and Develop Your Creative Potential

The inspired intent of the "Song of Songs" is for you, the reader, to discover and develop the creative potential you already possess. What Solomon describes, you can experience, and you can do, because you already possess the psychological wherewithal to do so. The first step is to discover your potential, to become enlightened to the simple fact that the magical, productive thinking of the greatest creators who ever lived is simply a more patient and persistent extension the way you have been informally thinking all your life.

The second step is to deliberately develop that potential by applying the principles Solomon identifies and describes in your own life, in your own unique manner.

Multifaceted Metaphors

In explaining the principles of creativity, Solomon makes use of natural metaphors, which is of course the approach of the modern quantum physicist who attempts to describe the weird complexity of ultimate physical reality, such as the behaviour of light and electrons, for example, by comparison with familiar phenomena such as the motion of waves on water.

The "Song", as we shall see, simply comprises a set of some thirty metaphors, each one designed, when made the focus of quiet meditation and held up to the light of personal experience, to sparkle forth a variety of complementary insights into the creative process, just as the facets of a diamond refract the myriad subtle shades of color of the rainbow when viewed from different angles.

Adopting a modern discovery approach to learning, the "Song" is not a simple didactic instruction manual, but consists instead of a set of thirty multi-faceted metaphors each one capable of affording a variety of insights into the creative process -- based on what at first appears to be a bewildering miscellany of subjects, including foxes, lions, horses, gazelles, sheep, a garden and a vineyard, a king and a virgin, and even a young flat-chested girl.

The Levites

The significance of the "Song" is not immediately obvious to the casual reader, or even to the scholar, who is unaware of Solomon's intention, and I suspect that it was intended to be studied by mature students, under the guidance of wise and learned teachers called Levites, probably over a period of weeks or months, being read and discussed, in question and answer fashion, in a manner similar to that of the famous Oxford tutorial system. In the absence of Levites, this book is offered as a substitute -- a distant learning package, if you will, designed to encourage and enable interested individuals to discover, develop, and maximise their creative potential.

It is interesting that although some Levites, members of the specially gifted family of Levi, were assigned to live and work in Jerusalem, supporting the work of the priests in the Temple and providing music, most of them were located, by divine decree, in 48 "cities of refuge", which were spread throughout the whole land of Israel. Although the stated function of those cities, initially, was to provide safe legal sanctuary for any person who had killed someone accidentally, there seems little doubt that they were also intended to become centres of educational and cultural excellence, constituting what we would today describe as a university system of education.

From the scriptural accounts, it seems probable also that every town and village in the land had its own resident Levite, a kind of village schoolmaster cum priest whose function was to provide academic and religious instruction for all, completing a complex legal, spiritual, educational, and administrative network that extended like a nervous system from Jerusalem on out to every corner of the land. Sadly the world leadership -- socially, culturally, scientifically, and economically -- that this sophisticated system, was intended bestow on Israel, making it a model for other nations to follow, was never attained, although important progress did begin to be made during the glorious reign of Solomon.

The Knowledge of the Ancients

By virtue of the principles Solomon was inspired to identify, what is known now, in fields such as science and engineering -- only developed in recent centuries -- could have become known then, thousands of years ago. And since those principles were almost certainly taught by God to Adam and Eve, it is interesting to speculate that such knowledge may well have been available before the great Flood of Noah, a period of time about which the Bible account is strangely silent, save to point out that even in the first few generations of human life on Earth people such as Tubal-Cain were already making musical instruments and extracting the metals copper and bronze and using them to forge tools and, no doubt, weapons of war.

The Pre-Flood World

The pre-Flood period was a time of greatly protracted human lifespans and a universal language, ideal conditions for interested individuals to exchange and extend knowledge, and although the Bible is strangely silent about that period, there exists a variety of anomalous and puzzling fossil findings, including fragments of artifacts constructed of aluminium and sophisticated alloys that were supposedly unknown until very recent centuries. Perhaps it is significant that one of the first major projects men sought to undertake after Noah's Flood was the construction of what would seem to be some kind of sky-scraper building. One might speculate that it was the existence of such tall buildings in the previous age that made

people confident of survival and contemptuous of Noah's dire warning of an impending deluge. Our knowledge of those times is meagre at best, but quite possibly it was a world where, in sharp contrast to the situation in our supposedly advanced societies, each and every human being was confidently aware of their personal gifts and creative potential.

Solomon's Wisdom

The magnificent Temple later built by Solomon became the cultural and educational centre of the land of Israel, providing the models of excellence and beauty in architecture, art, and music, intended to inspire the whole nation. Indeed, such was the prosperity of Solomon's kingdom, we are told, that the rulers of all the nations of the world sent emissaries to enquire after the secrets of his success. In fact, the Queen of Sheba, who came herself to test him with a series of hard questions, was overwhelmed by what she found, as well as by his wise answers. Thus, just for one brief period in its history did Israel just begin to become the beacon of civilisation, learning, and creative achievement that God intended when he delivered His chosen people from slavery in Egypt, established them as a nation under Moses.

Fascinating accounts of Solomon's life and works are found in the Bible in the books of Kings and Chronicles where we read that in addition to supervising the construction of the glorious first temple and undertaking ambitious projects in agriculture, horticulture, and horse breeding he became a student and lecturer in zoology and botany, finding many metaphorical lessons in nature and writing three thousand proverbs as a result, some of which are preserved in the Book of Proverbs. He also wrote a thousand and five songs, some of which are preserved in the Psalms, and in the last chapter of his book of Ecclesiastes we read how he wearied himself with his studying and the writing of many books as part of the inspired quest for understanding that made him the wisest person who ever lived.

The Original Doctor Doolittle?

Such was Solomon's wisdom and creative genius that ancient Jewish fables attribute all kinds of magical powers to him, including the ability to understand the language of animals in the manner of a Doctor Doolittle, however, in his surviving writings we find no occult or esoteric teachings but simply eternal values of health, wealth and happiness that have guided successful individuals throughout the ages -- plus the simple keys to creative excellence and personal success.

The Key that Never Turned

Sadly any scientific writings Solomon might have produced have perished, but it is interesting to speculate, as in fact the great scholar Origen did, that the Greek sages may well have obtained their mathematical and scientific ideas from Solomon, either by visiting Israel or perhaps from learned Levites who were scattered abroad when the nation was driven into exile some hundred years after his death. Classic Greek architecture is believed by some to have been based on that of Solomon's magnificent temple. There can be little doubt that had the people of Israel remained faithful to God, and the nation had been preserved, there would have been an explosion of knowledge and a rapid cultural and technological revolution surpassing anything that has occurred since -- triggered by the "Song of Songs". The key that would have unlocked that revolution was the "Song of Songs" -- but the key that never turned.

Did Solomon Build Stonehenge?

According to the scriptural accounts, Solomon sent fleets of trading ships on three-year voyages to bring back gold, silver, ivory, apes and baboons, from the fabled land of "Ophir", which some have suggested was located in Africa, hence the novel "King Solomon's Mines". However, historical records also suggest that Israelite seafarers also visited South America in ancient times, and there seems little doubt that Solomon's men must easily have reached the British Isles, where they may well have been responsible for constructing the enigmatic Stonehenge, possibly an observatory designed to keep track of the sacred Hebrew solar-lunar calendar, perhaps using the same technology as that employed in building his palace, which involved quarrying, precisely shaping and transporting foundation stones 12 and 15 feet long.

It would seem reasonable to assume that the foundation stones for the Temple may have been even larger, and perhaps even more precisely shaped. No doubt many scholars would scoff at the accounts of Solomon's feats of construction, but then I wonder what they would make of a written account of Stonehenge if no vestige of it remained to confound them?

The Origin of Buddhist Teachings?

Is it mere coincidence also that much Buddhist teaching -- which again finds its beginnings in those same centuries -- is likewise to be found in the wisdom writings of Solomon? Its stress on meditation (Zen), the search for awakening (Satori), the Lotus that symbolises it, and also the pursuit of the transcendental wisdom (Prajna) that lies dormant within every person, all resonate, as we shall see, with the teachings of Solomon's "Song of Songs". Solomon's stress on analysis also seems to be a central thrust of the teaching of Siddhattha Gotama, the last Buddha (i.e. Enlightened One), with his two Aims, the Noble Eightfold path, the ten Bonds, the four Intoxications, and the five Hindrances -- a creative attempt to analyse life in the hope of learning how best to live it. Even the erotic Buddhist Yab-Yum image, which apparently depicts the sexual union of wisdom and compassion, would seem to find an uncanny parallel in the "Song". Like the "Song", Buddhism makes no mention of God and focuses instead on spiritual principles of living.

Is the Song a Religious Book?

Before looking at the "Song", perhaps we should dispell any notion that Solomon's mysterious masterpiece is a "religious" work, despite its inclusion in the Bible. According to the editor of the "Jerusalem Bible": "People have found it surprising that a book that makes no mention of God and whose vocabulary is so passionate should figure in the sacred canon". Scholar Charles Ellicott says that: "From the beginning to the end there is not a single word in it which suggests any connection with religion. The whole theme, he says, is one of "folly, vanity and looseness." He concludes, perhaps with a shake of the head, by asking: "How did the vigilance of those who watched the formation of the Canon allow it?" How indeed, and why?

Such has been the confusion over the significance of the "Song" that when Jewish scholars in the first century sought to have it removed from the canon of scripture the Rabbi Akiba stated retorted that: "All the ages are not worth the day on which the 'Song of Songs' was given to Israel, for all the Writings are holy, but the 'Song of Songs' is the Holy of Holies".

Commenting its literary merits, John Bowker, in his "Bible Handbook" offers the following opinion: "The book is full of exquisite poems that use almost every device available to the Hebrew poet. It is a rhapsody of the thoughts and feelings of a young woman and her beloved as they journey towards the consummation of their love. Rarely has a book been interpreted so diversely over the millennia." As we shall see, it is that kind of passionate love for a purpose or subject that engages our creativity.

Is the Song Pornographic?

In "The Song of Fourteen Songs", Michael Goulder rejects any spiritual meaning and focuses instead on the implicit sexuality of certain sections of the "Song". Lifting the lid on some of Solomon's seemingly innocent similes -- but missing the message being conveyed -- he concludes that "titillation is the key note". The girl in the "Song", he says, is portrayed "from the first verse as a nymphomaniac", and the whole book could well be regarded as "nothing else than a piece of high-class pornography". Virtuous readers, he warns, may well "emerge from such a study feeling soiled and disgusted". God, however, who created the male and female form and also inspired the poetry Goulder is referring to, is not prudish. It is easy to understand, however, why certain more sensuous sections of the "Song" were bawdily sung in the taverns of ancient Israel, much to the chagrin of rabbis, by revellers who were totally unaware of their true significance.

Scholars Suppress the Meaning

Although some of metaphors selected by Solomon are obscured by the opacity of the ancient Hebrew, the full meaning of some sections of the "Song" has been deliberately denied modern readers by the prudishness of translators who have shrunk from conveying into English the literal meaning of many phrases. The great Adam Clarke, for example, writing a century ago, says in his "Commentary and Critical Notes on the Bible": "There are many passages in it which should not be explained, if taken literally, the references being too delicate; and Eastern phraseology on such subjects too vivid for European imaginations. Let any sensible pious medical man read over this Book: and, if at all acquainted with Asiatic phraseology, say whether it would be proper, even in medical language, to explain all the descriptions and allusions in this Poem." Virtuous readers beware!

The Song Baffles the Scholars

Commenting on its enigmatic literary structure, Cohen, in "The Five Megilloth" says: "The various sections succeed one another without logical sequence, giving the appearance of incongruous fragments." Not surprisingly then, the "Song" has remained a puzzle throughout the centuries, and its erotic poetry greatly disturbed the celibate scholars of the Early Christian Church, prompting Origen, who considered it dangerously suggestive, to say: "These things seem to me to afford no profit to the reader . . . It is necessary therefore rather to give them a spiritual meaning." This he did, devoting a massive ten-volume commentary to the task, seeking to show that the metaphorical language was referring in reality to the relationship between Jesus Christ and Christian Church. Origen, however, was wrong, as were the equally baffled Jewish scholars vied with him to give the Song a non-Christian spiritual meaning, asserting that it referred to the loving relationship between the nation of Israel and God.

The Pyramid of Wisdom

One basic clue to understanding the purpose of the "Song of Songs" is the fact that God revealed to Solomon the principles of successful living, making him the wisest person who had ever lived, and very significantly, who would ever live. Under the guidance of that inspiration, Solomon wrote three books which are not religious at all, in the normal sense of the word, but secular, because their intended purpose was, and is, to teach the principles of health, wealth and happiness. The "Song" simply complements his other two books -- Proverbs, Ecclesiastes -- to complete a wisdom trilogy or pyramid.

"Proverbs", the base of the pyramid, deals with wisdom, the fundamental principles of successful living. It was understood by Jewish scholars to have been designed to interpret the law of God and the Ten Commandments, as revealed to Moses, into practical detail to provide guidance for successful secular daily living in a manner harmonious with that law -- and that it was intended for all people, everywhere not just the people of Israel. Without this sound foundation of eternal principles of success such as self-discipline, control of the tongue, caution, courage, persistence, honesty, generosity, self analysis and general "righteousness" our creative efforts may well crumble to dust.

"Ecclesiastes", the second level of the pyramid, focuses on the crucial importance of sound values and realistic goals. In it, Solomon reflects on his own experiences and the experiments in living he carried out in search of the truly good and satisfying life. Without this underpinning of balance, moderation in things, including work, and an appreciation of the ultimate futility of riches for their own sake, our creative efforts will never bring real satisfaction.

Creativity -- the Apex of the Pyramid

Finally, the "Song of Songs", which is the apex of the pyramid of wisdom, completes Solomon's trilogy by offering, to those ready and willing to learn, the secrets of creative excellence and success, even genius - principles which find application in any and every field of human endeavour. As already noted, for some reason, the true significance of the "Song" was lost, somewhere along the dusty paths of Palestinian history, most probably when Solomon's empire was destroyed and his people carried away into captivity and all but lost contact with the Hebrew language of the ancient scriptures.

By studying his book of Proverbs, said Solomon, the simple could become wise, and those already accounted wise could increase their learning. Similarly, by studying his "Song of Songs" those who are not yet creative can discover and develop their creative potential — and those already accounted creative, even professionally so, can enhance the quality of their work.

A Personal Exodus?

I suspect that significant corroboration of Solomon's intent in the "Song" is afforded by the fact that some now unknown person or persons of authority, at some time in the distant past, saw fit to assign sections to be read to the congregations of Israel on the eighth day of the Passover festival, at the end of the days of unleavened bread. The Passover, which was instituted under Moses, commemorates Israel's exodus from Egypt -- a glorious deliverance from slavery -- and their entry into the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. Deliverance, I believe, is also the message of the "Song of Songs". Personal development gurus such as Anthony Robbins and many psychologists now recognise that most of mankind -- even in the so-called civilised world -- remains in a kind of mental bondage to mediocrity, fear and failure, unknowingly enslaved by negative attitudes, ignorance, and illusion. Through the inspired writings of Solomon, they are offered the opportunity to escape, and encouraged to undertake a personal exodus into a new and more satisfying life of creative excellence and enduring achievement.

The Voice of Experience

The great creators, such as Shakespeare, Beethoven, Faraday and Ford, must of course have been familiar with some or all of the principles of excellence Solomon identifies, either having been taught them by others, or perhaps having stumbled onto them for themselves.

Here and there among their biographical records, we find occasional confirmation of this fact, and accordingly I have attempted to illustrate the practical application of each principle by means of selected quotations that I have called the “Voice of Experience”.

I have also, where appropriate, included short workshop exercises to encourage you to actually begin applying the principles discussed, and so start accumulating your own experience.

PART 1

THE OPTION OF EXCELLENCE

Human Potential

Even three thousand years ago, Solomon, perceived that all human beings, even the lowliest of peasants, possess the potential to achieve creative excellence and make valuable contributions to society in some appropriate field — a truly revolutionary vision in an age where the suggestion that ordinary people were even capable of learning to read, write, and do arithmetic would have been regarded by most rulers as bizarre beyond belief. As bizarre perhaps as cognitive scientist Marvin Minsky’s more recent assertion that there is little if any difference between the average person and a Mozart or Beethoven. In his wisdom, Solomon saw that the creative excellence attained by the few is in fact an ordinary expectation of the human mind, and attainable by the many — once they wake up to reality and are enlightened to the possibilities of the God-like creative potential they possess.

Enlightenment — the Option of Excellence

The wise man and the creative genius, Solomon realized, are born as ignorant as the fool, but by the appropriate use of the miraculous magic that is lies ready and waiting to be aroused in every human mind, they somehow find and follow the path of personal development that leads to excellence. Appropriately, then, the first four principles of the “Song” focus on “enlightenment” — the simple fact that creative excellence, in the very broadest sense, is an option open to all human beings, no matter what their race, color or creed, no matter how humble their social origins.

1.1 FIRST FALL IN LOVE

I will sing the song of all songs to Solomon

That you would kiss me with the kisses of your mouth!

For your caresses are better than wine

Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is perfume poured out

Therefore the virgins love you.

Draw me after you, and I will follow you eagerly.

Be my king and take me to your chambers.

We will be happy together; we will extol your love more than wine;

Rightly do they love you.

Song of Songs

Love Changes Everything

Love changes the way you think, your attitudes, emotions and priorities -- and in this very first section of the "Song of Songs", Solomon depicts a girl with a vision of a new and better life, smitten with passion, and longing for her love to come and be her king and to carry her away to his bedchamber. If he leads, she will eagerly follow. This new-found love is the most important thing in her life. Even the sound of his name imbues her being with joy, like the scent of a fine perfume. But who is this king, what is his name, and why is she so smitten with him? We are not told — and just what has this to do with creativity, anyway?

What Do You Love?

A first point must be that creativity, like sex, begins with interest, excitement, and desire. It is not about logical, analytical thinking, and high powered intellectual gymnastics. Far from it. It begins with love, but what do you love? What is that thrills and captivates your mind? What is the significantly unnamed name that stirs joy in your heart like the scent of a fine perfume? Have you found it yet? When you do, it will change the way you feel, and that will change the way you think — as when boy meets girl. No wonder, then, during a TV interview, that the president of a leading international bank offered this simple advice to ambitious young people “Find something you love to do — and do it!” The word "love" is of course greatly misused. The great man is not saying find something you "like" or "enjoy", but something you passionately love, something that excites you in the manner described by the girl. Love is probably the most powerful emotion, one that can surmount any discouragement. Love is not always immediately apparent -- the proverbial boy next door does not notice the girl next door immediately, and older people tell us that love can grow deeper and stronger as a couple spend more time together. How can you let your creative love deepen?

Cooperate With Your Creative King

The girl and the other virgins in the “Song” simply represent the uncreative majority of people, but who is this mysterious, unnamed lover with whom the girl yearns to spend the rest of her life, the one she compares to a king, inviting him to carry her way, take her to his bed chamber and transform her life? Perhaps the most fundamental and revolutionary insight of this introductory section is that creative success comes not from struggling along on our own, but from forming a creative partnership with just such a “king”, by entering into a loving and ongoing relationship as typified by the traditional marriage. But where is your king?

As pointed out earlier, all biological creation begins with either conception or fertilisation -- and the obvious but unspoken outcome of this visit to the king's chamber will be conception, the beginning of a beautiful new creation. It has been correctly said that all human achievement begins with a thought, with desire -- leading to a mental conception -- which is why this principle appears right here in the first few lines of the "Song". As already noted, whatever the mind can *conceive* and believe, it can achieve.

Let Your Subconscious Mind Be in Charge

Who, or what, is this king, this mysterious agency that has the potential to transform our lives, this creative power that guided the likes of Mozart, Einstein, and Henry Ford — the power which can guide you? The answer, in modern parlance, is the Subconscious Mind — supposedly the greatest psychological discovery of modern times, the creative power of which a tiny minority of people have always been aware throughout the ages, one with which Solomon, as the wisest person and probably the greatest genius who ever lived, was more familiar than most.

Notice that the king has a “chamber”, an inner room which is a metaphor for that part of the mind that contains the creative power we need to help us achieve our goals — one that is somewhat removed, as in a house, from those areas where the more mundane workaday activities take place.

It's a Creative Partnership — Like Adam and Eve

The message is that the best kind of creative excellence only becomes available when we work in partnership with, and are led by, the subconscious, creative mind, in a submissive, secondary, female role — as an Eve to a powerfully intelligent Adam, in a kind of creative marriage union. Just as we can grow up, pass through puberty, get married and produce children, so helping fulfill the first part of the dual creative commission given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, so it seems there should come a time in our life when we are ready to enter into a parallel creative partnership with the subconscious mind, and, with its help, bring forth unique and beautiful new contributions, artistic and practical (female and male?), in order to help fulfill the second, creative part of that commission. Could it be, sadly, that most people shy away from this second encounter, and so remain forever, creatively speaking, virgins?

Let Your Creative King Be in Charge

Are you, then, like the girl, ready and eager to change your life, to give it a new and exciting purpose and direction by discovering and working with the creative subconscious mind that God has made available to all human beings, no matter what their race, color, creed or social origin? Are you ready to “get a life”? If you are, do not forget that you cannot do it on your own. The key is to use your subconscious, creative mind, as did the great creators, such as Rudyard Kipling who said: “I have learned that when the inner helper is in charge, do not try to think consciously. Drift — wait — and obey.” Notice that in the “Song” the girl says to her “king”: “Draw me, and I will follow you eagerly”. Let the creative king be in charge — there is a good degree of humility in genius and some people will refuse to accept this secondary role.

Create the Conditions for Inspiration

If we do take care to establish the right conditions and express our willing interest, again as in with the sexual parallel, the subconscious can inspire exciting creative ideas in our mind in a process that is typified by the way a baby is conceived in love making. As we shall see in detail later, inspiration, which is the starting point of works of genius, is as real as physical conception. On her own, a woman can never conceive a child, no matter how much she wants to, no matter how hard she tries. She has to work with a male partner, and the lesson is that the process of creative inspiration, which was familiar to the likes of Mozart and Dickens, works in the very same way. Successful creators, as we shall see, have learned to rely on and actively seek inspirational input from the subconscious mind.

The Eternal Mystery of the Subconscious Mind

The subconscious mind has been given various names by various creative people who have learned to draw on its power — such as, the right brain, the underself, the overself, the super-self, the giant within, the creative mind, the essence, the big me, the inner helper, and so on. It exists, but just what is it? The answer is that we simply do not know, or need to know. Perhaps it is God, or the Holy Spirit, or Jesus Christ, who upholds the whole universe by the word of his power — or an angel, or the spirit that Job says is given to us at birth, and which Solomon said returns to God at death.

All we need to know is that Solomon assures us, under the guidance of divine inspiration, that God has made available a source of creative intelligence that can transform our lives. I personally suspect that just as the sun and the rain is sent to make fruitful the efforts of the farmer who sows the seed, so God has somehow provided a source of creative power to bless the efforts of those who respond to and seek to carry on the creative commission he gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The great poet Goethe, in fact, seemingly asserts his belief in such divine assistance in the following words: "Concerning all acts of initiative and creation there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which

kills countless ideas and splendid plans -- that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then *providence moves*. All sorts of things occur to help one that would not otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamt would come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it! Boldness has genius, magic and power within it." Perhaps Goethe is hedging his bets, so to speak, and admitting his own uncertainty by using the word "providence" -- which is somewhat ambiguous and signifies the help of either God or Nature.

A less mystical, Nature, scenario might be to compare your bold new plan to a seed being sown in a garden. The soil in that garden will almost certainly already contains all manner of nutrients and moisture and be well exposed to adequate sunlight -- just as, in a similar manner, the society in which you begin your project will most probably contain people with money to invest with whom you may find favour, suitable premises that have just become vacant, skilled individuals who are looking for full or part-time work, and so on. As your project germinates and confidently reaches out its tiny roots it will almost certainly encounter these pockets of essential nutrients and sources of energy, and so thrive. No wonder people who boldly set out on such new ventures and discover these opportunities often claim that "you make your own luck!"

Is the Subconscious a Separate Mind?

The "Song" is simply using metaphors to teach key principles. Solomon is not necessarily suggesting that there actually is a separate mind, person, or spirit power of some kind who comes to our assistance, although psychologists do now feel that the subconscious operates "as if" it were a separate entity. It is "as if" there was a powerful king and lover ready and willing to help us, and that is all that matters. As with a child pressing the keys of a computer, all we need to know is what to do to make things happen, not how it happens, and that is what the "Song" is showing us. If, however, that subconscious power is the Spirit of God, then certainly miraculous help can be expected.

Interest Arouses Your Creative Mind

Creativity, like sex, begins with desire — a passion that triggers a mechanism in the mind that is normally dormant, a potential that until this moment you may have been totally unaware of. Just as the human body has a physical reproductive mechanism — which is not aroused and operational most of the time, and of which we are not aware in the early years of our life — so our minds possess a subconscious creative mechanism that is not normally operational until it is interested and aroused. Creativity involves an emotional encounter, like boy meets girl, and it is because of this divinely designed parallel between the creative and procreative process that some, but not all, sections of the "Song" are necessarily sensuous and erotic.

Relax and Let it Happen

It is not surprising, then, that the creative mind we all possess cannot be consciously flexed and mechanically operated like a muscle. To make use of it, we have to establish the right conditions and simply allow it to be aroused and operational, again as with the sexual parallel which illustrates it so beautifully. How to establish those conditions, deliberately, in order to receive creative inspirations and intuitive insights is the focus of the next chapter. Solomon's purpose in this introduction is simply to enlighten the reader to the reality of the creative potential they already possess, ready and waiting to be made operation — as illustrated by physical parallel of the girl and the other virgins in the "Song".

Daydream Your Future

It has been said that all achievement begins with desire, with a burning vision in the mind. As we noted at the beginning, the girl believes that her life could be better. Without that belief, without that initial bit of possibility thinking, nothing would happen, simply because she would continue to passively accept the status quo. Instead, she has daydreamed and mentally pictured the new life. Now, she is excited about it, and deeply emotionally involved. As a result, the feeling so aroused will be strong enough to overcome the natural fear that, as we shall see later, seems to surround all our attempts at creative change, and the creative mechanism of the subconscious mind will be activated.

Positive change in your life implies an improved situation, a new and better arrangement of various factors, and that requires some kind of creative action. The initial step to achieving that successful result is simply knowing, as specifically as possible — like the girl in the "Song" — just what it is you really want. As we shall see, one of the functions of the subconscious mind is to help us conceive and achieve goals. Once we really know what we want, in terms of specifics rather than vague generalities, the creative mind

can work out ways to make it happen, and help us formulate an overall plan which can be translated into specific, tactical steps. Success, in any field, has to be created.

Do What You Love

According to an article in the Daily Telegraph newspaper, John Sullivan, the most successful British writer of television comedy shows — such as “Only Fools and Horses, which brought the BBC its largest ever audience — wrote his first comedy at the age of twenty when he was working in a brewery. Although it was immediately rejected, Sullivan was so enthused by the process that it became his hobby, unlike his co-writer friend who then lost interest. Five years later, after many more rejection slips, he applied for a manual job at the BBC, saying in his letter of application that he would be pleased to do “any job at all, just to be there”.

Thus he followed his love, got the job, and kept writing, and then one day, after reading some of his work, a leading comedy actor gave him a contract to write some sketches. The rest, as they say, is history. Sullivan, by the way, left school in London at the age of 15 with no qualifications, and earned his living working on building sites, driving lorries and in plumbing.

The Essence of Creativity

By way of introduction, it seems that the whole essence of creativity is expressed in outline in these first few lines of the "Song"-- namely that God has made available to each of us a source of creative power that responds to our sincere interest, desire and passionate love by imparting insights and impregnating our imaginations with inspired purposes and possibilities.

You Don't Have to Be Creative!

Notice, however, that creativity will never be forced upon you. You do not have to be creative, any more than you have to get married and have children. It is simply an option. However, if you do wish to be creative, then like the girl, you must actively express your willing interest. If you do so, you will begin to receive the help you need, and the potent power of the creative unconscious will respond and come to your assistance in ways that may well surprise you.

Once More, With Feeling!

Are you ready, then, to create a new life and achieve excellence? Are you ready to fall in love? Although you may well be wary and nervous at first, like an innocent young virgin on her wedding night, perhaps, you now know how to approach and make contact with your creative mind — and this introductory section of the “Song of Songs” is a ready-made script, written for you by Solomon under divine inspiration.

As explained earlier, various scholars sometimes differ greatly in their renditions of many sections of the "Song", and it may be very significant that the title wording used here as the first line -- taken from the "New English Bible" translation -- suggests that the "Song" was indeed a song, intended to be sung as a means to relaxing and serenading the creative mind, actively requesting its assistance. Perhaps this is why, although music is not overtly mentioned elsewhere in the "Song", it is well recognized as a powerful aide to accessing the creative state of mind. Notice also that song is addressed to "Solomon", a name that actually means "the One of Peace", signifying not Solomon himself but once again the creative subconscious mind, the creative partner with which, as we shall see later, we can find peace and fulfillment..

Voice of Experience

"A burning desire to be and to do is the starting point from which the dreamer must ake off. Dreams are not born of indifference, laziness, or lack of ambition" (Hill -- Think and Grow Rich).

“There is no artists, man of science, or writer of any distinction, however little disposed to self-analysis, who is not aware by personal experience of the unequalled importance of the subconscious” (Gustave Gelev — From the Unconscious to the Conscious).

"Common to all such human æmechanisms is their guidance by a phantom captain . . . an infinite understanding . . . the phantom captain enters from his inner sanctum to peruse the exhibit" (Buckminster Fuller — Nine Chains to the Moon).

“There is dormant in each human being a faculty, whether it is developed or not, which will enable that particular individual to succeed if the desire of success is present in his conscious mind” (Erna Ferrell Grabe and Paul Ferrell — *The Subconscious Speaks*).

“The best results in life were obtained by close harmony and cooperation between the conscious and subconscious mind . . . in the nineteenth century the psychology of the subconscious was completely ignored” (Claude M. Bristol — *The Magic of Believing*).

“What in your opinion, is the master secret of the ages? . . . The answer is extraordinarily simple. This secret is the marvelous, miracle working power found in your own subconscious mind, the last place that most people would seek it” (Joseph Murphy — *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind*).

“One of the most helpful discoveries I made long ago in common with some other writers is that there is a part of the mind, which the psychologists call the ‘subconscious’ . . . I have found it possible to train this part of the mind to do a pretty organized job. Very often I have awakened in the morning to find a problem of technique, or plot, or character, which had long been troubling me, completely solved while I had been sleeping” (Louis Bromfield, American novelist).

"I saw that when people engaged in conversations about the long-range future, their lives blossomed almost magically" (David Ellis — *Creating Your Future*).

“‘What makes you think you can be an artist?’ . . . ‘I have been drawing since I was five.’ . . . ‘On canvas?’ . . . ‘On wrapping paper’ “ (David Weiss — *Rodin*).

“When McDonald’s former chairman Ray Kroc waxed poetic about hamburger buns, he hadn’t taken leave of his senses; he simply recognized the importance of beauty as a starting point for the business logic that ensues” (Peters and Waterman — *In Search of Excellence*).

Summary:

- 1) You are creative by nature and have a powerful subconscious mind, typified by a lover and king, a God-given source of creative intelligence available to help and guide you.
- 2) You can communicate with your subconscious mind, as with a person, in particular as with a lover, and receive insight or intuitions to guide you, as well inspirations for creative projects.
- 3) Creativity begins with a deep desire to be creative, with love for a subject or purpose, so it important to find something you love to do and start doing. When you do, a creative mechanism can be triggered in the mind, just as physical attraction can arouse the sexual process.
- 4) You must willingly accept a submissive female role in the creative process, as an Eve working with a powerfully intelligent Adam, so keep consulting your creative mind to seek the guidance you need. The answers will come as intuitions, insights of understanding, and feelings. Be patient and wait for these answers, which may not arrive that moment or that day.
- 5) When you are doing something you love, you begin to think in new creative ways, and creative projects can be inspired in your mind by a process typified by sexual conception, and developed in the mind, like an embryo in a womb.
- 6) Be confident that just as God provides the sun and rain that cause the seed sown by the farmer to grow and bear fruit, so he will bless and prosper, via the subconscious mind, the sincere and diligent efforts of those who respond to and seek to continue the creative commission given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

WORKSHOP

- 1) Prepare your own written summary of the important insights from this first section of the “Song”. In doing this, it might help if you try to imagine that you have been called on to give a talk on the subject to an evening class at a local college.
- 2) Take a few minutes to meditate on your life and how and why you would like to change and improve it. Then make a start on using your creative subconscious, simply using the introductory section of the “Song” as a script. Remember that subconscious works “as if” it were actually another person, a good friend or lover, or perhaps in contemporary terminology, a voice-activated computer. It is a perfectly sane, safe, and sensible, God-given procedure to follow.

2 LANDSCAPE YOUR LIFE

*I am very dark, but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem,
Like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.*

*Do not gaze at me because I am black, because the sun has looked on me.
My mother's sons were angry with me, they made me keeper of the vineyards
But my own vineyard I have not kept!*

Song of Solomon

Having introduced us to the creative power of the sub-conscious mind, and the need for us to work with it in a loving, submissive relationship, a potentially productive partnership typified by the traditional marriage, Solomon now moves logically on to deal with the conscious mind, and its role in our creative venture.

So What Have You Been Doing with Your Life?

The situation Solomon describes is very odd. For some reason, the girl has been laboring hard and long in someone else's vineyard, working under their direction, for their benefit, despite the fact that she has a perfectly good vineyard of her own which she has simply neglected. The message must be that here, metaphorically speaking, is a person with great potential who has been content to be employed in a quite menial capacity in the service of someone else.

Could it be that many people, perhaps the vast majority, as typified by the girl, are actually doing to the same thing — carelessly neglecting their own innate creative potential and letting others direct their lives, complacently drifting, buffeted by circumstance, constrained by fears, spending their time and energy helping other people pursue their creative goals, but failing to set any of their own?

Your God-given Potential

The girl is deeply tanned, her skin scorched by the sun from long hours laboring in the vineyard. She is not pale and white, like the delicate ladies who lived in palaces. Now, however, at last, as she begins to think and analyze and question her situation, she realized that beneath that sun-scorched skin, and despite her lowly social position, she is just as attractive, just as valuable, just as capable as the finest in the land, although up to now she has, for some reason, neglected her innate potential. The lesson must be that creative excellence is not reserved for some gifted elite, but is potentially available to every human being on the face of the earth, no matter what their past experience, the circumstances of their birth, or the social stratum to which they presently belong. Inspirational books are, in fact, packed with exciting stories of highly successful people, in all fields of life, who rose from nothing — having somehow woken up and discovered and developed the immense God-given creative potential that resides in every human being, no matter what their race, color, creed, or sex.

Your Self-image

These are simple but powerful, life-changing lessons, but Solomon has more in mind. What is it that stops us developing this creative potential, even once we become aware of it? The girl initially asks others not to stare or look down on her because of who and what she is, and what she has been, and the problem is, of course, that many if not most people in this warped world actually look down on themselves, having what is now described as a “negative self image” and an accompanying lack of self confidence — unless like a fortunate few, like a Mozart or Richard Brandson, perhaps, they have been encouraged and given that confidence and courage from an early age by enlightened parents.

The vast majority of human beings, it seems — including even quite young children — have somehow acquired the destructive and paralyzing delusion that they are “ordinary”, untalented and incapable, with the result that the few who do discover and develop their creativity to the astonishing degree that it can be are looked on as a breed apart, as specially talented, creative, even “genius”, whatever that means.

No wonder those few who do find success marvel at the creative paralysis of others, and helpfully and hopefully point out that all you have to do is follow your dream. The implication is that nobody is “ordi-

nary” — unless they want to be. Everybody can be creative — if they really want to be. As Henry Ford once said: “If you think you can, or you think you cannot — you are right!”

The Culture of Conformity

But there is more to it than a lack of self-confidence. Many people fail to pursue their dreams, simply because they are afraid of what other people will think of them. The girl in the “Song” has, up to this point of enlightenment and change of direction, meekly succumbed to the anger and emotional pressure of her bullying brothers, and let her life be shaped and directed by them. She has been controlled by fear.

It is not surprising then that, as Scottish personal development guru Jack Black points out in “Mindstore”, many people he tries to help to change their lives for the better are defeated right off by the powerful peer pressure to conform to the mediocre aspirations of friends and associates who find the newly found enthusiasm and energy discomfiting, embarrassing, and annoying. Theirs is the culture of conformity, the yellow pencil brigade, the tall poppy syndrome.

This would also seem to be a central message of the inspirational classic “Jonathon Livingstone Seagull”, in which Jonathon annoys his parents and fellow gulls by constantly practicing techniques that will enable him to fly faster, soar higher, and find fish more efficiently. Successful entrepreneurs simply do not care what other people think of them, and when one business fails, they start up another, just as when many great writers had one book rejected over and over and over, they wrote another one.

Limiting Expectations

However, in addition to fear of what others think, we may also be ruled, hypnotized, if you like, by our unthinking acceptance of limiting expectations. I suspect it is very significant that Solomon uses a girl as the central character in this metaphor, because for far too long women have had the direction of their lives dictated by the unreasonable expectations of male-dominated societies. For far too long, the message has been, and still is in some societies, that a girl should not have career aspirations or seek to discover and develop her special gifts. Her narrow role was seen as that of wife and mother, crucially important to society as those functions are, but no more than that.

Solomon's message is that most people allow others to direct, shape and limit their lives, to make them fit into the “system” and conform to other people's expectations, perhaps those of loving but misguided parents. Using a girl as the central character simply illustrates the lesson more clearly, but the principle applies to both sexes.

The Neglected Vineyard

Returning to the “Song”, I suspect that the vineyard the girl has mysteriously neglected does not in fact typify the conscious mind as a whole, but simply one of its several functions, namely that of intellect. Thanks to the miracle of self awareness, which we are told animals do not possess, we as human beings, made in the image of God and typified by the girl, are able to stand back and monitor our conscious intellectual processes, and think about thinking.

In Solomon's carefully chosen metaphor, it seems that the girl represents the true, decision-making self, and the neglected vineyard the intellect, the patch of psychological soil where ideas are sown and grown and harvested as useful produce. In an equivalent modern metaphor, Solomon might have the girl sitting at the keyboard of a computer, with the girl representing us, and the machine's microchip our conscious intellect, the mental facility with which we analyze, design, solve problems, and develop new projects.

The message of the metaphor would be that the memory banks of our neglected computer are likely to be full of erroneous data, “viruses”, and faulty programs that greatly undermine its efficiency and accuracy, some of which have been discussed above. Some serious servicing would be called for.

Are You Too Busy to Bother?

Another barrier to creative expression, and again one that has applied particularly to women, is that of lack of time. As typified by keeping her brothers' vineyard, the girl has up to now been so busy helping other people fulfill their goals — working in their vineyards — that she has unthinkingly neglected her own creative potential, her own vineyard. Now she has woken up, and accepts full responsibility for the situation in which she finds herself. She has failed to explore and cultivate her own creative capability, set her own goals, shape her own future and control her own destiny, and she now feels unworthy of the king's attention.

Like the vast majority, she has been drifting along, meekly accepting whatever hand life chooses to deal out, ruled by fate and circumstance. But now she is beginning to examine herself, her life, her actions, her motives — and her thinking, the thoughtless thinking that has brought her to this unsatisfactory situation. No wonder some inspirational writers use the metaphor of sleepwalking to describe the way, they claim, that the majority of people unthinkingly live out their lives.

Start Asking Questions

But what about you? How did you arrived at your present situation? Where did you go wrong? What have you neglected? Have you had real and realistic goals, or have you just drifted? What would you like to change, and what is stopping you doing it? Are you a real person, with values, ideals, and ambitions — or a robot, a Pavlovian dog that unthinkingly responds to the bells other people ring?

What do you really want to do with your life? How would you define success? What are you talents and abilities, and how could you develop them? As Anthony Robbins points out in “Giant Steps”, it is this habit of continually asking and obtaining the answers to questions like these that sets successful people apart from the crowd.

It's Not Too Late to Start to Begin

Even if it has taken many years, and perhaps great disappointment and painful adversity — even most of your allotted life — to arrive at this moment of enlightenment, do not give up. Be encouraged, rather, that you have finally arrived at the beginning! The great American painter, “Grandma” Moses, real name Anna Mary Roberston, did not start her artistic career until she was in her eighties. Having experienced great adversity, including the loss of a husband and several children, she began painting with house paint on scraps of canvas cut from a threshing machine cover. She was entirely self taught, starting out on her path to genius by copying scenes from books and Christmas cards. Perhaps it was the joy and fulfillment of her gift that kept her living on to the age of a hundred and one.

Your Experience Is An Asset

It is interesting that Solomon may well be using the dark scorching of the girl's skin as a metaphor for her exposure to the harsh realities of life, valuable experience which will stand her in good stead in her creative future. The dual comparison she makes is typical of the thought patterns of Hebrew poetry. First she says that she is dark but comely, two opposites. Then she compares these two descriptions to the tents of the poverty stricken nomads of Kedar, on the one hand, and the opulent silk tents of Solomon on the other, both of which the scholars inform us were black. The color is the transferable principle — the tents of Kedar were black and basic, but those of Solomon were black and beautiful. So in a sense, here is a weakness being turned into a strength. Experience will lend authenticity and a depth of understanding to her efforts, as many top writers well know.

God's Personal Message for You

The message of the “Song” is subversive, aiming as it does to open the eyes of the supposedly ordinary person — the peasant, the laborer, the servant, Joe Bloggs down the road, and perhaps women in general — to the fact that they have been brainwashed, so to speak, for too long a time, for too many generations, into an unthinking acceptance of a subservient, menial, slave-like role in society, of their “place”, their class, their caste, oblivious to the fact they themselves possess as much creative potential as their lords and masters.

Ignorance is bliss, and theirs was not to reason why — they were taught — theirs was just to do and die. They are simply “factory fodder”, “cogs in the machine”, the “great unwashed”, the proletariat, perhaps, but in the eyes of the God who inspired the “Song”, the creator of the creative mind — the one who can take a beggar from a dung hill and make him a king — each new human being is another Adam or Eve, intended to achieve success and create excellence. As the wisest person who ever lived, Solomon should see through the charade, the way the majority meekly, ignorantly, and foolishly accepted and acted out their bit part in the play of life.

Breaking Free

Benjamin Carson was born into the ghetto culture of a poor area of Detroit, Michigan, and soon learned to conform to the mediocre aspirations of his peers — whom he now compares to crabs in a barrel, each one pulling down another that tries to escape. At school, by the fifth grade, he was considered the “dummy” of his class due to his habit of taking an entire quiz without getting a single question right. His temper so violent that he would attack other children, even his mother, at the slightest provocation.

Somehow, like the girl in the "Song", Carson woke up and turned his life around, the turning point coming when his angry knifing of another boy narrowly avoided becoming a killing because the blade fortunately struck a belt buckle and snapped. Shocked by his own insane violence he ran home, locked himself away, and prayed and began reading the proverbs of Solomon. Miraculously freed from that moment from the violent temper that had previously controlled him, he then set out on a mission of self education. The public library became his favorite place, he began listening to classical music on the radio, and made frequent visits to the art gallery to learn all he could about the paintings and their creators.

To cut a long story short, after going on to graduate from Yale University and then the University of Michigan Medical School, he later made medical history with an operation to separate a pair of Siamese twins who were joined at the back of the head. Operations to separate twins joined in this way had always failed, resulting in the death of one or both of the infants, and initially experts told the mother she would have to decide which twin was to live and which was to be sacrificed. After five months of creative thinking and planning, Carson agreed to undertake the operation as lead surgeon of a 70-member team. At the end of a marathon 22-hour operation, the twins were successfully separated and now survive independently. Self belief is the key, says Carson, closely echoing the enlightenment of the girl in the "Song" — "I am black, but beautiful!"

Carson's personal hero is Booker T. Washington, a black man who rose from slavery to become an educator and the founder of the Tuskegee Institute. Another hero, who taught at Washington's college, was George Washington Carver, who rose from similar humble origins to become a great scientist. Carver found 325 uses for the peanut — including meal, a coffee substitute, wood filler, bleach, metal polish, paper, shaving cream, ink, linoleum, synthetic rubber and plastic. He also developed 500 shades of dye from the sweet potato. His discoveries were credited with saving the faltering agrarian economy of the South at the time.

Also amongst the black heroes Carson seeks to promote in order to inspire ghetto youngsters to follow their example is Elijah McCoy, whose parents were escaped slaves. Sent to study engineering in Scotland, McCoy later invented the drip-cup bearing lubrication system and set up a company to manufacture it. When offered inferior substitutes made by manufacturers who sought to copy his device, customers looking for the genuine article soon learned to ask: "Is this the real McCoy?"

Start Pulling Out the Weeds

Although you will obviously never write a poem or song, paint a masterpiece, compose music, or write a novel if you are simply too busy to bother, you may well have tried, but got nowhere. If so, try to understand some of the reasons for your failure by imagining, metaphorically speaking, the effect of sowing seeds by scattering them in a patch of soil that is already choked with weeds. The established weeds will simply rob the germinating seeds of nutrients, water, and sunshine, and your efforts will come to nothing.

But what are weeds? They are non-useful plants, such as thistles and thorns, that are sometimes painful to touch and even poisonous. Some are also very deep-rooted and difficult to remove. Perhaps Solomon is pointing out, metaphorically, that, due to neglect and a lack of active self-direction, most people have accepted into their minds all kinds of wrong ideas, basic misconceptions of the way the world works, ignorance, false beliefs, resentments, jealousies, self pity, paralyzing fears, limiting beliefs, crippling cultural values, and conformity to inappropriate expectations.

Can we uproot some of those weeds? Can we clean up and cultivate that patch of psychological soil we call a mind, and begin to sow new and useful seeds instead? Such a task can be discouraging, overwhelming — but expert help is available!

Your Subconscious Mind Can Help You Sort out Your Life

In "The Power of Decision", Raymond Barker points out that we are thinkers of thoughts, and that we must choose which ideas we allow to take root in minds and so control our lives. The goal, he says, is simply to become your true self, but that involves weeding your mental vineyard. The problem is that these particular weeds are invisible, and cannot be removed by the simple decision to do so.

Like Eve working with Adam, what you must do is enlist the help of your subconscious mind. Take time to meditate on the situation, and ask your creative mind to help you identify and eliminate the thoughts that have been limiting your thinking and your life. Work at it day by day. Start to notice how your actions and reactions are shaped, almost automatically and unthinkingly, by beliefs that you have been hypnotized into innocently accepting by your previous experience, upbringing, and education.

Find a Focus

However, no matter how thoroughly a plot of ground is weeded, it will soon start to grow weeds again if the neglect continues. The trick is to grow something useful instead, to replace the false values, poisonous attitudes, and limiting beliefs that choke our minds by strong, purposeful goals. In this regard it seems interesting that a vine is a substantial plant, not usually grown from seed, and one that is capable, like many fruit trees, of outgrowing and overcoming the influence of weeds. If cared for, it grows bigger, and simply rises above them, and demands its place in the sun.

Perhaps Solomon chose a vineyard as the metaphor for the mind in this section, rather than a field or garden, because it is a plot of land dedicated to a single creative purpose, namely the production of grapes for wine making. Part of the message must be that creative excellence requires a focused constructive and substantial purpose to pursue. It is interesting that even today, fine wine of good vintage, the product of a vineyard, is still taken as a metaphor for excellence and the good things in life.

Prune Back and Simplify Your Life

A grape vine lives for some ten to twenty years, and grows by putting out lateral runners from the main, vertical stem or trunk. If the vine is neglected, it will put out lots of laterals in all directions and the result will be a tangled web of unproductive runners, and a profusion of foliage. This is how Solomon is depicting the mental state of most people, as represented by the girl's vineyard in the "Song". Their lives are overcomplicated, unfocused, and out of control, and their time and energy are dissipated in many directions.

To correct the situation it is necessary to start pruning off most of the runners and reduce their number to just a handful, so that the energy of the plant can be concentrated into the production of a limited number of bunches of high quality grapes. The message, which is I suspect the key insight of the section, must be that we need to take charge of our lives, landscape them, so to speak, simplify them, so that we can concentrate our time and energy on a limited set of goals.

Creative people, like creative businesses, specialize and concentrate on doing what they do well — a point to which Solomon returns later. Like a vineyard, many business tend to grow into a tangle of operations that cannot be efficiently managed, and have to be carefully pruned back. If you run a business, do you have neglected, under-utilized assets? If you employ people, is there under-developed ability that could be trained to become more productive?

Voice of Experience

"There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that the must take himself for better for worse as his portion . . . no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what this is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried" (Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher).

"This is what I learned: that everybody is talented, original and has something important to say" (Brenda Ueland — *If You Want to Write*).

"No one is entitled to say, 'I'm not creative,' because the proof to the contrary is dreaming. Everybody dreams, so everybody is not only creative but astoundingly creative . . . You are the producer, you are the director, you are all the actors, which is a hell of a trick . . . You are the scenic designer. You are the sound man. You are in a sense — God. You are doing it all. And boy, that is dazzling" (Steve Allen, entertainer and scriptwriter — in Marilee Zdenek's *The Right Brain Experience*).

"I remember I used never to be able to get along at school. I don't know now what it was, but I was always at the foot of the class. I used to feel that the teachers never sympathized with me and that my father thought I was stupid, and at last I almost decided that I must really be a dunce . . . One day I heard the

teacher tell the inspector that I was ‘addled’ and it would not be worth keeping me at school and longer. I was so hurt by this last straw that I burst our crying and went home and told my mother about it” (Thomas Edison, inventor).

“To some people the idea of telling an uneducated man to think for himself savors of absurdity; they would argue that a man must first know how to think before he is advised to think for himself. We disagree entirely. Every man can think for himself . . . Some of the most original men in business have owed little to the schools and much to individual effort, relying solely on their own intellections . . . Get into the confidence of men in town or country, who appear to be quite average men, and you will sometimes find they have evolved for themselves a system of the universe, crude in its logic, perhaps, but not unintelligent in its perceptions” (T. Sharper Knowlson — Originality).

“The freeing and educating of the real person becomes the all important priority, with children of all ages — and with adults right up to the elderly: including highly qualified professionals. It means that people from every background and walk of life can discovered undreamed of potential and begin to release this quickly in chosen fields of application” (Matchett — The Road to True Professionalism).

“Do you know what frees one from this captivity? It is very deep, serious affection. Being friends, being brothers, love, that is what opens the prison by supreme power, by some magic force, but without this one remains in prison . . . And the prison is also called prejudice, misunderstanding, fatal ignorance or one thing or another, distrust, false shame” (letters of Vincent van Gogh).

Summary

1) Most people are too busy, and preoccupied with many things, to cultivate their creative potential, like a neglected vine, rampantly spreading in all directions, producing a lot of foliage but very small bunches of inferior grapes. To become creative you have to wake up to the reality of your situation, take charge of your life, prune it back, and simplify it, then focus your energies in potentially productive directions.

2) Because of neglect and a passive, drifting approach to life, your mind may well be like a neglected vineyard, overgrown with the weeds that choke out creative thoughts and stop them taking root and growing — false information and distorted views of reality, faulty emotional reactions, questionable cultural values, plus poisonous fears and deep-rooted anxieties that paralyze you into inactivity and cause you to shy away from valuable opportunities, so that you are reduced to living robotically, as if sleepwalking or in a hypnotic trance, controlled by the opinions, expectations, and influence of other people.

WORKSHOP

1) Something becomes neglected when we fail to devote time to it, so why not make time to meditate on the state of your life and open your eyes to what is really happening to you? Lying on the bed or sitting relaxed in an armchair, close your eyes and ask your creative subconscious to help you analyze your life. Ask questions then wait patiently and quietly for answer to tumble into your consciousness.

For example, are you really in charge of your life? Are you living robotically, or sleepwalking? How is your time and energy being dissipated? How can you simplify your life, and prune it back like a rampant vine that has become unproductive because its energies are dissipated into too many runners? What would you like to achieve? How has excellence escaped you?

2) How does your thinking limit your thinking — because of the metaphorical weeds you have allowed to grow unnoticed in your mind? Can you identify and then uproot some of them? Try to observe your actions and reactions throughout the day, and see how self doubts, negative feelings, fears, and preoccupation with unimportant matters, and perhaps the delusion that you are not a creative person, impose limits on your life, and cause you to miss out on opportunities.

Take a few minutes when you go to bed to meditate on these matters, and ask your creative mind to help your landscape your life — show you what you need to change, and how to go about it. Use your imagination to relive and analyze negative experiences, then mentally rehearse more positive and creative ways to handle such situations in the future.

3 THINK LIKE A SHEPHERD

Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock

where you make it lie down at noon

For why should I wander any longer like a vagabond

besides the flocks of your companions?

If you do not know, if you are still confused,

follow the tracks of the sheep,

and pasture your kids besides the shepherds' tents

Song of Solomon

How can you set about making the best use of the creative potential you now know you possess? In this third section, Solomon again chooses a work setting, one of a shepherd tending his flock. This is not some romantic evening, but the middle of the hot working day, and the shepherd is out there carefully observing his sheep, and making sure their every need is met. But how can you find that place, how can you find the shepherd and join in the work, and put your time, energy and talent to their best use?

Look for Needs

The girl in this section of the “Song” actually asks the same question. “Don’t you know?” replies the lover — are you “still bewildered”? It really should be easy. His advice is to “follow in the tracks of the flocks”. Such tracks should be easy to spot once you open your eyes and really start looking for them. The simple message is to open your eyes and to start from where you are, with the practicalities of your present life and the daily work environment that is portrayed by this passage — the path traditionally taken by many successful people, such as the office boy who ends up as managing director.

Start looking, really looking, obsessively looking, for unfulfilled needs, real needs that if attended to can improve the small corner of the world that you inhabit. In other words, you need to start thinking like a shepherd who spends his days watching out for problems and the needs of his flock, seeing every sheep as an individual. In the *ôSongö*, the girl is searching, thinking, and asking questions.

Keep in mind that creativity is not just concerned with music and literature, but with every field of human activity, in every aspect of the way we live and work. The concern in this section is not a simple one of romance, making love, and “doing what comes naturally”, but a practical one of earning a living, of finding out where best to graze the young kids.

The Eternal Secret of Wealth

The eternal secret of wealth, we are told, is simply this: “Find a need and fill it,” and in “Hidden Power”, James van Fleet says that if your goal is to make money, then your success will be measured by the amount of service that you give to others. Andrew Carnegie, who rose from humble origins as a Scottish immigrant boy in America a century ago to become a billionaire, observed that “No man can become rich himself unless he enriches others in so doing”. “Where your talents and the needs of the world cross, there lies your vocation” said Aristotle. Identifying needs and finding ways to satisfy them well is the basis of modern marketing. What do people really want? What is that interests them? What will they buy? Answering such questions is the function of focus groups and consumer surveys. A need should be analysed -- what specific aspect of that need do you or your business uniquely meet? Is it economy, quality, reliability, service, convenience, speed?

What kinds of needs are you personally good at fulfilling? What kind of function are you good at performing, with excellence? Like the tracks left by the sheep, the answers may not be immediately obvious, but keep searching, and they will become plainer. It is a journey.

Don't Waste Your Life

The girl is anxious to find her true love, and to stop wandering like a vagabond — an appropriate description, perhaps, of the way so many people live their lives, going from job to job, wasting their time, never really finding a place to fit, never becoming a round peg in a round hole, as the old saying goes.

A vagabond was a rootless, wanderer, living off the proceeds of petty crime and hand-outs, having no desire to settle down and become a useful member of society. Have you similarly been content for someone to give you "a job", just about any old job as long as it offers reasonably congenial working conditions and brings in enough money — or are you intent on making your personal and special creative contribution, doing the kind of thing at which you can excel? Are you reactive or pro-active? Do you have a purpose to achieve, or are you content to drift?

A vagabond was mentally a loner, outside society, not wanting to get involved, not wanting any responsibility, with no desire to be part of a team. The shepherd, however, although sometimes physically isolated for a while, was a responsible, thoughtful, planning kind of person, a problem solver, an identifier and filler of needs, a key player in an important basic industry. The thrust of the shepherd's job was to give, to protect, to care, and to help.

An alternative rendering of the phrase about being a vagabond speaks of being like a "veiled woman", a phrase that implies being like a prostitute. If we accept this alternative, then the message may be that we should make sure we do find our true love and not waste our time and energy on others. It's time to get serious, to sober up, and settle down with our compatible creative partner.

One problem the translators have with the original Hebrew is that it consists only of consonants, and that inserting different vowels can create different meanings. Can it be that Solomon was inspired to make possible the weaving of alternative insights into the same Hebrew phrase in some cases?

Start Small

The invitation to the girl to pasture her kids or lambs, may also be wise advice to start small, and go forward one step at a time. Even the great artists had to learn, starting out as apprentices, mixing paint and making brushes, then being allowed to add a few brush strokes to the work of the master. The early works of Mozart, we are told, were not actually very good — which is why they are rarely performed today — but he persevered and kept learning, as did all the great creators.

Here are some small ways to start. What specific problems need solving in your work, your home, your marriage, your community? What goals can you identify and commit yourself to? Analyze these situations and try to identify cause and effect. If you start thinking and asking questions — every spare moment you have, and when you go to bed at night and lie awake in the morning — your creative subconscious will come to your assistance in a magical and inexplicable fashion, and you will begin to find answers, and see exciting, creative opportunities.

Your Moment Will Come

In the year 1895, in America, King Gillette found a need to fill, and set about filling it in an excellent manner. His friend William Painter, already wealthy as the inventor of the metal "crown" bottle cap that is still in widespread use, had urged him to invent something else that people could use then throw away. As a result Gillette, like the girl in the "Song", was searching for an exciting purpose to which he could commit himself.

The moment came one morning when he was shaving, using the expensive cutthroat razor which consisted basically of a steel strip some quarter inch thick and several inches long, tapered along one edge to a keen, hollow ground cutting edge. He described the moment it as follows: "One morning when I started to shave, I found my razor dull . . . and beyond the point of successful stropping. It needed honing which meant it would have to be taken to a barber or cutler. A razor is only a sharp edge, and all the back of it is just support.

Why do they go to all the expense and trouble of fashioning a backing that has nothing to do with shaving? And why do they forge a great piece of steel and then spend so much labor in hollow grinding when they could get the same result by putting an edge on a piece of steel only thick enough to hold an edge? I stood there with the razor in my hand . . . the Gillette razor was born — more with the rapidity of a dream than by a process of reasoning.

In that moment I saw it all: the way the blade would be held in the holder; the idea of sharpening two opposite edges on the thin piece of steel; the clamping plates for the blade, with a handle halfway between the two edges of the blade. All this came more in pictures than conscious thought, as though the razor were already a finished thing and held before my eyes. I stood there before that mirror in a trance of joy.”

Make Your Work Love in Action

Work is really all about satisfying needs, our own and those of other people, ideally as effectively, efficiently, economically, safely, quickly, and beautifully as possible, which is why work has been defined as “love in action”. That should be the aim of every person in every job, including every designer, planner, and manager. That is practical creativity, and the job of the subconscious mind is help us achieve excellence in so doing. And when you are relaxed and loving what you do, your creativity will begin to flow. It will be easy and natural. Unfortunately, for many people, the work that should be a joy has too often become an irksome and unfulfilling chore, possibly because they are in the wrong job, trying to do things they are not gifted to do well. And that is the subject that Solomon addresses next.

Voice of Experience

“What does my experience tell me needs to be attended to, which if attended to completely will advantage to all humanity?” (Buckminster Fuller, engineer and architect)

“To the extent that your work takes into account the needs of the world, it will be meaningful; to the extent that through it you express you unique talents, it will be joyful” (Laurence Boldt — How to Find the Work You Love).

“My life has an aim after all, I know that I might be quite a different man! How can I then be useful, of what service can I be! There is something inside me, what can it be!” (Vincent van Gogh, artist).

“The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve” (Albert Schweitzer).

“Keep asking yourself ‘What kind of world is it that I would like to help fashion?’ and ‘Can I do it through words or wood, through paint or people, through cloth or jewelry, music, stone or steel?’ Do not accept that these areas are none of your business. . . You will soon find that in your imagination anything is possible . . . Make your voyage in the spirit in which Columbus discovered America. There is sure to be something big . . . if only you set sail!’ It does not have to be grand: Home, office, factory, leisure, local communities . . . Simply decide what kind of improvements and additions are needed and make your commitment accordingly.” (Edward Matchett — Creative Action)

“The money is not the point, at all. The point is that we beat off all the big manufacturers, we won prizes, we made good things that people wanted.” (James Dyson, inventor of the cyclonic, bagless vacuum cleaner — Against the Odds).

"This false possession . . . which is consumptive of the complete lifetime, from four years onward, of the vast majority of people . . . stone-blinds the possessor to the simple, delightful truth trends that are everywhere and all times about us. For unspoiled children and happily debunked, emancipated grown-ups, these trends make life's courses as evident as a highway through a meadow. Ironically, the non-possession-person's citation of evident trends has always been fearfully hailed as witchcraft, mysticism and quackery by the still mystified, self-bequackeried majority" (Buckminster Fuller — Nine Chains to the Moon).

Summary

1) Begin your creative quest like a journey, by beginning where you are in your present life, by looking for needs you can fulfill — specific ways in which you can help improve the lives of people and so make a valuable contribution to society. Learn to think like a shepherd who spends his days watching out for problems and the needs of his flock. In the Bible, sheep are often used as a metaphor for people.

2) Be realistic and find needs that are appropriate your present knowledge, skills, experience, and in particular, your interests. It is wise to start small, as typified by the girl raising her lambs, and so gain experience.

3) Wealth and success come from finding effective ways to meet the real needs of people. In America a century ago, the Van der Bilt fortune started from the operation of one small ferry boat and later expanded to include railways. In a design situation, take time to meditate and ask your subconscious creative mind to help you identify the needs of the end user, then determine to fulfill them in an excellent manner.

WORKSHOP

1) Take a few minutes when you go to bed, to meditate on your home or work situation. Ask your creative mind to help you identify needs you can fulfill, problems you can set about solving. Write them down, and make them the focus of future sessions.

2) Take time to meditate on specific ways in which you already fulfill the needs of people in some other area of your life. Can you find ways to fulfill them more effectively, more quickly, more efficiently, more economically, more excitingly, more permanently?

4. ACT LIKE A HORSE

I compare you, my love, to a mare harnessed to Pharaoh's chariots.

Your cheeks are comely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels

We will make you ornaments of gold, studded with silver

Song of Solomon

I doubt that the first line of this short section in which the lover compares the girl to a horse would have been construed as a compliment to a young lady in Solomon's day any more than they would be today. So what is the message?

Act Like a Horse!

Creatively speaking, Solomon is comparing the reader to a horse, but not just any old horse out in the meadow, trotting too and for as the moment takes it, but a horse that is harnessed to one of the chariots of the powerful Pharaoh, ready to perform a specific and important function with strength, enthusiasm, and courage. This section again is dealing with the realities of the workaday world, where you will encounter opposition to your ideas and ambitions and there will be battles to fight.

As we shall see in moment, however, if you are doing the job you are gifted to do, and have found a specific purpose to pursue, then you will be able to go fearlessly forward with great strength and determination, like a horse into battle. Oddly and interestingly, a horse is normally quite timid and easily shies away, but not apparently when there is a sniff of battle. Likewise, by the power of purpose, the right purpose, the weak can be made strong. Courage is important because it is our emotions, especially fear, that can so easily defeat us when we try to change our lives.

You Are a Thoroughbred

Scholar Adam Clarke comments that mares were used in preference to stallions for both riding and drawing chariots because they were swifter, able to go longer without food and endure greater hardship. He adds also that: "There is perhaps no brute creature in the world so beautiful as a fine well bred horse or mare," a view that is confirmed today by the world-wide appeal of horse racing to people of all social groups. You too can be a creative thoroughbred, no matter what your present situation or past failures, and I was interested to read that one of the three mares from whom all British race horses trace their ancestry originally worked drawing a coal wagon through the streets of Paris!

You Have a Gift

The fundamental lesson of this section is, I believe, simply illustrated in the rest of creation. For example, just as a horse is specially equipped, as we have just seen, to excel in performing horsey functions — which differ from those of sheep, fish, frogs, and birds, for example — so different people are gifted to work best, and so contribute most effectively to society, in certain areas, such as numbers and finance, technology, art, music, literature, teaching, administration, and so on — generalized gifts which have been able to find specific practical expression in every age. A natural key to finding that gift — your intended niche in this creative ecology system — must obviously be what instinctively interests you, again typified by boy meets girl and falling in love.

Solomon was a great breeder and trader of fine horses and an additional insight may be that those who discover and develop their creativity properly will receive rich rewards — as also typified by the ornaments of gold studded with silver perhaps.

Do What You Were Created to Do

The biographies of highly creative individuals suggest that we cannot achieve the excellence of genius in any field we choose, but only in the area that makes proper use of our special capabilities, which is perhaps why Agatha Christie, who tried many things before becoming a writer, commented: "I learned that I am

me, that I can do the things, as one might put it, me can do, but I cannot do the things that me would like to do.”

Novelist Stephen King says that everybody is drawn towards something, some area of natural interest in which they can excel. Accordingly, Solomon’s main message here may well be that God has given each human being a special gift with which to make their contribution to society.

Listen to Your Calling

A natural key to finding that gift — your natural niche in this creative ecology system — must obviously be what instinctively interests you, again typified by finding and falling in love. Traditionally a person’s life’s work was described as a “vocation”, a word which literally means “calling”, as in the word “vocals”, implying perhaps that if we really pay attention we will hear the call, and our heart will be stirred, as by the words of a lovely song.

Experts now tell us that despite several decades of psychological research, the most effective way to predict vocational choices is not by completing banks of complex questionnaires but for a person to ask himself, his own heart — the creative subconscious mind — what it is he really wants to do.

Your life’s work has been defined as the work you were born to do, in other words, the meaningful contribution to society that God has gifted you to do, the true vehicle for your talents. There is where you will find your purpose on Earth; there is where you will find real happiness and fulfillment.

A prime aim of education, then, should obviously be to help young people discover and begin developing their individual gifts, and how they can use them to make a meaningful and excellent contribution to society. It would seem to follow that even in the most backward of underdeveloped countries — as well as the unemployment registers of the more advanced ones — there must exist a valuable pool of amazing creative potential, waiting to be released and developed.

Use Your Gift to Give

The existence of special gifts seems to be confirmed in the New Testament where Paul explains that God has equipped all human beings with special vocational capabilities, saying: “There are many forms of work, but all of them, in all men, are the work of the same God” (I Corinthians 12:6). In the following verse, he then points out the reason God has given us those gifts, saying: “In each of us the Spirit is manifest in one particular way, for some useful purpose.”

Notice again the stress on purpose, on making a contribution to the needs of people. Why not let that be your motivation, as it was for the great artists such as Van Gogh, and the modern businessman such as Ray Kroc of McDonalds — a desire to give something beautiful to the world, a practical act of love. The creative mind will respond to that commitment, because that is the reason for its existence.

Work to Your Strengths

In “Win With Your Strengths”, Donald Clifton and Paula Nelson report that, based on a study of the careers of 250,000 professional people, the international research organization Gallup concluded that high achievement comes when individuals are involved in activities that match their strengths. This would seem to be common sense, but they point out, however, that many people sacrifice the sense of accomplishment that comes from playing to their strengths in this way by struggling to climb as high as possible up the ladder of corporate “success” at any price.

Their advice is to pick one of your strengths and pursue it and stick with it — and not to waste time trying to correct weaknesses unless they are seriously hindering you. Most people who pursue multiple strengths, they claim, end up achieving only mediocrity — a Jack of all trades, but master of none. A further piece of advice given, which might possibly be inferred from this section of the “Song”, is to look for a complementary partner, someone with whom you can work more efficiently and effectively than on your own — just as horses are sometimes harnessed together, perhaps?

Are You a Fish Out of Water?

But what about you, the reader? Have you ever spent serious time trying to analyze your strengths and weaknesses? Does your lack of confidence or frequent failure make you feel that everybody else is far better than you? Have you been failing and feeling unfulfilled because you have been trying to do things you are simply not equipped to do — like a fish trying to walk or a mouse trying to swim? Should you take some kind of career aptitude test? What seems to come naturally to you? What is it you find easy that most

other people find difficult? What specialized knowledge do you already possess and would like to expand further? What area do you feel a desire to learn more about? What calls you?

Focus Your Thoughts — Like a Burning-glass

Once a person has found an area to work in, their thoughts becomes focused on that area, concentrated, like the sun's rays passing through a convex lens, generating creative heat. As Jack Addington comments in "100% Mind Power", a composer, for example, thinks only about music. He does not think about physics, or painting, or business. Artists, scientists, designer, and writers, all focus their attention on the particular area in which they seek creative ideas. "Once you have opened the door", he comments, "ideas will come from everywhere to clothe your original idea."

Find a Purpose to Pursue with Enthusiasm

A vitally important complementary insight here is that like the horse drawing Pharoah's chariot, the human mind is designed to be harnessed to specific but appropriate purposes and to pursue them with enthusiasm, emotionally supercharged and pushing fearlessly and single-mindedly forward, overcoming all opposition. This we can do when we work in close co-operation with our creative unconscious. No wonder creative genius William Blake said that enthusiasm was everything, for if we have that, all else will follow. Notice however, that once again there are two agencies involved — the conscious mind as typified by the horse, whose energy and enthusiasm are directed by the wise and powerful Pharoah who typifies the subconscious mind.

Eat, Sleep, Walk, Talk and Dream It

With regard to the power of purpose, the late Frank Sinatra said in a TV interview that if you are going to be good at any job, you have to "eat, sleep, walk, talk, and dream it". If you do, he concluded, you will succeed, and in the end you will become "a big man in the business". As a young singer, having discovered his gift, Sinatra set about developing it with enthusiasm and determination.

Singing with leading big bands — having already achieved enough success to satisfy most people perhaps — he carefully observed the way the great trumpet and trombone players controlled their breathing, and sought to emulate them with his voice. Likewise he noted how the great violinists played with such smoothness that there was never a hint or hesitation to reflect the fact that the bow was being pushed too and for, continually stopping and starting. Frank practiced hard to lend the same seamless sound to the phrasing of his songs. And he succeeded.

The Passion of Purpose

Here, very early on in the "Song", Solomon — writing three thousand years ago — identifies an eternal secret of personal and business success that is still the focus of every modern self-help/inspirational book, from Napoleon Hill's "Think and Grow Rich" down to Anthony Robbin's "Awaken the Giant Within", namely the need to identify a specific goal that you can pursue with a passion.

A genuine goal, as Solomon is stressing, is far more than mere purpose or idle objective. It is a creative encounter, a life-changing experience — like love, like boy meets girl — that triggers the magical creative mechanism in the mind that otherwise lies dormant and unused. Human beings, made in the image of God, are goal oriented. In Solomon's book of Proverbs, we find that the secret of becoming wise is the simple desire to do so.

Passion Arouses Your Creative Mind

Similarly, in his classic self-help book "Think and Grow Rich", Napoleon Hill expounds the simple secret of wealth that was given to him by billionaire industrial giant Andrew Carnegie — namely, the burning desire to achieve it. Desire transmuted into a specific goal changes the way we think, and triggers our creativity. As a result amazing new powers become available that we were previously unaware of, somewhat like a teenager becoming aware of their inherent sexuality.

Here, then, is the eternal secret of success. And that secret has not changed in three thousand years, being recently expressed by a young multimillionaire TV and radio presenter in a magazine interview in the following words: "Follow your passion — and hope that others will be interested too!" When asked in a TV chat show what he would do if he lost all his money, entrepreneur Richard Branson replied simply: "I would find something interesting to do".

Not just a purpose, then, as many self-help books suggest, not just a “goal” plucked out of the air and mechanically written down on paper because that is what the book said to do — but an interest that becomes love and deep desire, a burning passion, a fire that consumes every obstacle and reduces every negative emotion to ashes.

Here also is the first simple step toward creative excellence, success, and genius, and here also is the reason why so many people never achieve it — they simply never take the time to find and become intimate with their love, so they never even begin, and the passion is never kindled, and desire is never aroused. So nothing happens, as with the sexual parallel.

It Begins with Desire

In “Mindstore”, British personal development trainer Jack Black delivers the same message as Solomon when he says: “The first requirement, though, is that you must have a massive DESIRE for your outcome. Nothing will happen if the DESIRE is not there . . . If you don’t really desire the goal you set, then to put it simply, you don’t have one. Everyone I have met who has achieved undoubtedly wanted to achieve their goal more than anything else.”

However, Black also comments: "As I see it, the 96 per cent of our population who really do not understand the importance of goals spend their entire lives helping and assisting the 4 per cent achieve their goals" - like the girl we read about earlier who neglected her own vineyard and laboured hard and long instead in someone else's, until she finally woke up to reality.

The function of inspirational books, dating back to Samuel Smiles’s Victorian classic “Self Help”, would seem to be to encourage the reader find and fall in love and become infatuated with a purpose — love it, embrace it, and play with it, and be ravished by it. If the books succeed and that does in fact happen, then the desire and passion that has been stirred can arouse a powerful creative mechanism that was previously dormant, thereby making possible inspirations and insights that would not otherwise be available. That mechanism for creating success is the subject of the second chapter of this book.

Self-help books stress the need for belief in your goals. When inspiration occurs it will be appropriate. Just as horse gives birth to a foal, and a dog to a puppy, so your conception will be appropriate to your present level of knowledge, skills and experience, and it will, therefore be realistic -- and believable. You will know that it is also achievable -- and as you nourish the embryonic creation it will grow and develop in your mind into a fully functioning possibility, and like a woman with child you experience a certainty, an excitement, a responsibility, and resolute determination to bring this beautiful new thing to birth.

Power to Change the World

There can be little doubt that the inspired, but unfulfilled, intention of the “Song of Songs” was to trigger the transformation of the world, beginning with ancient Israel, from being a virtually static agrarian economy in which the vast majority of people labored to perform basically identical and uncreative tasks, into a complex and dynamic industrial society of specialized products and professional services.

That transformation, elements of which have since occurred in a piece-meal and haphazard manner only in recent centuries, was to have been achieved by the organized enlightenment of ordinary individuals, both men and women, to their amazing creative potential, the existence of which had long remained an obscure and unsuspected secret. That crucial psychological secret was revealed to Solomon, and the development of that creative potential forms the focus of the remainder of the “Song”. That transforming power resides in you.

Voice of Experience

"Only a few know that a definite plan plus a burning desire for wealth are the only dependable means of accumulating wealth" (Hill -- Think and Grow Rich).

“Ultimately, of course, he drifted to London and the theater, where, according to the stage tradition, he found employment in a menial capacity, perhaps even as a holder of horses at the doors, before he was admitted into a company as an actor and so found his way to his true vocation as a writer of plays.” (Encyclopedia Britannica — article, William Shakespeare)

“Many comedians attribute their choice of career to some childhood cause, such as poverty, peer mockery, isolation, ugliness, rejection or loss. Woody Allen thinks that’s boloney. He says: ‘It’s just an inborn thing that some have. Like Jerry Lewis. I think he was born funny. Two babies lying side by side; one will not become a comedian no matter what he does. For the other, it’s like it was in his genes.’ . . . Whether, as Allen believes, it’s in the genes, or whether my own love of being funny grew out of the enjoyment I felt when I made people laugh, I really don’t know. What I do know is that I never wanted to do anything else more than I wanted to do comedy.” (Bob Monkhouse, comedian — *Crying With Laughter*.)

“When anything is being accomplished, it is being done, I have learned, by a monomaniac with a mission” (Peter Drucker — *Adventures of a Bystander*).

“The people I worked with were amazed by how positively their lives changed when they focused on exactly the kind of future they wanted. This process also worked for organisations . . . ” (Dave Ellis — *Creating Your Future*).

“If our true nature is permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful, and happy” (Abraham Maslow).

“Whenever a man, in concentrating his faculties on a matter of importance, conceives an idea which surprises him by the magnitude of its results, we say that he has been inspired; but it would be difficult to aver that a man has ever been inspired in an art other than that which he understands and practices continually, and for which he has a natural inclination” (Joly — *The Psychology of Great Men*).

“You must first be sure that you are asking for something that is rightfully yours to have and is within your ability to handle; for the subconscious manifests itself only according to the capabilities of the person” (Claude M. Briston — *The Magic of Believing*).

Summary:

- 1) As Agatha Christie found out, you cannot achieve creative excellence in any and every area you choose. You have a special gift, or gifts, that needs to be identified and developed in order to help you make an excellent creative contribution to society in that field, your niche in the creative ecology of society.
- 2) Sometimes you can maximize your effectiveness by working synergistically with other people, like horses in harness.
- 3) When you find the right area in which to work and have set a specific goal, you will be able to go forwards with enthusiasm that overpowers fear, like a thoroughbred horse drawing a chariot into battle. The power of purpose brings the emotional strength to overcome barriers and discouragementÆs.

WORKSHOP

1) Take time to relax and meditate on your life and ask your subconscious mind to help you identify your gifts. Be guided by what draws you, stimulates interest, stirs your heart, and brings joy, one in which you can specialize, where learning becomes a pleasure and an obsession. Try to visualize yourself in five or ten year’s time — ask your creative mind to help you “see” yourself working successfully in some special field.

It may help to consider questions such as these:

What would I like to accomplish in your life?

What would I like to have written as your epitaph or eulogy?

How would I like to change the world?

What gives me the greatest satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment?

What interests and excites me most?

If I did not have to work, what would you do with my time?

What am I good at?

What special gift or talent do I possess that could help make the world a better place?

2) Some people find that it helps to spend some time, an hour or more even, simply trying to express the thoughts and feelings of your heart on paper, just writing whatever comes to mind, not worrying about grammar and punctuation, a kind of Brainstorming session. Why not ask some other people to say how they see your strengths?

3) Having looked for needs to fulfill in the previous section, can you now identify some very specific goals or purposes to pursue? Write them down, spend some time rewritings and clarifying them, over and over, until you know precisely what it is you really want to achieve.

4) Break you goal down into specific, practical steps or tactics, things you know with confidence that you can do, and so ensure the attainment of your goal. Get started. What small thing can you do today, even if it is just a phone call or making a list of things to do tomorrow. Thorough preparation and a command of the facts will you absolute confidence, but think also about seeking advice and finding a positive person with whom you can discuss your plans.

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The principles or insights in this first chapter have followed a logical sequence, beginning with simple but amazing fact that just as there is someone somewhere with whom we can share our life, so God has given each person a powerful creative partner, one that most people never find. That partner, the creative subconscious mind, is compared to a powerful king who can transform our lives, if only we are interested and willing to fall in love. Love and passion change the way you think and trigger your creativity.

This led on to the fact that many people are simply too busy rolling along in their present rut or routine to take time to really think, to reflect on their life realize that it could be very different. We need to wake up to our neglected potential, take charge of our lives, and landscape them — prune them back, simplify them, and so focus our time and energy into certain productive areas.

To switch on our creativity, we should begin from where we are in our present life, by identifying problems to solve and real needs that we can set about satisfying in order to make a meaningful contribution to society.

It is then important to turn those needs into specific goals, that are appropriate to our special gifts, so that we can pursue them with the enthusiasm and courage of a horse charging into battle.

PART 2

YOUR CREATIVE MIND

Following the enlightenment of Part One, Solomon now deals with five fundamental principles of achieving excellence, after the manner of Mozart, Dickens, Beethoven and others, using a creative process that relies on two key functions of the subconscious mind — namely, Inspiration and Intuition.

Inspiration

The first function, Inspiration, is the process by which unique projects are “conceived” in the mind in a manner typified at the highest level by the process of human reproduction. Most people have almost certainly experienced inspiration many times without realizing it — relaxed moments when magical ideas and exciting possibilities tumble glowing into the mind, ready to be developed, “gestated”, and brought to birth. The scale of such inspired projects can vary greatly, from small to large — from an idea for rearranging the furniture, to a novel, an invention or a business project — as with the physical creative parallels in the animal world which extend from microscopic organisms such as an amoeba up to gigantic creatures such as the whale and the elephant. Inspirations are, I believe, appropriate to “you”, to your present knowledge, skills and experience -- and therefore are realistic and attainable. They are not grandiose schemes artificially concocted by “thinking big”.

Inspirations — a Dime a Dozen!

The fact that such inspirations can be either ignored or acted on, led the great Jewish American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, to comment: “I am certain that many, many people have waked up in the middle of the night with a flash of inspiration about some novel they would like to write, or a play or a poem or whatever and that most inspiration never come to anything. Inspirations are a dime a dozen. The difference between inspiration and the final product, for example, Tolstoy’s ‘War and Peace’, is an awful lot of hard work, an awful lot of discipline, and awful lot of training, an awful lot of finger exercises and practices and rehearsals and throwing away of first drafts and so on”.

Intuition

The second function, Intuition, is the provision of insights of various kinds, a magical stream of ideas and images that can tumble into the mind — to expand understanding of a subject or situation, to identify creative new arrangements or variations of a system or structure, to locate principles that can be brought into a problem situation, and even to offer dialogue and appropriate phrases to writers, as well as words and music to a composer, or dance steps to a choreographer.

Your Mental Womb

The two processes can work together, so that once an Inspiration has been conceived, its development takes place as if in some kind of mental “womb” by the accretion of a steady stream of Intuitive insights, just as a physical embryo in the womb grows and develops molecule by molecule, as it draws out appropriate nutrients from the bloodstream, until it is complete in every detail and ready to be delivered as a physical reality. Highly creative individuals have learnt how to deliberately facilitate these two processes, and so can you. They are normal and natural, and all human beings, not just some gifted minority, already the psychological facilities involved.

Notice again the interesting parallel that just as a fetus develops in the womb, invisibly and miraculously without the mother’s direct intervention, so the inspired conception develops in the subconscious mind, evidently a kind of mental “womb”, in such a manner that the creative person often feels when it is finished that it was not them who did the creating, any more than a mother conscious directs the growth of the baby.

5 BE INSPIRED

While the king was in his hole, my nard gave forth its fragrance

My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh, that lies between my breasts

My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms

in the vineyards of Engedi

Song of Solomon

If, as we saw earlier, the creative action of the subconscious mind is like sex, how close is the parallel? The answer is — very close, which is why, in these verses, Solomon is able to use sexual intercourse and orgasm as metaphors for the process of Inspiration which is characterized by a transient, glowing moment, familiar to creative individuals, during which an exciting possibility is conceived in the mind. As with the sexual parallel, the inspiration is the consequence of relaxed play with the object of your love and fascination. Solomon chooses this erotic metaphor, not to titillate, but because it is the most appropriate, accurate, and informative one possible.

Creative Intercourse

Now the girl and the king are together in his chambers and the creative action is about to begin. The message is that in order to be inspired we have to achieve union with our creative subconscious mind, a intimate process typified by sexual intercourse -- which is simply the closest possible physical contact between man and woman. One lesson is that we must achieve the closest possible contact with our creative mind, and when we do, new creative possibilities become available.

The phrase “my nard gave forth its fragrance”, is a metaphor for the sexual arousal the girl is experiencing. Michael Goulder suggests that although nard was an expensive aphrodisiac ointment, the term here implies her personal scent — what we now know as pheromones, given off in arousal and intercourse — as, he comments, “she goes forward flowing with passion”. Likewise, we have to be interested and responsive to the inspirational input of our creative mind.

The Creative Mechanism in Your Mind

The henna flowers mentioned were strongly scented blossoms in the form of long and somewhat tapering clusters similar in shape to the English Buddleia. Goulder offers the translation that the lover is a “spike” of henna, graphically describing his response to the girl’s stimulation, adding that: “Her nard has sent forth its fragrance to good effect”. Our availability and interest arouses the creative mechanism of the unconscious mind that is normally dormant and passive.

Nourish the Creative Embryo — Let It Grow

If the newly conceived creative embryo resulting from this interaction is nurtured with constant attention, it will be found to slowly but surely grow, bit by bit, phrase by phrase, insight by insight, just as a baby in the womb slowly assimilates available nutrients, molecule by molecule — all the time directed by the “genetic” content imparted at the moment of inspiration. This is precisely how Beethoven worked, walking the countryside, gently humming and developing new inspirations, then rushing home to play them out on the piano, before recording them on paper.

After accompanying him on a walk one day, a friend commented: “Beethoven muttered and howled the whole time, without emitting any definite notes. When I asked him what he was doing, he answered, ‘A theme for the last allegro of the sonata has occurred to me.’ When we reached home he ran, without stopping to take off his hat, to the piano. I sat in a corner, and he soon forgot about me. At last he got up; he was astonished to find me still there, and said, ‘I cannot give you a lesson today: I must go on working.’ ”

Employing a different metaphor to Solomon, and commenting on the way a book can be inspired then grow from a single mental image, John Fowles said: “I am amazed at this wonderful dynamo in the mind that

can create a novel from a single image. You should give yourself to your imagination.”

Relax, Play and Be Receptive

In love making, a woman allows herself to relax and become receptive to the advances of a man, leading perhaps to intercourse during which a sperm of genetic information is transferred and may fertilize an ovum, leading, through a period of gestation and labor, to the creation of a new and unique issue. Similarly in creative action our task is to relax — and play — and become excited and receptive to the input initiated by our creative subconscious, leading to the inspiration or conception of a new creation, that, like the sexual counterpart, needs to be gestated and then delivered into physical reality, a unique and beautiful gift to the world.

Just as the woman’s excitement prepares her body for the process of intercourse that would otherwise be painful or impossible, so our creative excitement lubricates the mind for the entry of inspirations that it could not otherwise receive. The quite astonishing parallel between the two processes is no accident of evolution.

Inspiration — A Mental Conception

Inspiration, the crucial conception of works of genius, comes to those who prepare themselves and patiently and persistently seek it — and success comes to those who recognize that inspiration, that precious embryonic creation, then cherish and develop it, and carry it through to birth, no matter how lengthy and tiresome that period of gestation may turn out to be.

As with a baby, however, you can never be sure how your new creation will turn out. Although some writers try to plan their books in precise detail, chapter by chapter, in advance, some of the more successful, such as John Fowles, find that their novels often begin with just a single image that pops into their mind when lying relaxed in bed perhaps, then magically grow and develop in quite unexpected ways — as they nurture it in every spare moment — with the visualized characters even taking the story off in unexpected and perhaps unwanted directions by the spontaneous actions and dialogue they generate. Charles Dickens and others have described this same phenomenon.

Cultivate the Mood

Describing how the artist deliberately seeks the emotional encounter that can lead to inspiration, psychologist Rollo May says: “The artist must cultivate this mood, wait for it, and seek to stimulate it, sometimes by gazing at their paints or even brushing random patterns on the canvas . . . sparked by the artist’s encountering the brilliant colors on the palette or the inviting white roughness of the canvas . . . It is a waiting for the birthing process to begin to move” (The Courage to Create).

Inspiration has relevance in many fields, including acting. In a TV documentary about the life of Marilyn Monroe, for example, it was explained how, at the height of her fame, she withdrew from Hollywood to New York to study *method acting* — which was described as a technique involving meditation and introspection designed, or at least intended, to bring the actor to the point of inspiration. When inspiration has occurred, the actor is no longer mechanically role playing, because a new and unique interpretation has been conceived, gestated and brought to birth on the stage or screen.

Creation versus Construction

An article by a New York Times columnist who had taken part in a poetry workshop described how participants were involved in activities and given assignments to lead them to the point of inspiration. When a good poem resulted, which was obviously different in kind to those generated by mechanical juggling of words and phrases, the workshop director would comment *“I think you caught a fish!”* — a useful metaphor for the process, the fact that something has *“clicked”*, the contacts had closed, something special had happened — namely, inspiration. An important feature of such workshops is the realization that inspiration can be deliberately and successfully sought after rather than “waited for”.

There is little doubt that a work such as poem can be produced by the method of inspiration on the one hand and by deliberate practical technique on the other — the essential difference, perhaps, between “real poetry” and what is called *doggerel*. The latter, no matter how well crafted, will lack the special magic of the former — just as a doll may be pretty and even able to electronically articulate a few phrases but lacks the living spark of the baby. Charles Dickens described this second more mechanical process as “construction” in contrast to the inspirational process of creation, observing that: “The whole difference between construction and creation is exactly this: that a thing constructed can only be loved after it is constructed; but a thing created is loved before it exists”.

The Inspiration of an Artist

In his “Acrylic Painting Course”, accomplished artist and teacher Alwyn Crawshaw describes how he finds himself inspired by scenes and subjects, even as mundane as a local builder’s yard. He says: “Each time I passed it, I always felt inspired and wanted to ‘have a go’ . . . When the day came, I was almost bubbling over with enthusiasm! I sat down and thoroughly enjoyed painting it. Incidentally, I was only sixteen years old and painting a complicated picture like that was very ambitious. I must have been excited or I don’t think I could even have started it!”

He continues: “But the point is I had lived for three days in anticipation . . . I had achieved something I really wanted to do. I am sure that if it can happen to me, it can happen to you . . . I had a similar build up of excitement when I did a painting in acrylics just a few months ago . . . The view inside the church, looking towards the altar was absolutely breathtaking — the colors looked like a sea of golds, reds, and blues. I was immediately inspired! . . . I could hardly contain my excitement — I was just like a little boy in a sweet shop.” Just how well such initial inspirations are developed, whether or not they will become “masterpieces”, will depend, as Crawshaw observes, on the artists skill and mastery of technique.

The Inspiration of a Musician

The great composer Tchaikovsky had learnt to actively seek inspiration, saying: “We must always work, and a self-respecting artist must not fold his hands on the pretext he is not in the mood. If we wait for the mood without endeavoring to meet it half way, we easily become indolent and apathetic. We must be patient and believe that inspiration will come to those who can master their disinclination . . . I am glad I have not followed in the steps of some of my Russian colleagues, who have no self-confidence and are so impatient that at the least difficulty they are ready to throw up the sponge. This is why, in spite of great gifts, they accomplish so little, and that in an amateur way.”

Inspiration can also be triggered — in the prepared, interested mind — as if by accident by an emotional encounter as the result of an experience, a memory, a smell, or by hearing a comment, a phrase that has a magical ring to it, sometimes even just a single word. Composer John Tavener explained in an interview in the Telegraph Magazine how his composition “Song for Athene” — which was played at the funeral of the Princess of Wales — had been inspired when he attended the funeral of a Greek actress and saw her body laid out in an open coffin and dressed in a bridal costume, according to Orthodox tradition. “It had an extraordinary effect on me” he said, and as he walked away from the service he simply found himself spontaneously singing a refrain that had come magically to mind. “It seemed”, he said, “like a parting gift from her”. The funeral of Diana affected him in a similar way, inspiring him to compose “Eternity’s Sunrise”.

The Inspiration of a Writer

Somewhat similar was the experience of Hugh Lofting in World War I, when his family asked him to describe life in the trenches of France. Surveying the burnt landscape, the barbed wire, the decomposing bodies, and the suffering and misery that surrounded him, he began, for some reason, to think about the horses that had to endure the same appalling conditions, and began to wonder how they would describe it all.

And so came the magical inspiration for the first Doctor Doolittle book, as Lofting began writing little stories which he sent home but also read to an enraptured audience of fellow soldiers in breaks between the fighting. Asked to provide illustrations for the stories, he searched around for suitable pieces of charcoal, the remains of incinerated rifle butts, the debris of death, as a Daily Mail article described it.

In the first Doolittle book, the kindly doctor abandons his human patients to look after animals, who reward him by teaching him their language. According to Lofting’s son, the message of the Doolittle books is that the world would be a much better place if we all made the effort to understand other people’s feelings and points of view, even when, as with animals, it seems at first almost impossible to communicate with them. It is interesting that among the magical powers attributed to Solomon by Jewish fables was that of being able to converse with animals.

Moments of Inspiration

In a radio interview, horror writer Stephen King described the inspiration that starts him writing a new novel as being like the piece of “grit”, around which he then attempts to build a “pearl”, bit by bit, day by day until it is complete. Sometimes that initial inspiration arises from watching a film or from a dramatic

moment in a dream, such as seeing a hanging corpse suddenly open its eyes and look at him. Very often, he explained, the inspiration is a sudden insight, a previously unnoticed and intriguing connection between two seemingly unrelated situations.

Agatha Christie said that “There has to be one delicious moment when you have thought of something”. The delicious moment for her first novel, “Snow Upon the Desert”, resulted from a chance remark made by a friend one evening when they observed a mysterious woman dining with two army officers. Her friend said: “She will have to make up her mind between them some time.” That simple comment, Agatha recalled, “was enough for my imagination. I was able to make up an excellent story.”

Deliberately Seeking Inspiration

Many successful creative individuals make a daily habit of deliberately making themselves available for inspiration by scheduling relaxed “play” time with their love. Singer-songwriter Elton John, for example, explained in a magazine article that he buys several newly-released records each Monday then listens to them for an hour every morning during the week. Even though the music on most of them is far different from his own and although he has no desire to emulate their style, he does find that the exercise stirs up his own creative feelings — helps him get into the creative mood — and inspires him to compose Elton-John type music.

Paul McCartney

Paul McCartney once described how he sits strumming his guitar, letting his feelings lead him, humming and muttering whatever gibberish comes to the tip of his tongue, until somehow a striking phrase or pleasing fragment of melody emerges. That is the moment of inspiration, and that initial embryonic creation is then repeated over and over, allowing it to slowly grow and develop. This he would do in his studio on a daily basis, a working discipline, deliberately seeking inspiration. As a result of deliberately seeking inspiration in this manner, rather than doing nothing and hoping it will come of its own accord, he has succeeded in writing several thousand songs.

John Lennon

John Lennon’s personal assistant, Frederic Seaman describes a similar approach, saying: “In the morning, I could hear John playing the guitar in his room, refining the lyrics to ‘Living on Borrowed Time’. When I came back from a trip to Hamilton I found him sitting at the piano in the living room still working on the song . . . a songwriter whose discipline and tenacity as a musician were nothing short of astounding. He could strum the guitar or sit at the piano for hours, doggedly playing the same chords and singing the same lyrics over and over until he was able to ‘fill in the blanks’.”

Inspiration in the Business World

Inspiration is not limited to the arts, and is equally important in business and science. In “The Mind of the Strategist”, business consultant Kenichi Ohmae comments on the critical importance of inspiration in the business world, saying: “My message in this book, as you have guessed by now, is that successful business strategies result not from rigorous analysis but from a particular state of mind. In what I call the mind of the strategist, insight [inspiration?] and a consequent drive for achievement, often amounting to a sense of mission, fuel a thought process which is basically creative and intuitive rather than rational . . . Great strategies, like great works of art and great scientific discoveries, call for technical mastery in working out but originate in insights that are beyond the reach of conscious analysis.”

Visions and Goals

In a newspaper interview Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop group, commented: “I’ve never yet met an entrepreneur who just wanted to make money. They have visions.”

The secret of success in any field, we are told, is to set a goal, to pin-point precisely what you want to achieve and when. Some consultants apparently identify tangible realities that can be visualized, such as how much money in the bank, what kind of car, how big a house and in what location — then translate these larger goals into a series of short-term ones. These are simply games designed to arouse the creative mind and bring about inspiration.

Although this "think champagne, drink champagne" approach does motivate some people, at least for a time, leading personal development gurus have found that most people simply cannot do it, probably because they intuitively realize that money is not the true measure of success nor material wealth the ultimate source of satisfaction — and deep down they desire instead to accomplish something that can bring meaning to their existence. Visions — creative conceptions or inspirations — come from the heart, not from a check book.

Inspiration as it occurs in the business world is well described by Paul Brunton in "In Search of the Overself" as follows: "The inspiration which presents a business man with a prophetic vision of what he is to achieve . . . will leave a lingering, exalting influence that will help him to carry the work through right from its beginning . . . It fixes a certain aim or goal before the eyes during the first intoxicating moments of self-absorption . . . carries with it the inspiring sense, the positive certainty of the success or rightness towards which it is leading him".

Interest, Excitement, Arousal, Inspiration — Excellence

Solomon, as we saw earlier, is suggesting that the real key to success in any field is to find something that interests and excites you and arouses your normally dormant creative mechanism — something in which you can excel and find satisfaction because it engages your creativity.

It is important to understand the process of inspiration, to create the conditions and take the actions necessary to trigger it, to be aware of it when it happens, and then to nurture and develop the outcome — as successfully creative individuals have done throughout the ages, and as you can do too.

Voice of Experience:

"Creative imagination . . . is the faculty through which 'hunches' and 'inspirations' are received" (Hill -- Think and Grow Rich).

"The analogy between artistic creation and childbirth is ancient . . . the exploration of artistic creativity as the psychic equivalent of procreation has been advanced in our time by Melanie Klein" (Simon Stuart — New Phoenix Wings).

"The creative person, in the inspirational phase of the creative furor . . . is all there, totally immersed, fascinated, absorbed in the present, in the current situation . . . utterly lost in the present . . . Little wonder that this shaking experience has so often been considered to be super-human, supernatural" (Abraham Maslow).

"For long works, however, inspiration usually gives only the skeleton and general hints as to how it is to be filled in. The writing and rewriting of almost every bar of Beethoven's works will give an idea of the extreme labor involved . . . The mood induces concentration, which focuses the mind on the conception and it attracts ideas suitable to the expression of the conception . . . The idea when it comes suddenly into the mind with the glow of inspiration [a different metaphor] must be noted down before it fades or is lost." (Rosamund Harding — The Anatomy of Inspiration)

"The mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakes to transitory brightness; this power arises from within" (Shelley).

"Then, when the first moment has passed, I put the canvas aside, facing the wall, and get on with living; but I feel it 'working' within me. Then one day, and a completely unexpected way, something is triggered: I pick up the painting again, and, as I proceed, a host of new ideas come in. It is like being in a state of drunkenness. That is how I paint" (Joan Miro).

"I am amazed at this wonderful dynamo in the mind that can create a novel from a single image." He added: "In fact I am wondering now whether I should admit to you that I have no idea where this novel is going at all. I think if you were making a skeleton you'd want to make sure you had certain bones. I think I've got the main bones." (John Fowles — newspaper interview)

"Cezanne sees a tree. He sees it in a way no else has ever seen it . . . it is vision that is now not tree but Tree . . . Something is born [conceived?], comes into being, something that did not exist before — which is as

good a definition of creativity as you can get” (Rollo May, psychologist, *The Courage to Create*).

“All this fires my soul, and provided I am not disturbed, my subject enlarges itself, becomes methodised and defined, and the whole, though it be long, stand almost complete and finished in my mind, so I can survey it, like a fine picture or a beautiful statue at a glance. . . . For this reason, the committing to paper is done quickly enough, for everything is, as I said, already finished; and it rarely differs on paper from what it was in my imagination” (Mozart).

“I am certain that many, many people have waked up in the middle of the night with a flash of inspiration about some novel they would like to write, or a play or a poem or whatever and that most inspiration never come to anything. Inspirations are a dime a dozen. The difference between inspiration and the final product, for example, Tolstoy’s ‘War and Peace’, is an awful lot of hard work, an awful lot of discipline, and awful lot of training, an awful lot of finger exercises and practices and rehearsals and throwing away of first drafts and so on” (Abraham Maslow).

“There has to be one delicious moment when you have thought of something . . . That chance remark was enough for my imagination. I was able to make up an excellent story” (Agatha Christie, in her autobiography).

“One must set oneself to watch for and cultivate certain fragile moods of the heart. Such moods come to most people’s lives at different times, often casually and unexpected . . . and being uncultivated are thrust aside and much of their value lost . . . it is necessary that one should keep all one’s mind upon it and recognize it as an important messenger and listen to its message; one should ponder long and deeply . . . They are generally of momentary duration and should be recognized at their real worth and their inner essence consciously extracted, for truly these moments can be turned to high account” (Paul Brunton — *The Quest for the Overself*).

“Never put off. The instant lightning strikes, jump out of your chair and run and do the poem or the story or the novel . . . I swim. Swimming is wonderful, the total thing of the whole body. And lying in the sun and reading poetry. Then I run back and forth all day from the pool to the typewriter.” (Ray Bradbury to Marilee Zdenek — *The Right Brain Experience*).

Summary

- 1) Creative inspiration is as real as physical conception, and it is the beginning point of all works of genius. The process may however be poorly carried through lack of attention or even allowed to abort.
- 2) Although you cannot make inspiration occur, you can, as with sex, create the conditions and take the actions necessary to bring it about. It is simply a matter of spending relaxed and patient time daydreaming and playing with what you love in whatever way you feel appropriate.
- 3) Inspiration comes as an exciting idea or possibility tumbles into the mind, with a special magical feel, accompanied by a swirl of relevant emotion, phrasing, and images. It is the parallel of a sexual orgasm and the accompanying conception. The intensity of the feeling, as with sex, varies from person to person.
- 4) Given regular relaxed attention, and assuming the relevant nutrients of knowledge are available, that new creative conception will slowly grow, bit by bit into a complete work, such as a painting, a song, a novel. For this to happen, however, it is important to keep reviewing the work and paying attention to it, just as blood is continually supplied to an embryo to nourish it and keep it warm.
- 5) Inspiration will not occur if you are creatively frigid, unemotional, coldly logical, intent on trying to force things to happen, wanting to show off your intellect, mentally striving, and so on. Follow the sexual model Solomon provides and be interested, playful, and let the tears of joy well up and flow. Interest leads to arousal of the creative mind. It also lubricates the entry of the ideas into your mind, again as with the sexual parallel process.
- 6) Remember that inspirations are perishable, and should be taken note of and preserved. Value them and do not let them abort through neglect.

6 GET A GREEN BED

Behold, you are beautiful, my love

Behold, you are beautiful

Your eyes are doves

Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly lovely

Our bed is green

The beams of our house are cedar, our rafters are pine

Song of Solomon

In the first line of this poem, Solomon would seem to be describing the elation that accompanies the climax of the sexual union that was the subject of the previous section, as they both cry out with joy, a moment when each sees the other's beauty enhanced beyond normal. In the parallel moment of creative inspiration, the mind likewise perceives a beauty that is not the norm, an ephemeral glory that soon fades away -- leaving behind an embryonic new creation.

The Importance of Beautiful Surroundings

Having introduced the principle of mental conception that we call inspiration, the lover now tells the girl that the most ideal environment — or “bed” — for this creative love making is one of natural beauty, the green grass, shrubs and trees. It is not surprising then that many great creators such as Beethoven, Keats, Van Gogh, Wordsworth, and physicists such as Helmholtz discovered inspiration when walking the fields, woods and mountains. Sir Isaac Newton evidently spent some time sitting out in the garden under the apple tree.

The cedar and pine mentioned in these verses were extensively used for the beams, planks and paneling that completely lined Solomon's Temple, so that a further message here may be that by our creative action we actually worship God, by fulfilling the creative injunction given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Create Your Own Garden of Eden

The Garden of Eden was probably the perfect creative environment, and main message of this brief section of the “Song” seems to be that our creativity can be greatly enhanced by surrounding ourselves with beautiful things, be they natural or man-made, and I was interested to hear recently that a writer friend of mine finds that sitting working in historical church buildings enhances his creativity.

Focus on Beauty

If we spend time gazing on the beauty of natural things, soaking in their glory, seeing every tiny detail of shape and shade of color, then we will inevitably find ourselves becoming more sensitive, more discerning, more creative — and more open to inspiration. In “Creativity in Business”, Michelle Ray and Rochelle Myers devote a whole chapter to the need to learn to pay complete attention to things. They describe, for example, how Minor White, who taught photography at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, would assign students to spend half an hour simply gazing at one photograph. For the first ten to fifteen minutes, they were instructed to try to hold their gaze steady without moving the eyes at all, then turn away and try to visualize every detail they had seen in the mind's eye.

This simple exercise, he found, could lead to magical insights, moments of Truth, ecstasy, and visionary new understanding — if only people would take the time to do it. The great poet and artist William Blake also made a habit of simply gazing at beautiful objects — the grain and knots in a piece of timber, a stone, a plant, a flower. Beethoven let beauty of a trees ravish his being and lift him to his creative heaven. Solomon was enraptured by plants and animals, even the tiny ant.

A Key to Genius?

Solomon's father David, composer of many psalms, was also very sensitive to the beauty of creation and let it impart insights and inspirations to his mind, saying in Psalm 19, for example: "The heavens declare the glory of God . . . Day after day they pour forth speech . . . Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the end of the world." It is no surprise then that in "As You Like It", Shakespeare has a character making a comment that may well be an insight to his own particular genius, saying: "I find tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything." You can do the same.

Voice of Experience

"Beethoven wrote of the ecstasy of the woods: 'Every tree said to me Holy! Holy! . . . I feel uplifted when in happy moments I find myself raised to my artistic atmosphere . . . You yourself know that man's spirit, the active creative spirit, must not be tied down to the wretched necessities of life.' " (George Marek — Beethoven, Biography of a Genius)

"Happy ideas come unexpectedly without effort . . . they come particularly well during the slow ascent of wooded hills on a sunny day." (Hermann von Helmholtz, physicist, quoted by P.E. Vernon, Creativity)

"When I look at a fig tree, every leaf has a different design. They all have their own manner of moving in space; yet in their own separate ways, they all cry 'Fig tree'." (Henri Matisse, painter, quoted by Francoise Gilot, Life with Picasso)

"Tennyson, on his knees, peering into the depths of a bubbling spring in order that he may know its every aspect, is a scientific observer; he becomes an experimentalist when he essays to embody his vision in words — not succeeding at first, perhaps; the inspiration comes with after effort" (T. Sharper Knowlson — Originality).

"Both [art and science] seek beauty in the forms they create as analogues for their experience of the world. Fundamental physicists have declared: 'Let us worry about beauty first, and truth will take care of itself' " (Henning — Creativity in Art and Science).

"They cannot understand that the figure of a laborer — some furrows in a ploughed field, a bit of sand, sea and sky — are serious objects, so difficult but at the same time so beautiful that it is indeed worth while to devote one's life to the task of expressing the poetry hidden in them" (Vincent van Gogh, artist).

"Those nights out of doors filled me with a kind of ecstasy that made me able to write poems . . . as if my body were a musical instrument . . . I crouched over my pad and held my pencil . . . ready to serve the marvelous buzzing happiness at the moment when . . . it should condense and form precious words that would drop on to my paper from the end of my pencil" (Rosamund Harding — Anatomy of Inspiration).

"Fixation of sight leads to fixation of mind. It cultivates and achieves fixed attention, because the latter faculty follows the route dictated by the outside object. When a man's conscious being is thus wholly placed on one point, his inner resources hitherto merely latent — begin to show themselves" (Paul Brunton — The Quest for the Overself).

"Shelves of books on music and theology line one wall of the sitting room; there is a piano and an Indian tamboura on a stand, but what is most noticeable is the number of religious artifacts and images, the exquisite icons standing on shelves or resting on music stands. There is a view through a window to a screen of trees and fields beyond. They are surroundings that encourage contemplation . . . As Orthodox tradition defines religious icons as 'windows into heaven', so Tavener has described his music as 'icons with notes rather than color' " (Telegraph Magazine article on the work of composer John Tavener).

"I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in Nature around me that are in unison or harmony with the cogitation of my fancy and working of my bosom; humming every now and then the air with the verses I have framed . . . I retire to the solitary fireside of my study and there commit my effusions to paper . . . Seriously, this, at home, is invariably my way" (Robert Burns).

Summary

- 1) Just as a bedroom or “boudoire” should be an appropriate environment for love making, so the mind is relaxed and made receptive and creative inspiration favored by the right surroundings.
- 2) Many experienced creative people have favorite places to quietly relax and get in touch with their creativity. Children’s write Roahl Dahl, for example, had a shed in the garden where he would go and sit in an armchair, with a board on his knees and a writing pad to record his ideas.
- 3) Gazing at beautiful things, especially natural ones such as flowers, wood grain, animals, for example, is a good way to stem the flow of logical thought and communicate with your creative subconscious mind.

7 BECOME A NOTHING

I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

As a lily among thorns, so is my love among maidens.

As an apple tree among the trees of the wood,

so is my beloved among young men.

With great delight I sat in his shadow,

and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

Song of Solomon

The attainment of creative excellence and the receiving of inspiration has more to do with attitude than intellectual ability.

Our Submissive Female Role

For those who wish to attain creative excellence it is vitally important to understand and accept the submissive, female role already described in working with the creative unconscious. By comparing herself to the rose of Sharon, which was apparently a common wild flower, the girl here demonstrates the humble attitude that is characteristic of genius. She is not thick skinned, tough, unyielding and uncooperative, wanting to do things her own way, like those typified by the prickly thorns, whom creativity cannot approach.

Inspiration and attaining excellence is not a matter of being clever, self-assertive and trying to show off superior intelligence and knowledge, but of cooperating, in a spirit of humility, with your creative subconscious, as typified by the king. It is important, then, to carefully cultivate this attitude, that of a submissive, responsive woman, eager to cooperate with her husband in the implementation of his plans and share in the joy of his success.

Did I Do That?

This is a crucial point, and this is why people who have discovered their creativity often comment, after completing a project, that they feel as if it was not them who did it, but as if it were done for or through them, and that they really had very little control over the outcome — as with the development of a baby in the womb. In fact, in “Doctor Zhivago”, Boris Pasternak describes the passive role of the conscious mind as it works in cooperation with the subconscious creative mind, suggesting that the creative person, in the gestation phase, acts like a mother who “collaborates with the development at the same time involuntarily, and which brings about an event celebrating birth and incarnation . . .”. It is interesting that Pasternak described the mind as playing both a maternal and a paternal role in the creative process.

As just noted, having been creative once, many people feel that they could never do it again, — again perhaps as with a woman who has just given birth — but of course they do, because, sooner or later, inspiration inevitably strikes again if they continue to provide the right conditions. Author John Fowles apparently even experiences a kind of post-natal depression after completing a novel.

Don't Be Frigid

Michael Goulder suggests that the lily referred to in the “Song” was “singled out not only for its beauty and its scent, but also because of its deep calyx” — its cuplike cavity — calling it “a simile which can be taken quite innocently, but which is sufficiently suggestive in phrasing to ensure that a sexual intention is present”, perhaps typifying the girl’s willingness and total lack of what be described as creative frigidity. The “Song”,

he says, is full of recurrent double entendres. The whole purpose of a flower is to be attractive and sweet smelling and so facilitate the creative act of sexual reproduction. It is also interesting that flowers contain both male and female structures.

The Humility of Genius

In his “Fundamental Design Method” training programs, which have been used in the British nuclear power and aircraft industries, consultant Edward Matchett stresses the importance of attitude in receiving insights from the creative mind, saying: “To do this work successfully it has to be done in a spirit of true humility. One may discover that one can access very important knowledge and understanding quite easily, but if this should ever cause one to feel clever then the power to do so is quickly lost — at least temporarily until one’s inner state changes . . . In the moment that the work turns into an exercise in self aggrandizement the messages [i.e. insights] stop coming.”

Be Like Alice in Wonderland

As already stressed, our role in that creative relationship is a female one, and to let our creative “Adam” have his way with us, to stop trying to make things happen our way, to stop mentally striving, and to get the self out of the way. We must become a “Nothing”, which is the working method of genius, as Matchett describes in his book “Journeys of Nothing in the Land of Everything” — and which he suggests was the creative message of “Alice in Wonderland”. Many people, Matchett claims, are too intellectually proud to accept this role. This is why it is essential to escape the rigid, logical intellectualizing that author John Fowles describes in his novel “Mantissa” as a mental chastity belt.

Creativity, it is worth repeating, is not about logical thinking and conscious intellectual striving, and its working methods are characterized instead by playfulness, excitement, and joy. Without interest and arousal, there can be no inspiration — nothing will happen, for nothing can happen — as with the sexual equivalent that I leave the reader to identify. As with the sexual parallel, mental relaxation is important, as implied by the mention of oils as used today in aroma therapy, and by the sensuous caresses that are more intoxicating than wine.

Voice of Experience

“Well, why was it so dull then? so utterly disgustingly bad? . . . Certainly one reason was that I had not that friendly, generous humbleness to want to interest, entertain or make clear to others what I thought. It just became a literary stunt — though this kind of literature is often admired by people of the very highest brow” (Brenda Ueland — *If You Want to Write*).

“You have to be just as certain of your own nothingness as you are convinced of the wisdom, intelligence, love, power and consciousness of the eternal; quite sure that the emptiness of the former can and will be filled out of the fullness of the latter . . . To become truly receptive, you must cultivate an inner state similar to a cup that is completely empty; then have the certainty that cup will continually be filled with whatever is needed . . . Gradually it becomes a way of life that can always be relied on, rather like knowing that the sun will rise every morning . . . the unending reward for a persistent readiness and openness . . . If your personal pride requires you to retain any sense of personal capability and self-sufficiency, you are not yet empty enough to receive anything of real consequence” (*The Core of True Genius*).

“He who wishes to express himself is on the wrong track: his aim should be to express beyond himself” (Sir Francis Galton).

Summary

- 1) You must willingly accept the female role in the creative process. It is not a matter of “being creative” or being talented or clever and hoping to impress people; it is a matter of humbly asking your creative mind to help you achieve whatever it is you want to do.
- 2) When beginning a project, instead of rushing in to start it, it is important to take time to meditate and ask your subconscious mind to guide you. It is important also to take frequent creative breaks, to pause and close your eyes, and ask your creative mind to guide you. Try always to be a helper, an Eve to your creative Adam. Let him be in charge.

8 DON'T GET MECHANICAL

*He brought me to the banqueting house
and his banner over me was love
Sustain me with raisins, refresh me with apples
for I am weak from passion
O that his left hand were under my head
and that his right hand embraced me!*

*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem
by the gazelles or the hinds of the field
Do not arouse or excite love until it pleases
to awake of its own accord*

Song of Solomon

The key message here — which it is twice repeated later because of its importance — is that the creative process cannot be mechanically forced and rushed, and has to be aroused naturally. The word rendered “awaken” can also mean to lift up or raise up, which may have anatomical implications, referring to the response of the subconscious mind.

Relaxed, Patient Play

The creative subconscious mind cannot be mechanically forced to respond, or be turned on like a tap. As with the physical, sexual parallel there must be relaxation and foreplay, or the process will not work, being inhibited by the tension involved. We should not expect, therefore, to launch right into our creative work in the way we could with some physical task, but must instead find ways to relax, play, and be patient and let the process of creative arousal proceed naturally, without working, intellectualizing and straining at it. As we saw earlier, this requires time and patience. As with sex, which is really a form of play for grown ups — although we must not be frigid and unresponsive on the one hand, neither must we be mechanically and inappropriately overactive and impatient on the other.

In this regard, recall the words of Rollo May, describing how the artist sat before this easel and played with the paints. He did not plough on and produce a painting by virtue of his own mechanical striving, but waited patiently for inspiration and insights to come first.

Alluding to this same principle, Jack Addington advises adopting a lazy “lying-in-the-sun attitude”, simply playing with ideas that come, loving them instead of condemning them as foolish and unworkable, and so rejecting them prematurely. This, he says, is how inventors, authors, artists, and composers work and receive their ideas — when they have stopped striving and are often half asleep or daydreaming.

Always Consult the Subconscious

His advice for preparing a speech, for example, is to work out a brief outline and go over it a few times, then relax but be ever alert over the next few days for the insights that will surely arrive, often when least expected, that will enable you to expand the outline, and develop the “skeleton” into a fully detailed speech.

The key is to pass the problem over to the creative subconscious, by posing specific questions, then listen

very carefully for the necessary insights to arrive. He adds that he personally plans his best talks while watching golf or a football on television. As he watches, he sits relaxed with a yellow lined notepad on his knee, enjoying the program, but staying alert and taking careful note of each and every idea that tumbles into his mind as he does so.

Many business people, especially, fail to access their creativity because they are constantly driven and so never make time to properly relax their minds. Consequently, they find that their creativity only starts to work when they slow down to perform “mindless” tasks such as shaving, washing the dishes and walking.

Voice of Experience

“When I am entirely alone and of good cheer — say traveling in a carriage or walking after a good meal or during the night when I cannot sleep; it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly . . . how they come I do not know and I cannot force them . . . Those ideas that please me I retain in my memory and am accustomed to hum them to myself. If I continue in this way, it soon occurs to me how I may turn this or that morsel to account, so as to make a good dish of it, that is to say, agreeably to the rules of counterpoint, to the peculiarities of various instruments . . . All this fires my soul and provided I am not disturbed, my subject enlarges itself, becoming methodised and defined . . . “ (Mozart, letter to a friend).

“The religious tradition says that only the spontaneous is true . . . If I find I’m trying to write and it’s not spontaneous, it doesn’t come. Once I start thinking about it or finding it difficult to do, then I scrap it. And that’s completely the opposite of the Western concept of composition, which is this idea of someone slaving over something to get it right” (Composer John Tavener, quoted in the Telegraph Magazine).

“Dodson (Lewis Carroll) had hoped to present Alice with her story at Christmas, but it was progressing very slowly. Although the dialogue ‘came of itself’ he refused to force the story along. He could not, as he put it ‘set invention going like a clock’, and inspiration [or insights] had a way of coming at the most inconvenient times” (Michael Bakewell — Biography of Lewis Carroll).

“I sometimes begin drawing with no conceived problem to solve, with only the desire to use a pencil on paper, and make lines, tone and shapes with no conscious aim; but as my mind takes in what is produced a point arrives where some idea becomes conscious and crystallizes, and then a control and ordering takes place” (Henry Moore, sculptor).

“He (Leonardo da Vinci) will never work till the happy moment comes — that moment of bien-etre which to imaginative men is the moment of inventiveness. On this he waits with perfect patience” (Pater — the Renaissance).

Summary

- 1) You cannot mechanically force and rush your creative subconscious into a state of arousal any more than with the sexual parallel.
- 2) It is vitally important to create the right conditions, to relax and play with your creative love and just let the creative process follow its natural course, as it will, as with the sexual parallel.

9 LEARN TO BLEAT

Listen! The voice of my beloved!

Look! He comes, leaping upon the mountains

bounding over the hills.

My beloved is like a gazelle, or a young stag

Look! There he stands behind our wall

gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice

Song of Solomon

was an avid student of nature and his reference to gazelles and hinds — male and female deer — here and at several other places in the Song, is evidently a deliberate and careful choice, based on his extensive knowledge of their habits. Reference books tell us that the roe deer common in Palestine do not form herds but live in very small groups, one buck with two or three does. The gestation period for their offspring is nine months, the same as for humans, and the doe normally has twins — one male and one female.

Demonstrate Your Availability

Very significant here, is the fact that a buck will serve any female that attracts him and demonstrates her interest by her bleating! The mating habits of the roe deer, then, serve to illustrate a key principle of creativity, namely that we too must “bleat” to our creative mate and make our willingness and earnest desire for assistance known to the creative subconscious.

Learn to Bleat!

Ways of bleating might include reading poetry, doodling, sketching, playing or listening to music, meditating and generally making ourselves available for the inspirational process to occur. In other words, don't just “wait” for inspiration — do something to demonstrate your interest.

If you are writing a song or composing music, you can bleat by humming and muttering nonsense syllables and words that match the emotion in your heart. If you are an artist or engineer, you can do it by sketching, making models and simply handling materials.

Play Games

Sex is a game for grown ups, and there is a creative parallel. A successful American writer described how he began each working day by playing word association games, which led him from idea to idea, in a chain reaction, until sooner or later inspiration would strike, sometimes moving him to tears, and then he would begin to write. The brilliant songwriter Bob Merrill explained in a radio interview that he too sought inspiration by playing with words and associating pairs of random objects around him until, sooner or later, something magical occurred — as happened one day when he finally associated “dog” with “window”, leading to the inspiring phrase “How much is that doggy in the window . . . the one with the waggly tail?”

Your Creative Subconscious Will Respond

At the sound of our “bleating”, our creative love comes bounding across the hills to mate with us, to bring about a creative conceptions that can lead to the production of a work as elegant and beautiful as he. Thus, Solomon assures us that our creativity is always available, perhaps gazing in at the windows of our life, eager to respond. However, our creative lover may be excluded by the mental building we have constructed for ourselves — busy daily routines, worthless pursuits, false values, wrong beliefs, illusions and fears. Highly creative people set aside time every day to relax and spend time playing with their love, like a wife with her husband. We too must be interested, available and responsive.

You Were Born to Be Inspired

A key message of this section seems to be that inspiration is readily available. It can happen to you. It will happen to you — if you relax and play and create the right conditions by following the principles Solomon is describing. God wants you to be inspired and to undertake exciting new projects. You were born to be inspired. Your creative mind, therefore, is eager to work with you, but you must work in harmony with the principles of the “Song”..

Become Aware of Inspiration

Notice the admonition to be attentive: “Listen! . . . Look! . . . Look!” A second major lesson of the section may be that we need to become aware of the process of inspiration and the arrival of insights, to be alert and attentive, and notice when it occurs, and then take appropriate action.

The Creative Mind is Very Shy

Although the lover is eager to respond and comes bounding across the hills like a deer, when he arrives he does not knock on the door and seek entrance, but simply gazes shyly through the windows. Such behavior would be rather odd if the verses were actually describing a human lover — he acts instead like a gazelle, a feature of the creative mind is not typified by the otherwise highly appropriate boy-meets-girl metaphor.

The significance is that although the creative subconscious is eager and able to assist us, it does not force ideas and inspirations into the conscious mind, but acts instead like a virile but wary gazelle, like a timid young deer, and waits patiently for admittance.

Voice of Experience

“Creative Action is empowered by Creative Energy which contains the highest intelligence known to man. This energy . . . comes in response to his acknowledged need for assistance . . . and his commitment to produce work of real worth . . . it is enough that it comes and always comes when the person attains and maintains a particular receptive state . . . [the state] is not difficult to attain. It is primarily a relationship of becoming more open, sensitive, trusting and caring of attempting more and learning to expect that what is needed will arrive mysteriously.” (Edward Matchett, Creative Action).

“If people will sit down at their typewriters every morning and begin to word associate every single morning, it will bring all this stuff up” (Ray Bradbury, quoted in The Right Brain Experience).

Summary

- 1) Although the creative mind acts timidly, like a gazelle, never barging in and dictating insights to you, that does not mean should be passive wait, and do nothing.
- 2) Like the male gazelle, the creative mind will eagerly respond to your love call, your “bleating”, and come, figuratively, bounding across the hills to be with you.
- 3) It is important therefore to find ways to “bleat”, things to do and ways of playing with your love that are appropriate, be it doodling, sketching, humming, strumming an instrument, visualizing, and so on. Matchett’s phrase “purposeful play” is a useful one to keep in mind.

10 PILLOW TALK

My beloved speaks and says to me

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away

for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come

and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land

The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom

they give forth fragrance

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff

Let me see your face, let me hear your voice

for your voice is sweet, and your face is comely

Song of Solomon

Creative Intuition

We now come to the second key function of the creative mind — Intuition, which the Oxford Dictionary defines as “immediate apprehension by the mind, without reasoning”, in other words the provision of valuable insights by the creative mind.

As we have seen, we must work with the creative subconscious as wife with husband, which is why, strange as it may seem at first, we can actually communicate with it as with another person, receiving in response a stream of insights of understanding, or intuitions, that tumble into our consciousness — a kind of “pillow talk”. Many successful people somehow learn to actively seek of this source of help in a deliberate fashion, as did the hotelier Conrad Hilton and the writer Robert Louis Stevenson.

Your Subconscious Mind Can Speak to You

Notice the key statement in the first line — “My beloved speaks to me”. Creativity involves a two-way communication with your creative mind, as if with a person. Strange as it may seem at first, your creative mind can speak, or communicate with you, if you prefer, by dropping insights into your consciousness. Solomon is not talking about actually hearing strange voices of some kind, but simply being more aware, more sensitive, and noticing the insights that suddenly pop fully formed into the mind. This is the basis of Intuition, which some people may make better use of simply because they spend more time paying attention to it, as did Sir Isaac Newton and others as we shall later.

You Can Speak to Your Subconscious

Notice the request in the last line: “Let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet”. Here is the second and complementary key statement of this section. The lover speaks to us and we should respond, but how do we do this? The obvious way is by actually talking and asking questions, strange again as that may seem at first — addressing them to our subconscious mind — then patiently waiting, with complete inner silence, for the reply.

This is simply an extension of the “bleating” principle described in the previous section. Again, I would suggest that many people do ask questions of themselves in this manner, but quite informally. Highly creative individuals have learned to formalize the process — deliberately posing key questions, then

listening patiently with complete inner stillness, perhaps for hours, for the answers to pop fully formed into their consciousness.

Follow Rudyard Kipling's Example — Ask Questions

This principle was I suspect well understood by Rudyard Kipling who famously said that he wrote his stories with the assistance of his little helpers — Who? What? Why? When? Where? and How? The method he used must have been to pose the questions, then stop and listen with complete inner stillness for the answers to arrive — in the patient, meditative manner many successful people have somehow discovered to be effective — rather than struggling and striving to answer them himself.

Always Ask — What Else Do I Need to See or Understand?

Referring to the creative mind as “the unknown”, Edward Matchett urges designers to pose it questions such as: “What else do I need to see and understand?”, adding that: “This question is often put to the unknown whenever . . . anything that one needs to understand seems to have reached completion. The valid answer may come from anywhere, yet when it does come it will have a ring of authority and rightness.” In my own experience, the answer may not even come that day, but suddenly pop into the mind some time later.

The Secret of Synectics

Deliberately posing specific questions to the creative mind is also the key element of NASA consultant William Gordon’s “Synectics” problem solving system, which is described in more detail later. Gordon’s essential technique for a solving a problem is to present it in a generalized and visualized form to the imagination and then “ask” the creative mind to find a parallel or analogous situation in the natural or man-made world where the principle required to solve that problem is already being used. The familiar pop-top drinks can, for example, was invented by this technique, finding the principle required by copying the way bananas are opened.

Solving Problems— WHAT? and HOW?

Posing and answering carefully structured questions are key factors in successful problem solving in general. A problem is best regarded as frustrated purpose, and the first and very crucial step — Problem Identification — is to ask the creative mind specifically what it is that we should be trying to achieve, to help us identify the wisest, most potentially fruitful purpose, goal or objective that we should be pursuing — the WHAT?

Having carefully identified the WHAT, the second step — Idea Generation — is to ask another question: HOW? — how can we make the things happen that we want to happen, the things that need to happen in order for us to achieve our specific purpose. The best way to find those answers has been described above. More formal approaches to problem solving — involving visualization, analysis of structure, and the use of metaphors — will be dealt with later.

Why? Why? Why?

Sometimes a problem arises in business because our existing system malfunctions and we want to repair it in order to restore the status quo. Finding the solution involves giving a very brief description of what is going wrong, for example that “sales are declining”, then repeatedly posing the simple question: “Why? — why is this happening?” which enables us, assuming we have enough knowledge of the situation, to trace down through the complex and branching root system of cause and effect until we locate the real source of the trouble.

In a business situation, for example, there may be half a dozen readily identifiable reasons why sales are tapering off. Once identified, those immediately obvious reasons should be interrogated to find the causes that lie below them. An analysis like this may go several layers deep, finally revealing one or more main root causes that need dealing with. Personal problems, such as health or marriage difficulties, can also be analyzed in the same manner. In simple situations, the answers to our questions may come quickly and easily to mind, but sometimes it will be necessary to spend some serious, patient time quietly meditating, posing the questions then listening with inner silence for the required insights of understanding to arrive.

This process, done thoroughly, could take several hours on more than one occasion. Perhaps it is because answers sometimes do come quickly and easily that we tend to give up prematurely in more complicated situations when they do not and so fail to discover the power of patient meditation.

Let the Subconscious Do the Answering

Solomon is telling us, then, that in addition to conceiving projects, we can also converse with our creative self, just as the girl does with the lover in the Song, or as a wife with her husband, asking for insights, understanding, and ideas. But when you do ask a question of your creative mind in this way, do not immediately start suggesting answers yourself, saying such things as: “Now let me see . . . I know, why don’t I try . . . What if I . . . I think we should just . . . “ and so on. Do not do that. Do not strive and struggle — just stop, relax and be quiet and let the natural process proceed, and sooner or later the insights you need will tumble fully formed into your consciousness.

Truth is the Offspring of Silence and Unbroken Meditation

Isaac Newton, a giant among geniuses who well understand these matters, would sit passively for several solid hours at a stretch, day after day, just letting understanding of a situation develop incrementally in his imagination, slowly budding, branching and flowering like a plant. He said that this practice of holding a subject “ever before me” was the secret of his great genius, and that Truth was “the offspring of silence and unbroken meditation”. Sometimes when getting up in the morning, he would sit on the edge of the bed, following a train of thought, and remain there in that same position, totally absorbed, until someone broke into his reverie and called him for lunch.

How Genius Thinks

The simple, passive, joyful, non-intellectual way in which genius thinks — the way we can all learn to think — was described by British student of genius Rosamund Harding in her book “Anatomy of Inspiration” as “dreaming over the subject”. In the following brilliant extract, which bears reading and re-reading several times, then putting into practice, notice her reference to matters such as the mood associated with the subject, and the need to passively watch, of not forcing the pace or injecting one’s own thoughts, but letting understanding bud and branch like a vine.

She says: “In order to inhibit irrelevant ideas, the dreaming must be combined with a certain intensity of feeling . . . so that when the thinker gets into the mood associated with his subject, all relevant ideas become available . . . Dreaming over a subject is simply the faculty of allowing the will to focus the mind passively on the subject so that it follows the train of thought . . . allowing them to form and branch naturally until some useful or interesting results occur.

The thinker must learn not to obtrude his own personal wishes but to follow where truth leads him . . . watches but does not disturb the natural development of the ideas; merging himself into the great sea of life beyond himself in order that he may become at one with it.” This is how the great creators were — and are — able to receive a stream of valuable insights, understandings and inspirations from the creative mind. Solomon is telling us that anybody can do it, if they really want to.

How to Make New Discoveries

In “100% Mind Power”, Christian minister Jack Addington says that by virtue of intuition, we can know what Plato knew, and we can all become discoverers in our chosen field — the possibilities are there in the mindscape of the imagination for all to find, like diamonds and gold nuggets in the ground. Intuition is not exclusively reserved for psychics and seers, and Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung considered it to be a natural function of the normal human mind. The vital key, says Addington, is to learn to really listen to your heart with complete inner stillness and silence — as Isaac Newton did — then the ideas and inspirations you seek will become available.

Voice of Experience

“I keep listening in a sort of inner silence until something clicks and I feel a right answer.” (Conrad Hilton, hotelier — Be My Guest).

“To believe in your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, that is genius . . . A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the luster of the firmament of bards and sages . . . Else tomorrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another” (Ralph Waldo Emerson).

“The weird thing about poetry is if you ask for it, it comes: it’s a bit magical like that.” (Murray Young, poet, newspaper interview)

“All I know is that you listen . . . and follow the truth of what’s going on . . . focusing without distraction . . . you become immersed in that moment, you become that moment” (Ray & Myers — Creativity in Business).

“I keep the subject constantly before me, and wait till the first dawning opens slowly by little and little into the clear light . . . Truth is the offspring of silence and unbroken meditation” (Sir Isaac Newton).

“He (Elmer Gates, creative consultant to American corporations) would go into his room, seat himself at the table, shut off the lights . . . remaining in that position until ideas began to flash into his mind . . . He concentrates on the known factors . . . He hold this picture in his mind until it has been taken over by the subconscious mind, then relaxes by clearing his mind of all thoughts, and wait for his answer to flash into his mind” (Napoleon Hill — Think and Grow Rich).

“Stay quietly centered, and be patient. The overall picture will form from an amalgam of perhaps hundreds of individual insights; not one of which must be ignored . . . Generally I find that people have been educated to mistrust such phenomena and that they are partially conscious of inhibiting them. Insights which do arrive as fresh intuition or inspiration are not valued . . . not permitted to enter the arena of professional work” (Matchett — The Road to True Professionalism).

“To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, that is genius . . . A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the luster of the firmament of bards and sages . . . Else tomorrow a stranger will say with mastery good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another” (Ralph Waldo Emerson).

“In the depth of the country, miles from what we call civilization, we have listened to a man, dressed in shabby clothes . . . ‘How can we know?’ he was asked. ‘Just ask in the Silence,’ he replied, ‘and it will be given you in the watches of the night’ “ (T. Sharper Knowlson — Originality).

Summary

- 1) You can learn to communicate with your creative mind, as with a person.
- 2) In seeking help, ask specific questions as did Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, and others — who, what, why, when, how?
- 3) It is important to attain relaxed inner stillness then patiently “listen” for insights, intuitions, and feelings that provide the answers you seek. These will tumble into your consciousness as ready formed chunks of information. If, like Newton, you are seeking to develop understanding, these insights will link together to form a gestalt.
- 4) If you are serious in your creative effort, be prepared to invest serious time in meditation and waiting for answers to your questions. Do not expect immediate responses. An answer may arrive suddenly a few days later when you are doing something else. It is important not strive and try to answer the questions yourself — try instead to attain the relaxed, passive, dreamy state of mind in which you are closest to you creative love.
- 5) If you get stuck working on a project or writing a song or poem, for example, stop frequently and ask you subconscious to help you complete it. Stop “trying” and keep pulling yourself back to a state of relaxation. Do rehearse what you have completed and savor the emotion of it.

WORKSHOP

- 1) **INSPIRATION:** Remember that inspiration is as real as conception. Remember the sexual model and take time just to relax with your love. You cannot “try” to be inspired. Find a private spot and try to surround yourself with some beautiful things which you spend time gazing at, including man-made objects of excellence, even photographs and pictures. See their detail, admire and soak in their beauty. Let it fill you being, just as Beethoven was ravished by the beauty of trees.

Remember that you cannot force inspiration. Find enjoyable, absorbing ways to play with your love, things to do that are appropriate to your subject. For a writer, it might be some kind of word association game. For a composer it might be idly strumming a guitar. For an engineer it might be sketching. In all this, try not be mechanical, but emotional. Try to feel the special joy and let it fill your heart.

Remember to spend some time speaking to your subconscious mind in a prayerful manner, asking for help and guidance. Pause and do so any time things seem to be bogging down. Stop striving and relax back into the right approach.

Do not expect results in one session. If you really love what you are about, you will make sure there are several sessions each week. When an inspiration does arrive, cherish it and let it grow. Keep reviewing it, gently, passively, patiently, with trying to force the development. This “gestation” period may be minutes, hours, days or weeks, or longer.

2) INTUITION: If you are seeking understanding of something, sit or lie down quietly with your eyes closed. Relax and ask your creative subconscious to help you. Describe what you want to achieve. Then gently rotate your attention of different aspects of the structure of the situation.. Ask questions and wait patiently with inner silence for the answers to come.

Do not strive and try to consciously answer the questions or reason things out for yourself. Just relax and listen. The answers will not come in the form “voices” but as little insights and feelings that tumble into your consciousness. As you continue, session by session, day by day, the insights will build up into a framework of understanding.

Be prepared to spend serious stretches of time, 20 minutes or half an hour, rather than five minutes. Isaac Newton, genius among geniuses, meditated in this fashion for hours. sometimes sitting up all night, day after day, week after week.

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The six principles in this chapter seem to fall into thought pattern characteristic of Hebrew poetry by forming three parallel pairs.

In first and last position come the two key functions of the subconscious mind — how to use inspiration and intuition.

The remaining insights support or amplify these and are arranged in complementary parallel pairs. The second and fifth concern setting the right conditions for using the subconscious mind — first by being surrounded by and drinking in natural beauty, and second by “bleating” or showing your active interest or need by means of purposeful play.

The remaining pair concern right mental attitude — willingly accepting a submissive female role, and then being patient and relaxing and not trying to mechanically force or rush the process.

PART 3

BASIC BARRIERS TO EXCELLENCE

Having earlier identified basic attitudes and illusions that prevent many people even getting started on their creative quest, Solomon now describes four common barriers that can seriously constrain our achievement once we have set out in pursuit of the excellence that is readily attainable. The first two have to do with time, and the second two with attitudes of mind.

In a lifetime's experience training engineers, designers, and managers to express their personal creative potential, consultant Edward Matchett found that human weakness is a major barrier to excellence. "Real things", he says, "are produced only by real people . . . When a person is lacking in inner development, lacking in true stature, he or she cannot produce anything of excellence". All too often the "real" human being is constrained by faults, attitudes, and complexes. Matchett continues: "The almost universal enslavement is by the past, by conditioning and habit, thinking and illusions. It is always the persons own fault, never someone else's, that this enslavement is allowed to continue. And yet the enslavement is so strong, so pervasive and pernicious that it is not easy to be rid of it."

11 CATCH YOUR FOXES

Catch us the foxes, the little foxes

that spoil the vineyards,

for our vineyards are in blossom

Song of Solomon

Here is one of the most odd and seemingly irrelevant verses of the whole “Song”, yet it teaches a very important principle of excellence. As we have seen, creative work is typified by growing plants, such as vines, and it seems significant that reference books tell us that foxes in Palestine would play havoc with vines and could ruin a valuable harvest by devouring the bunches of immature young grapes. The little foxes evidently typify attitudes that stop creative work developing to full maturity and perfection.

Don't Settle for Mediocrity

The foxes that raid the vineyard are happy to devour the immature grapes. The sour taste of the unripe fruit is quite acceptable to their undiscerning palate, and they do not realize what marvelous potential they are destroying. They typify, among other things, the person who is satisfied with mediocrity rather than excellence, who does not push for perfection, and is perhaps simply too impatient to let the creative process run its course

Let the Creative Fruit Mature

In a garden, no matter how well the ground has been cultivated, fertilized and watered, and how thoroughly it has been weeded, all will be ruined if you impatiently pick the tiny, immature produce. This one little principle, although obvious in the gardening setting, is extremely important and easy to ignore in creative work.

Just as an apple tree produces hard green sour apples which then gradually ripen, turn red and grow sweet, so our creative work must be given time to mature and be magically transformed in the same fashion. It is a very great temptation, when you have worked for a length of time on a project, such as writing a book, to cut short this ripening process and so deny yourself the excellence that is readily available.

Take Pains for Perfection

Genius has been defined as an infinite capacity for taking pains, and when Michel Angelo, for example, was criticized for agonizing over mere details of a sculpture, he replied that trifles make perfection, but that perfection is no trifle. In a radio interview, John Cleese described how he and Connie Boothe devoted six whole weeks to the writing of each single episode of the classic “Fawlty Towers” TV series. For the first three weeks they simply told and retold the story line to each other over and over again, endlessly — letting it slowly grow and develop in new and unexpected directions. Only then did they start to write it down and compose the dialogue. Best-selling author Jeffery Archer explained in a radio interview that he typically produces seventeen drafts of a novel before he feels it is polished enough for publication.

On the other hand, one of the world’s greatest popular songwriters admitted in a recent newspaper interview that although he has produced some brilliant and memorable songs, many of the thousands he has written are really not very good, simply because, as a wealthy and successful person, he has been too lazy to push for the perfection attained earlier.

Foxes in Hollywood?

These principles of apply in all creative areas, even acting. The immensely successful American actor Will Smith said in a newspaper interview that he seeks perfection in every detail of his work: “I make it a point that I just can't leave until the day's work is completed to the best of my ability. I can't sleep if something didn't go well. I'm hours and hours running it through my mind. I just can't let things go . . . I just can't stop with things I'm working on . . . I'll work within an inch of my life to be successful.”

Listen to Your Creative Mind

Never ignore the gentle nagging feeling that comes from your creative mind telling you that the work is not quite finished. Keep persisting until you have a masterpiece, and keep listening until no further insights arrive. Ask your creative mind what more there is to do, to add, to correct, to improve, to delete — then listen patiently for an answer.

Puttying

The world's greatest poems, songs and music were usually shaped and reworked again and again and again in the pursuit of perfection. Beethoven and even Mozart had to rework their compositions, sometimes in their heads and sometimes on paper. William Blake and John Keats did intensive editing — or “puttying” as it is sometimes called — on their poems, changing the wording and even splitting and/or re-sequencing verses. Great paintings were sometimes the results of hundreds of painting sessions, involving many rubbing outs and re-paintings — not in a haphazard way, but all the time guided by the genetic content of the initial inspiration in the painter's mind.

Catch Your Little Foxes

The destructive power of the little foxes, as with many wild creatures, is belied by their attractive appearance. Could it be that your own little foxes are pleasant diversions that somehow keep creeping in and causing you to neglect your creative projects, depriving them of the time and attention they require to reach proper maturity? Notice that the foxes are apparently small and easy to catch and should be destroyed rather than driven away and so allowed to return later.

I suspect that Solomon somewhat humorously made this reference to the little foxes a very little section in the “Song”, perhaps also to stress their importance, a touch of contrary thinking, making something important by its brevity rather than its excessive size.

Voice of Experience

“Seuss, inspired by the lament that children aren't motivated to read, pressured his editors for a list of 200 words simple enough for five- to six-year-olds . . . It took him a year and half to take 228 words and carve a story.” (Peter Bernstein, writing in Readers Digest)

“Michelangelo was one day explaining to a visitor at his studio what he had been doing to a statue since his previous visit. ‘I have retouched this part — polished that — softened this feature — brought out that muscle — given some expression to this lip, and more energy to that limb.’ ‘But these are trifles,’ remarked the visitor. ‘It may be so,’ replied the sculptor, ‘but recollect that trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle.’ “ (Samuel Smiles — Self Help)

“Matisse told us that sometimes in the evening he used to wipe out with cotton and turpentine whatever he had done during the day if it didn't please him completely. He would start the same painting again next morning from scratch, always with a spontaneous approach. He did that because, he said, ‘When I have a feeling for something, my feeling does not change. That feeling is at the center of my conception of the painting and I try all possible expressions of it until I find one that satisfies me completely.’ “ (Francoise Gilot — Life With Picasso)

“Despite his brilliance at first drafts, he forced himself to redraft and rewrite. His credo was: ‘Perfect sentences have often been written; perfect paragraphs at times — but never a perfect page . . . There is but one art, to omit! O if I knew how to omit, I would ask no other knowledge. A man who knows how to omit could make an Iliad of a daily paper.’ “ (Frank McLynn — Robert Louis Stevenson, a Biography)

“In 1978 he invented the cyclonic, bagless vacuum cleaner. The world did not exactly beat a path to his door. Neither did any existing cleaner manufacturer, although one in America tried to steal the idea . . . His career is like one of his painstaking Edisonian experiments — every permutation tested one by one, every fault noted and corrected, a near-perfect product gradually evolved from first principles . . . Does he have a secret formula for success? . . . ‘Remember that I am celebrating only my own stubbornness . . . I am claiming nothing but the virtues of a mule.’ “ (Hugh Pearman, Sunday Times review of the autobiography of James Dyson, inventor and manufacturer).

“Until the particular creation is completed, in all its intimate detail and complexity, some tension will continue to tug at the creator’s heart and mind. He must obey these signals, for they serve to give him the guidance he needs. The work may seem complete, yet there can remain the inner need for a further brush stroke, one further construction of a philosopher’s logic, or many more hits with the sculptor’s chisel. If these signals are real, it is crucial that they are heeded even the almost completed work now requires five more years of painstaking effort” (Edward Matchett — The Core of True Genius).

Summary

- 1) Creative work involves a growth process, like a baby in the womb, or grapes on a vine, and must be allowed to proceed to completion, otherwise the product will lack the beauty of perfection that is readily attainable — the difference between sour green apples and ripe rosy red ones.
- 2) Foxes are an appropriate metaphor for the bad habits, attitudes, and pressures that so easily creep in and cut short the patient ripening process that lends perfection of detail to our creative work, causing it to be prematurely curtailed. Reflect on your working methods and identify the little foxes that damage your work.
- 3) Ask your subconscious mind to tell you if your project is not yet properly completed, and if it is not the answer will come as a nagging feeling that there are details yet to be sorted out. Never ignore this feeling if you want to achieve excellence.

12 THE TIME BARRIER

My beloved is mine and I am his

He pastures his flock among the lilies.

All night, until the day breaks and the shadows flee

turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle

or a young stag upon the mountains of division

Song of Songs

The lover pasturing his flock among the lilies has an explicit sexual connotation, referring to love making, and the creative parallel process of seeking inspiration. In these verses the girl urges the virile lover to keep going until day breaks, in other words, all night long. The creative message seems to be an encouragement to be very persistent, to devote lengthy sessions to seeking inspiration.

Inspiration Can Be Elusive

Do not give up and think that the inspirational process cannot work for you just because it does not mechanically occur each and every time you seek it, despite the fact that you have relaxed, and played, and done your best to establish the right conditions. Inspiration can sometimes be elusive — as is often the case with physical conception — which is why it is crucial not only to patient, as we saw earlier, but to allocate serious stretches of time to each session. Failure to do so, means that inspirations will be few and far between.

Over and Over and Over and Over

The two songwriters of the immensely successful pop group Abba, for example — so successful they outsold the Beatles — explained in a television interview that when composing they would sometimes sit strumming their guitars for several hours at a stretch — over, and over, and over, and over — and then repeat the process day by day, often for several months before a fragment of a magical new tune would arrive. That snippet would then be developed by simply repeating it over and over again, hoping each time that it would somehow be carried a few notes further, as it inevitably was. Their patient but persistent working in harmony with the principles of the “Song” always paid off.

Master Your Disinclination — Inspiration Will Come

The importance of this persistent approach is well understood by creative individuals, and in this regard, it is worth examining again the words of Tchaikovsky that we read earlier: “We must be patient and believe that inspiration will come to those who can master their disinclination . . . I am glad I have not followed in the steps of some of my Russian colleagues, who have no self-confidence and are so impatient that at the least difficulty they are ready to throw up the sponge. This is why, in spite of great gifts, they accomplish so little, and that in an amateur way.”

Patiently, Persistently, Playfully

Like the lover in the “Song”, Tchaikovsky kept going, spending adequate time, patiently and persistently and playfully — not forcing himself to manufacture some kind of mechanical music, but simply playing until a magical inspiration arrived that could then be developed in the relaxed, passive manner already described.

Notice too how he speaks of other composers who had great technical mastery but who achieved very little simply because they overlooked the basic principle Solomon is stressing in this section and were not prepared to invest adequate time — a critical creative block. The reason their work was “amateurish” was because it was mechanically composed by mental striving rather than developed naturally from an initial inspiration.

Voice of Experience

“The habits of deep meditation . . . exercised their full influence over his mind . . . Absorbed in thought he would often sit down on his bedside after he rose, and remain there for hours without dressing himself, occupied with some interesting investigations which had fixed his attention . . . it was often necessary to remind him of his meals.” (David Brewster — *The Memoirs of Sir Isaac Newton*).

“The artist must cultivate this mood, wait for it, and seek to stimulate it, sometimes by gazing at their paints or even brushing random patterns on the canvas . . . It is a waiting for the birthing process to begin to move” (Rollo May — *The Courage to Create*).

“He (Leonardo da Vinci) will never work till the happy moment comes — that moment of bien-etre which to imaginative men is the moment of invention. On this he waits with perfect patience” (Pater — *The Renaissance*).

“Hotel employees have related that it was quite common to see Tesla standing transfixed in his room for hours at a time, so oblivious to his surroundings that they were able to work around his room with his being apparently unaware of their presence.” (John O’Neill — *Prodigal Genius*)

“The difficulties in the way were great, but all were surmounted by his genius . . . Brindley retained to the last a peculiar roughness of character and demeanor; but his innate power of thought more than compensated for his lack of training. It is told of him that when in any difficulty he used to retire to bed, and remain there [sometimes for several days] thinking out his problem until the solution became clear to him” (*Encyclopedia Britannica* — James Brindley, eighteenth century engineering genius and canal builder).

“The real luck . . . is discovering soon enough what seduces, and being able to commit to the relationship. Work is a demanding and frivolous lover, promising everything and not always delivering, turning frigid for no discernible reason . . . But better to have a passion than not.” (Charlotte Chandler, *The Ultimate Seduction*).

Summary

1) It is important to devote serious stretches of patient time to playing with your creative love, waiting for inspiration to occur.

2) Do not expect creative processes to run mechanically, like clockwork. It is no good trying for five minutes then giving up and saying “I tried it once. It just doesn’t work.” As with many worthwhile things in life, patience and persistence are essential, and these are character traits that separate the successful from the unsuccessful.

13 THE THOUGHT POLICE

*Upon my bed, night after night
I sought him whom my soul loves
I sought him, but found him not
I called him, but he gave no answer.*

*I will rise now and go about the city
in the streets and in the market places
I will seek him whom my soul loves
I sought him, but found him not.*

*The watchmen found me
as they went about in the city
Have you seen him whom my soul loves?*

*Scarcely had I passed them
when I found him whom my soul loves
I held him, and would not let him go
until I had brought him into my mother's house
and into the chamber of her that conceived me.*

*I have adjured you, O daughters of Jerusalem
by the gazelles or the hinds of the field
that you stir not up nor awaken love until it please*

Song of Songs

Here we find the girl lying relaxed in bed at night, an ideal creative situation. However, although she seeks her love in this fashion night after night, nothing happens, and he does not come to her. Solomon's advice is apparently is not working. Something must be wrong. Finally, she goes out into the city streets to look for him, but is soon apprehended and discouraged in her search by the Watchmen. It is only when she escapes their clutches and presses on that she immediately finds her love.

The Thought Police

The city, as we shall see again later, is a metaphor for the mind, and the Watchmen represent dominant attitudes, in this case unquestioned adherence to convention and the knee-jerk rejection of new and unusual ideas, which can come from two sources, without and within. The Watchman — the thought police — do as they have been taught and told, slavishly follow the rules to the letter, and make quick judgments on those who anything different.

They Are On Patrol Right Now!

In Brainstorming, Alex Osborn found it necessary to separate the generation and judgment of ideas and devote separate sessions to each. Knee-jerk reactions to ideas can come in various forms — verbal comments such as “We’ve tried that before . . . If that’s so good, why isn’t everybody doing it already?” but also as grimaces, sighs, smirks and so forth. Some brainstorming groups have red cards which participants flash, referee style, when such negative inputs occur. For some reason, most of us do seem shy about suggesting our ideas, as if we have the Watchmen patrolling our minds — right this moment — reminding us that we are not clever enough to be creative, and scolding us for being stupid by suggesting these silly new ideas. We of course can also act as Watchmen with regard to other people’s ideas. It is important to become less judgmental of possible new ideas.

Convention and Conformity

As we grow up, most of us are taught to conform, and so soon learn not to be creative. Much of education seems to consist, perhaps necessarily, of learning the “right” way of doing things — and might better be described as “training”. Consequently, as Solomon is pointing out here, our normal, default way of thinking tends not to be creative, but strictly conventional, possibly somewhat hostile towards the concept of creativity, perhaps finding the whole idea quite threatening and even a bit “mad”. We are therefore inclined to reject new ideas out of hand as being stupid and obviously worthless, when on closer examination they may be found — like a lump of gold ore — to contain something of great value. It follows that we may have to make a conscious decision to be creative and entertain new ideas.

Like the girl, it isn't that you are not creative by nature, but simply that the Watchmen — although you may not realize it — are intercepting and driving creative thoughts away. It is important therefore to make a deliberate decision to go out and find those ideas before the thought police do and make them welcome and hold onto them.

Look for the Gold

In view of the above, it is important to make it a habit when looking for ideas to solve a problem or improve a situation, to look for the potential good in even the silliest sounding idea before rejecting it — like the grains of gold in a dull lump of ore that could easily be discarded. Perhaps it could solve your problem, at least in principle, if only you could make it work, so what is lacking to make it work? Sometimes a seemingly wild idea is found to be a metaphor conveying a valuable principle, if only time is taken to consider it.

For example, in order to increase repeat orders, a business might consider the odd idea that it should “glue” its customers to it. Many business now do this, in effect, by means of loyalty schemes of various kinds. Patient meditation on a variety of joining methods — such as nailing, bolting, sewing, using magnets or velcro, and so on — would almost certainly discover subtle new ways to improve existing loyalty schemes. The traditional project method depends on taking a broad idea — a goal — that is on its own completely unworkable and then converting it into narrower and narrower objectives and strategies and finally specific practical, do-able tactics.

Creative Butterflies

A second insight that may be drawn from this section of the “Song” is the fact that creative ideas are perishable, and what seems obvious and exciting at the moment may well be forgotten and lost for ever a short time later. Like the girl with the lover, when she finds him, we must take firm hold and not let go. Creative individuals often keep notebooks in which they record ideas for future reference and development.

Jack Addington comments that insights are ephemeral, fleeting, and transient. They arrive with the delicacy of a butterfly and can speed away again just as quickly. Do not make the mistake, he says, of assuming that you will surely remember the insights that comes to you when you are driving the car or half asleep in bed. You will not, and most of them will surely perish. It is important, therefore, to stop the car, or, if you are in bed, get up and put on the light, and record them.

In the last line, Solomon reminds us again of the need to relax and be patient in seeking inspiration, which is why the verb is in the past tense — “I have adjured you”, previously. It is crucially important, Solomon is saying, to work in harmony with the principles he is describing, in particular to cultivate a receptive state of mind.

Voice of Experience:

“An essential characteristic of the creative state is that one’s critical faculty which normally inhibits all new ideas is completely switched off. Thus ideas are born, many of which will be killed when the critical faculty is switched on again, but others can be followed up by further ideas which meet the criticisms if one is still in the creative state.” (Meredith Thring — How to Invent).

“The reason for your complaint lies, it seems to me, in the constraint your intellect imposes on your imagination . . . Apparently it is not good if the intellect examines too closely the ideas pouring in at the gates. Regarded in isolation, an idea may seem quite insignificant and venturesome in the extreme, but it may acquire importance from an idea which follows it; perhaps in certain collocation with other ideas which may seem equally absurd it may be capable of furnishing a very serviceable link . . . In the case of the creative mind, it seems to me, the intellect has withdrawn its watchers from the gates, and the ideas rush in pell-mell and only then does it review and inspect the multitude. Your critics . . . are ashamed or afraid of the momentary and passing madness which is found in all real creators . . . You reject too soon and discriminate too severely.” (Johann Schiller, quoted by John Adair — Effective Decision Maker).

“The idea when it comes suddenly into the mind with the glow of inspiration must be noted down before it fades or is lost” (Rosamund Harding — The Anatomy of Inspiration).

“Excellent ideas come to me every moment and if instead of executing them at the very moment they are clothed with the charm imagination lends them . . . one forgets, or what is worse, one no longer finds any interest in what seemed inspiring.” (Delacroix)

“When having lain musing on my sofa, a number of interesting thoughts have suggested themselves, I conquer bodily indolence and rise and record them in these books . . . my thoughts crowd each other to death.” (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, poet)

"Ideas are elusive, slippery things. Best to keep a pad of paper and a pencil at your bedside, so you can stab them during the night before they get away" (Earl Nightingale — consultant).

“Sometimes an idea comes in the night when I have to get up and strike a light and note it down — sometimes when out on a lonely walk, when I have had to stop and with half-frozen fingers jot down a few words which should keep the new-born [conceived?] idea from perishing — but whatever or however it comes, it comes of itself [i.e. it cannot be forced to come].” (Lewis Carroll, author).

“He also collected ideas. He had a small exercise book in which he wrote down any germ of an idea. Sometimes he just wrote down words that he liked the sound of . . . Not only ideas for stories, but for inventions too. He was fascinated by the limitlessness of the imagination. Once he bought a pair of tennis shoes that were a little tight. He wanted to stretch them so he thought about the problem until he came up with an idea. He filled two plastic bags with water, sealed them tightly and placed one bag inside each shoe. The he put them in the freezer, knowing that water expands as it freezes and would therefore stretch them. It was a success . . . My father often said: ‘There is no end to what you can invent if you put your mind to it. You can go on for ever.’ I think that is worth remembering.” (Ophelia Dahl, daughter of Roald Dahl the writer — Sunday Times Magazine).

"The thoughts that come often unsought, and is it were drop into the mind, are commonly the most valuable of any we have, and therefore should be secured, because they seldom return again" (John Locke -- philosopher).

Summary

1) Creative new ideas, approaches, methods, styles, and so on, are judged by the ideas that have already been approved and accepted into our minds, typified in the “Song” by the city Watchmen, the “though police”. If there is a conflict, the new idea will usually be rejected for disturbing the peace. We have to evade the Watchmen and boldly push on past them, like the girl.

2) It is necessary to make a conscious decision to be creative, to be open minded to new and unusual ideas, many of which may seem stupid and bizarre at first sight. Even seemingly unworkable suggestions may well contain a useful principle if you take the time to analyze them. Before rejecting an idea, take time to ask yourself “What is good about this idea? What would it take to make it work?”

3) The very idea that you are capable of being creative may seem too ludicrous for words, with the result that you may never even try to begin.

4) Creative ideas are perishable and although they may seem exciting at the moment, they can be lost for ever just a few minutes later. Many creative people keep notebooks in which they record good ideas for later use. Some composers and songwriters carry mini cassette machines to record inspirations which occur when they are out and about. One person I read about phones home and hums or sings his inspiration onto his answering machine.

5) Lying in bed at night is a good time to get in touch with your creativity, to relax and switch off the torrent of logical, reasoning thought and let the imagination take flight. Remember, however, that the process requires patience and cannot be forced.

14 NEGATIVE CAPABILITY

*What is that coming up from the wilderness
like a column of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense
with all the fragrant powders of the merchant?*

*Behold, it is the litter of Solomon!
About it are sixty mighty men of the mighty men of Israel
all girt with swords and expert in war
each with his sword at his thigh against the terrors of the night.*

*King Solomon made himself a carriage from the wood of Lebanon
He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple
It was lovingly wrought within by the daughters of Jerusalem.*

*Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon
with the crown with which his mother crowned him
on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart*

Song of Solomon

The glory and opulence of Solomon's litter typify the creative treasure that lies within the heart of every human being, and like that litter crossing the wilderness, our creative minds often operate in hostile territory and may need protection from the "terrors of the night".

Are You Afraid to Think About Thinking?

It is in bed at night, when we are most tired, that we are most vulnerable to a crushing loss of confidence in our creative work, and a variety of fears and anxieties that can afflict us — fear of letting the mind become still, fear of our feelings and innermost thoughts, fear of unusual creative ideas, fear we might go mad, fear of the unknown, fear of thinking about thinking.

The Courage to Create

Many people are afraid to switch off the stream of conscious logical thought and just quietly meditate. In "Simply Sane", Gerald May says that sanity, truly being yourself, demands a price, the death of delusion and the fear that may accompany that. If people give up consciously controlling everything they think, they fear that someone or something will "take over".

This restricting and paralyzing fear he describes as "the fear of ultimate vulnerability". In "On Not Being Able to Paint", Marion Milner describes how learning that real painting involved getting in touch with and

expressing her heart was initially a frightening experience, as new and unusual ideas and images came to mind.

As psychologist Rollo May's describes at length in "The Courage to Create", even the most illustrious of artists had to battle with strange and unreasoning fears that militated against their creativity.

The Voice of Judgment

Highly successful business people also have had to fight this same battle as Michael Ray and Rochelle Myers describe in "Creativity in Business". In their course on creativity in management at Stanford University, experienced business managers and entrepreneurs are taught to recognize what they describe as the VOJ — the Voice of Judgment — the highly destructive fears and criticisms that somehow creep into the mind and discourage creative, innovative action.

Their students are encouraged to become aware of these fears, to listen carefully and notice precisely what the VOJ is saying to them, even to write it down, and recognize it for what it is. Some individuals go as far as shouting out loud in defiance of these irrational fears that seek to crumble their confidence and erode their creativity.

Ask yourself what your own VOJ has stopped you accomplishing in the past as well as what it is seeking to sabotage at the moment.

Keeping Out Fears

In his classic inspirational book "Think and Grow Rich", Napoleon Hill lays great stress on the destructive power of a variety of fears and the critical importance of filling the mind instead with positive, constructive emotions and desires. In the "Song", the mind is depicted as an opulent litter, occupied by Solomon, depicting perhaps the positive wealth mentality that Hill and others stress. The fears, the terrors of the night, seek to enter and plunder that litter and destroy it.

As Hill points out, of course, most people would claim to be free of such paralyzing fears. He asserts, however, as a life long student of success, that: "Few people realise that they are bound, handicapped, whipped spiritually and physically through some form of fear. So subtle and deeply seated is the emotion of fear that one may go through life burdened with it, never recognizing its presence."

Those who accumulate great riches, he continues, always protect themselves against the entry of negative thoughts and fears. In words reminiscent of the "Song" he says: "Go at the task as carefully as you would search for any other enemy you knew to be waiting in ambush".

Get Yourself a Sword!

Like the night terrors in the wilderness, the VOJ comes like a coward through darkness. Be forewarned and forearmed, and repel such attacks with courage and confidence. It is important to meet them head on, like Solomon's swordsmen — face up to them and destroy them. The number sixty, apparently, signifies overwhelming strength, being double the number in his father King David's bodyguard, and also, perhaps, that we should arm ourselves with many affirmations.

It is interesting that in the Bible words are sometimes compared to swords, and so perhaps we need to arm ourselves with positive affirmations to provide the protection we need. This is in fact precisely the approach of the experienced creative teacher Marilee Zdenek who teaches her students to employ a whole series of positive affirmations as part of a set of daily exercises designed to discover and develop their creative potential and repel the unreasoning fears she describes as dragons.

Don't Let Fear Paralyze Your Creativity

Jack Addington lists the following fears that can paralyze the creative mind — fear of failure, fear of ridicule, fear of rejection, fear of disapproval, fear of adverse consequences. He offers positive affirmations such as the following: "I cease fearing failure. I now live for the sheer joy of living. I rely on and trust the Creative Power within me" — "I trust God, not only within me, but within everyone. No one can reject me because I am one with all of Life" — "I accept Life joyfully and lovingly. I am accepted by Life right now." Seek Solomon's gladness of heart, as mentioned in the last line of this section of the "Song".

Negative Capability

Even the greatest creators are afflicted by fears. John Keats, who was keenly interested in these matters, concluded that Shakespeare, whom he admired and studied, had the essential quality of “negative capability”, which he described as the courage to go ahead and penetrate mysteries, despite doubts and fears and uncertainties, relying on intuition rather than reason, letting the sense of beauty overcome and obliterate every other conventional consideration.

The world is deeply conservative and it should not surprise us that Vincent van Gogh was only able to sell one his marvelous painting during his lifetime. There is a suspicious inertia that opposes change, a herd instinct that somehow encourages a slavish adherence to convention, standard practice, expert authority and tradition.

We must confidently value the unique treasure of our own heart rather than copying others and kowtowing to convention, and have the courage to hold it up to the world for all to see. We now admire Picasso, but what courage he must have had. Isaac Newton encountered so much criticism that in the end he simply worked things out to his own satisfaction then hid the precious papers away in a drawer. His discovery, for example, that the moon controlled the flow of the tides on the sea was looked on by many as lunacy!

Ask Your Creative Mind to Help

Another insight in this section of the ôSongö may be that the litter typifies the mind, and hidden away inside that mind, until he chooses to draw back the curtains and make himself visible, is Solomon, who in turn once again typifies the subconscious, creative mind. Here is a reminder of the power of the subconscious mind that is available to help us in our creative quest — very wise, like Solomon, very powerful, like a king, and ready, as depicted by the crown, to take charge and rule over our mission. Ask your subconscious mind to help you find suitable positive affirmations to repel those fears and to silence the VOJ.

The virgins of the Jerusalem, it appears, are somewhat reluctant to come out and meet Solomon, to leave the familiar city environs and venture out into the creative wilderness. Here again is fear, as many people are simply afraid to contemplate such matters as the working of the subconscious mind.

Voice of Experience

“One of the very necessary ingredients of an inventive person is the ability to use imagination. Yet imagination is also a powerful ingredient in the experience we know as fear . . . I would therefore encourage those who have inwardly branded themselves as cowards, for I place a lot of weight on the theory that a person who knows fear has imagination.” (Eric Laithwaite — How to Invent)

“The copy-writer lives with fear. Will he have a big idea before Tuesday morning? . . . I have never sat down to write an advertisement without thinking THIS TIME I AM GOING TO FAIL” (David Ogilvy — Ogilvy on Advertising)

“Fear is the natural companion of creative action” (Barbara Sher — Wishcraft).

“Intelligence is inhibited by engrams which feed false or improperly graded data into the analyzer . . . the dynamics are inhibited by engrams” (Ron Hubbard — Dianetics).

“When I stand before my canvas, I tremble” (Leonardo da Vinci).

“Creative people are distinguished by the fact that they can live with anxiety, even though a high price may be paid in terms of insecurity . . . They do not run away from non-being, but by encountering and wrestling with it, force it to produce being” (Rollo May — The Courage to Create).

“A lot of people want to be me, but they haven’t got the guts to go out and stick their heads in a noose. I put myself in the position of people being able to take a pot shot” (Barabara Taylor Bradford, novelist — Sunday Times article).

“[Georgia O’Keefe] discovered that painting did not necessarily mean imitating and that she could freely invent what she wanted . . . It was an ability that would enable her to change shapes and colors at will, to create worlds never before seen . . . During the days when this inspiration came to her, O’Keefe thought she would go mad, as so many new, strange shapes filled her mind. So visualization became for her a basic tool.” (Pierro Ferrucci — Inevitable Grace)

“It is becoming more and more apparent that what we call normal adult adjustment involves turning one’s back on what would threaten us as well. And what does threaten us is softness, fantasy, emotion, childishness . . . What I am leading up to is that out of this unconscious, out of this deeper self, out of this portion of ourselves of which we are generally afraid . . . comes creativity, which is a kind of intellectual play which is a kind of permission to be ourselves, to fantasize, to let loose, and to be crazy, privately. Every new idea looks crazy at first.” (Abraham Maslow).

“Creative people are distinguished by the fact that they can live with anxiety, even though a high price may be paid in terms of insecurity . . . They do not run away from non-being, but by encountering and wrestling with it, force it to produce being” (Rollo May — The Courage to Create).

“Fear of one’s own greatness . . . evasion of one’s destiny . . . we simultaneously shiver with weakness, awe, and fear before these very same possibilities . . . evading your own capacities, your own possibilities” (Abraham Maslow).

“Whatever you can do, or think you can, begin it; boldness has genius, power and magic within it” (Goethe).

“We are called to do something new, to confront a no-man’s land, to push into a forest where there are no well-worn paths and from which no one has returned to guide us. This is what the existentialists call the anxiety of nothingness . . . and this requires a degree of courage for which there is no immediate precedent and which few people realize” (Matchett — The Road to True Professionalism).

Summary

- 1) It takes courage to be creative, and fear seems to be a universal human experience, to the extent that whole books have been written about the subject.
- 2) Many people are afraid to think about thinking, to stop watching TV, reading newspapers and books, and whatever else they can do to avoid letting their mind relax and contemplate creative ideas and the direction of their life.
- 3) Many people fail to express their true selves, the feeling of their heart, because they are afraid of what others will think of them.
- 4) Even successful business people have to conquer fears, the Voice of Judgment, and the true purpose of many management leadership courses, which involve outdoor activities such as rock climbing, is learning to confront and conquer fear.

WORKSHOP

- 1) Take time to focus on any creative project you have undertaken, perhaps a poem, song, or story. Consider going back and revising and revamping it. Ask your creative subconscious to help you see where to begin and what needs doing. Study the project with a fresh approach and get to work improving it, polishing and perfecting it. As with a piece of music, where every single note has to be correct, weigh every single word of your work and consider eliminating or changing it. Does it flow? Is it logically consistent?
- 2) Meditate on your working methods and ask your subconscious mind to help you catch the little foxes, the bad habits and attitudes that have been limiting the excellence of your projects.
- 3) Take stock of your working methods from a time point of view. Do you actually schedule sensible stretches of quiet, patient time to be with your creative love? Do you really want to spend time seeking inspiration and insights? Are you committed to creative action?
- 4) Are you really open to new ideas, even the idea that you can be creative? Make a decision to examine new ideas and suggestions and look for the possible good in them before rejecting them. Reflect on specific aspects of your life at home and work, and ask your subconscious mind to help you see better, alternative approaches that could be investigated. For example, how do you organize and use your time? How can you save time? How do you squander time? How do other people rob you of time? What opportunities for

improvement and advancement are you ignoring or overlooking?

5) Do you have the courage to think about thinking, and about the way various fears limit your creativity and cause you to miss opportunities? Make a decision to monitor yourself throughout the day and try to spot the VOJ at work. Make up some positive affirmations to use as verbal “swords” with which to fight them off. Take a few moments at the start of the day to rehearse these.

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The four insights in this section all concern common barriers to creative excellence arrange themselves into two pairs.

The first two concern time factors — firstly, the need to allow your creative work time to ripen and mature, and secondly the need to devote serious stretches of relaxed, playful time to seeking inspiration.

The second pair both concern attitudes — firstly the need to deliberately adopt an open, receptive frame of mind and be less judgmental towards new ideas, and secondly summing up the courage, with the aid of positive affirmations, to carry on with your creative action even when assailed by the miscellany of fears that can be aroused. In other words, we have to open our minds the mind to creative new ideas, and closing them to paralyzing fears.

PART 4

PRACTICAL PROJECTS

Very often we need to make deliberate, conscious use of the imagination in order to achieve a given purpose and attain excellence in so doing — to fulfill specific, clearly identified needs, such as the design of a piece of equipment, or to solve a problem. This second form of creative action is typified in nature by the cultivation of plants — in contrast to the emotionally triggered artistic creativity which is typified by love making between man and woman, which is the stuff of excellence and genius in the arts, but which can also find application in other areas such as engineering and business, as discussed earlier. It may well be one of a number of practical, detailed projects required to support our inspired conception and make it a reality.

Ideas, apparently, can arrive on two levels. An inspiration, as we have seen, is unique and reflects the whole being of its parent, the person who conceives it. It is associated with words like mission, vision, and vocation. It is a dominating purpose to which you are totally committed with the passion and protectiveness of a mother carrying child. It is a purpose that you pursue for its own sake, not for money or prestige or any other such benefit. It is your joy, your obsession, your compulsion -- an end in itself.

The practical project, by way of contrast and clarification, is a means to an end, a simple purpose, perhaps an assignment given to you by somebody else. It is not an end in itself, and if you find a better alternative means to that higher end, the present means will readily be scrapped. Obviously, it must engage some emotion, as do all human activities, but whereas the essence of the inspiration is comparable to the vitality of a human being, that of the practical project, while still a thing of exquisite beauty, is more on the level of a plant you want to grow in the garden.

To recap briefly, Solomon saw that the mysterious creative mechanisms of the human mind are, by deliberate divine design, simply illustrated and illuminated by the two broad physical processes by which nature continuously creates new and beautiful things, namely the growth and reproduction of animals — which has already been dealt with — and plants.

Plant cultivation involves three basic processes — 1) pollination of flowers, leading to the production of seeds, 2) the growth and further development of existing plants, and 3) the sowing of seeds to produce new plants.

Each process illustrates a creative parallel: 1) the discovery of break-through new seed-like ideas, 2) the development and incremental improvement of existing systems, the main source of technological progress, and 3) the undertaking of design projects by implementing seed-like ideas in order to create innovative new systems.

In process number 1, which might be described as "External" creativity, the most powerful inventive tool in the sciences, new seed-like ideas are found by combining previously unrelated things — a process typified by the transfer of pollen in flowers, the fusing of male and female gametes. In a sense, a flower typifies a problem — an opportunity in disguise, simply waiting for the crucial insightful idea that will open up the magical new possibilities hidden within it.

In process number 2, which might be described as "Internal" creativity, which encompasses most of Brainstorming and Lateral Thinking, and which finds wide application in business and engineering, new improved systems are created by modifying and extending what already exists — a process typified by the growth and development of a plant such as a tree. Both Internal and External creativity also find application other areas as diverse as comedy writing and advertising.

The third process, the traditional design project — as illustrated by the deliberate and purposeful sowing and growing of seeds in a garden — is in fact the central focus of this section of the "Song".

Visualization and Metaphors

The processes of practical creativity relies on the deliberate application of two key functions of the imagination — visualization and the use of metaphors, and this section focuses on the factors that maximize their efficacy.

Visualization and Internal Creativity

The word "imagination", like the word "image", derives from the root word "imago", to imitate. The imagination enables us to mentally plan and create by finding, forming and manipulating images — imitations — of physical reality in the mind's eye. When that primary creative process is completed to our satisfaction, we can then go ahead and undertake the secondary creative process of turning our mental creation into a physical reality. Visualization is the key tool of Internal Creativity whereby we innovate and solve problems by visualizing then adapting and mutating the existing structure of a device, organization or situation, as with the growth and development of a plant.

Using Metaphors in External Creativity

The visual imagination is also crucial in the process of External creativity whereby we search for metaphors to provide useful ideas and parallel principles that can be brought into a situation to solve a problem — just as the wind or a bee bring pollen into a flower and fertilize it, resulting in the formation of seeds that can be used to grow new plants.

The Garden Metaphor

The central insight of the group of seven that make up this section is that practical, creative projects can be deliberately undertaken — without an initial inspiration — and developed or "grown" to excellence like plants, the useful produce of a garden. The other six supporting insights are arranged before and after this core concept in parallel pairs. The first and last insights, appropriately, focus on two key functions of the imagination already mentioned — visualization and the use of metaphors. The other four insights enclosed between them deal with factors that either enhance or constrain the imagination in its performance of these key functions.

Tough Practical Projects

Although a poem or song may sometimes be completed quite quickly, it has taken a century of creative effort on the parts of thousands of talented engineers to evolve the Wright brothers' first flying machine, step by step, component by component, material by material, by a process of micro-evolution, into the modern jumbo jet. Such complex and tough practical projects require a very deliberate, more formalized, detailed and repeated application of the principles of Solomon's creative technology, and I suspect that this section of the "Song" is intended to focus on the carrying out of such more demanding practical projects and problem solving.

Imagination in a Strait-jacket

Physicist Richard Feynmann said that the laws of science put the imagination in a strait-jacket, meaning that practical creative work in physics, chemistry, and engineering — unlike the productions of fiction, fairy tale and horror story writers — has to comply with the demands of reality and the laws of the universe. Business systems likewise must comply with economic reality and even the vagaries of human behavior.

It was far, far easier, for example, for the prolific Enid Blyton to sit with her portable typewriter on her lap and churn out her children's books from the dialogue her characters created in her imagination than it is for an engineer to design a better washing machine, or for a company to devise more effective marketing strategies for its products.

Feynmann's point seems also to have been recognized by the great Russian composer Tchaikovsky who pointed out that writing good poetry is more demanding than composing music, saying: "For a lyric poem, not only must the mood be there but the idea must be there . . . In music it only necessary to evoke a certain general mood or emotion."

The Project Method

The traditional project begins with a broad direction-setting Goal which might be compared to a seed that is to be sown in a garden. The design brief associated with that goal should identify the detailed needs and performance criteria that the final product or service must satisfy in an excellent manner — information that might be compared to the genetic content of a seed.

This initial specification should direct all the subsequent growth of the project, as the Goal is then developed into supporting Objectives which in turn branch out into Strategies, each of which is finally translated into detailed, practical Tactics, the specific physical actions which must take place in order for the project to work and for the Goal to be achieved.

There would seem to be an obvious parallel between the development of a project and the growth of a plant such as a tree — with Goal, objectives, strategies, and tactics paralleling the Trunk, branches, laterals, and twigs of a tree. It is this time-honored similarity that seems to be a central focus of this section of the “Song”.

It is interesting that in producing a baby, we have no control over the outcome, we just accept, joyfully the issue that is produced — and so it is with the inspirational process, where we do not know how the poem, song, or piece of music being created will turn out. However, with plants, we deliberately choose the kind of seed we sow in order to meet specific needs and achieve a specific purpose that we have identified.

Goals and the Project Method

In the project method, the early planning stages of Goal and Objective, for example, are broad, conceptual and direction-setting ideas that will in principle enable the achievement of the desired purpose and make it possible to translate the inspired vision into practical reality. As already explained, that initial mental conception will, if nourished and kept alive with plenty of attention, gradually develop and grow like a baby in the womb and end up as a detailed plan -- but still at the conceptual level. It is not possible at that stage to envision every future circumstance, difficulty, set back and problem that will surely be encountered along the way to success and the achievement of excellence. Furthermore, after the manner of a Moon rocket that actually spends most of its time somewhat off course, the project during its implementation will have to be monitored and steered back on target -- tended and watched over like the crops in a garden.

What remains, then, are the Strategy and Tactic stages, the identification of the very specific, practical steps that will have to be taken to interface the vision with the realities of the physical world. This would seem to be the function of Practical Creativity.

Even the writing of a novel, for example, which may start with an initial inspiration, will involve the solving and surmounting of various problems as the plan that has been nurtured in the imagination is turned in final reality, which is where the techniques described in this section would be very helpful.

Goals and Plans

In his classic book "Think and Grow Rich", based on the wealth-creating philosophy of Andrew Carnegie, in his time the richest man in the world, Napoleon Hill repeatedly stresses the need for a definite Goal which must be translated in a definite, specific Plan of action. Perhaps this is the distinction Solomon is making -- with the Goal, the inspiration, being typified by human conception, and the detailed practical Plan typified by the sowing and growing of seeds. The crucial point is that if the detailed Plan is based on accurate and complete knowledge, and perfectly formed like the genetic content of a seed, it is bound to succeed.

A Problem is a Frustrated Purpose

In carrying out any project, we are trying to consciously and deliberately create something — to achieve a specific purpose, to satisfy needs, to bring something new, beautiful and better into existence, perhaps a business system or a new invention. Along the way there will be problems, some easy to solve, some hard, which is why a problem is best thought of as a frustrated purpose, a situation where something is stopping us achieving a chosen goal. The first step in problem solving, therefore, is to analyze the situation and state the problem in the form of a purpose, finding out what it is we really need or want to achieve — thereby turning it into a creative project.

Experienced problem solvers are adamant that this first direction-setting decision is in fact the most crucial, difficult, and neglected stage in the process, probably because busy people are often reluctant to invest the time necessary to carry out the careful analysis required. Failure at this stage might be likened to rushing to the station and getting on the wrong train and ending up at the wrong destination, resulting in a frustrating waste of time, effort and money.

State Your Purpose as a Question

Significantly, as was noted earlier, experienced workers also counsel stating or defining the problem as a question, using a form such as: “How to . . .”, or more stimulatingly for the imagination, “In what ways might . . .” — in other words, framing a question that can be posed to the creative subconscious and meditated on in the manner described earlier, and in conjunction with the two key techniques highlighted in this section, visualization and the use of metaphors.

As was also discussed earlier, there are two stages, and two key questions to be posed and answered, in the problem solving process — deciding WHAT must be achieved, then finding out HOW to make it happen. Like the right and left punches of a boxer, these questions are asked repeatedly as the project develops, buds and branches stage by stage from Goal to Tactics.

Find the Root of the Problem

Sometimes the WHAT that arises from a problem involves trying to correct or repair an existing system that has begun to malfunction, or that cannot cope with new conditions for some reason, in order to restore the previous status quo — such as boosting flagging sales of a product — which, as explained earlier, necessitates extensive questioning in order to dig down and trace down the complex root structure of cause and effect to find out what is going wrong.

Sometimes, when identified, the root cause or causes may be impossible to remedy — such as a change in government regulations — which is why it may be more valuable and productive to question the purpose of solving the immediate problem and re-examine higher level strategies and objectives that would have been supported by the solution if found — a principle illustrated in a simple fashion by the person who is forced to find a different route to the office because of construction work and ends up discovering a good short cut, a better way, an alternative method of reaching the original objective.

Identify Your Specific Objective — WHAT?

As stated above, making sure you have identified the most appropriate WHAT is of crucial importance because it sets the direction for all that follows. In the field of engineering, Meredith Thring gives this advice: “What is one’s main objective? is it to use less fuel, fewer materials of construction, to achieve something new for the first time, like flying . . . A clear formulation of what one is trying to do takes one half-way towards the invention, because so often, one can reject completely a condition which has become traditional in the existing system . . . One must learn to pick the center of gravity of the problem and continually try to find better ways of doing this”. The fundamental key to this problem solving process is thorough Analysis, which is a recurrent theme of the “Song”.

Search for a Solution — the HOW?

Once the WHAT has been wisely and clearly identified, and the problem has in effect become a project, all that remains to be done is to search out a variety of viable ideas — possible HOW’s — for achieving the objective, and then choose from those options the most appropriate one for your particular situation, with your particular knowledge, experience, and resources. As we shall see, there are two basic techniques for generating those ideas Internal and External — both of which are dealt with by Solomon in this section of the “Song”, both of which are modeled by the growth and reproduction of plants.

The Internal Search

The first technique involves analysis of the existing Internal structure and mechanisms of the problem situation in search of ways to manipulate, adapt, mutate and generally modify it in order to find a fresh approach — a process which is typified in nature by the way plants extend their roots system, bud and branch, and grow stouter and stronger. This process of Internal Creativity, as we see in more detail later, relies heavily on Visualization, the power of the mind whereby an image pictured in it, no matter how tenuously, can spontaneously transform itself into creative new forms.

Describing how he and his brother were forced to innovate in the face of labour shortages at the end of World War II that made it very hard to find kitchen staff, restaurateur Dick McDonald recalled their new thinking as follows: "Let's get rid of it all. Out went dishes, glasses and silverware. Out went service, dishwashers and the long menu. We decided to serve just hamburgers, drinks and French fries on paper plates. Everything prepared in advance, everything uniform." Such as the simple bit of Internal creativity that signaled the beginning of a world-wide catering empire.

This same simple Internal approach has made possible great advances in industry -- tweaking the status quo, step by step, in a series of incremental but not insignificant changes. In "Creativity at Work", Simberg says: "In recent years . . . the organised approach has been developed . . . aimed at improvements in product design using new processes, substituting materials and lowering costs. This is achieved by working on primarily small though not unimportant changes." Virtually the same approach under a different name is described by Crum in "Value Engineering", where he describes how engineers at the GEC company in America were forced by material shortages after World War II to analyse every aspect of product design and production -- seeking to identify essential value and the precise features that created it, and so find better and hopefully cheaper ways to create it. More recently this approach to general business organisation has been called "re-engineering" -- factionating processes in fields such as banking in order to identify elements that can be routinised and so performed by less skilled, lower paid staff.

Similarly, in "How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling", insurance man Fran Betger describes how, when discouraged to the point of suicide, he sat in his car down a country lane reflecting on his failure. As he did so, as he analysed the structure of the selling process, he began for the first time to really understand how it worked, and how he could tweak the various variables to make himself more effective. Thus he turned his career around and went on to achieve great success.

As we shall see later in more detail, such analysis is powerfully important in the pursuit of excellence. Any process, any skill, any procedure can be analysed, better understood, and more consciously controlled. This approach is the basis of much of our modern wealth-creating industry -- from mass production to cost accounting.

The External Search

The second idea-generation technique depends on searching elsewhere, Externally, outside the situation, for a new principle that can be brought in to solve the problem — typified in nature in the fertilization and fruiting of flowering plants by the way bees and the wind transport and transfer pollen. This external search for ideas, External Creativity, also involves Visualization, but this time also making use of Metaphors, a procedure formalized by William Gordon in the "Synectics" system mentioned earlier and explained in detail below.

Just as the male pollen deposited on the female stigma of a flower must be of the right kind, so the ideas brought in to solve a problem must be appropriate to the situation, which is why this second idea generation technique relies on the problem solver first having carried out a thorough analysis of the situation.

Innovation and Adaptation

The Internal and External approaches to problem solving are recognised by British business consultant who identifies two kinds of managers -- the Adaptors, who start from the status quo and seek to make creative modifications, and the Innovators who regard the status quo as a limiting cocoon from which they must break out.

Significantly, Nobel Prize winner Richard Feynman also recognized the two approaches in physics -- the Greek way and the Babylonian way. He explained that the Greeks worked very logically, step by step, from first principles and axioms -- a developmental Internal approach -- but that the Babylonians just related one thing to another, a metaphorical approach. Feynman's approach was Babylonian, always relating a problem to things he knew about nature, looking for analogies and parallels.

15 MAKE METAPHORICAL

Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful!

Your eyes are like doves behind your veil

Your hair is like a flock of goats, moving down the slopes of Gilead.

Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes

that have come up from the washing all of which bear twins

and not one among them is bereaved

Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely

Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.

Your neck is like the tower of David, built for an arsenal

whereon hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors

Your two nipples are like two fawns

twins of a gazelle, that feed among the lilies

Until the day breathes and the shadows flee

I will go quickly to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.

You are all fair, my love; there is no flaw in you

Song of Solomon

In this section of poetry, Solomon begins to focus on the use of metaphors, as shown by the frequent repetition of the simple comparative “like” — used seven times, a Biblical number of completion, as in the seven days of creation. The metaphor, beyond its role in literature and general communication, is a powerful problem solving tool, as we shall see in a moment. It is also the most prolific source of invention and discovery in science and engineering.

Although we all make use of metaphors informally, and they are of course woven widely into our language, highly successful people tend to make deliberate, careful and extensive use of them in order to communicate and convince, explain, influence and persuade more effectively.

The Power of Metaphors

Appropriate metaphors are like the utility programs of a computer, pre-packaged units carefully designed to effect a specific purpose. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a good metaphor is worth far more, able to evoke moving images, dialog and sensory responses in the mind of the recipients.

Proverbs, for example, are metaphorical, and their power lies in their heuristic content — tried and tested rules of conduct that find practical application in a wide diversity of situations in everyday life, including business.

A good way to increase your intuitive command of metaphors is by reading good literature, especially poetry, and by studying and contrasting common proverbs, that at first glance appear to be contradictory, in order to isolate their key principles: for example: “Too many cooks spoil the broth”, but “Many hands make light work”. For this very reason, they can, of course, be used to stress and exaggerate one principle or value in a situation and downplay another, which is why they are of great interest to politicians and their speech writers. Ideologies use powerful metaphors to promote extreme positions.

How Metaphors Work

Metaphors rely on the existence of parallels between apparently unrelated situations. The practical use of metaphors relies on subject and object sharing some essential feature, such as shape, color, texture, structure, mechanism, principle or purpose. In fact, such is the complexity of even the seemingly simplest objects that it is always possible to find some common factor, some parallel principle. This simple but surprising fact is the basis of the Random World idea-generation technique described later.

In reading and trying to appreciate metaphors visually, attempt to picture both elements in the mind’s eye, no matter how fleetingly — then shuttle back and forth between them, what we might call the subject and the object of the metaphor (e.g. A, the subject, is like B, the object).

In considering an object or situation, try to extract the general feature and let it form a fuzzy image in the mind, then practice transforming it into subject and object in turn. For example, both a soccer ball and a wine bottle share the feature of roundness. Picture the ball, fuzz it into a blur of roundness then turn it into a bottle of some kind. then reverse the process.

Using Your Imagination to Search for Metaphors

Having done that, now ask your imagination to find something else that is like this generalized image, something else that embodies this quality of roundness — for example saying “What animal is like this? What plant? What machine or building — then wait passively and patiently for something specific to emerge from the misty cloud of unknowing. In this case, perhaps a ladybird, the eye of a lion, an orange, and so on. The feature of roundness finds such general, widespread application that a vast number of images can potentially come to mind, unless some kind of specific qualifying condition is added, which is what in fact happens with "Synectics".

William Gordon's "Synectics" System— the Method of Genius

The same technique is used in solving problems, and is formalized in William Gordon’s “Synectics” system in which, after identifying the key problem, the creative mind is asked to find a parallel situation where that problem has been solved in principle — Where in the animal world is there something like this? Where in the plant world? Where in the man-made world? When the imagination comes up with an analogous situation, it is analyzed in order to identify and extract the key principle — as with the example of the drinks can and the banana described earlier.

Like bananas, the easy-open cans now manufactured have segments with brittle seams that can be ruptured by pulling on a “tab”, then peeled away to give access to the contents of the packaging. A similar but not identical idea could have been found from considering pea pods. The idea — the metaphor — for “Pringles” crisps, which are molded from potato paste and specially shaped to stack together, was found by copying the way wet leaves pack easily and compactly into a refuse sack.

Stating the Problem as a PARADOX

In “Synectics”, Gordon defines the problem in the form of a conflict or PARADOX, as he calls it — e.g. “The drinks can is easily opened although there is no can opener.” In other words, the problem and the subsequent search for a solution is narrowed down by identifying what might be described as driving and restraining forces — which is the common situation in the physical world, where, for example, hot-air balloons overcome gravity, motor-cycles overcome friction, and marketing ploys overcome sales resistance. Notice, too, that Gordon defines a problem in a positive way, not as a failure, but as a successfully resolved situation in which the desired action is taking place despite certain opposing forces. Playing with the approach myself I thought about the common problem with worn windscreen wipers on a car, where small sections of the rubber blade edge fail, causing narrow arcs of uncleaned glass to be left behind while the rest of the screen is crystal clear. My paradox was that the blade cleans all the glass although it has gaps in its edge — that was the situation I wanted to achieve.

Find the ANALOGY

Having stated my paradox, I then tried to visualize the wiper somehow wiping the window surface properly, then let the image become fuzzy, generalized and un-specific — “something wiping — moving — back and forth — flopping about . . . “ I then asked my imagination: “Where in the plant world is there something like this?” After a while, magically, out of the misty mindscape of my imagination, came a hazy glimpse of a tree branch moving up and down in the wind, and blades of grass doing the same.

Gordon calls this second step in the system the ANALOGY — because a specific useful metaphor has been spotted and the problem has already been solved, at least in principle.

Identify the UNIQUE ACTIVITY

The next step is to consider the analogy and draw out the UNIQUE ACTIVITY, the transferable principle needed to solve the problem. In my example, the unique activity was that as the branch, like a blade of grass, has a different stiffness and so bends differently when pushed down than when lifted up, so that the tip traces out a different arc in the air.

Spot the EQUIVALENT

My EQUIVALENT, then, would be to make a wiper blade with a support that bent more easily in one direction than the other, so that it would in effect be “pushed” stiffly across the wind screen in the one direction, then “dragged” reluctantly back in the other direction — thereby causing each spot on the edge of the blade to trace different arcs going and coming, greatly reducing the chance of any section be left uncleaned.

Great Inventions from Metaphors

To further illustrate the importance of metaphors, the principle of the ship’s propeller pulling it through water was derived — Synectics fashion — by a Victorian inventor from the way a screw pulls itself through a piece of wood, and the concept of a suspension bridge from the way spiders can span a gap with a web. The modest young Belgian doctor who invented the stethoscope, because he was too shy to put his ear to the breasts of lady patients to listen to their heart beat, found the idea he needed when he saw some children whispering messages to one another through a piece of tubing. Louis Braille found a way of helping the blind to read by copying the dot patterns on the dominoes he had played with as a child before he lost his sight. The examples of inventions made by this metaphorical method are endless, and often accidental. Gordon formalizes the process.

Sometimes, then, the needed principle is discovered by the fortuitous experience we call serendipity. For example, many Greeks must have noticed how water overflowed when they lowered themselves into a bath, but only Archimedes was looking for a method of measuring the volume of an irregularly shaped object such as a crown.

Metaphors in Engineering

Likewise, when American engineer George Westinghouse saw how compressed air could be sent hundreds of yards down tubes to operate drills in a quarry, he immediately saw the solution to the problem he had been working on, namely, how a train driver could operate brakes on the wheels of a long string of carriages all at the same time.

The history of science shows clearly that identifying specific problems and then perceiving the principles required to solve them in other, parallel situations is of great importance, which is perhaps why Gordon claims that “Synectics” — which means “joining two things together” — is the method of genius, now formalized for use by the average man. No wonder the metaphor is acknowledged as the most prolific source of ideas in problem solving and invention.

Metaphors in Medicine

The word metaphor simply means “carried over” or transferred and in using a metaphor we transfer a feature or features of one object or situation to another where it applies in principle but not literally, using it perhaps to make a complicated matter more understandable.

Harvey’s theory of how blood circulated around the body and back to heart was based on the way the earth went around the sun and so returned to its original position. This searching process depends on our minds being well stocked with broad general knowledge, which sometimes is not the case, and the solution has to

be discovered, sometimes accidentally, by a literal search elsewhere. This is why Louis Pasteur was led to observe that discovery favors the prepared mind, which simply means that if we know what we are looking for, the chances are that we will recognize it when we stumble onto it, as with going shopping for Christmas presents.

As Harvey's case illustrates, the most fruitful metaphor is sometimes quite remote, namely relating the circulatory flow of blood to the orbital motion of planets — in which case the parallel principle transferred was that of something moving around a circuit of some kind, as also with a runner on a track.

It is interesting that previously a different and misleading metaphor, the motion of the tides of the sea, had been employed to support the erroneous notion that the blood flows to and from the heart along the same tubes — here the transferred idea was also movement there and back, but this time along the same path, as also with a child's swing for example or a pendulum.

When Harvey hit on the right metaphor, he apparently began writing down his idea in medical Latin but became so excited and impatient to get this ideas onto paper that he finished it off in English. The original document is preserved in the British Museum. Archimedes, similarly, was so excited when he discovered his displacement principle that we are told he ran through the street of Athens shouting "Eureka! Eureka!" — I've found it! I've found it! Perhaps in the biological model of creativity discussed earlier the finding of such ideas might be compared to the bee finding the nectar in a flower during the crucial process of pollination.

Biometrics — Metaphors from Nature

According to a recent Times article on the supposedly new science of "Biometrics": "Scientists are increasingly looking to nature's most ingenious accomplishments and using them as templates for new technology". Dr. Julian Vincent, professor of Biometrics at Reading University, commented: "Whenever humans try to make something, we always find out that nature has done it to perfection". It has long been known for example that flies have sticky pads on their feet that enable them to walk upside down on the ceiling, the glue being strong enough to support several times their weight but weak enough to be easily detached at will, somewhat like the ubiquitous Post-It note pads.

Attributing such innovations to evolution, of course, rather than to God, the scientists have found, for example, that insects manage to maintain a smooth flight path by constantly monitoring the air pressure around them, by means of multiple minute pressure sensors built into their wings! Where each sensor penetrates the wing surface it is surrounded by a tiny reinforcing ring, analogous to the sticky "gummed reinforcements" that are used to strengthen punched holes in ring binder paper. The reinforcing rings are just pliable enough to allow the insect wing to bend.

Engineers, interested in adapting the design for aircraft wings, are still studying the humble fly, trying to discover further secrets of its amazing aeronautical engineering.

Metaphors in Literature

Although the stress here has been on the use of metaphors in problem solving, they are of course of vast importance in literature of all kinds, in education, and the general communication of ideas. The Bible itself is solid with metaphors, like the sultanas, cherries, and peel in a rich fruit cake. In one of the Psalms, for example, we read of some normally brave and courageous sailors whose courage "melted", like ice, in a particularly severe storm. It is interesting that ice can be extremely strong when very cold, as on lakes in Alaska that can support the weight of heavy trucks in the winter. Yet in the summer heat the ice melts into water than cannot even support a grain of sand.

In the book of Job, and many other places, we see that God himself thinks and communicates metaphorically, describing the wicked, for example, and how he plans to deal with them. In once instance, he says that he will "ease" himself of his adversaries. The original Hebrew text, apparently, is quite earthy, graphically describing in colloquial language how waste matter is expelled from the body!

One scholarly atheist argues that the original Hebrew of the Old Testament is simply too crude and sensuous, as in the "Song" for example, for it to the word of a God. However, the creator of every detail of the male and female anatomy is far from prudish. Why should we be?

Metaphors Affect Your Emotions

In his book “Awaken the Giant Within”, Anthony Robbins discusses the way the metaphors we use to describe life can trigger positive or negative emotions that can control the way we choose to live day by day. They can be consciously or unconsciously used in a positive or negative fashion, constructively or destructively.

Positive metaphors can stimulate us to enthusiastic action, but negative ones can destroy our confidence and cause us to cringe and accept inevitable defeat — acting in effect as pithy and powerful “self talk” scripts, as positive and negative affirmations. Do you see your life as a “feast” of opportunities and encounters with interesting people, or as a continuous “battle” with a system that is designed to destroy you? Where did you get the metaphors that shape your thinking, he asks. Did you inherit them from you parents perhaps, or have you taken time to make a sharp new set for yourself? Try to become aware of the metaphors you unthinkingly use every day.

Faced with a problem, are we “on the ropes”, “back to the wall”, “dead in the water”, “over the hill”, and so on, or is our setback like the “cocking of a gun”, or “coiling a spring”? The point is that the fear unleashed by our negative metaphors can paralyze us into inactivity, causing us to avoid taking the positive and enthusiastic actions necessary to turn the situation around, to “turn the tide” that looked like it would advance for ever.

Metaphors in Your Marriage?

Simple and obvious analogies can help us tackle personal problems even. For example, a marriage that has “gone flat” could profitably be compared to a fire that has gone out or that will not take light. Meditating on the metaphor, we might ask our subconscious creative mind to help us answer questions such as — How can we add a firelighter? What about some paraffin? How can we dry out the wood? If we ask, for example, How can we chop the wood into small pieces so they can catch light easier, we might start focusing on a number of little things we could do to make a difference, rather than one big change. Take a look at the daily routine and habits and the way arguments begin. Are there patterns that can be interrupted? And so on. Some top marriage guidance counselors take this metaphorical approach, because it works.

Metaphors in Business and Marketing

Incidentally, the creative metaphorical power of the mind can also be used identify and express our deeper feelings about a situation, as when focus groups are asked to say which animal, vegetable, or item of clothing, comes to mind when they think of a certain product being advertised, or politician running for office. Such intuitive comparisons, when analyzed, serve to identify key features, both strengths to can be better exploited, and weaknesses to be corrected.

Metaphors, even used informally, can stimulate effective creative action. If our business is in danger of being trampled by the elephants of big business, can we find a way to “fly”, or to use our cat-like agility to dodge their lumbering charge? If we see our operation as a blunt ax, how can we find ways to sharpen the cutting edge? A few minutes spend meditating on such matters could only be profitable.

Monty Python Metaphors

Metaphors are even used to create humor. Exaggeration -- like the classic clown’s face, clothing, and silly walk -- and the surprise they trigger -- are two elements in the creation of humor, which is why impressionists often try to compare an overly serious or pompous politician, for example, with a cartoon character or someone in a very mundane jobs. All that is needed is some kind of metaphorical parallel, some kind of similarity in tone of voice, a mannerism, or a double entendre regarding their message that enables the important person to be portrayed in a very ludicrous, exaggerated manner.

Metaphors were a major part of the classic Monty Python series, where for example, the old saying “I could have died laughing” was used as the basis for a sketch where a joke that was so funny that it killed its writer, one Sid Scribbler. It was then, because of its hazardous nature, translated into German phrase by phrase by separate translators, and used as a weapon of war by broadcasting it over loudspeakers on the battle field. This metaphorical approach is also a classic ploy of newspaper cartoonists who scrutinize each day’s news stories in search of silly parallels. A leading impressionist commented in a TV interview that he is always “looking for metaphors”.

The Victorian Vicar

In "An Anatomy of Humour", Richard Boston tells of a Victorian vicar named Sydney Smith who made a careful study of humour and was consequently able to reduce people to fits of laughter, including even the supposedly sober-sided Queen Victoria. As already mentioned, a problem -- such as how to create humour -- can be solved in two ways, Internally or Externally.

Smith used the External, metaphorical approach to create ludicrous comparisons, very similar to those used in the "Black Adder" TV series. For example, in describing a scholarly article in the "Edinburgh Review", he said that it was "long and vigorous" . . . "like the penis of a jackass!"

This same ancient metaphoric mechanism for manufacturing merriment was, more recently, used by a newspaper reader who wrote to the letters editor of the "Guardian" to comment on an article that had described how the United States Government was spending billions of dollars to produce neutrons bombs that would "knock down people, but leave buildings standing". Catching a remote parallel between two seemingly unrelated situations, the reader commented that in his experience three pints of John Smith's best bitter could achieve the same result for less than five pounds!

As with the busy bee foraging for nectar, the External creative process involves a deliberate search for parallels between previously unrelated situations -- a skill that can be consciously cultivated and exploited by any interested person, as the Rev. Sydney Smith always asserted when asked to reveal the secret of his wit.

As we shall see later, there is also a complementary Internal approach to creating humour.

Musical Metaphors

Although music is metaphorical in the way it evokes memories and feelings, there can be more to it. An interesting illustration of the power of the mind to perceive metaphorical parallels was highlighted by a magazine article about the composer Sir Edward Elgar, who discovered that he could rearrange the same basic piece of music in various ways in order to caricature the personalities and mannerisms of friends and famous people. Apparently his famous Enigma Variations collection was inspired by this discovery, and he ended up writing fifteen pieces.

One loud and thunderous piece apparently represented the energetic manner in which his friend, William Baker, would walk out of a room. Elgar assigned enigmatic titles to the pieces to give clues to the identities of the people involved. The ninth, for example, was named after Nimrod the great biblical hunter in Genesis, and was written as a tribute to his friend August Jaegar, the word "jaegar" being the German for "hunter". The deeply emotional thirteenth variation is a particular enigma because it has no title, only three asterisks, which Elgar said took the place of the name of lady who, at the time of the composition, was on a sea voyage. Despite much detective work, her identity has never been discovered.

Don't Forget to Consult the Subconscious

Next time you have to make a presentation of some kind or sell somebody on something, why not take a few moments to meditate and ask your creative subconscious to help you find some appropriate metaphors to stress the key principles of your argument.

Voice of Experience

"It was a fine and deep saying of Aristotle that the greatest thing by far is to be master of metaphor. This is the mark of genius, for, he said, it implies an intuitive perception of similarities in dissimilars. All the great thinkers have been masters of metaphor because all vivid thinking must be in images and the philosopher whose metaphors are blurred and diluted is one whose thinking is blurred and diluted . . . All great thinkers are masters of metaphor because all thinking of any kind must be by analogy" (Havelock Ellis — Impressions and Comments).

"Perceiving analogies and comparing them by facts is the creative source of discovery." (Sir Humphry Davy, scientist and inventor)

"Analogies are very powerful in scientific thought and probably generate . . . more ideas than any other mode of thinking." (David Lamb)

“Boole traced the analogy between logic and algebra, just as Descartes had previously shown the likeness between algebra and geometry . . . Genius is often another name for the power to see similarities in phenomena, natural or mental, that have hitherto been undetected” (T. Sharper Knowlson — Originality).

“For months my head had been working . . . what has been done for a few words, for a few lines, I must succeed in doing for large pages of writing . . . for the first of all books, the Bible . . . How? . . . I studied the power of the [wine] press which nothing can resist . . . A simple substitution which is a ray of light! . . . To work then . . . God has revealed to me the secret that I demanded of Him.” (Johan Gutenberg, inventor of the printing press)

Summary

- 1) Using metaphors in describing and explaining things can help you communicate more creatively and effectively.
- 2) Become of the way the use of positive or negative metaphors to describe the same situation can affect the way you and other people feel and act.
- 3) Metaphors can be used, formally and informally, to solve problems by extracting and transferring an essential principle. For example, many businesses now have schemes such as repeat order discounts and loyalty cards that work like a “glue” in order to retain customers and keep them coming back.
- 4) When you need some ideas, such as planning an advertising campaign or even a party, the Random Word method is very productive, and depends on the fact that almost any object picked at random will possess characteristics and principles that can be usefully transferred to the problem situation.
- 5) William Gordon’s “Synectics” system is a more formal version of the same process, the metaphorical process by which many great scientific discoveries were made.

WORKSHOP

Details of William Gordon’s powerful “Synectics” system were given above, but before trying it out, you may wish to practice the less formal problem solving approach described below.

The physical world is far more metaphorical than at first appears, and just about any object, process, activity, or word chosen at random will be found to embody principles that parallel any problem situation you are dealing with. Consequently, if you want to find some ideas — for example, for planning a function, becoming a better manager, or improving a product or service, or whatever — simply pick an object at random and make a list of say 10 of its features. Then meditate on each feature in turn for a few seconds, asking your creative mind to show you any principle that would be useful for your purpose. In this manner, perhaps working your way through the objects in the room where you are at the time, you will soon accumulate a list of possible ideas, which if considered further will usually generate a magical new fusion or two, break-through ideas, or hot spots.

To illustrate the process — which can be carried out formally and somewhat mechanically on paper or informally in the imagination — suppose you were the producer of the weather spot on a TV channel and you needed some ideas to improve it. To do so, simply choose an object, such as the apple which is sitting on my desk at this moment.

Begin by listing say ten FEATURES of the apple, forgetting all about the problem as you do so. For example: it is round — farmers grows them on trees — cooking apples can be sour — William Tell shot an apple off someone’s head — they are red and green — they have a core — you don’t eat the core — the pips can be sown to grow new trees — people use them to make pies — New York is called the “Big Apple”.

Next, consider each feature in turn, trying to visualize it in the imagination, along with the problem, just letting it float and do what it will while you watch and wait with inner stillness, listening and looking for useful insights. As you do this, relevant INSIGHTS will usually pop into your mind. Write these down next to the list of features, as in the example below.

FEATURE

INSIGHT

Apples are round — The world is round, it rotates. Have a sequence of special items that we rotate through day by day throughout the week?

Farmers grow them — Bring in farmers and people from different occupations to ask them how the weather affects them in their work and what they look for in the weather spot.

Cookers can be sour — Make the spot more technical on certain days, giving very specific meteorological data. Should we have an educational spot each week where we explain a technical term and how we get the data and make the forecast?

. . . And so on.

Finally, having made a list of insights in this way, scan the insights several times, trying to somehow float all of them in the imagination — not logically analyzing or assessing them, but simply letting them be there, passively, sun bathing, so to speak. Note that the aim of this process is not to pick out the best one, but to stimulate your imagination, hoping for a magic fusion or synthesis of ideas to take place.

When this happens, a “hot spot” will usually somehow grab your attention and give you a little “Eureka!” feeling, and you will know you have discovered a useful idea, a little surge of joy, like the bee finding the nectar. If no useful ideas are forthcoming, try again with a different set of less obvious features or a different object. The more unique the features you start with, the more probable it is that some good unusual insights will be discovered.

Business consultants find that using this technique with activities — such as a trip to the zoo, a picnic, playing cricket — is a particularly productive source of problem solving ideas. A slightly different approach would be to ask questions such as: How can we make this product/service more like: a lion, a pair of scissors, a potato, a book, a trip to the beach, and so on — and then proceed as just described.

16 BE CHILDLIKE AND FLEXIBLE

Come with me from Lebanon, my bride

Come with me from Lebanon

Depart from the peak of Senir and Hermon

from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards

Song of Solomon

Here Solomon is using the psychology of lions and leopards to focus on the fact the highly successful creative person is flexible and ready to adopt playful imaginative approaches, rather than seeing himself as a serious expert, a high powered intellectual, capable of clubbing any problem into submission by means of rigorous, formal logic.

The Lions Try to Kill the Gazelles!

Solomon, we are told, was a avid student of wildlife, writing books and lecturing on the subject, even having his ships bring back exotic creatures such as apes and baboons, possibly from as far afield as South America, a three-year return journey in those times. He would of course be especially familiar with the wild creatures of Palestine, such as the lions, about which reference books provide the following interesting and significant information — they prey on gazelles, seeking to destroy the very creatures that Solomon has used earlier as a metaphor for the creative mind. Here, then, Solomon is alerting us to something that can destroy or diminish our creativity, and, by dressing it up in metaphorical language, offers us the chance to reflect on the message dispassionately, a traditional creative use of metaphors.

Do You Think Like a Lion?

Lions are very patient and prefer to lie in wait, often near a watering hole, hoping to trap unsuspecting game, such as antelope, rather than running and chasing all the time, the more so because the animals they like to eat all run faster than they can. Lions are unique in that they exist in prides, groups of one to five males along with attendant females, and young. A pride typically contains about a dozen animals and defends a territory which is marked out by the males spraying a mixture of scent and urine on bushes.

The adult male is very intolerant of other males and also of the young males of the pride, driving them away by time they are about three years of age. Likewise the females are very intolerant of other females and also drive away the young maturing ones. A new male, fighting his way into a pride will even kill and eat the young sired by his predecessor.

What, then, is Solomon's message? Perhaps you are ahead of me. Lions typify a very rigid, habit bound and intolerant frame of mind. They act and react robotically, unthinkingly, like many animals I suppose, strictly by instinct. They are very conservative, set in their ways of doing things, very protective of the status quo, feeling threatened by change and reacting violently against those who intrude.

Are You Afraid of Creative Ideas?

Paradoxically, despite their immense strength, lions are motivated by fear. The great Jewish American psychologist Abraham Maslow pointed out that non-creative people are often very rigid and controlled because they too are also fearful, and afraid that the incursion of unusual, unconventional creative thoughts into their mind is a sign of impending madness. Like the lion, they have to resist, fight off, and destroy these disturbing intruders.

If this is one of your particular problems, is the situation being made worse by associating with a small "pride" of equally habit-bound colleagues at work.? Solomon urges us to come down from the wild and chilly mountain uplands into the valley, and to forsake the company of these proud and fearsome creatures.

Don't Stand On Your Dignity

Getting in touch with our creativity requires a willingness to become aware of and change ingrained habits and routine methods of working and approaching problems, and the fact that Solomon chose lions and leopards to typify such conditioned patterns of behavior would seem to suggest that they can constitute formidable barriers to excellence. Perhaps rigid minded, proud people who stand on their dignity — “serious professionals”, really expert experts — are the hardest to deal with, because they are simply refusing to do what is necessary to become more creative for no good reason at all. They could do it if they wanted to. It is just that simple. But they won't even try! They are being stupidly stubborn, arrogant, and set in their ways and may become very angry and fierce if pressured to change.

Think Like a Child

To tell someone that they have deep-seated habits that need to change is obviously treading on dangerous ground. It is interesting that one contemporary described the scientific genius Michael Faraday as “that great mad child” — which in a positive sense was precisely what he was: childlike, playful, open-minded, receptive, intuitive, curious, a possibility thinker, eager to try new things.

Purposeful Play

The love making between a man and women is, of course, or should be, a form of adult play. And the message is that creative action is also a form of play, relaxed intimacy between you and the object of your affection. In counseling designers who would be more successful to adopt this unintellectual attitude international consultant Edward Matchett says: “The first step in the transformation is the one that is crucial. It MUST be one of purposeful play. No other action could ever produce it: true professionalism never arrived by any other route.”

Hidebound By Habits — Set in Your Ways?

As we have just seen, the lion is set in his ways, reacting instinctively and living his life, day after day in the same pattern, always employing the same old working methods that have brought him some success in the past. He catches a gazelle now and again, so why change? He is the king of the jungle, top of the food chain, and somewhat successful in what he does — but compared to a man, he is very limited but does not know it.

He may be a good lion, with powerful muscles and sharp claws, and be able to run very fast. He may be very proud and handsome and able to dominate those around him. But he is just a lion. If he wants to become a genius, he must become a man — able to think and plan and accept new ways of doing things. He must realize that the most successful human animals approach their creative work in a different way — not with ferociousness, brute strength and fear, but with joy, playfulness, and flexibility, and so are able to invent highly effective devices such as spears and nets and guns and very fast-moving vehicles which are good for chasing things.

What Solomon is talking about is the unbending mental rigidity and arrogance that afflicts so many an expert mind, one that has become unwilling to entertain and explore and acquire new and possibly more effective ways of thinking and working.

Along these lines, a further insight that might be drawn from this section could be the need to have the humility to consult others, perhaps by means of informal brainstorming over a cup of coffee, after the manner of Nobel Prize winner Francis Crick, rather than working in isolation.

The Characteristics of Genius

Matchett offers the following descriptors of the working method of true genius: “Flexible and adaptive . . . Uses anything for any purpose . . . Can stop and change in mid flight . . . Blazes new trails . . . Goes forward in uncertainty . . . Plays many roles well . . . Balance of male and female traits . . . Never works in the same way twice . . . Monitors own thought . . . Not constrained by training/education . . . Actions never predictable . . . Produces own approaches . . . Keeps shedding the past . . . Questions everything . . . Does whatever needs to be done . . . Distrusts research findings . . . A free being . . . Questions own beliefs continuously . . . Non-defensive openness”.

Voice of Experience:

“These are rigid people who try to control their emotions and so look rather cold and frozen in the extreme case. They are tense; they are constricted. And these are the people who in a normal state generally tend to be very orderly and very neat and very punctual and very systematic and very controlled . . . The ‘new’ is very threatening to such a person, but nothing new can happen to him if . . . he can freeze the world . . . if he can proceed into the future on the basis of well tried laws and rules . . . He is afraid of his emotions, or of his deepest intellectual urges, or his deepest self, which he desperately represses. He’s got to! Or else he feels he’ll go crazy” (Abraham Maslow — The Farther Reaches of Human Nature).

“And before I knew it I was playing . . . It was effortless. It was easy to play with those things. It was like uncorking a bottle. Everything flowed out effortlessly” (Richard Feynmann, Nobel physicist).

“My prime object is to help him discover weaknesses in his own thinking — and in the way his thinking is being disciplined by the controls placed upon it . . . How many scientists ever make a SINGLE breakthrough in the whole of their working life? How many technologists produce a single successful new technological system or commercially valuable product? Not many. Why? . . . Simply because their thought processes have not been properly disciplined” (Matchett — The Road to True Professionalism).

“In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s mind there are few” (Shunryu Suzuki).

“He was entirely free from pride and undue self assertion. During the growth of his powers he always thankfully accepted a correction, and made use of every expedient, however humble, which could make his work more effective in every detail.” (Encyclopedia Britannica, Eleventh Edition — Michael Faraday, inventor of the electric motor and dynamo).

“Success cloaks complacency . . . Success discourages criticism” (Alan Bartlett — Profile of the Entrepreneur)

“Try to listen to the call of that which needs to be brought into existence. All it requires is a certain inner stillness. Then be intent on doing nothing other than obeying what the need is commanding . . . keep practicing creating as though you yourself are almost incidental . . . Get out of the position of being an expert . . . This is the state in which the best of thoughts keep coming” (Edward Matchett — Creative Action).

Summary:

- 1) The lions typify rigid-minded people who proudly regard themselves as highly qualified experts, capable, experienced, and intelligent and quite capable of getting what they want without the help of the creative subconscious. Are you a lion? Are you influenced by other lions?
- 2) Many such rigid minded people are actually afraid of creativity, afraid of thinking and thinking and so analyzing and improving their working methods. Could you map out your working methods on paper and perhaps create a thinking model?
- 3) The truly creative person, in contrast, takes an open-minded, child-like, playful, humble approach, and is very flexible, always willing to listen and learn, and find better ways of doing things. Some highly creative people make a habit of informally Brainstorming with colleagues.

17 MULTI-SENSORY IMAGINATION

You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride

you have ravished by heart with a glance of your eyes

with one jewel of your necklace

How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!

How much better is your love than wine

and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!

Your lips distill nectar, my bride

Honey and milk are under your tongue

The scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon

Song of Solomon

In the previous section we read about the intellectual lions, those who look on themselves as experts, tough minded and rigorous logicians, serious professional thinkers who know all there is to know about their discipline and need lessons from nobody. In contrast, Solomon now describes the state of mind and practical working method of the true genius — one that is tuned into playful sensory experience, emotion, intuition and non-verbal channels of information exchange between the conscious and subconscious mind.

Sensitize Your Imagination

Notice, for example, the deliberate repetition, in the first line of this section, of the phrase “you have ravished my heart” and the allusions later to the senses of smell, touch and taste. The stress here is on non-verbal thinking and the need to sensitize the imaginations to other sources of information and ideas. Creative individuals actually try to get the “feel” of a project or problem, to discern its “color”, “taste” and “shape” — silly as this may seem to people of a more rigid frame of mind — and also explore and experience the human and emotional dimensions of the situation.

It's Not About Logic!

When Rolls Royce engineer Edward Matchett was commissioned by the British government, in the 1960's, to research the creative mind and traveled the world interviewing highly creative individuals such as Albert Einstein, he was astonished to find that their methods of working had little to do with logic, convention, the scientific method, intellectual rigor, and so forth, although they were of course masters of such matters.

These great thinkers were preoccupied instead with emotion, beauty, joy, love, childish delight, day-dreaming, awe, wonder and curiosity — with letting their whole being be ravished and lifted to its creative heights by music and the glorious beauty of natural things — a leaf, a tree, the sparkle of a drop of dew, an ant, the paws of a dog, the joy of breathing in the morning air, the fragrance of a flower, the touch of the hand, the taste of a piece of toast.

No wonder the great mathematician Godel would close his eyes and meditate and try to actually “see” concepts such as infinity. Creativity is a multi-sensory experience — as is stressed in these verses — a return to the Garden of Eden and a closeness to God and the inner creative essence. Or that Einstein would comment: "The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is good as dead".

Take Time to Smell the Roses — and Watch the Insects!

Take the time to gaze at the texture of an apple skin, the weave of a swatch of cloth, the grain of a piece of wood. Pause — as did Solomon, and other great creators such as Matisse and Blake — to observe a fly, a beetle, a spider, and marvel at the masterpieces of design with which God has surrounded us. Observe the leaves of a tree and see how they are all different, yet all the same. See the sparkle of the sun in a dew drop, be enthralled by the turbulent flow of water from a tap. Picture Solomon in all his glory, the mighty king of Israel, lover of a thousand women, the greatest genius the world has ever known, down on his knees observing tiny creatures like the ant in order to learn the lessons God has built into their behavior.

Savor Your Senses

Find ways to savor the magic of each of your senses. Smell a flower, touch a leaf, see the sky — and believe, and let the beauty flood your being. Having done these things, take a few moments later to close your eyes and try to re-create the experiences in your imagination. Open your mind and re-sensitize it to the magic of creation and you will begin to think like the great creators — and like God himself.

It was said of physics genius Richard Feynman that he found a wonderful joy in trying to understand nature and find out how it worked at the most fundamental level of quantum mechanics. In "The Beat of a Different Drum", biographer Jagdish Mehra says: "He could almost feel it with his hands. He liked to play the drums, so when he was doing physics he was always doing something with his hands. He liked to wave his arms and make sweeping gestures."

Many engineers and inventors find that holding and handling materials helps their creativity -- and as we saw earlier, artists often sit at their easel, savoring the smell of the paints and idly playing with their brushes in search of inspiration.

Writing Poetry

Giving advice on writing inspired poetry, British poet Ted Hughes says: "Imagine what you are writing about. See it and live it. Do not think laboriously, as if you were working out mental arithmetic. Just look at it, touch it, smell it, listen to it, turn yourself into it. When you do the words look after themselves like magic . . . You keep your eyes, your ears, your nose, your taste, your touch, your whole being on the thing you are turning into words . . . So you keep going as long as you can, then look back and see what you have written . . . You will have captured a spirit, a creature."

It is interesting to compare this advice with that offered to design engineers by Ted Matchett in his book "Creative Action": "Mentally crawl inside and amongst these things and also view them from miles away and from every side. Mentally blow them up and delight in watching them explode, collapse and curl over. Play music to them in your imagination. Dance with them and laugh as you enjoy the dance . . . Work at simply melting familiar forms. Treat it as a game. The act of creation should always be enjoyed . . . Such is the way of working that our creative giants have employed".

Voice of Experience

"The important thing to remember is to open ALL your senses fully — and to keep them open. Then real knowledge — the living media of the eternal — will always come in at the precise moment that it is needed, and with it genuine capability containing, and always producing, genuine appropriate form" (Edward Matchett — The Core of True Genius).

"It is up to you to infuse her with your own vision . . . Drawing consists not only of what is set down, but of what is not . . . Short brushstrokes, long brushstrokes, they don't matter, as long as you have sensitive-ness in your eyes. Your eyes must act as intermediary between you and the subject . . . Let your drawing flow, Rodin . . . Use your eyes. There is an art to seeing; to see well is the most difficult thing of all, it requires genius" (David Weiss — Rodin).

"The words of language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any part my mechanism of thought. The physical entities which seem to serve as elements of thought are . . . more less clear images which can be voluntarily reproduced and combined . . . This combinatory play seems to be the essential feature in productive thought." (Albert Einstein)

“Provide or imagine some of your favorite odors . . . What ideas do they suggest? . . . Consider some favorite flavors . . . and develop an aspect of taste into forming some other ideas . . . Touch some of the objects around you . . . How do they feel? . . . Relate textures and/or surfaces to other ideas for solving your problem” (Ruth Noller — Scratching the Surface of Creative Problem Solving).

Summary

- 1) Creativity, like sex, involves the emotions, and is not a cold, logical, analytical, mechanical process.
- 2) All the senses are God-given channels of communication for receiving information that can relax the mind and help you get in closer touch with the creative subconscious.

WORKSHOP

- 1) Take time to slow down, even for just a few minutes, and gaze at supposedly simple things, such as a piece of wood, a drop of dew, a flower, and let their beauty ravish your being.
- 2) Try to become more aware of all your senses, and savor the pleasure they can bring. Pause as you eat or drink something, stop thinking about other things, and simply savor the taste, also the texture, as well as the colors. Make time to stop doing anything else and listen to the sound of birds, or a piece of music. Relax and let it fill your being, change your thinking, and make you more sensitive to creative input. Likewise take a few moments to the touch of objects, leather, cloth, wood, and so on. Perhaps the exercise could be compared to opening wide the “eyes” of your senses.
- 3) Relax and try to recreate such sensory experiences in the mind’s eye.
- 4) No matter what your field of activity, relax and look for beauty in the ideas, products, and processes with your deal. Let it bring tears to your eyes.

18 CREATE APPROPRIATE FORM

A garden locked is my sister, my bride

a garden locked, a fountain sealed.

Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates

with all choicest fruits, henna with nard,

nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon

with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes

with all chief spices.

I am a garden fountain, a well of living water

and flowing streams from Lebanon.

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind!

Blow upon my garden, let its fragrance be wafted abroad.

Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.

I come to my garden, my sister, my bride

I gather my myrrh with my spice

I eat my honeycomb with my honey

I drink my wine with my milk

Eat, O friends, and drink: drink deeply, O lovers!

Song of Songs

Earlier in the “Song”, Solomon described the methods by which unique and beautiful creative projects can be inspired, or conceived, in the mind, and carried through to completion in all areas of human endeavor, but here he is concerned with more practical projects — problem solving and design, the achievement of specific, carefully identified purposes — as typified by the conscious and deliberate sowing and growing of plants in a garden.

Psychological Soil

The human mind, it seems, is somewhat like the soil in a garden or field, a medium in which seeds can be supported, given access to water, air, and nutrients, and given space to germinate and develop — a magical garden where images of new physical possibilities can be designed, discovered, and developed.

As Solomon expresses it, the girl’s mind is like a potentially productive walled garden that is locked up, neglected and unused, a fertile patch of psychological soil, lying drying in the sun because the fountain that should water it has been blocked up too. What is needed to bring it to life is water, and the lover says

that he is a prolific source of water — likening himself to a fountain, a well and also a stream, fed by the massive melting snowpack of the Lebanon mountains. His water can make that garden productive and cause it to bring forth a rich harvest of useful, practical produce, such as honey, milk, wine, and others described below.

Once again, we are encouraged to work in close cooperation with the creative subconscious, otherwise the soil will not be properly productive. Yet another clue to the fact that Solomon is talking here about the human mind is the fact that the garden is walled or “secret”, as some versions render it, a most private, inner part of our being.

Excellence Can Be Automatic

Although unique, creative projects begin with inspiration, many design and problem-solving projects can be undertaken without inspiration, by deliberately taking an idea — perhaps someone else’s idea — and implementing it, to achieve a practical purpose, just as we can deliberately sow and grow carrots and cabbages in a garden to provide food. Those carrots and cabbages, if given the right growing conditions and care, should be near-perfect, and our project, although no more unique than the carrots in our garden, should be equally excellent and beautiful. Excellence should be automatic.

Practical Ideas Are Like Seeds

A vital difference between creative and convention projects is illustrated in the metaphors by the fact that although the carrot and cabbage seeds may not be unique and could be sown by anybody, the reproductive process in man and the animals does actually begin by manufacturing a unique “seed”, a fertilized ovum. Not surprisingly, the ancients referred to a man’s children as his “seed” because there is a powerful parallel.

Plants illustrate important principles of practical creative thinking and problem solving — in particular the need to identify very specifically what it is you really want to achieve. Solomon describes in this section what one commentator terms a “utopian fantasy garden”, using its valuable produce as a metaphor for the practical creative activities in which we could become involved, reaping a rich harvest from the creative imagination. Although we prize the fruit, such as apples, we can also make extensive practical use of a variety of other plant products, as Solomon’s list actually illustrates.

For example, henna is a hair dye extracted from leaves and shoots, nard is an aromatic balsam from the trunk of a tree, saffron is a food flavoring and coloring made from flower stigmas, calamus has reedy stems that contain a perfume, cinnamon is a spice consisting of rolled strips of bark, incense is an aromatic gum, aloes is a laxative plant juice with many cosmetic uses, and myrrh is also a gum resin.

You Have to Stop Stopping It Happening

Horticulture offers many insights into excellence. For example, experience shows only too clearly that the good and poor gardener can start out with the same seed and get drastically different results. As already stated, the seeds contain the potential for perfection, and what the poor gardener does is to stop them fulfilling that potential, primarily by poor preparation and neglect. But perhaps it is more instructive to look at the positive things the good gardener does — such as thorough cultivation of the soil, use of fertilizer, weeding and protection from pests, and regular watering if there is not sufficient rain. Even though the good gardener cannot force the plants to grow, any more than the poor gardener can, he attains excellence by stopping stopping them growing.

In the same way, a teacher cannot make a child learn but he or she can certainly hinder the progress of that child by lack of attention and encouragement, confusing and poorly structured presentations, inadequate and inferior teaching materials, and so on. Solomon’s metaphor of the mind as a patch of psychological soil would seem to have some connection with Froebel’s concept of the child (German — *kinder*) as a plant and the school as a garden — a *kinder-garten* — pervaded by the sunshine of love, attention and encouragement.

Why We Have a Patent Office

The principle of the plant model, and the seed-like nature of ideas, was illustrated in a television program about the life of Frank Whittle, the British inventor of the gas turbine jet engine back in the 1940’s. Whittle realized that to attain maximum efficiency and speed, a plane would have to fly at high altitudes where the air was sparse enough to reduce drag but too thin for an ordinary piston engine to suck in enough oxygen to burn its fuel properly. He realized that a revolutionary new source of motive power was needed, and found the solution by adapting the principle of the steam turbine.

Because the British military authorities at the time failed to grasp the immense importance of his idea — just as their Victorian forebears had assured the inventor of the screw propeller that British Navy ships would certainly never make use of such a strange device — Whittle took the precaution with the help of a fellow Air Force recruit who had been a patent agent before the war of obtaining the legal protection his brilliant invention merited.

As a result, because the patent was not secret, Hitler’s scientists in Germany were informed and were able to simply steal the idea and actually succeeded in getting a successful jet fighter plane off the drawing board and into the air before the conservative Brits woke up to the value of what was being offered to them.

Given Whittle’s seed-like solution to an aeronautical problem, the brilliant Luftwaffe engineers were able to create “jet engine-ness” just as any gardener can create “carrot-ness” once the seeds are available. It is simply because of this seed-like nature of such practical ideas that the Patent Office was set up in the first place.

Satisfying the True Needs of the Situation

As we have seen, the genetic content of the seed chosen by a gardener or farmer must enable it to create plants which satisfy a particular set of needs — such as flavor and texture, shape and size, growing season and climate, soil type, disease and pest resistance, storage life, and of course nutrition, with different varieties of seeds satisfying such needs to differing degrees.

The Optimum Solution

In the field of engineering, Edward Matchett found that a resolute commitment to meticulously identify and then fully satisfy the needs of a particular situation can transform the performance of even experienced designers, enabling them to achieve the excellence he describes as “Appropriate Form”, which is defined as being “the optimum solution to the sum of the true needs of a particular set of circumstances”.

Excellence Depends on a Blend of Ingredients

Marketing experts recognize, for example, that the excellence of a product such as a washing machine or a service, such as a retail operation, also depends — like the flavor of a cup of coffee — on a variety of factors. The needs to be considered in a typical design situation might include: function (speed of operation, smoothness, precision, quietness, user friendliness, versatility, training needs), form (beauty, size, compactness, ease of assembly, storage and transportation), cost of manufacture (simplicity, choice of materials, use of standard components), economy of operation (fuel efficiency, waste, ease of servicing, durability), safety and environmental impact.

Appropriate Form in Fast Food

Appropriate Form does not necessarily mean the biggest, fastest or strongest. A good illustration here might be a fast-food restaurant, because although many have been set up, based on the same basic idea, some are excellent and some are not. What the excellent restaurant should provide is delicious food that is hopefully nutritious, at a reasonable price in pleasant surroundings. The burgers do not have to be gigantic, but appropriate to normal adult and child appetites. There does not need to be a vast menu, but a diversity of choice that is appropriate to the taste of most people, including vegetarians. The furniture and furnishings do not need to be expensive but clean, comfortable and attractive to a quality appropriate to the standards of acceptability of the bulk of customers — at least in the particular segment of the market that is being targeted.

A Commitment to Excellence

In developing McDonalds restaurants into a global success, Ray Krock and his helpers were meticulous in identifying and satisfying needs such as these, and fought long and hard to make sure franchisees maintained the required standards of portion size, price, cleanliness and service. While McDonalds flourished, a number of businesses that had been set up earlier on similar lines simply withered because a complacent and often greedy top management lacked Krock’s commitment to excellence and Appropriate Forms of product and service.

There is no particular magic in recognizing that needs exist. The creative magic resides rather in the absolute commitment to fully identify and then satisfy each and every one of them. Do not neglect, however, to seek the help and guidance of the creative mind in finding and fulfilling those needs. As indicated in the last verse, we should regard the project as his project, and his input will ensure excellent produce.

This requires relaxation, quiet meditation, the gentle rotation of attention over all aspects of the problem situation, the posing of questions, and the patient waiting for insights and the growth of understanding.

Voice of Experience

“True needs will always be the same, irrespective of the looker . . . needs are needs. They are as real as stars and as universal in their distribution. Anyone can recognize a true need . . . anyone who truly wishes to do so. Which, obviously, means you. But you must be clear concerning how you guard against self deception. It is done by always desiring to know Truth, with a capital T . . . by refusing to compromise on your own integrity” (Matchett — The Core of True Genius).

"What is this UNDERSTANDING? It consists in an intuitive non-graphable awareness of perfection . . . This awareness of perfection serves as a universal yardstick relative to which any sense experience may be measured, and by virtue of which CONSCIOUS SELECTION may be made. 'This is a better pair of shoes.' How does one know? Because it the more closely approximates a 'perfect' pair — the 'perfect' pair that will never hurt, wear out, become dirty, or have weight. 'Perfect', though impossible of demonstration, is nonetheless the criterion of selection. 'Perfect' is not only a direction, but a time direction, 'perfection' being never in 'reality' attainable" (Buckminster Fuller — Nine Chains to the Moon).

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word . . . Others, like the seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop — thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown’ “ (Mark 4).

“Try to listen to the call of that which needs to be brought into existence. All it requires is a certain inner stillness. Then be intent on doing nothing other than obeying what the need is commanding . . . keep practicing creating as though you yourself are almost incidental . . . Get out of the position of being an expert . . . This is the state in which the best of thoughts keep coming” (Edward Matchett — Creative Action).

Summary

- 1) You can undertake practical creative projects without an initial inspiration, just as a gardener deliberately sows seeds and produces flowers and vegetables. Useful ideas are like seeds, which is why we have a patent process.
- 2) Practical projects are undertaken in order to fulfill specific needs. Those needs, typified by the genetic content of a seed, should be meticulously identified in advance and should guide every step of the work. Seek to create Edward Matchett’s Appropriate Form — the optimum solution to the sum of the needs of the situation.
- 3) The good gardener stops stopping his plants growing by making sure they get sufficient light, water, and nutrients and are kept free of weeds. How can you apply the parallel principles to your project?
- 4) When working, it is important to keep stopping and consulting the creative mind and seek its help and guidance, working like the girl in a subservient role, getting your work checked over.

WORKSHOP

As an exercise in thinking about thinking, start making a flow chart or some kind of model of how to approach a problem or design situation in order to achieve excellence. Include formal creative techniques and checks and reminders on attitudes, assumptions, and barriers to excellence. Complete it after studying the remainder of this section.

19 THE CITY INSIDE YOUR HEAD

I slept, but my heart was awake, in a dream

Hark! my beloved is knocking. "Open to me, my sister

my love, my dove, my perfect one

For my head is wet with dew, my locks with

the drops of the night."

I had put off my garment, must I put it on again?

I had bathed my feet, must I soil them?

My beloved put his hand to the latch

and my heart was thrilled within me

I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh

my fingers with liquid myrrh, upon the handles of the bolt.

I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone

My soul failed me at his departure. I sought him, but found him not

I called him, but he gave me no answer.

The watchmen found me, as they went about in the city

They beat me, they wounded me, they took away my mantle

those watchmen on the walls

Song of Songs

Here the girl is sleeping with her "heart awake", implying perhaps a kind of creative reverie, sometimes called the "hypnogogic state", a highly relaxed and receptive state of mind that exists just before dropping off to sleep and on waking up in the morning.

Tennyson's Waking Trance

Many creative people deliberately access this state at other times of the day to help them do their work by using relaxation routines, such as progressive muscle relaxation. In words very reminiscent of those in the "Song", the poet Tennyson said that as a child he had learned how, when all alone, to go into "a kind of waking trance".

The immensely successful Sir Walter Scott, who wrote "Ivanhoe" among many other works, found, as others have done, that if he meditated on a problem when he went to bed, then he invariably found the solution next morning as he lay relaxed before rising. Robert Louis Stevenson had a habit of making specific requests of his subconscious mind before he went to sleep, asking it to help him develop a current story or even find ideas for a good new one.

The Twilight Zone

In a newspaper interview, Paul McCartney described how he wrote the song "Yellow Submarine" when relaxed in bed just before dropping off to sleep: "I always find it a very comfortable zone . . . you've laid your burdens down from the day and there's this little limbo land just before you dip into sleep. I remember thinking that a children's song would be quite a good idea and I thought of images and the colour yellow came to me and a submarine came to me, and I thought, well, that's nice . . . I just made up a little tune in my head then started making a story, sort of an ancient mariner telling the young kids where he lived . . . written for Ringo in that twilight moment". Notice the familiar features in his comment -- relaxed in bed, thinking in images, not mentally striving, a passive receptive state of mind.

The Power of Conditioned Responses

Although the girl hears the lover and would normally be eager to respond, on this occasion she hesitates because she has already undressed and gone to bed, having removed her garments and her shoes. Her conditioned response is a reluctance to break with that habitual routine way of doing things.

The important lesson may be that the girl does not respond because the suggestions of her lover — typifying new ideas and possibilities — are at odds with her habitual ways of thinking and working, in conflict with convention, as typified by her normal, unquestioned bedtime routine. He is, in fact, asking her to reverse her normal procedure. An additional implication might also be that her routine has closed her mind, as typified by the house, which is shut up and door bolted, perhaps the normal state of mind of the majority of people.

The Thought Police Again — Keepers of the Status Quo

When she does finally respond and get the door open, it is too late, and the lover is gone — probably driven away by the patrolling Watchmen. Once again she goes out to search for him, and once again encounters the Watchmen, the thought police whose job it is to secure the status quo, drive inquiring souls back into hiding, and put an abrupt end to this silly creative nonsense. The girl should not have been out alone at that hour. It was not the done thing. There was a creative curfew in force! They apparently, also acting on the basis of unquestioned assumption, thought she was a prostitute trying to slip back home and ripped off her veil to get a better look at her.

Notice also the girl's attitude, even towards her lover. Such is the strength of her habitual way of acting and reacting that she says, in effect, "Why should I? Why should I change the way I do things, the way I am, the way I used to be before you came along? Why should I bother?" The message may be that we must begin to think about thinking, and take conscious charge of the deep-seated and comfortable attitudes that can cause us to respond robotically and artificially and unnecessarily limit our creative action.

Ask your creative subconscious to help you become aware of the power and influence of attitude. When you are in the middle of a project, simply stop and take a few moments to reflect on the way attitudes may be limiting your thinking — What am I overlooking? What am I assuming? What am I refusing to consider? What am I not bothering to do? What is unthinkable?

The Constraints of Convention

How is convention holding you back in your creative work, denying your access to break-through ideas? What assumptions, conventions, traditions do you need to question? Creative breakthroughs are often made by simply reversing the accepted approach, typified by the girl getting out of bed and putting her clothes back on. Can you think the unthinkable — bigger instead of smaller, thin instead of thick, yes instead of no, inside out, back to front, and so on.

Even the best ideas may seem silly at first, and even the wildest of ideas may contain a valuable break-through principle if carefully analyzed. The son of the British engineer Barnes Wallace, who invented the spinning, bouncing bomb used by the RAF to destroy enemy dams during World War II, commented in a radio interview that the idea of skimming the spinning bombs along the water surface, the way a child skims flat stones on a pond, was just a "silly suggestion" that someone made when all other ideas had failed.

Unspoken assumptions limit the use of the imagination simply by putting certain areas out of bounds — saying, in effect, "Don't waste your time looking in that direction, I'm sure you won't find any useful ideas there." It is a bit like looking for a lost golf ball — you search and search in the logical places, the places where you know it has to be, then finally you look in the impossible places, and there it is!

The Power of the Watchment

The fact that the Watchmen are mentioned on two occasions in the Song suggests that they typify something very important. In addition to being uncritically open-minded to new ideas, as we saw when we encountered the Watchmen earlier, it is also necessary to remove the blinkers of convention and conditioning which may still remain. As stated previously, the Watchmen may well equate with that part or function of the mind that Freud termed the Super-ego, which acts as a kind of conscience or judge for the ideas created by the Id, the intuitive subconscious mind. In fact, this second posse of Watchmen appear to be more zealous and forceful than the colleagues she encountered earlier.

As we have already seen, and will examine from a different angle in a moment, the Super-ego is not a reliable guide, having apparently been “programmed” by our previous education and experience. It can, however, be deliberately “re-programmed” by the conscious use of positive affirmations, as we also saw earlier, into the adoption of a new set of assessment criteria.

False Ideas

We all harbor illusions, falsehoods that we have accepted as absolute truth, and it is important to realize that the ideas we already hold in our minds — put there during our education and upbringing — provide the criteria by which we judge any new ideas that come along and try to enter. Sometimes those illusions may be so strong, and a new idea seem so contrary, that we may get angry and verbally attack the person who offers it, just as the Watchmen attacked the girl.

Unless we are earnestly and sincerely seeking after Truth — instead of assuming we already possess it — we may well deny ourselves new understandings and breakthroughs. In other words, our thinking limits our thinking! I am reminded here of the director of the U.S. Patent Office some decades ago who resigned his post, saying, in so many words: “We have steam engines and gas lights. What more can there be to invent?”

I Think, Therefore I Am — I Assume!

When Isaac Newton formulated the laws of motion, which are still used by NASA engineers in their space flight calculations, he assumed that the mass of an object was fixed. This was an obvious, common sense thing to do, but more recently, Albert Einstein showed that the mass of an object depends on its speed — and that even time apparently flows by at different rates for observers in relative motion, and that matter can be converted into pure energy, and vice versa.

The world is far, far more complex than previously assumed, to the extent that scientists are beginning to suspect that even the so-called physical constants — absolute bedrocks of physics — such as the speed of light, may in fact be slowly changing! Just about the only thing we can safely assume in this world is that we can assume very little!

The genius is a free thinker, like the great French mathematician Rene Descartes centuries ago, who made a habit of questioning everything — retreating finally to the narrow, axiomatic basis of certainty that “I think, therefore I exist”. Any assertion beyond that, he felt, could be fraught with assumptions, and should therefore be meticulously scrutinized prior to acceptance.

Can Electrons Think?

So utterly strange is the behavior of the most fundamental particles of matter, that some scientists are speaking, still tongue in cheek at the moment perhaps, of the “psychology of the electron”. Scientists are of course not quite sure that there are any “fundamental” particles of matter, and that perhaps, as Aristotle asserted so long ago, particles of matter are simply temporary accretions of an endlessly divisible spirit fluid — in direct contradiction to the teaching of Democritus whose “atomic” theory which has held sway in recent centuries, especially since the discovery of the chemical elements, namely that in dividing up matter we will finally arrive at a minute “un-cuttable” piece, the Greek term for which is “a-tom”

Solomon's Powerful Metaphor of Mind

The city in the “Song” is, in fact, a powerful metaphor for the mind. As we grow up our mind becomes populated by ideas, knowledge, insights and understanding which are typified by the citizens of that city. It is a cosmopolitan city with occupants of all kinds from all over the world — all trying to live in harmony and peace.

As we mature, and law and order is established, troublesome outsiders are a threat to stability and are not welcome, so the citizens get together to appoint trustworthy Watchmen, the ancient equivalent of a police force, to keep them out and drive them away. And if someone already inside begins to disturb the peace, like the girl wandering around after curfew, they will be forcibly dealt with too. The city must be allowed to sleep peacefully.

Over the years, we have sorted out what is True and what is False, what is right and what is wrong, what is normal and what is not, what is acceptable and what is not. Then, like the ancient city the mind becomes closed to outsiders — with thick, high walls and with Watchmen patrolling within.

To gain entry, new ideas have to come humbly to the gate and be vetted by the Watchmen. If they are suitable, respectable new thoughts — nicely in harmony with the existing citizens — then they may be admitted and found a place to stay. The Watchmen help keep life simple.

Are You Sleepwalking?

It is claimed that many, perhaps most, people in the world are “sleepwalking” through their lives. Like the city in the “Song”, their minds are asleep. It is not surprising, then, that the few people who have woken up and released their creativity — be it in the arts, music, science or business — are often regarded as race apart, as “genius”, magically moved and inspired by some “muse” or strange supernatural power.

Of course, with time the “city” can change and dominant beliefs can come and go. For example, when Charles Darwin first proposed his theory of Evolution, it was zealously attacked by the Watchmen because the majority of people had been taught and accepted a quite erroneous version of Biblical creation. Now, however, the situation has reversed, and children are taught that Evolution is true and that the Biblical account of creation is simplistic nonsense, or at the best merely metaphorical — to the extent that the educated person who now dares to suggest that the Genesis account of the creation of man is literally true is looked on as mad.

The Origin of Dreams

Some translators take the first verse of this section of the “Song” to be referring to the dream state, a condition in which we are not actually fully asleep, because although the mind — the heart — is cut off from normal sensory input, it is still awake to input from the imagination. Dreams do in fact vividly demonstrate, and should convince us of, the incredible creative power of that imagination. In Ecclesiastes (5:3), Solomon indicates that dreams are generated by the concerns of the day, which is perhaps why psychiatrists have found that studying the content of dreams can be a valuable way to analyze personal problems and worries.

Such is the power of the creative mind, apparently, it can analyze and understand painful or puzzling experiences and translate them into metaphorical parallels that we can more easily and dispassionately analyze and understand, with a bit of reflection. These can be communicated to us as dreams. Bear in mind, however, that Solomon adds the caution in verse 7 of the same chapter of Ecclesiastes that much dreaming is meaningless — although, as we saw earlier with the Random Word method, almost any object or experience can offer insights into a problem situation.

It is not surprising therefore that people have been known to find the solutions to practical problems by means of their dreams. For example, Elias Howe, the inventor of the sewing machine — and special needle with an eye at its point — found the breakthrough he needed to make his machine work when he dreamed about being taken captive by natives. As they surrounded him, he noticed that the spears they carried each had an eye-shaped hole in the tip of its blade. Eureka!

Messages from the Subconscious

It seems evident, then, that one way the creative mind can communicate with the conscious mind — and provide answers to the questions we pose to it — is by means of dreams, and this may well be one of several insights that Solomon intends this section to teach us. Notice, however, that Howe had previously spent some time struggling with his problem so that the solution received came in direct response to a need that had been communicated to the creative mind earlier.

To illustrate the point more simply at a personal level, a friend of mine had a dream in which he was busily planting some plants in someone else’s garden, conscious all the time that it was a stupid thing to do, but he kept going. Later in the dream, of course, the other person arrived and made a big fuss, much to my friend’s embarrassment. On waking and thinking about the dream, he found a fairly obvious meaning in it. Although he was concerned about his health, he had for some time been knowingly undermining it in a very

foolish way, but had not faced up to the seriousness of what he was doing. The dream woke him up to the reality of the situation and he immediately made the necessary changes in his life.

Using Dreams to Solve Problems

In her book “Creative Breakthroughs”, Jill Morrison describes how some people make a deliberate habit of seeking answers to problems by means of their dreams. To do this, when they go to bed, before dropping off to sleep, they simply repeat a carefully worded question several times, in effect asking their creative mind for an answer. We do this naturally when we are very concerned about something. The required answer may then come in a dream or directly to the mind as an insight, sooner or later, perhaps next day at some odd moment.

In problem solving it is very important to clarify what you want to achieve, and Jill Morrison offers the following advice regarding the formulation of dream questions: 1) You must have a genuine desire to find the answer, 2) Keep the questions short, candid, to the point, and 3) Avoid asking for yes or no answers, but rather for understanding. The use of dreams in this way — taking advantage of the naturally relaxed state that occurs in sleep — would seem to be a useful adjunct to the more purposeful creative techniques discussed earlier which can be employed at will anytime.

Anthony Robbins suggests that the key differences between successful and un-successful people is that the successful ones make a habit of asking and finding answers to important questions, rather than simply drifting passively through life. Jill Morrison’s “dreamwork” approach would seem to offer an effective way to enlist the assistance of the creative mind in focusing on literally hundreds of such questions each year, simply by spending a few minutes each night reflecting on the events of the day gone by and formulating questions such as: “How could I have handled that situation better today . . . What is holding me back in my career . . . What plans should I be making? . . . How could we improve our marriage . . . ?”

Voice of Experience

“Cubism emerges clearly as one of the major transformations in Western Art. As revolutionary as the discoveries of Einstein or Freud, the discoveries of Cubism contravened principles that prevailed for centuries . . . In place of the earlier perspective systems that determined the exact location of discrete objects in illusory space . . . Cubism proposed that the work of art was itself a reality that represented the very process by which nature is transformed into art.” (Robert Rosenblum — Cubism and Twentieth Century Art)

“When IBM discovered that it was not in the business of making office equipment or business machines, but that it was in the business of processing information, then it began to navigate with clear vision” (Marshal McLuhan — Understanding Media).

“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.” (Albert Einstein).

“I stress again that the key obstacle to acquiring practical capability and originality is the CONDITIONING to be found in most students . . . learned behavior, low self confidence, bloated pride, the fear of the unknown, the wish to ride a favorite hobby horse, and so many other trivia, get in the way of doing what should be both natural and easy” (Matchett — The Road to True Professionalism).

“Our image is in itself resistant to change. When it receives messages which conflict with it, its first impulse is to reject them as in some sense untrue . . . The stability or resistance to change of a knowledge structure also depends on its internal consistency and arrangement. There seems to be some kind of principle of minimization or internal strain at work which makes images stable and others unstable for purely internal reasons” (Kenneth Boulding — The Image).

“There are two types of students they wish on me. One type is the clerk, who wants to make straight lines, although there are no straight lines in nature, who wants to draw according to a rule, although there are no rules in life . . . Then there are the second type, who are rare, and where they come from you never know, who, a la Rembrandt, try to use their eyes, try to see their own way. Most artists see through their family, their teachers, their masters, the society in which they exist. But the second type, a la Rembrandt, learn to ignore these things and to see through their own eyes’ . . . August was in despair. He saw so little, so badly” (David Weiss — Rodin).

“Begin looking through different eyes at the world around you . . . You must practice for hours getting rid of familiar names and labels . . . Look at the spaces between and at the shadows rather than looking at what you had considered obvious until now. Mentally crawl inside and amongst these things and also view them from miles away and from every side. Mentally blow them up and delight in watching them explode, collapse and curl over. Play music to them in your imagination. Dance with them and laugh as you enjoy the dance . . . Treat it as a game. The act of creation should always be enjoyed . . . Such is the way of working that our creative giants have employed.” (Edward Matchett — Creative Action).

“The cause of our current social crises, he would have said, is a genetic defect within the nature of reason . . . Our current modes of rationality are not moving society forward into a better world. They are taking it further and further from that better world . . . It begins to be seen for what it really is — emotionally hollow, esthetically meaningless and spiritually empty” (Robert Persig — Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance).

Summary

- 1) The dreamy, hypnogogic state that occurs just before dropping off to sleep is a good relaxed time to meditate and get in touch with your creative mind.
- 2) Some successful people make a habit of posing questions to the subconscious before going to sleep. Sometimes the answers come in dreams and sometimes as insights next day.
- 3) Dreams are often metaphorical in nature and may contain important information from the subconscious. Many, however, are meaningless.
- 4) You may tend to reject creative ideas because they conflict with conventional ways and unquestioned values and habitual approaches.
- 5) It is very important to identify and challenge assumptions, and many good ideas are found by deliberately reversing normal procedures.
- 6) The city in the “Song” is a metaphor for the mind, and the patrolling Watchmen are the already accepted and now unquestioned but often erroneous ideas, assumptions, procedures and values which form an unreliable basis for evaluating new ideas. Thus our thinking limits our thinking.

WORKSHOP

We live our lives in a jungle of assumptions — carefully keeping to established paths, and constrained by often imaginary limitations and boundaries, habits, conventions, customs, normality, ignorance and illusion, false beliefs, misunderstandings and misinformation, perhaps like a dog unaware that his chain has finally worn through. We let the Watchmen that patrol our minds tell us what to do and what not to do, we unthinkingly accept their judgment of what is possible and impossible, good and bad, sensible and silly. In short, we stop really thinking for ourselves and let habit, assumption, and illusion take over.

What we must do instead, is challenge our initial reaction to any new idea, start thinking about thinking, monitor and modify our reactions, and become more fully aware of the limiting power of assumption. Perhaps this is why the great Irish writer Bernard Shaw said that he earned a living by making a habit of thinking at least once every day.

How can you challenge assumptions when you are not even aware of them? One simple but powerfully effective way — using the magic of the imagination or simply pen and paper — is to identify and state, say ten things that seem obvious and true about the situation with which you are working, and then deliberately reverse, exaggerate and/or minimize each one of them to produce some twenty or thirty new statements that serve to describe a different reality. These adapted statements then play the same part as the FEATURES in the earlier workshop on the use of metaphors.

For example, in thinking about improving railways, you might state that "Trucks do not go on railways". This might suggest that perhaps trucks could go on railways if we could lay concrete strips along both sides of a rail tracks then let large trucks use them in between scheduled train services.

Having done that, scan the new list of statements and to try to visualize and float each of the new descriptions in your imagination for a few seconds, pondering its implications and possibilities, waiting for creative INSIGHTS to emerge. If nothing is found, start the procedure again by writing ten new statements describing less obvious aspects of the status quo. Valuable insights will invariably be found. Finally, it may help to put the insights together and try to juggle them all in the mind, waiting for a magical new idea to emerge, a hot-spot.

20 YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS CONSULTANT

*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved
that you tell him I am sick with love.*

*What is your beloved more than another beloved
O fairest among women? What is your beloved more
than another beloved, that you adjure us?*

*My beloved is all radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand
His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven
His eyes are like doves beside springs of water, bathed in milk, fitly set.
His cheeks are like beds of spices, yielding fragrance
His lips are like lilies, distilling liquid myrrh.
His arms are rounded gold, set with jewels
His loins a shaft of ivory, encrusted with sapphires.*

*His legs are alabaster columns, set upon bases of gold
His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars
His whispers are most sweet, and he is altogether desirable
This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

*Whither has your beloved gone, O fairest among women?
Whither has your beloved turned, that we may seek help you find him?*

*My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices
to pasture his flock in the gardens, and to gather lilies
I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine
He pastures his flock among the lilies*

Song of Solomon

Here Solomon used vivid imagery to depict the creative mind — our powerful subconscious consultant and project manager — as an idealized, perfect but pleasant and approachable God-like being, a lover who is special, greater than others. Here, perhaps, is the “giant within” that Anthony Robbins urges the average man and woman to awaken. Here is the creative genius - that lives in the heart of each one of us, the creative spirit given by God to every human being with the intention of enabling them to improve the world — ready, willing and able to engender inspirations and impart insights. I suspect that the extensive length of this section is a clue to the importance of the subconscious mind in our creative endeavors.

The Subconscious Mind is Your Friend

With regard to intuition and insights, the lover is depicted also as a friend — an expert within — ready and willing to help and guide us, whispering sweet things to the girl, typifying the manner in which our creative mind imparts the exciting and valuable insights we need to carry out our creative and conventional projects.

The girl says also that he is a friend, pleasant and approachable, motivated only by love for us and concern for our success and well-being. Such insights and ideas are of particular importance in practical projects such as problem solving and design work, and it is important to learn to rely on this expert within for this help rather than the expertise of our conscious intellect.

Notice again that the creative subconscious whispers quietly to us, like a lover in an intimate situation. It will not shout and demand our attention and try to force its insights on us. Only if we create the right conditions and pay careful attention will those whispers be heard.

Do We Share the Mind of God?

In “100% Mind Power”, Jack Addington, lawyer-turned-Christian minister, says that successful people have learned to rely on the limitless source of creative ideas that can never be exhausted, the “Wisdom of the Ages” that is to be found deep in the heart of every human being — part of the “Universal Subconscious Mind” which we all apparently share as the literal “offspring” of God, as the Apostle Paul described human beings. Those ideas and inspirations, although readily available to each one of us, are easily overlooked when our minds are too busily occupied with other matters.

The Importance of Applying the Principles

The friends of the girl express their interest in helping finding this wonderful lover. The girl tells them that he will be found working in the garden, and I suspect that an important lesson here is that we shall not find our creative love by some kind of theoretical study or exercise, but by getting ourselves involved in a creative project, in which situation all the principles Solomon identifies will acquire relevant, practical significance.

Keep On Consulting the Creative Subconscious

It is worth repeating that the techniques described in this chapter should be used in close conjunction with the creative subconscious, constantly requesting its help, making it the project manager, so to speak. Even if you are writing music, a song, or poem — keep asking your subconscious consultant, in a prayerful and thankful attitude, to help you get it right, to help you see what comes next, how to improve a particular line or verse, and so on. Keep playing, rehearsing, reviewing, modifying and polishing what has already been produced every spare moment you can find.

Keep getting the conscious self out of the way — continually stopping, relaxing, and asking for help, then waiting patiently for the “sweet whispers” of insight you need to lend that creative magic to your work. Even when you have apparently completed the work, keep asking the creative mind to show you anything that needs to be added, deleted, changed, and improved.

Remember — Your Role Is a Female One

The description given here of the lover — again typifying the subconscious creative mind — is obviously very similar to the three descriptions of the girl, the key differences concerning gender. Once again we are reminded that there is a subconscious mind which is structured very much like the conscious mind, although much more powerful, and which apparently exists almost as if it were a separate person, as modern psychologists have been suggesting. The crucial differences in the anatomies of the two minds obviously have to do with their intended functions, as already discussed, so that the male, subconscious mind is equipped not only to communicate with the female conscious mind, but also to impregnate it with inspira-

tions which then develop in some kind of mental womb. All human beings possess this creative capability, but few ever make conscious deliberate use of it.

Voice of Experience:

“The great artists, writers, musicians, and poets became great because they acquire the habit of relying on ‘the still small voice’ which speaks from within through the faculty of the creative imagination . . . One of America’s most successful and best know financiers followed the habit of closing his eyes for two or three minutes before making a decision. When asked by he did this, he replied, ‘With my eyes closed, I am able to draw upon a source of superior intelligence.’” (Napoleon Hill, *Think and Grow Rich*)

“Success depends on adequate knowledge . . . sufficient knowledge of the special subject and with a variety of extraneous knowledge to produce new and original combinations of ideas. Technical skill must be so far developed that it is never a hindrance to the flow of ideas.” (Sir Francis Galton).

“He asked those innumerable questions which came to his lips almost as soon as he could walk . . . on one occasion he chased the old goose off her nest and tried to hatch out the eggs himself by sitting on them, just to satisfy a natural desire to know how it was done . . . He was [later in life] studying out something and usually had a book dealing with some scientific subject in his pocket. I you spoke to him he would answer intelligently enough but you could always see that he was thinking of something else when he was talking.” (The Life of Thomas Alva Edison)

“You don’t have tinker’s cuss of producing successful advertising unless you start by doing your homework. I have always found this extremely tedious, but there is no substitute for it. First study the product you are going to advertise. The more you know about it, the more likely your are to come up with a big idea for selling it” (David Ogilvy — Ogilvy on Advertising).

“But it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding” (Job 32:8).

“The true self is the heart and center of a real person. But beyond and above it — immeasurably greater, immeasurably more impressive, powerful, wise and loving — is Self with a large ‘S’ “ (Matchett — *The Road to True Professionalism*).

“The Lord said . . . Nothing they imagine to do will be impossible for them” (Genesis 11:6).

Summary:

- 1) The subconscious creative mind operates as if it were a separate powerfully intelligent person, a well endowed man with whom we must work as a female helper, and Eve to an Adam.
- 2) We should look on the subconscious mind as a friend whom God has provided to help us.
- 3) The subconscious whispers creative insights to us. It does not shout or demand our attention.
- 4) Even in practical projects we should constantly seek help and guidance from the subconscious rather than striving to do it all ourselves. Keep stopping and taking time to meditate and seek the insights and guidance you need to achieve excellence and solve problems.
- 5) Even the subconscious mind is limited by the knowledge we make available. It is important, therefore, to learn as much as you can and become intimately familiar with your subject, without ever regarding yourself as some kind of “expert”. In your chosen area this will be a pleasure and an obsession.

21 THINK VISUALLY

You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, comely as Jerusalem

terrible, awe inspiring as visions.

Turn away your eyes from me, for they disturb me.

Your hair is like a flock of goats, moving down the slopes of Gilead.

Your teeth are like a flock of ewes that have come up from the washing

all of them bear twins, not one among them is bereaved

Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.

There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and maidens without number

My dove, my perfect one, is unique, the darling of her mother

flawless to her that bore her.

The maidens saw her and called her happy

the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.

Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon

dazzling as the sun, awe inspiring as visions?

Song of Songs

In this the second description of the girl, we find her making full use of her eyes by peering seductively over the edge of her veil, dazzling the lover like the sun breaking over the horizon at dawn. She becomes a vision. How could he have overlooked their appeal in his previous analysis? And yet, as we shall see later, when we come to the third description, there is still another more potent and alluring asset remaining to be discovered.

Thinking in Pictures

There seems to be a special emphasis in this section on the visual — with references to the eyes, seeing, and the sun. Perhaps the clue we are looking for is the reference in first and last lines to “visions”. A vision is something that is seen in the mind rather than reality, and I suspect that Solomon is focusing our attention here on the creative use of the visual imagination — visualization. What might be described as the “vocal” imagination was discussed earlier in the chapter dealing with insights and intuition.

As already noted, the stress here seems to be on practical projects rather than literature and music, hence the emphasis on discovering and exploring new physical possibilities by the mental manipulation of images.

Einstein Did Not Think in Words

Comparing the description of the girl here with that given earlier, it is significant in the list of metaphors — for the eyes, teeth, hair, temples — that this time the lips are omitted. Perhaps this is another hint that the section is dealing with images and visualization, not with the lips, and, by implication words. It was Albert Einstein who said that words played no major part in his creative thinking, only images. Notice the stress on the visual in the last few verses, also, as the maidens admire the girl's appearance.

Although the term visualization literally means seeing images or pictures in the mind, the process extends to all the senses, and beyond that, because we can “visualize” sound, touch, taste, feel and also emotion. Although the girl and lover have no need of visualization, the text is not illustrated and Solomon does expect it of the reader.

Eidetic Imagery

The research of the British genius and student of genius Sir Francis Galton over a century ago, showed that young children have vivid visual imaginations, including what is called “eidetic imagery”, a photographic ability to look at writing then close their eyes and still see the page clearly enough in the mind's eye to read from it. Although the vast majority apparently lose this ability as they grow up, due to neglect, some people, such as Enid Blyton and Tesla, practice and retain it. Tesla, in fact, was deliberately trained in the skill of visualization by his parents.

How Designers Find New Fashions

Clothing designers make use of creative visualization by picturing a basic garment in the mind's eye and perhaps a person wearing it — then watching patiently with inner stillness, letting it take on new forms, patterns, shapes, colors, materials and decorations. By the same process the morphology of an ordinary animal can be transformed into a Disney cartoon figure.

How Top Writers Create Dialog

Creative writers, such as Enid Blyton and Barbara Cartland, visualized characters and listened as they spoke then wrote it down. Barbara Cartland in fact described in a TV interview how she would lie relaxed on a couch, visualize and listen to her characters, and dictate what they said to her secretary.

Charles Dickens described how he would sit and wait patiently for the characters he wanted to write about to appear in his imagination and start to act out scenes and generate dialogue. This is how the great creators work. Some composers visualize an imaginary person and ask him to play music or sing an original composition, which they later write down. Odd as this may seem, it is just another way of using the creative power that is demonstrated in our dreams.

Some business people picture famous individuals, such as Henry Ford, and ask them for advice in solving problems. These are simply games that can be played with the imagination. Such visualizations are a constant theme of the “Song”, and it is quite possible that Solomon actually wrote it by visualizing the various characters involved and listening as they generated the dialogue we have been reading.

How Choreographers Plan New Dance Routines

Choreographers visualize dancers moving to music, watching in the mind's eye as they spontaneously generate new movements. In a TV interview, Michael Flatley, dancing star of the phenomenally successful “River Dance” and later “Lord of the Dance” shows described how he had visualized his dancing success since the age of six and was often reproved by his teachers at school for daydreaming his future. He urged all children to follow their dreams in this fashion, insisting that what can be clearly visualized can also be achieved.

On another occasion he explained how all his innovative dance routines came from inside him, from the heart, visualized by the creative imagination. A choreographer who worked with Michael Jackson made almost identical comments in an interview. In my own experience, it is virtually impossible to hold any form steady and unchanging in the mind's eye, without it taking on new configurations.

An Orchestra Conductor Uses Visualization

The manner in which visualized images can be deliberately used to evoke a certain emotion and so access a desired state of mind was described by the legendary conductor Mstislav Rostropovich, who said that: “Whenever I conduct his music, I always see the face of Shostakovich, alive as it has always stayed in my heart and mind”.

Visualization in Physics

The creative engineer imagines himself inside a machine or even part of it, watching and waiting, looking for innovative mechanisms and processes to appear. The great British genius Michael Faraday sought to explain how some liquids could conduct electricity by picturing himself as a molecule in a solution, being pulled to both positive and negative plates. He realized that if the water caused neutral molecule split into two parts, one positive and the other negative — a process chemists now call dissociation — those could then be attracted away in opposite directions and so carry electricity through the solution.

These charged particles he called “ions” which is the Greek word for wanderer. Described by one rather cynical aristocrat as “That great mad child”, Faraday also conceived the lines of force model that is still used in physics to describe magnetic fields. After he had demonstrated his newly invented dynamo to members of parliament, one skeptic said “Yes, but what earthly good is it Mister Farady?” — to which the great genius replied “What good is new born baby, sir?”

Visualization in Psychotherapy

Psychiatrists such as Carl Jung encouraged patients to break negative and destructive behavior patterns by visualizing and reliving painful situations, then practicing responding in more positive and creative ways. This is how genius makes use of the imagination in the process of Internal Creativity. All human beings have this capability to explore and understand structure and make deliberate creative modifications to it.

How Engineers Use Imagination

This powerful problem-solving technique of using visualization to make adaptations and improvements to existing systems and structures is typified in nature by the way a plant such as a vine grows and develops, budding and branching, getting bigger, thicker and stronger, reaching out in new directions. Most progress in technology takes place in this manner, as existing products are gradually improved, bit by bit, year by year. When we see an amazing piece of technology, it is important to remember that it is the result of endless improvements over a number of years. To make those incremental improvements, top engineers and designers visualize structures and allow their subconscious mind to mutate them into innovative new forms.

Reminder — Don't Forget to Rely on Your Subconscious Consultant

As stressed earlier, it is important to use the technique of visualization in close cooperation with the creative subconscious — your giant intellectual friend within. Keep asking questions and requesting guidance as you visualize, in order to direct the process most productively, as we saw with Synectics. Rotate your questioning over the various elements of the structure of the situation — and keep listening for insights.

Voice of Experience

“I shut my eyes for a few minutes, with my portable typewriter on my knees — I make my mind go blank and wait — and then, as clearly as I would see real children, my characters stand before me in my mind’s eye . . . As I look at them, the characters take on movement and life — they talk and laugh, and I hear them . . . The story is enacted in my mind’s eye almost as if I had a private cinema screen there . . . I watch and hear everything, writing it down with my typewriter” (Enid Blyton).

“I can’t understand anything in general unless I’m carrying along in my mind [i.e. visual imagination] a specific example and watching it too. Some people think in the beginning I’m kind of slow and I don’t understand the problem because I ask a lot of these dumb questions . . . He thinks I’m following the steps mathematically, but that’s not what I’m doing. I have the specific physical example of what he’s trying to analyze . . . so when the equation says it should behave so and so, I know that’s the wrong way around. I jump in and say “wait! There’s a mistake!” “ (Richard Feynmann, Nobel Prize winner in Physics).

"I shut my eyes in order to see" (Paul Gauguin — artist).

“To him thoughts are the most real things in the world; in fact, they seem to take on the attributes of matter and produce results accordingly. ‘When I was describing the poisoning of Emma Bovary,’ said Flaubert, ‘I had so strong a taste of arsenic in my mouth, I was myself so far poisoned that I had two consecutive fits of indigestion . . . real indigestion.’ . . . He says: ‘I have ridden with them in a forest on an autumn afternoon, under the falling leaves, and I was the horses, the leaves, the wind, the words they spoke, and the red sun which made them half close their eyelids heavy with love” (T. Sharper Knowlson — Originality).

“We ask students to visualize an apple in their minds, and many people have trouble even doing that” (Professor Robert McKim — in Marilee Zdenek’s *The Right Brain Experience*).

“I’ve always said that my writing is just simply putting down on paper what I see. I can see everything . . . Now that’s visual thinking . . . The characters in my books take over and do the writing for me . . . They take on a life of their own.” (Ib Melchior, Hollywood screenwriter, talking to Marilee Zdenek in *The Right Brain Experience*)

“By that faculty of visualizing . . . I have evolved what is, I believe, a new method of materializing inventive ideas and conceptions. It is a method which may be of great usefulness to any imaginative man, whether he is an inventor, businessman or artist.” (Nikola Tesla — *American Magazine*, April 1921)

“Lecoq stressed the use of the visual memory; he insisted that they soak themselves in what they saw so that they would be able to reproduce is completely from memory. But he also taught technique, how to use pen and pencil as well as chalk and crayon and charcoal” (David Weiss — *Rodin*).

“But in the landscaping jobs . . . Mentally, I become less than an inch high. I have to really get into it, a line begins to mean something. That line is a pool edge and I’m there and I begin to visualize it . . . And if I’m interrupted I have to come back to regular size” (Cleo Baldon, designer — in Marilee Zdenek’s *The Right Brain Experience*).

“Before I put a sketch on paper, the whole idea is worked out mentally. In my mind I change the construction, make improvements and operate the device . . . See my motor here; watch me reverse it . . . I cannot begin to describe my emotions . . . secrets of nature . . . I had wrested from her against all odds.” (Nikola Tesla)

“I have taught myself to write not so much by the study of verse technologically as by trusting my own ear . . . But the ear is not enough. There is also the eye. Not the eye of the oculist, but the mind’s eye, by which I mean the faculty of inward visualization . . . My thoughts — if one can call them that — have been, when allowed to have their own way, a series of mental pictures. Thinking in pictures is my natural method of self expression.” (Siegfried Sassoon)

“As I stood there with the razor in my hand . . . the Gillette razor was born — more with the rapidity of a dream than by a process of reasoning. In that moment I saw it all: the way the blade would be held in a holder; the idea of sharpening two opposite edges on a thin piece of steel; the clamping plates for the blade, with a handle halfway between the two edges of the blade. All this came more in pictures than conscious thought, as though the razor were already a finished thing and held before my eyes. I stood there before that mirror in a trance of joy . . . I could not foresee the trials and tribulations I was to pass through before the razor was a success. But I believed it with my whole heart” (King Gillette, quoted in *Brainstorms and Thunderbolts*).

“At one time it was golf balls, and as he walked absent mindedly through the laboratory, he was throwing and spinning imaginary balls” (Egon Larsen, describing the thinking methods of professor J.J. Thomson, discoverer of the electron — *The Cavendish Laboratory, Nursery of Genius*).

“Rutherford’s extreme power of concentration on a particular problem until he could see it from all angles . . . his vivid pictorial imagination in space and time of the events of the world of subatomic particles” (Egon Larsen, describing the thinking methods of Ernest Rutherford, discoverer of the atomic nucleus — *Cavendish Laboratory, Nursery of Genius*).

Summary

- 1) Visualisation, seeing things in the mind’s eye, is a theme throughout the “Song”, and is a God-given creative process by which we can envision a desired end and then set about finding ways to make it happen.
- 2) Good designers rely on the fact that visualized images, of a machine or item of clothing for example, are not stable and can spontaneously mutate into creative new forms.
- 3) Many successful writers rely on visualized images of characters to generate natural dialogue and take actions that direct the development of a story. Choreographers can use similar process.
- 4) Visualization is one way to undertake purposeful play with your subject. A designer, for example, may try to visualize people actually using and commenting on the piece of equipment he is trying to design.

5) Visualization is a way to rotate attention over all aspects of the structure of a situation, waiting for insights and spontaneous new forms to emerge. It can also be used to rehearse situations and plan how to handle them most effectively, as well as reviewing and reliving previous unsatisfactory situations in order to learn from them and see how things might have been done differently.

WORKSHOP

Visualization is critically important in creative work, as we have seen, and there is an infinite number of simple exercises for practicing it. For example, try to imagine yourself making a sandwich then eating it. Try to see the ingredients. Find the butter and the bread — look in the cupboard, open the refrigerator. Now slice the cheese. Touch it, feel the temperature and the texture. Open the jar of pickle . . . and so on. Assemble the sandwich and try to taste it and feel it in your mouth as you chew it.

Another simple exercise is to imagine yourself walking through the house, or driving down the road — trying to see and hear what is happening on the way.

Here are some more simple ideas but you can make up many more yourself:

Picture a ball. Let it change color, going through the colors of the rainbow.

Let the ball grow then shrink.

See it bouncing on a surface — faster/slower, higher/lower.

Zoom in to see it close up, then so far away it disappears.

Turn it into a cube, a pyramid, a cylinder, a disk.

Spin the ball on a fingertip.

Cut it in half with a knife, then quarters — apply some glue and join them back together.

Turn it into an apple, a pear, an orange, a football, a golf ball.

Turn it to lead and mentally heft it to feel the weight. Turn it to aluminum then cork.

Turn it to Plasticine and beat it with a mallet.

Make it explode and come back together again.

Turn it to wax and melt it with a blow torch.

Try to visualize the molecules in a glass of water, vibrating and rushing about, colliding with one another like snooker balls, bouncing back off the sides, some shooting out of the surface and evaporating and crashing into more ponderous molecules of the air. Mentally heat the water and see the molecules speed up, see pockets of steam forming. Pretend you are a molecule or riding on one. Let your imagination take flight.

Count up to 20, trying to see the numerals being written on a chalk board or on paper. Visualize numbers at random — 34, 98, 103, etc. Try to see your date of birth, your age.

Recite the alphabet, seeing each letter in a variety of colors, capital and lower case. Try to visualize words with objects to match — such as dog, box, ball, bird. Pick up one of the letters and stretch it like a piece of elastic, then let it pop back to shape.

The seven principles or insights in this section form a cohesive package, all relating to the matter of Practical Creativity, and are arranged in a parallel pattern that is characteristic of Hebrew poetry.

The central thrust of the section is the achievement of excellence by the implementation of seed-like ideas — the creation of Appropriate Form — in meeting needs in a design situation as typified by the way a good gardener grows plants in a garden. The supporting insights are arranged around this in three complementary pairs.

First and last come the tools of thinking metaphorically and visually, the two key skills that need to be cultivated.

Next, the second and sixth insights are nicely complementary — first the warning against being a rigid-minded, inflexible expert who needs no help from anybody, then the injunction to let the creative giant within be in charge of the project, instead, with us working as an assistant, and Eve to our super-intelligent Adam, willing to do as he directs.

The remaining pair of insights are also complementary — first the need to open up the imagination to receive information from different sensory inputs, then the need identify and challenge the conventions and assumptions that close in our thinking and blind us to creative new possibilities.

PART 5

PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

The focus of this penultimate group of principles seems to be that those who would aspire to excellence and wish to deliberately access their creativity regularly, perhaps on a daily basis, should approach their work in an organized manner, with the total commitment of what would today be described as a professional. The foregoing sections of the “Song” have dealt basically with principles and techniques, but professionalism is also about attitudes and character.

You have to “be” a professional — a person who is in love with what they do, one who never stops learning and who is obsessed with attaining the beauty of patient perfection. There is more to it than aptitude and knowledge. The stress in this chapter, then, is on attitudes and habits.

As noted earlier, the thinking of the creative giants, as we have seen it described, is no different in kind to the thinking other people have experienced — except that it is applied more patiently, more passively, more diligently, more persistently, more obsessively, more thoroughly, more precisely, more visually, more metaphorically, more sensually, more joyfully, more humbly, more expectantly, more iconoclastically, and more courageously.

22 THE CREATIVE MOOD

*I went down to the nut orchard
to look at the blossoms of the valley
to see whether the vines had budded
whether the pomegranates were in bloom.*

*Before I was aware
my fancy set me in a chariot beside my prince*

Song of Songs

The last line of this section of the “Song” is a particular mystery, and commentators tell us that no sensible, meaningful translation has even been given, one of them describing it as a “hopelessly corrupt verse”. I suspect that it and the previous verse are in fact talking about the creative mood, the relaxed state of mind we have seen described in which the creative mind works most efficiently. The fact that Solomon puts this principle in first position in this section is an indication of its importance, for the first step in the working day of the professional creator is the cultivation of the creative mood.

The Creative Mood

When we get deeply engrossed in something, we sometimes suddenly come back to reality and say “Oh, I got carried away!”, and I suspect that the girl’s escape into the mindscape of the imagination, into the creative mood — into the company of her lover, who apparently comes in his chariot to fetch her — is precisely the significance intended by Solomon, and it seems appropriate that he should draw our attention to this experience right here at the start of the sections dealing with the systematic and deliberate, professional use of the creative mind.

If you try to launch straight into creative work as you would into a physical task such as painting a wall or washing the dishes, you will probably find yourself mentally striving and intellectualizing, which is not what you want. It is important, therefore — vitally important — to take time to clear the mind of other concerns, to relax, to switch off the torrent of logical thought, and get into the euphoric creative mood, and achieve intimate contact with the creative subconscious mind.

How to Access the Creative Mood

One way access this mood, as the first verse suggests, is to review and meditate on the work you have produced so far, delighting in it, playing with it, savoring it, and letting it re-create the emotion that is appropriate to it, that led to its inspiration perhaps. This is probably easier for musicians because of the emotion of the music, but even scientists, engineers, and business people find that there is a mood appropriate to what they are working on, one that may even bring tears to their eyes as they contemplate its beauty.

Some professional creators begin each working session by systematically working through muscle relaxation exercises. They might also spend some time gazing at beautiful objects and listening to music. Some composers, for example, work by playing an established melody then, when they feel like it, improvising, letting their creative mind carry them off in a new direction. In the creative mood, when you become fully immersed in your work, ideas begin to flow in a magical fashion. The implication of the “Song” is that your creative subconscious, your prince, will be drawn and even come and carry you away, so to speak. In other words, you will become deeply engrossed into what might today be described as an altered state of consciousness, and a very highly creative one.

Sometimes It Takes Time

One top comedy writer and best-selling novelist said in a TV interview that he has to sit at his word processor for an hour and sometimes two hours before he gets into the right mood, and his creativity starts to flow, and ideas start to come. Similarly, Charles Dickens sometimes had to sit for hours staring out of the window, day-dreaming and doodling to get into the right mood, the mood that Beethoven called his “raptus”.

Vincent van Gogh said: “I have a very great lucidity, at moments when nature is so beautiful. I am not conscious of myself anymore, and the pictures come to me as if in a dream”. It is important to relax body and mind and patiently seek this mood, rather than forcing your work, struggling and striving and producing something of inferior quality.

In “The Soul of a New Machine”, Tracy Kidder describes how a computer engineer charged with writing the micro code programming for a new computer would sit for days before a blank pad before insights and ideas began to flow, and he finally began to feel that he was himself “a micro code writing machine”. How easy it would have been for the engineer to have given up after a few hours and decide that he was not creatively capable enough to do the job, or to mechanically strive to generate some inferior material.

Get Out of the Wrong Mood

As with the physical parallel of love making, getting into the right mood, involves first getting out of the wrong mood, by stopping doing other things and taking time, adequate time, to relax and play with your love. Obviously, this takes time and peace and quiet. You cannot switch the creative mood on like a light.

We should not confuse the creative mood with the process of inspiration discussed earlier. It is simply the fully relaxed state of mind in which we gain full access to our subconscious mind and the imagination. Using the plant metaphor again, the mood might be likened to a warm sunny day, one on which plants can thrive and grow. In contrast, our non-creative mood might be likened to a cold, cloudy day, when growth is at minimum. Notice however that even on the gloomy day, the sun is still there, but it is obscured, waiting for the clouds to go away.

Using a Mantra

Alfred Lord Tennyson, regarded by many as the greatest poet Britain has ever produced, seems to have learned at an early age how to access the right mood. His method of relaxing was to keep repeating his name, just as today some people seek a deep state of relaxation by using a mantra — a word or sound repeated to aid relaxation, coming from a Sanskrit word meaning “instrument of thought”.

It would seem obvious that the res: “The poet tells us later in life that he used to go into a kind of trance . . . ‘a kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone.’ . . . He induced it by repeating his own name until his individuality ‘seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being! . . . There is no delusion in this matter! It is no nebulous ecstasy, but a state of transcendent wonder associated with absolute clearness of mind.’ “

In “The Varieties of Religious Experience”, psychologist William James says that Tennyson’s experience is actually very common, but perhaps not commonly spoken of. It simply means that the mind is capable of switching off the mundane matters of the day and attaining a natural relaxed, creative state.

The Tennyson Technique

It is interesting to notice some key points in what Tennyson says. First, he had to be alone and relaxed, as we saw earlier with Mozart. Incidentally, it is interesting that Mozart was a friend of the hypnotist Mesmer, who would have been familiar with relaxation techniques, and with whom he must have discussed such matters as creativity. Second he stopped exerting his own “self”, again as we have already seen stressed a number of times — so that he was not struggling and striving to get ideas and somehow get a poem underway. Third, it was the state of boundless joy and wonder and clarity, fully open to receive inspirations and insights arriving from the creative mind. And fourth, as noted earlier, a waking trance, the very same state of mind described by the girl in an earlier section.

Using Mandalas

In “The Right Brain Experience”, Marylee Zdenek encourages readers to use another aid to switching off the dominant logical thought processes, namely drawing and passively gazing at mandalas — geometric patterns composed of series of concentric forms — which she claims have been used for centuries by mystics to increase “concentration” (i.e. relaxation?) and to achieve a mental state receptive to spiritual

enlightenment. Mandalas are apparently common in the stained glass windows of European churches and cathedrals. The technique she suggests is to simply sit and quietly gaze at the center of the mandala for several minutes, but taking care not to start trying to analyze the pattern. Perhaps it is significant that flowers seem to have a mandalic design to them, as does the iris of the human eye.

Using Poetry and Music to Access the Mood

Reading poetry, such as the “Song of Songs” itself is also an aid to interrupting the default flow of logical, analytical thought and getting in touch with the creative self. As you read, let your emotions move you, picture the images portrayed, meditate on the metaphors, and let your imagination take flight. Genius Nikola Tesla, inventor of the alternating current dynamo and the only scientist ever to refuse a Nobel Prize, had a habit of reciting poetry by Goethe to help him attain the creative mood.

Perhaps Einstein played his violin for the same reason. In the jargon of the modern neurolinguistic linguistic psychology (NLP), such individuals were perhaps developing specific “anchors” or associative triggers to help them access this desired state of mind when they wanted to.

Overcoming a Creative Block

If, for example, you are getting bogged down trying to write a song or poem, and find yourself mentally striving and producing trite, mechanical stuff, it can help to simply stop and spend fifteen or twenty minutes or so listening to music, letting it relax you and stir your emotions. Then, when you come back to the song, you will find that the magical phrases you need will start to flow, perhaps bringing tears streaming down your face. That is how it works. Let it happen.

What About Muses?

As already noted, in this section Solomon is speaking of what psychologists would today describe as an “altered state of awareness”, one in which the girl is, metaphorically, visited by the lover and carried away in his chariot, in other words getting deeply and fully into a relaxed, creative mood. He is not suggesting that there is some kind of supernatural being that comes to whisk you away. He is simply using appropriate metaphors to describe the normal and natural, if poorly understood, working of the human mind God has given us.

There would seem to be some similarity here with the ancient Greek idea that the creative action was a consequence of being visited by a “muse” (Greek — ‘thinker’), some kind of female spirit. Originally there were supposedly three muses, who presided over the production of artistic works, the term “music” originally embracing all the arts, in contrast to the term “gymnastic” which referred to development of the body, the term deriving from the Greek for naked.

Later, according to Homer, there were nine Muses, goddesses of song, dwelling on Mount Olympus, where they sang at banquets. Having experienced the creative mood, and having been taught the somewhat distorted Greek idea, many creative people still speak of “courting the Muse”.

Where Does Inspiration Come From?

The implication of the “Song” is that, as psychologists are coming to suspect, the creative power we can call on is not some supernatural external source, but one residing within us — the subconscious mind. This view is supported elsewhere in the Bible, where, in the account of the Tower of Babel, God himself offers the following testimony to the creative power inherent in man, saying: “Now nothing that they imagine to do shall be impossible to them” (Genesis 11:6).

When the young composer Moscheles sent the score of “Fidelio” to Beethoven for him to critique, he wrote on the bottom a note saying: “Finished, with God’s help”. When Beethoven returned the manuscript, he added a further note: “O Man, help yourself!” What we “court”, then, is not some mysterious muse, but our own subconscious creative mind.

Voice of Experience

“John took great care in crafting the lyrics . . . He sat at the piano in the living room before lunch or dinner and played until he sank into a deep, trance-like state where the missing words just came to him from ‘above’. He explained that the trick was to allow the mind to go blank.” (Frederic Seaman — John Lennon, Living on Borrowed Time).

"It was a mental state of happiness about as complete as I have ever known in life. Ideas came in an uninterrupted stream and my only difficulty was to hold them fast. The pieces of apparatus I conceived were to me absolutely real in every detail, even to the minutest marks and signs of wear" (Nikolas Tesla, scientist — Autobiography).

"Let the reader but remember what he knows of biography, especially that of poets, novelists, essayists, painters, and musicians, and he will see that the vagaries of the artistic temperament take on the semblance of rationality. Their lackadaisical habits . . . their bohemianism and their fits of laziness were part and parcel of their intellectual method; unconsciously they obeyed a psychological law which demands . . . partial day-dreaming if the best results are to be forthcoming" (T. Sharper Knowlson — Originality).

"In that trance-like condition, which is the prerequisite of all true creative effort, I feel that I am one with this vibrating Force, that is omniscient, and that I can draw upon it to an extent that is limited only by my own capacity to do so" (Richard Wagner, composer).

I find that there are places to go in the mind, beyond images, beyond words. Where the sensation is blissful. And euphoric . . . I was actually able to stay there for several months one time. I was able to have that state whenever I wanted to, no matter what I was doing. Then the old habits settled in and I lost the capacity to stay in that state as much as I would like" (Professor Robert McKim — in Marilee Zdenek's *The Right Brain Experience*).

"It's just that I put myself in the state of mind of what I'm working on. I don't know whether I believe in God or not . . . But the essential thing is to put oneself in a frame of mind which is close to that of prayer" (Henri Matisse, painter).

"The successful process of thought . . . is not so much an active one as a passive one. In short, the thinker dreams over his subject" (Sir Francis Galton).

"Writing micro code is like nothing else in my life. For days there's nothing coming out. The empty yellow pad sits there in front of me, reminding me of my inadequacy. Finally it starts to come. I feel good. That feeds it, and finally I get into a mental state where I'm a microcode writing machine." (Carl Alsing — *The Soul of a New Machine*).

"Flow — the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter, the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it." (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi — *Flow, the Psychology of Optimal Experience*)

"The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; and, as imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." (William Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*).

"For oft, when on my couch I lie, in vacant or in pensive mood, They flash upon that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude; And then my heart with pleasure fills, and dances with the daffodils" (William Wordsworth — describing his working method in his famous poem, 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud').

"Shelly found that munching bread was helpful in composing, just as Addison and Sheridan liked to have a bottle of wine handy, and Schiller a flask of Old Rhenish — also rotten apples in his desk . . . Dr Johnson needed a purring cat, and orange peel and tea within reach. Jokai could not write unless he had violet ink . . . Thomas Hardy, prior to beginning work, always removed his boots or slippers . . . some require motor excitation; they work only when walking or else prepared for work by physical exercise. And yet there are others, who, like Milton, Descartes, Leibnitz, and Rossini, find the horizontal position more advantageous . . . Immediate surroundings have a great deal to do with mental processes" (T. Sharper Knowlson — Originality).

"When my work does not advance I retire into the oratory with my rosary and say an Ave; immediately ideas come to me" (Lombroso — Hayden, *Man of Genius*).

"In proportion, as these conditions of ordinary consciousness were subtracted, the sense of an underlying or essential consciousness acquired intensity. At last nothing remained but a pure, absolute, abstract self . . . beholding life for the first time in all its young intoxication of loveliness, in its unspeakable joy, beauty and importance . . . I saw all the usual things in a miraculous new light . . . I saw for the first time how wildly beautiful and joyous, beyond any words of mine to describe, is the whole of life" (Michael Paffard — *The Unattended Moment*).

“The first thing I do when I am conscious of the coming of a poem is to seek paper and pencil. It seems as though simply gazing at a piece of blank paper hypnotizes me into an awareness of the subconscious . . . I find that the concentration needed for this is in the nature of a trance, although is too exaggerated a word for it.” (Amy Lowell, poet)

“In sleep fantasy takes the form of dreams. But in waking life too we continue to dream below the threshold of consciousness . . . Active imagination is a matter of allowing the natural mind time and freedom to express itself spontaneously . . . This is a knack which, given patience, anyone can acquire. Active imagination requires a state of reverie, halfway between sleep and waking.” (Anthony Stevens — On Jung)

Summary

- 1) There is totally absorbed, relaxed state of mind, known as the creative mood, in which you achieve intimate contact with your creative subconscious.
- 2) It is important to take time to cultivate the creative mood by means of purposeful play before getting started on a project. Always remember that you are working in partnership with the creative subconscious. Make this part of your professional approach.
- 3) Some people use muscle relaxation routines to help them do this. Reading poetry is also a useful technique, also listening to music.

23 THINK UNTIL IT HURTS

Return, return, O Shulammite, return, return, that we may look upon you

Why do you want to watch me as I dance between the rows of onlookers?

How graceful are you feet in sandals, O queenly maiden!

Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand

Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine

Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies

Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle

Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon

by the gate of Bath-rabbim.

Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, overlooking Damascus.

Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple

A king is held captive in the tresses. How fair and pleasant you are

O loved one, delectable maiden!

You are stately as a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters

I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its branches

Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine

and scent of your breath like apples, and your kisses like the best wine

that goes down smoothly, gliding over the lips and teeth

Song of Songs

Here the lover attempts to describe and define the girl's beauty and allure for the third time — the number three, like the number seven, signifying completion in Biblical matters. A clue to Solomon's purpose here is the fact that whereas the previous two descriptions were very repetitious, new details are now added, as he describes her neck and mouth, her breath and posture, reflecting a more thorough analysis of the situation.

Reversal

It seems significant, also, that in this third analysis of the girl's charms, the lover takes a reverse approach — a classic creative ploy — starting from the feet instead of the head.

Some people exploit the reversal principle, a major thrust of lateral thinking, by using the other hand to write or paint, finding that this can often stimulate their creativity and bring out new ideas and insights. In

an attempt to become more aware of, and break out of, habitual patterns of acting and thinking, some people also deliberately change their routine way of doing things, forcing themselves to try different foods, read different newspapers, watch different TV programs, dress differently, adopt different morning routines, and so on.

Dynamic Images

Notice, too, that as the lover describes the girl this third time she is dancing, demonstrating an enthralling and powerful asset that was overlooked on the previous two occasions— namely, movement! The images generated by the imagination are dynamic, not static, which is why they can be used to create dialogue, dance steps, cartoon characters and innovative new designs, as discussed earlier. The designer simply observes passively and watches and waits for magical new forms or arrangements to appear out of the misty mindscape of the imagination.

Pierro Ferrucci comments on this important phenomenon in "Inevitable Grace", saying: "Everything the mind creates as though by some magic spell, comes to life . . . Jung called this phenomenon 'reality of soul'. Internal images are not inert, but have an independent life of their own, are as real as living things. What Jung discovered was an instrument for inner exploration not unfamiliar to many artists who had already been using it as a means of increasing their creative powers. In some cases the images themselves appear and speak." This is a perfectly normal, powerful and productive function of the imagination.

Return, Return, Return, Return!

However, the clue to Solomon's main intent here is, I suspect, found in the first line, where he says: "Return, return . . . return, return . . . that we may look upon you" — and so notice the things we overlooked on the previous two occasions! This is Solomon's advice with regard to a problem situation — keep coming back, again and again and again and again, in order to explore and understand its structure more fully. Never be content with your initial analysis of a situation because, as with any situation in life, there will always be hidden subtleties that do not immediately emerge — until we look with hindsight and see things that were actually evident all along, but that were impatiently overlooked.

Look for the Hidden Dimensions

His main purpose, then, is to teach us the power and importance of meticulous, repeated and unusually persistent analysis of the structure of a situation, digging under the surface and probing the hidden and intangible dimensions — which is what he did himself when, soon after becoming king of Israel, he was required to decide the case of the two prostitutes who both demanded custody of the same small newly-born baby. His famous judgment — that the baby be cut in half and a piece given to each claimant — given in an age where the literal execution of such a violent sentence was all too possible, caused the real mother to immediately identify herself by urging the king to give her baby to the other woman. What Solomon had done was to look beyond the surface facts, circumstantial evidence and the testimonies of witnesses, and perceive the emotional dimensions of the situation.

Reading the account, one wonders why the woman whose baby had died would even want the other baby and the responsibility of caring for it. Could it be that both babies had been illicitly fathered by a wealthy man who, the false claimant knew, would provide well for both baby and mother, thereby relieving her of the need to carry on plying her unsavory trade? As usual, in any situation, there are hidden dimensions waiting to be explored and interesting possibilities to be teased out by patient meditation.

Be Obsessively Persistent

In your creative work, then, keep visualizing and playing and listening to your heart until the ideas you need appear. Keep searching and looking for hidden dimensions, new angles, new approaches. Analyze, analyze, analyze, analyze! Be like a dog with a bone. Never give up prematurely in your search for the beauty of perfection, elegance and simplicity and new possibilities — be unusually thorough and obsessively persistent.

That I believe is the lesson of this section. How many people who have thought of a business plan, the beginning of poem or song, or an idea for novel or an invention, ever go back to it time and again, day by day, week by week, month by month if necessary, in order to think it through thoroughly, keep playing with it, and cherishing it from the moment they rise in morning until the time the drop off to sleep at night, polishing and smoothing every detail, and gradually turn it into a creative reality, a work of excellence, an inspired masterpiece?

Such analysis is also critically important, of course, in the arts. It was Rodin who said: "Where shall we begin? There is no beginning. Start where you arrive! Stop before what entices you. And work! You will enter little by little into the entirety. Method will be born in proportion to your interest; elements which your attention at first separates in order to analyse them, will unite to compose the whole" (The Cathedrals of France).

Think Until It Hurts

The critical importance of extreme and unusual persistence in teasing out structure in a business situation was stressed by billionaire Lord Thomson, and quoted by John Adair in "Effective Decision Making". To be successful, Thomson counseled: "One must worry a problem in one's mind until it seems there cannot be another aspect of it that hasn't yet been considered . . . one must think until it hurts." Notice the word "aspect". All too often, Thomson, said, a problem seems completely impossible to solve and the temptation is to simply give in and go away, a temptation he had learned to resist.

Tease Out the Structure of the Situation

Top consultants insist that no two business situations are ever exactly the same, and even a small business has complex structures involving visible and invisible, tangible and intangible, human and emotional factors — mechanical and electrical equipment, credit and banking, personnel, communication, advertising, transport, storage and security systems, plus a complex profit mechanism. Many of these structures may not even be fully understood by the people operating the business, just as the driver of a vehicle may have no idea at all about what happens under the bonnet or what to do if something goes wrong. It follows that any attempt to improve or repair such a structure will require very careful analysis and a teasing out of structure and relationships before the situation is properly understood.

Structure and the Sales Person

Successful sales reps are trained to identify both the features and benefits of their product. Their task is to move the prospect beyond an appreciation of the immediate and obvious features of their product — its physical attributes and performance — and lead them through an exploration of the structure and mechanics of the situation in order to anticipate and appreciate the benefits that could accrue in the way of increased sales, economies of time, and so on, and then combine these with price in order to quantify the intangible and elusive thing called "value". The appeal, of course, all the time is to the emotions, encouraging and helping the client to visualize and savor those benefits.

Developing a Creative Edge

An additional insight here is the fact that excellence — as with the girl's beauty and attraction — results from the combination of various factors. This gestalt principle that the combined effect is greater than the sum of the parts is very important in business. By taking time to teasing out the component parts of a product or service, and then judiciously tweaking some of them, a company can develop a creative edge over the competition. In the same way, careful analysis of the structure of a business can identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities for growth and under-exploited assets — human as well as physical — that could be put to much better use.

Find a Model

The successful businessman, says Alan Bartlett in "Profile of the Entrepreneur", continually strives to analyze and understand the mechanics of the market in which he operates. "Having created and discarded a large number of theoretical models," he says, "the entrepreneur focuses on the one that in his view is best suited to achieve his purposes."

Fractionate the Situation

Likewise, the successful soccer coach analyses the minute mechanics of every aspect of the game. The successful teacher identifies and analyses the dynamic variables that control teaching and learning. The successful salesman analyses the psychology and sequence of the selling process. Adherents of Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) seek to analyze the anatomy of excellence in any field with a view to enabling others to achieve it, teasing out every cause and effect relationship, every emotion, every attitude, every psychomotor action.

In a similar manner, a century earlier, Eli Whitney analyzed and minutely "fractionated" the steps by which skilled gunsmiths produced guns, resulting in the low-cost mass production of identical weapons

with easily interchangeable components, thereby enabling damaged guns to be quickly repaired on the battle field. The modern movement for “re-engineering” business organizations depends on the same process of meticulous analysis of structure and function.

The Importance of Exhaustive Analysis

The successful advertising agency exhaustively analyses the product or service it has to sell in order to discover its “unique selling proposition”, the special feature that offers the buyer a valuable benefit. In “Madison Avenue”, advertising great, Rosser Reeves, is quoted as saying: “We can’t sell a product unless it is a good product, and even then we can’t sell it unless we can find the unique selling proposition. There are three rules for a U.S.P. First, you need a definite proposition: buy this product and you get this specific benefit . . . Then, second, it must be a unique proposition, one which the opposition does not or cannot offer. Third, this proposition must sell.”

Commenting on the diligent analysis required to do this, David Ogilvy says: “You don’t stand a tinker’s cuss of producing successful advertising unless you start by doing your homework. I have always found this extremely tedious, but there is no substitute for it.” Having done his research, Ogilvy counsels relaxation in order to “unhook your rational thought processes” and open up the “telephone line from your unconscious.” His particular way to relax, he says, is a hot bath and a bottle of good wine.

The Importance of Understanding Structure

A thorough understanding of structure is fundamental to invention, design, marketing, innovation and excellence in any field — as is a comprehensive knowledge of the standard forms and structures that have been developed over the centuries in fields such as poetry and literature in general. The prolific Enid Blyton, for example, was fully conversant with and wrote articles about techniques such as plotting and characterization. Books on creative drawing, for example, usually lay great stress on first mastering basic techniques such as perspective, proportion, observation, and so on.

Lateral Thinking and Brainstorming both consist simply of techniques for teasing out and then manipulating the structural elements of a situation in order to solve a problem or find a creative new approach. The principles are clearly demonstrated in any garden where an immense variety of plants has been created by varying every possible factor — numbers of petals and stamen, color, internal and external dimensions of all component parts, shapes of leaves, textures of surfaces, and so on. Simple but effective Brainstorming techniques are described in the Workshop at the end of this section.

The Value of Structure to an Entrepreneur

The value of understanding structure, and then being able to tweak it in simple ways, is also well illustrated in “It Ain’t as Easy as It Looks”, in which biographer Porter Bibb describes how Ted Turner built up to his world-wide CNN television empire — which grew to be more profitable than the big three US networks that had a long head start on him — by starting out with just one tiny, bankrupt local UHF station in Atlanta, Georgia.

Whilst the other local stations, all with powerful network backing, vied for the same audience with crime and police series, depicting endless violence and psychological problems, Turner, who could not afford such programming anyway, began showing old movies and sitcoms from his childhood, escapist family entertainment that ordinary working people wanted — such as “Lassie”, “I Love Lucy”, “Father Knows Best” and “Leave It to Beaver”.

Whilst the others offered crime, rape and murder — and in color — Turner went for family values, thereby achieving another bit of contrary thinking at the same time by giving unique new value to the black and white materials that were cheaply available because the other stations did not want them.

This stress on family values was then made the basis of his advertising sales pitch. The audience may not be big, he told potential advertisers, but they are of above the average mentality — they had to be in those days, Bibb comments, to be able to operate the primitive UHF tuning systems on their TV sets. Turner also pointed out to sponsors that their slick color ads would stand out a mile on this black and white station, thereby giving them “shock value”!

Turner next went after the news, or rather the people who did not want to watch the news that was forced fed to them in unison by the trio of network-backed stations. When the big networks said it was news time for everybody, Turner started showing “Star Trek” reruns. Similarly, when the standard practice was to rent films for a set number of showings, he always tried to purchase them outright, even though they were

the oldest and cheapest available. He could then show them as often as he wanted, and in the end his patient, far-sighted but simple policy paid off and WTCG (which he jokingly said stood for Watch This Station Grow!) eventually became the single most profitable television station in the U.S.A.

Turning Weaknesses into Strengths

In ways such as these, he was able to achieve the goal of every contrary thinker, namely turning obvious weaknesses into strengths. Another reverse approach taken by Turner, which might be anathema to lesser businessmen, was to be generous in negotiating the prices he agreed to pay for programs, thereby making a lot of friends in the industry. Sometimes he simply trusted people and never even bothered to ask the price before closing a deal.

Contrary thinking is simple, just requiring a touch of creativity, but perhaps the big drawback is that it often offends the accepted wisdom of the Watchmen, so that most people lack the courage to do it. Turner's sales manager at the time, Tom Ashley, is reported by Bibb as saying: "At first, nobody took him seriously. Big mistake. He is eccentric. Maybe even crazy. But Turner's bright and he is driven. And he never gives up. I think Ted knew people were laughing at him back then . . . And now he's the guy with the last laugh."

Time for a Change?

It is interesting that in "Ecclesiastes", Solomon speaks of there being a time to laugh and a time to weep, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, and so on. In other words, there comes a time — due to changing circumstances — when it is appropriate to do just the reverse of what was the appropriate thing to do some time earlier! Successful entrepreneurs, such as Ted Turner, are on the look-out for those times.

Because the world is full of opposites — such as, thick/thin, fast/slow, long/short, inside/outside, up/down, weak/strong, right/left, male/female, child/adult, manual/automatic, etc., etc. — deliberate reversal — "contrary thinking" — is a particularly fruitful source for innovative new approaches, even in the most complex areas of modern technology.

Rocket designers, for example, have recently realized that the power-to-weight ratio of small rockets, can be far greater, by a factor of a hundred or more even, than that of large ones, which necessarily have to be made very strong because of the tremendous forces involved, and therefore very heavy. Much greater efficiency can therefore be obtained by simply bundling hundreds of very small ones. Their aim now is to minimize rather than maximize rocket size.

Meditate — Consult the Subconscious Mind

As already explained, the key to achieving understanding of structure and cause and effect relationships is patient meditation in cooperation with the creative subconscious. Like Newton, Tesla devoted many hours to the process. In his "Cambridge University Notebook", in a section headed "Imagination & Phantasia & Invention", Newton says that the imagination is aided by good air and fasting, but spoiled by drunkenness and gluttony, "commotion of ye spirits", and too much study.

Elsewhere he said that the secret of his great insight into science was that: "I keep the subject constantly before me, and wait till the first dawning opens slowly by little and little into clear light . . . Truth is the offspring of silence and unbroken meditation." As we have seen earlier, that silent, persistent, patient, playful and relaxed meditation often lasted for several solid hours at a stretch, day after day, week after week. Notice the word "unbroken".

Using Structure to Create Humor

As we saw earlier, humor can be created by the use of metaphors, but it can also be created by tweaking the structure of a situation in order to produce exaggeration and surprise, its two main ingredients. Some of the commonest methods of creating surprise are to suddenly switch to an alternative meaning of a word, and to lead the listener to assume that what is being said applies to one person, then apply it to someone else. For example: Joe: "I'm not going to school today. The teachers don't like, and the boys and girls don't like me either." Joe's mother: "Joe, You must go to school . . . after all, you are the headmaster!" Or, "I don't enjoy working in this school. All I get is rudeness, hostility, and laziness . . . And that's just the teachers!"

Or, "This school is so environmentally friendly, we use unleaded pencils!" Or, "I think I should have been a hypnotist . . . Every time I speak, people start falling asleep!" Or, "Did you know that there are eight vitamins in water? . . . Yes, H2O!"

The Victorian vicar Sydney Smith, able to reduce even Her “We are not amused!” Majesty to tears of laughter, confessed that he studied the principles of humor and was always on the look out for ways to create it, very often by means of exaggeration, for example, when he commented that a certain fat lady who was getting married was big enough to provide wives for all the bachelors in the parish, and that one morning he had set out to try to walk around her before breakfast, but got too hungry to complete the journey.

The Discipline of Writing Things Down

A secondary principle Solomon may be demonstrating in this section of the “Song”, in this third attempt at pinpointing the source of the girl’s attraction — a point perhaps so obvious that we easily overlook it — is the importance in problem solving of disciplining and organizing your thoughts by the simple expedient of writing them down, committing them to specific and hopefully unambiguous words and phrases, thereby clarifying the situation and redefining the problem over and over again until the mist of misunderstanding clears and a definite purpose appears. If you cannot capture a problem on paper in precise words, the chances are that you do not yet fully understand it. It is very easy to waffle ambiguously, when speaking.

Notice these words from the wise with regard to the need for meticulous analysis of structure in order to clearly identify the real problem and be able to state it with precision:

“The importance of developing a statement which reflects the ‘real’ problem cannot be overstated” (Csikszentmihalyi).

“The formulation of a problem is often more important than its solution which may be merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill” (Einstein).

“When problems are poorly defined or vaguely comprehended, one’s creative mind does not work sharply” (Ohmae).

It follows that it is crucially important to take adequate time — and make repeated efforts as Solomon has shown us — to properly identify and define problems. Many people are too impatient to do this, which is why it has also been said that for every problem situation there is always a solution which is plain and obvious — and wrong!

Structure in Problem Solving

In any situation there will be an large number of possibilities, and in solving a problem we are not looking for the one “correct” solution, but the feasible option that is most appropriate for us, in our particular situation, with our particular experience, knowledge and resources. Creative problem solvers obsessively explore the structure of the problem situation in search of many possible options.

Notice also these words of wisdom from the great Nikola Tesla: “After experiencing a desire to invent a particular thing, I may go on for months or years with the idea in the back of my head. Whenever I feel like it, I roam around in my imagination and think about the problem without deliberate concentration . . . I choose carefully the possible solutions of the particular problem I am considering and gradually center my mind on a narrow field of investigation. Now, when I am deliberately thinking of the problem in its specific features, I may begin to feel that I am going to find the solution. And the wonderful thing is that if I do feel this way, then I know I have really solved the problem and shall get what I am after.”

Tesla was an acknowledged scientific genius — unique also in that he refused the Nobel Prize, apparently because he was unwilling to share it with Thomas Edison whom he looked down on as a mere “inventor” — and perhaps we can learn some important principles from him. First, notice that he was very patient and did not try to force the creative process, taking months and sometimes years to develop an idea.

Second, he tackled a problem at the very highest level of generality rather than jumping in to attack the immediate, specific problem as first presented — i.e. he moved up the ladder of ends and means, thereby opening up a wide range of possible approaches, asking questions such as “Why do we need to solve this problem? What higher purpose will it achieve? Is there an alternative way of making that happen? — e.g.: ‘This appears to be an electrical problem, but could there be a mechanical solution?’ “

Identify the Options

Notice also that he “roamed around” in his imagination to discover a number of different alternative approaches before settling in on one specific solution. This was also the approach of Thomas Edison, regarded by many as America’s greatest ever inventive genius. His biographer Francis Jones said of him:

“Although capable of flashes of great genius, his mind is necessarily analytical, and when a problem is presented to his attention it may be safely presumed that most of its solutions will be considered by him and the most successful selected.”

In a similar fashion, the experienced copy writer generates dozens of headlines — even if he thinks the first one is excellent — before making a final choice. Nobel Prize winning chemist Linus Pauling said that the way to get good ideas was to get lots of ideas then throw the bad ones away. And in Brainstorming, Alex Osborne always taught that “Quantity brings quality”.

Structure in Brainstorming

An important principle of Brainstorming is that it is intended to involve several people, thereby not only increasing the input of ideas, but also consulting individuals who may have very different and valuable viewpoints on the structure and mechanics of the problem situation. In this regard, perhaps it is significant that in the first verse of this section the girl was dancing between two rows of onlookers — so that when one group watched her from the front, the other was getting a diametrically opposed view from the rear.

Classically, in any organization, the manager and the managed will necessarily have very different viewpoints on a problem situation and will be able to offer very different solutions. Related to this point, is the importance of using the imagination to try to take on other personas and try to glimpse the structure of the situation as they would — not just the famous, and accomplished “experts”, but a variety of people such as the postman, the milkman, your grandmother, a soldier, your old math teacher, and so on. Highly creative people play these kinds of games with their imagination.

Keep Returning

Finally, if you are composing music, writing a song or a poem, it is also important to keep returning to it, over and over again, day after day after day, every spare moment you can find. Keep reviewing and rehearsing what has already been produced. Keep rekindling the emotion. Keep playing with it, and you will find it magically growing, developing, and extending. And keep consulting the subconscious mind. Although works are sometimes produced very quickly, do not normally expect to sit down and create something in one sitting, any more than a woman produces a baby in one day, week, or month. Return, return — return, return.

Voice of Experience

“In this process [the design method called ‘Attribute listing’] the attributes or peculiar characteristics of a product or idea we wish to improve are carefully listed. Then step by step modifications or changes of those attributes should result in different and hopefully better products” (Robert Crawford).

‘Nightingale goes on to give several definitions of paleness in the face. Questions too are of the utmost importance, and they must be precise. Asking “Did you have a good night?” is inadequate. Far better would be to ask “How many hours did you sleep? Which hours of the night were they” ‘ (Pierro Ferrucci, quoting from Florence Nightingale’s nursing manual — “Inevitable Grace”).

“If I have any advice to pass on, as a successful man, it is this: if one wants to be successful, one must think; one must think until it hurts. One must worry a problem in one’s mind until it seems there cannot be another aspect of it that has not been considered . . . Thinking is work . . . When a difficult decision or problem arises, how easy it is, after looking at it superficially, to give up thinking about it . . . it is easy to decide that it is insoluble” (Lord Thomson — After I was Sixty).

“Rutherford’s extreme power of concentration on a particular problem until he could see it from all angles . . . his vivid pictorial imagination in space and time of the events of the world of subatomic particles” (Egon Larsen — The Cavendish Laboratory, Nursery of Genius).

“Kingdoms, empires, churches, armies have all been structured into hierarchies. Modern business is so structured — so much so that in some fields such as biology, the hierarchy of phylum-order-class-genus is almost an icon” (Robert Pirsig — Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance).

“ ‘I have been speculating last night,’ said Charles Darwin to Horace Darwin, ‘what makes a man a discoverer of undiscovered things; and a most perplexing problem it is. Many men who are very clever — much cleverer than the discoverers — never originate anything. As far as I can conjecture the art consists in habitually searching the causes and meaning of everything that occurs’ “ (T. Sharper Knowlson — Originality).

“When a problem is presented to his attention it may be safely presumed that most of its solutions will be considered by him and the most successful selected . . . If you honor wished him to, Mr. Edison could go into a field of grass a mile square and select from it the most perfect blade” (Francis Jones, quoting from the transcript of a court case — “Thomas Alva Edison: An Intimate Record”).

“Being effective in thinking seldom means copying successful competitors. It often entails going back to first principles, reflecting deeply upon the changing situation and coming out with products that creatively blend the old with the new” (C.E. Meyer, chief executive of Trans World Airlines — quoted by John Adair in *Effective Decision Making*).

“The line defines the concept, the form, the tone, the texture. There is the suave line, the lyrical line, the witty line, the decorative line” (David Weiss — Rodin).

“We were both looking at the same thing, seeing the same thing, talking about the same thing, thinking about the same thing, except he was looking, seeing, talking and thinking from a completely different dimension . . . John looks at the motorcycle and he sees steel in various shapes . . . I look at the shapes of the steel now and I see ideas. He thinks I’m working on parts. I’m working on concepts” (Robert Pirsig — *Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance*).

Summary

- 1) It is important to tease out, analyze, and understand every detail of the structure of a situation in which you seek to achieve excellence.
- 2) Become aware of and focus on the different, often invisible and intangible dimensions of the situation, such as human, communication, emotional, financial, and mechanical.
- 3) Commit yourself to be unusually and persistent in doing so, and devote repeated sessions to the process, always taking time to ask your subconscious mind to help you.
- 4) Trace the cause and effect chains that enable you to control variables and so predict the outcome of purposeful changes.
- 5) Use visualization and try reversing, eliminating, replacing, and generally modifying elements of the structure in order to find creative new ideas and solutions to problems.
- 6) In identifying problems, commit yourself to describing them in writing in specific, unambiguous terms. If you cannot do this, then you do not really understand the situation or know what the real problem is.

WORKSHOP

Lateral Thinking and Brainstorming both make extensive use of techniques for manipulating the structural elements of a situation in an effort to find creative new arrangements. In Brainstorming, Alex Osborn used a series of probing questions — which we can pose to our own imagination, if we prefer, rather than to a group of people — which was summarized by Eberle as the mnemonic SCAMPER — asking what can be:

SUBSTITUTED: Can we substitute some other person’s viewpoint of the problem situation — Margaret Thatcher, Adam and Eve, Robin Hood, your old math teacher, a plumber, a child, etc. — how would they see it, what might they suggest? This substitution can be carried in the imagination, as can those that follow — by pretending to really be these people, like an actor, speaking their dialogue.

COMBINED: Can we join things together in some way? Could we combine the car starter motor and dynamo into one unit? Could we combine car, house and contents insurance into one homeowner policy, based on a simple menu of variables?

ADAPTED: [Here Osborn actually introduced the metaphor principle by looking for ideas elsewhere, as already discussed.] What ready made idea or system or product could be adapted to our situation? What can we copy? Many years ago, General Motors ousted Ford as market leader by copying the retail methods of shoe makers and rationalizing the odd miscellany of motors cars produced by its family of component companies — such as Packard, Buick and Cadillac — and offering instead a coherent, integrated range of vehicles, neatly spanning the whole price range from economy to luxury.

MAGNIFIED/MINIFIED: What can be made bigger or smaller? Could a dairy magnify its delivery service to include telephone ordering of frozen food, videos, pizzas, pet supplies in the evening? Could the costs of doing this be minified by using the existing premises and vehicles and employing some of the existing work force on a casual overtime basis?

PUT TO OTHER USES: Many assets are under-utilized. Could we pay unemployed people a small extra wage and use them as tutors in schools? Could we turn a church building into coffee and book shop during the week to raise money, staffed by volunteers from the congregation?

ELIMINATED: What component or operation is actually un-necessary? How can we eliminate the time many teachers use making their own worksheets, simply because most text books, especially in science, are so poor? Could a school become a clearing center for particular subjects and topics, using the Internet — so teachers could submit sample worksheets and exchange expertise, a kind of electronic publishing resource for the whole world?

REARRANGED: Is there a better way? How could you rearrange the way you use your time at work and at home in order to enrich your life or your marriage, get more done, enjoy new experiences, start new hobbies and creative projects?

REVERSED: Reversal is a simple but powerfully productive ploy. Could we make felt tip pens so they could be refilled rather than thrown away?

Brainstorming can be carried out as a group activity, which has the advantage of tapping the knowledge, experience and novel viewpoints of others, but can also be done solo.

24 PLAN YOUR WORK AND WORK YOUR PLAN

I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me

Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields

and lodge in the villages

Let us go out early to the vineyards

and see whether the vines have budded

whether the grape blossoms have opened

and the pomegranates are in bloom.

There will I give you my breasts

Song of Songs

Here, the growth that the girl goes out to inspect in the field — the budding, blossoming, and growth that presents the creative work that is under way, and one of the messages must be that creative projects are not usually completed in one session but by a repeated process of working and waiting.

Give Your Creative Work Time to Grow

During the waiting period, the work, like the vine and other plants, continues to grow — expand incrementally, bud, branch, and blossom — and when you return to it, new growth — new insights and ideas — become available, the process psychologists now refer to as “incubation”. Related to this may be the phenomenon of “writers block”, which may be either a failure to relax or simply impatience with the growth rate of the project, in which case the practical solution may simply be to stop and come back again later, like the girl.

Rudyard Kipling's Method

The need to give a project time to develop in the imagination, was stressed by the great Rudyard Kipling, although he employs a different metaphor: “Read your first draft, and consider faithfully every paragraph, sentence and word, blacking out where requisite. Let it lie by to drain as long as possible. At the end of that time, re-read and you should find that it should bear a second shortening. Finally, read it aloud alone and at leisure . . . I have tales by me for three or five years which have shortened themselves yearly.”

Even if you are fully committed to perfection, and are fully aware of the “little foxes” principle described earlier, you must still allow time for creative growth to take place in the imagination, rather than trying to force the process to a premature conclusion, as with the birth of a baby.

As noted earlier, we should not expect to churn out creative work of any complexity at high speed, any more than a farmer expects his crops to grow to maturity over night. When a creative work is physically produced very quickly, it is usually because it has been fully gestated in the mind of the creator during the preceding days, weeks, or months. Bertrand Russell, for example, found that it was far easier to write — or think? — a book if he spend a long time planning, and organizing his material in his mind before sitting down at his typewriter.

Plan Your Work, then Work Your Plan

However, the main message of this section probably has to do with the adoption of a totally professional approach to creative work, with the need to plan your work and then work your plan, even when you do not “feel like it”, when you do not “feel” creative — and to persevere with obsessive determination. Charles Dickens, we are told, planned his working day according to a strict methodical schedule. From nine in the morning until two in the afternoon, he sat in his study writing. Sometimes this period was very productive, but sometimes he would be forced to sit and doodle and stare out of the window, but he would never give up and stop work. In the afternoon he made a habit of walking for three hours, a proven way to relax and get in touch with the imagination.

The Working Routine of a Writer

This kind of professional self-discipline is common featured in the biographies of successful contemporary writers. Novelist Jeffrey Archer, for example, explained in a newspaper interview how one of his recent novels took 1,500 hours to complete, working from 6 am to 8 pm each day, following a routine very similar to that of Dickens.

Like Dickens, he also allocates an hour or two first thing each morning to simply thinking about this current project, lying relaxed in bed and letting the imagination take flight, as well as taking daily walks during which he devotes his mind to solving problems. Despite being inspired by God to be the wisest person who ever lived, or who ever would live, Solomon also had to work hard, leading him to comment in the last few verses of his book Ecclesiastes that “much study is a weariness of the flesh”.

The Working Routine of a Painter

In a Sunday Times supplement on creativity, contemporary portrait painter Emma Sergeant described her daily working routine which — necessarily — parallels that outlined by Solomon. “If I’m clouded by other thoughts,” she explained, “the whole thing becomes routine and I find I’m killing any chance of my work happening”. After describing how she begins the day by swimming, riding or taking the dog for a walk, she says: “By time I get to my canvas I’m feeling relaxed and I’m not thinking too much”.

Perhaps alluding to inspiration and insights she adds that when she looks at the canvas she gets the feeling that there is a drawing or painting already on it. She is careful to be led by those feelings, saying: “If I have to disturb the rhythms and impose what I want, it is going to go dead on me. But if I go along with what I am seeing and feeling from the canvas, then I find that it instructs me. Then I have to discover it, and nurture it to life”. Evidently she has learned to work a helper, in a submissive role, to her creative subconscious.

The Importance of Perseverance

Speaking of persevering and sticking to her schedule, she adds: “The funny thing is, the more tired I feel, the better the work goes. Whenever I feel so tired that I don’t want to carry on, something interesting usually starts to happen . . . So even though nothing seems to happen for hours, there could be a treat at the end of the day.” Perhaps referring to the submissive female role Solomon stresses, she says: “My job is actually very humble. I feel I’m a craftsman — I have to finish off what somebody else started. It has taken me years to discover these things”. Solomon discovered these things three thousand years ago!

Alluding also to the creative mood we discussed in the previous section, she adds: “Some people don’t understand it takes hours to get yourself into a trance-like state where you are producing stuff”.

You Have to Work at It

Returning to the “Song”, in this section we find the girl planning to go out to the fields early in the morning, and apparently work so late that it will be necessary to lodge in the villages over night, which probably implies a willingness to accept some discomfort and disruption of normal routine. She was evidently going to spend a lot of time inspecting and tending the crops. Perhaps it is significant the Solomon does not refer to a garden this time but to a field, a place of hard and often tedious work.

Anybody, as we have seen, can sow some seeds and produce a few plants of questionable quality, but the good gardener — like the good farmer — gets excellent results. The good gardener gets those excellent results because of the kind of person he is — the kind of person he has become — because of his attitude, character and application. Very often, the poor gardener knows what to do, but is simply too lazy or disorganized to do it, so the difference in results is not the result of some magical talent or understanding, but of diligence and plodding perseverance.

Notice, however, that the girl is not going to go out and do the work by herself. It has to be a labor of love in conjunction with her lover, so perhaps there is a warning here to the effect that although we must be prepared to work long and hard, we must also be careful to follow the other principles Solomon has stressed, to always rely on our creative mind, and not resort to mental striving and intellectualizing.

Voice of Experience:

“His approach to song writing was very methodical . . . In the morning, I could hear John playing the guitar in his room refining the lyrics . . . When I came back from a trip to Hamilton I found him sitting at the piano in the living room still working on the song . . . a songwriter whose discipline and tenacity as a musician were nothing short of astounding. He could strum the guitar or sit at the piano for hours, doggedly playing the same chords and singing the same lyrics over and over again until he was able to ‘fill in the blanks’ “ (Frederic Seaman — John Lennon, *Living on Borrowed Time*).

“Matisse told us that sometimes in the evening he used to wipe out with cotton and turpentine whatever he had done during the day if it didn’t please him completely. He would start the same painting again next morning, from scratch, always with a spontaneous approach. He did that because, he said, ‘When I have a feeling for something, my feeling does not change. That feeling is the center of my conception of the painting and I try all possible expressions of it until I find one that satisfies me completely’ “ (Francoise Gilot — *Life with Picasso*).

“I don’t believe in writer’s block. If I have a bad day, I always write something, even if it’s just notes. That way you’ve got something to work on the next day” (Barbara Taylor Bradford — *Sunday Times* article).

“I have an unfinished still life which is already about a hundred sessions old, and since my return from Nice I work every day. “ (Francoise Gilot, *Life With Picasso*)

“The men who have moved the world, have not been so much men of genius, strictly so called, as men of intense mediocre abilities, and untiring perseverance” (Samuel Smiles — *Self Help*).

“The barriers are not erected which can say to aspiring talent and industry, ‘Thus far and no farther’ “ (Beethoven).

“Balzac worked for 18 hours at a stretch, even while he ate . . . The first draft is put down with great gaps between single paragraphs and the enormously wide margins are filled in gradually . . . On every sheet he used only 8 to 10 lines because he lacks the sureness of expression and is unable to find at once the definitive formulation. Whereas at first he has only a skeleton of a novel ready, the details are invented by and by.” (Alfred Hock, *The Origin of Genius*)

“Whatever it is that feels good. It can be two pages or can be six — as long as I’ve done something and I feel I’m ahead of the universe for the day. Every day I have to feel I’m one up” (Ray Bradbury, quoted in *The Right Brain Experience*).

“Seuss, inspired by the lament that children aren’t motivated to read, pressured his editors for a list of 200 words simple enough for five- to six-year-olds. For six months, he spent eight fruitless hours a day at his drawing board seeking illustrations. Then one day he noticed his sketch of brassy-looking cat . . . this cat was trouble — of the kind children love” (Peter Bernstein, writing in *Readers Digest*).

Summary

- 1) Top creative people plan their work then work their plan. Get control of your time and apply yourself, always remembering to work in close partnership with your creative mind.
- 2) Do not expect to complete creative projects very quickly, or in one session. Keep reviewing your work and let it develop in your subconscious mind, so that when you come back to it there will be new growth. If you simply plough on, and start striving, you will become “blocked”.
- 3) Creativity is not an academic study. The principles Solomon identifies are meant to be applied, and the way to make contact with your creative mind is by getting involved in a project.

25 KEEP PLAYING BY THE RULES

The mandrakes give forth fragrance

and over our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old

which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.

O that you were like a brother to me, that nursed at my mother's breast!

If I met you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me.

I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother

and into the chamber of her that conceived me

I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranates.

O that his left hand were under my head

and that his right hand embraced me! I have adjured you

O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up

nor awaken love until it please

Song of Solomon

The mandrakes, or “love apples”, in the first verse are an aphrodisiac, but the significance of the choice fruits, new and old, Adam Clarke says, must be “left to the reader’s sagacity and prudence”, perhaps being used by Solomon as a metaphor for the limitless experiences the creative mind has ready and waiting in store for us, if only we are interested and willing to respond.

Creative Aphrodisiacs

Aphrodisiacs, named after Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, are substance used to stimulate sexual desire, and a wide variety have been employed since ancient times. I was quite surprised to find several of aphrodisiacs mentioned here and elsewhere in the “Song” — figs, nuts, cinnamon and saffron — discussed in a recent newspaper article on the subject.

Many creative people adopt special routines and have favorite places to work, as already mentioned, which act as creative aphrodisiacs and so help them get into the creative mood. Here then, it seems, the girl has made the necessary preparations for the lover’s visit, but he has not showed up, implying that our creativity may sometimes seem elusive, and not at our beck and call. She muses on what she would like to do when he does turn up.

The girl is apparently describing the things she would do if only she had easy access to her love — if he lived in the same house like a little brother — and she was able to control his actions. Several phrases also express her impatience. If her little brother was just a toddler, this section implies, the girl would be free to pick him up and kiss him and show her affectionate publicly without upsetting anybody. Kissing and caressing her lover in public, however, would meet with stern disapproval. One lesson, therefore, might be that creative action is basically a personal, private matter, not a group activity.

You Will Never Have Complete Mechanical Control

The main lesson, however, would seem to be that no matter how experienced or accomplished we might become in our creative work, we shall never have complete, mechanical control of the inspirational process, which is typified by the sexual activity described in this section. We shall always have to ôplay by the rulesö that Solomon has set down for us. As we have seen, however, that does not mean, however, that we should simply sit back — and do nothing or do something else — and “wait for inspiration to strike”, a popular misconception of the way creative people work.

This is an appropriate place, at the end of this section, for Solomon to remind us again of the patient way the process works and must be allowed to work — even for the most experienced and successful of creative people.

Voice of Experience

"You cannot entirely control your subconscious mind, but you can voluntarily hand over to it any plan, desire, or purpose which you wish transformed into concrete form" (Hill -- Think and Grow Rich).

“Although the dialogue ‘came of itself’ he refused to force the story along. He could not, as he put it ‘set invention going like a clock’, and inspiration had a way of coming at the most inconvenient times” (Michael Bakewell — Biography of Lewis Carroll).

“When I am entirely alone and of good cheer — say traveling in a carriage or walking after a good meal or during the night when I cannot sleep; it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly . . . how they come I do not know and I cannot force them.” (Mozart, letter to a friend)

“Write what comes now . . . More will come later. The river will begin to flow” (Brenda Ueland — If you Want to Write).

“Beethoven took no end of trouble with his music . . . He made 18 starts on the tenor soliloquy in Act II. There are 10 versions of the final chorus” (George Marek — Beethoven).

“The men who have most moved the world, have not been so much men of genius, strictly so called, as men of intense mediocre abilities, and untiring perseverance” (Samuel Smiles — Self Help).

Summary

- 1) Accept that you will never achieve complete mechanical control over the creative process, no matter how experienced you are.
- 2) It will always be important to adopt the patient, playful procedures we have seen described. You will never be able to force and rush the creative process.
- 3) Many creative people have favorite places to work and special routines which help them cultivate the creative state of mind.

26 NINETY NINE PER CENT PERSPIRATION

Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?

Under the apple tree I aroused you.

There she who conceived you was in travail

There was there she who carried you was in travail

Song of Songs

Inspiration and Perspiration

The repeated reference to "travail" in this short section must be significant and serves, I suspect, to remind us that, according to the sexual model, the birth of a new creation may well involve considerable "labor", as well as a lengthy gestation period, depending on the particular work being undertaken. No wonder Thomas Edison said that genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration, and that it has also been defined as an infinite capacity of taking pains.

As with a mother, the dedicated creator accepts the labor of creation for the sake of the joy of bringing something new and beautiful into the world. Note also the key stages in the creative model that are referred to here – arousal, conception, gestation, and the labor of birth.

It May Require Labor

It is easy for the dabbling amateur to imagine that the so-called professional somehow finds it all very simple and effortless to produce creative works. The biographies of the great creators, however, show otherwise. Although they do rely on the magic of the creative mind for the initial inspiration and subsequent insights, there still remains – as with the carrying and birth of a baby – a certain amount of perseverance and labor, as already described. The professional is simply committed to do the job properly, to pay attention to detail and do whatever needs to be done to attain excellence, no matter how much tedious reviewing, revising, researching, editing and polishing it takes, sometimes devoting several years to a project. He will do it. He must do it.

Voice of Experience

"They are likely to discover that before the Gates of Excellence the High Gods have placed sweat – the sweat of labor – often mingled with the sweat of pain" (Ochse – Before the Gates of Excellence).

"The difference between inspiration and the final product, for example, Tolstoy's "War and Peace", is an awful lot of hard work, an awful lot of discipline, an awful lot of training, and awful lot of finger exercises and practices and rehearsals and throwing away of first drafts and so on" (Abraham Maslow, psychologist).

"I was industrious; whoever is equally sedulous will be equally successful" (J.S. Bach, composer).

"The truth that lies in such misquoted definitions as 'Genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains' . . . is not even a half truth: it is a one-third truth. We see it in the tremendous industry that follows an inspiration; but the notion that 'taking pains' – in other words, hard work – can produce originality of the most distinctive kind is nonsense" (T. Sharper Knowlson – Originality).

"Beethoven took no end of trouble with his music; the Sketchbooks . . . testify to Beethoven's struggle in subjugating the operatic medium to what he wished to express . . . He made 18 starts on the tenor soliloquy in Act II. There are 10 versions of the final chorus." (George Marek, Beethoven, Biography of a Genius)

Summary

- 1) According to the sexual model of creativity, inspiration is followed by a period of gestation and then the labor of birth, which is perhaps why Edison said that genius was 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.
- 2) Be prepared to expend diligent effort in order to achieve creative excellence, accepting that some project may take months, even years to complete properly.

27 BINDING COMMITMENT

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your hand

For love is strong as death, ardor is intense as the grave

Its flashes are flashes of fire, a flame of God.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it

If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house

it would be utterly scorned

Song of Songs

How important is your creativity to you? The relationship between the girl and the lover is not some cheap dalliance, and one version has the girl saying: "Seal me in your heart with permanent betrothal". The seal on the hand may also imply a wedding ring, an outward symbol of an inward commitment. Professional creative excellence – a la Einstein, Mozart and Beethoven – involves the total commitment of a marriage, one in which you will gradually learn more and more about how your partner thinks and behaves.

The Commitment of Marriage

We saw in the very first verses of the "Song" that the successful creative life is typified by the traditional marriage, and it is significant that Roland Murphy comments that these verses constitute, in fact, the "climatic point in the Song . . . the desire of the lovers for abiding union." The lesson, I believe, is that we must make a serious, binding, marital commitment to our creative subconscious mind.

Our creative love will respond accordingly to a genuine, earnest commitment to excellence, and a sincere desire to give something beautiful to the world – and wonderful things will then be achieved. Creative offspring will be conceived and brought into being.

Odd as this notion of a creative betrothal may sound, I was encouraged recently to come across an ad for a book by Jan Phillips – a highly creative person who has apparently discovered this very principle – entitled "Marry Your Muse – Making a Lasting Commitment to Your Creativity".

Professional Daily Commitment

Creativity is not a haphazard, once in a lifetime, process that somehow depends on "luck" or spurious inspiration. Ideally, as with a marriage, it involves a daily commitment to spend time relaxing together, and in the pursuit of common goals. As these verses are explaining, we can enter into such a continuing and productive creative relationship, as is evidenced by the prolific output of many of the great creators. It would seem to be no accident that, generally speaking, the author who writes one book often writes several, the composer who writes one piece of music often writes dozens, and the businessman who conceives of one money-making scheme is able to dream up many more.

Expressing your creative potential should become a central purpose in life, a responsibility even. To do otherwise would be to be like a fish that does not want to swim or a bird that has no interest in flying.

Voice of Experience

"Until the particular creation is completed . . . even if the almost completed work now requires five more years of painstaking effort. One must not ask why one cannot be released from such a duty; it is enough to know that the work has to be done" (Edward Matchett – The Core of True Genius).

"Matisse was confined to his bed for three quarters of the day but that did not dampen his enthusiasm for the project. He had paper fixed to the ceiling over his bed, and at night, since he did not sleep much, he would draw on it with a piece of charcoal attached to the end of a long bamboo stick, sketching out the portrait of St. Dominic and other elements of the decoration." (Francois Gilot, in Life With Picasso)

"You will find that these geniuses or creative people are generally pretty intense. Even though they may not look it on the outside, they are thinking all the time about how to pull something off." (Marvin Minsky, cognitive scientist, The Society of Mind)

"A short length of thread bent in the form of a hairpin was laid in a nickel mold, securely clamped, and placed in a muffle furnace, where it remained for five hours . . . The mold was then opened and the carbonized thread carefully taken out, when it instantly broke . . . Thus commenced the battle for a perfect [electric lamp] filament. At last they succeeded in taking from the mold one perfect, unbroken filament, but when they attempted to attach it to the conducting wire it parted again. It was not until the night of the third day . . . during which no sleep or rest had been taken . . . that success came to them and the filament was placed in the lamp, the air exhausted, and current turned on. A beautiful soft light met their eyes, and they knew that the secret of the incandescent electric lamp was solved." (Francis Jones – Thomas Alva Edison, an Intimate Record)

"Whosoever is resolved to excel in painting, or indeed any other art, must bring his mind to bear upon that one object from the moment that he rises till he goes to bed" (Sir Joshua Reynolds, founder of the Royal Academy).

"Back in New York, he wove those rhymes into a children's book 'And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street' . . . Twenty publishers rejected his manuscript. They said the story was silly, the rhymes nonsensical. Finally, in 1937 an editor agreed to take a chance, and Dr. Seuss, the children's author was born" (Peter Bernstein, writing in Readers Digest).

Summary

- 1) Many people who produce one creative work, go on to produce many more, because they have entered a kind of creative marriage with their subconscious mind, as typified by Adam and Eve and every marriage that produces children.
- 2) Your subconscious mind responds best to a sincere and serious commitment.
- 3) Love your creative work and make it a fulfilling, central commitment in your life.

28 CREATIVE PUBERTY

We have a little sister, and her breasts are still small

What shall we do for our sister, on the day when she is spoken for:

If she is a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver

but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers

My lover knows that with him I find contentment and peace

Song of Songs

Excellence is never based on ignorance, and proper education and skill development are crucial to prepare you for the creative commitment described in the previous section. Although it was suggested earlier that specialized knowledge is important, a very broad general knowledge is also crucial and is one of the key characteristics of genius – and that I suspect is the focus of this section of the “Song”.

You Need Broad General Knowledge

To illustrate the point, a friend of mine who worked for a leading high tech electronics company, described how they would sometimes be given design briefs so tight that they often appeared to be physically impossible to meet. On one particular occasion, for example, a piece of military communication equipment had been successfully designed, except for the incorporation of one additional function that seemingly required an additional knob on the control panel, a luxury not allowed by the specification.

After struggling with the problem for some time, and pleas for a loosening of the spec having fallen on deaf ears, my friend happened to mention the problem to a colleague from a different department – a mechanical engineer – who immediately suggested a simple mechanical method of performing the required additional tuning function using one of the existing control knobs. It worked. The lesson is that the complete professional is not a narrow specialist.

Overcoming Assumptions

Incidentally, the technique described earlier for identifying limiting assumptions can be very useful in such tunnel-vision situations. In this particular case, an obvious description of the situation might have been: “We are trying to solve this problem using our knowledge of electronics”, which might have been adapted to read: “We are not using electronics to solve this problem” – which in turn could have stimulated a variety of alternative approaches, such as: “We are using mechanical . . . hydraulic . . . magnetic . . . acoustic . . . pneumatic . . . methods to solve this problem”.

Creative Maturity

In the “Song”, the girl’s little sister has not yet passed through puberty and is not yet physically mature enough to be spoken for in marriage, and the metaphorical implication would seem to be that we have to grow and mature to a certain state of readiness before we are attractive to our creative love and ready to enter into a serious commitment that is required. In the Bible, mother’s milk is used as a metaphor for knowledge, which is no doubt why Jewish scholars take the two breasts in this verse to signify Moses and Aaron – teachers of Israel – and Christian scholars take them to represent the Old

and New Testaments. This lesson is that a broad and solid foundation of knowledge and skills is necessary before we can express our creativity effectively.

How Well Endowed Are You?

Sometimes a young woman who lacks physical development is rather unkindly described as being "as flat as a board" and in these verses two flat objects are offered as metaphors for her condition—a wall and a door. Although nothing could be done to help the little sister literally and physically, the situation is only metaphorical, and happily we can remedy our lack of knowledge and skills, just as the wall and the door can be built on—which is why Solomon supplies the metaphors. Battlements can be added to embellish a wall and raised panel work to a door.

The girl points out that she herself was once in the same situation as the sister, but has since developed large breasts. When we fall in love with a subject, learning becomes a passion not an academic chore, and as our knowledge and skills can grow, and we can rapidly become a well endowed expert in our chosen field—but at the same time amassing the broad general knowledge which enables us to perceive the metaphorical links needed to provide fresh insights and novel viewpoints.

Why John Lennon Bought an Entire Book Shop

Creative people generally have a voracious appetite for books and magazines and stimulating information of all kinds and possess wide general knowledge. Thomas Edison built an extensive library of scientific books—and was apparently rarely seen without a book in his pocket—and Van Gogh lined the walls of his room with bookshelves. Beethoven read and reread the ancient classics, often underlining and copying out sections that interested him.

John Lennon acquired the habit, copied I believe from James Joyce, of readings extracts from several different books each night before retiring—and on one occasion purchasing the entire stock of a New York book shop. Solomon tells us, also, in Ecclesiastes that he wearied himself with study. Knowledge provides the nutrients of creativity, like food for the body and fertilizer for the soil.

The Education of a Great Poet

Biographer Peter Levi describes how Alfred Lord Tennyson, arguably the greatest poet in the English language, was given a head start in his love and learning of poetry by his mother who used to read poetry to him and also listen to his compositions as she was dragged around the country lanes in a wheeled chair drawn by a large dog. The boy then developed the habit of walking and reading with such total absorption that he would not hear a carriage approaching from behind.

Like all the great creators, Tennyson was from childhood in touch with his emotions—which is a key to receiving inspiration—and when Lord Byron died he is said to have gone out into the woods and carved his hero's name on a rock. He also learned to "listen" to nature and said that as a child he had the habit on a stormy day of spreading his arms to the wind and crying out: "I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind." To some this may sound decidedly odd, but we find in the Psalms of David that he too often imagined the trees to clap hands and the whole creation to sing in praise to God. Such is the nature of the creative mind. Such is the nature of your mind.

Tennyson's creative achievement rested on a foundation of solid scholarship and hard work. Levi says: "He drew up a scheme of work . . . with hardly a mention of poetry at all. It is the kind of scheme young men do write, and then ignore, but it is worth remembering how widely read and seriously informed he was. He did in the end read French, Italian, Latin, Greek, German, apparently Hebrew and possibly Welsh." He then gives Tennyson's weekly timetable which devoted separate half day blocks to chemistry, botany, electricity, animal psychology, mechanics among other things.

He adds: "This grueling program opens one's eyes to how seriously he took the sciences, and how seriously he aspired to a universal culture such as today is hardly to be found." Levi describes elsewhere Tennyson's devoted study of poetry and literature back to Greek and Roman times, and how we would rewrite and try to improve well know pieces.

The Education of a Great Writer

Biographer Frank McLynn has similar words to say about the great novelist and poet Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote among other things "Treasure Island" and "Doctor Jeckyll and Mister Hyde". He says: "Like Shakespeare he worked tirelessly to turn himself into a master of English. This is where the true education of Robert Louis Stevenson took place. Although he had the reputation of an idler, in his chosen field no one could have been more hardworking and painstaking . . . always equipped with two books, one to read from, the other to write in, he wandered over the Pentland Hills . . . Whenever he came across a passage in a book that particularly pleased him, he tried to reproduce its style and unique quality."

Stevenson was in love with the language, and McLynn goes on to describe the extent of his studies, saying: "The range and breadth of his undergraduate reading compels astonishment."
How to Improve Your Song Writing

One implication of the foregoing would seem to be that if you are a song writer, for example, even of popular songs and you find your material rather shallow and bland, it would help tremendously to start getting some intellectual "protein" into your mental diet – to start reading some philosophy, the Bible, the Greek classic, and the great poets, for example.

Creativity and Contentment

Finally, returning again to the "Song", in the last line the girl says that her creative love has brought contentment and peace to her life, a fact that accords with modern psychological studies of happiness by people such as Csikszentmihalyi which have shown that creative action in a manner appropriate to a person's present level of knowledge and skills brings a sense of fulfillment and is an expression of sound mental health.

The National Importance of Education

It is interesting and perhaps significant that although knowledge is important, we find this section here, as virtually the last insight in the "Song" – save for the two remaining, concluding sections which constitute more of a move to action anyway – at the other end, so to speak, as far removed as possible from the first insight dealing with the importance of relying on the power of the creative subconscious mind. This section highlights the importance of a good education system for any society that is intent on excellence.

As explained in the introduction, there can be little doubt that had the people of Israel responded to their divine calling and remained faithful to God, their virtually static agrarian economy, in which the majority of people performed the same basic and uncreative roles, would very rapidly have been transformed into a dynamic and wealthy society of specialist products and professional services, making them the envy and example of the world, and that the "Song of Songs" would have been the catalyst for that explosion of progress.

The Creative Power of Education

Perhaps the potent power of general education is illustrated by the interesting fact that even today some religious groups, such as the Amish in America, still resist the creative progress ordained in Eden by seeking to deliberately deny their children the benefits of secondary education, which is in theory intended to help young people explore their interests and discover their gifts. Children from such backgrounds who have for various reasons been able to receive those opportunities have often developed

an insatiable desire for further education, personal development, and creative action that has set them at odds with their cultures.

Voice of Experience

"John read voraciously, often on weighty matters, as if he were researching some challenging subject. He was always giving me lists of books to purchase . . . Like James Joyce, he often chose to read seven pages a night out of seven different books." (Frederic Seaman – John Lennon, *Living on Borrowed Time*)

"He [William Blake] was in no way opposed to developing one's drawing abilities by observing and drawing physical objects, but he used this type of drawing only as a point of departure for his creative work: the imaginative expression of his inner visions" (Judith Cornell – *Drawing the Light from Within*).

"When he was lodging in Clapham . . . one of the young men in his boarding house asked to see what he was writing. 'He read it and looked at me with pity. 'I say' he said, 'if you think anybody is ever going to pay you for stuff like this, you're mistaken. You'd better chuck it in. Why not do fretwork instead. They you'd have something to show for all the time you're wasting.' . . . Arthur slogged on . . . he would have to practice incessantly." (Hugh Brogan – *The Life of Arthur Ransome*)

"Beethoven had the habit of copying out quotations from the books he read or underscoring passages which he liked. Among the books he owned were the Bible . . . Odyssey . . . Fables . . . complete editions of Goethe . . . and Shakespeare . . . he read and reread Plutarch's Lives, Cicero's Letter; Horace's On the Art of Poetry; Aristotle's Politics; Plato's Republic." (George Marek – *Beethoven, Biography of a Genius*).

"We must make here a distinction between talent and genius . . . talent is something developed by the mastery of technique. The technique of his craft must of course be acquired by the artist during his earlier years, and to a degree that makes him an adept in the chosen channel of expression, yet this is only preliminary . . . The genius who has never studied the technique of his art cannot produce a good work; but on the other hand, the talented man without an inner source of inspiration cannot produce an outstanding work" (Paul Brunton – *The Quest of the Overself*).

"Napoleon believed that battles were won by means of sudden inspirations on the field – mental excitement being the generating power, and the previously acquired knowledge of strategy, tactics, men, material, and terrain, the substance. The chances are that an untutored Napoleon would have had no inspirations at all" (T. Sharper Knowlson – *Originality*).

"All inspired individuals are, in some way, prepared for the experience . . . impossible without groaning effort, without painful winning of skill . . . Even if we cannot specify of command inspiration, we can I think practice deserving it" (Robert Gruding – *The Grace of Great Things*).

Summary

- 1) Excellence is never based on ignorance, and highly creative people usually have broad and deep general knowledge, in addition to specialist knowledge of their subject. Beethoven and Vincent van Gogh were good examples of this.
- 2) Broad knowledge facilitates the finding of useful metaphors in problem solving.
- 3) The action of the subconscious mind is limited by the extent of the knowledge you make available, just as a plant's development is limited by the supply of nutrients.

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The theme of the insights in this section has been that enduring creative excellence requires a total professional commitment, and perhaps it is not surprising that the insights he provides in this chapter resonate strongly with the working methods described in the biographies of the great creators such as Dickens, Newton, Tesla and Beethoven.

As usual, the seven insights actually form a thought pattern characteristic of Hebrew poetry. The central insight was the fact that no matter how experienced you become, you will never acquire automatic, mechanical control of your creativity and will always need to adopt an organized, professional approach. The other six insights form three parallel pairs around this.

The first and last – the creative mood and the need for broad, general education – both concern the mental preparation that is a necessary prerequisite for effective creative action: firstly, relaxation and clearing of the mind of unwanted information and input, and second, by way of interesting contrast, having previously filled the mind with essential knowledge by means of education and research into the project topic.

The second insight in the group – the importance of persistent, repeated analysis – and the penultimate one – having the creative commitment of marriage – both concern mental resolution. The remaining pair – the need to plan your work and work your plan, and the willingness to carry out the necessary labor – also complement each other, both being concerned with the importance of work and effort in the pursuit of excellence.

PART 6

AN INVITATION TO EXCELLENCE

Solomon concludes the “Song” by reassuring us of our immense creative potential and of the fact that our creative subconscious mind is ready, willing and eager to assist us in its development and application.

Is Genius a Myth?

The premise of this book has been that Solomon’s purpose in writing the “Song of Songs” was to teach the principles of creative excellence, amounting to what is commonly called genius — but just what is “genius”? Because there seems to be no precise definition of the term and because no official body confers the title, like a knighthood or a Nobel Prize, it is open to abuse and misunderstanding — popularly conceived, for example, as the ability to achieve things that are supposedly impossible for other, ordinary mortals, a myth that, as cognitive psychologist Marvin Minsky points out, highly creative people have often been happy to help perpetuate..

What Is Genius?

The term genius has been defined in different ways by different people, and the great American psychologist Louis Terman simply took it to mean someone with an IQ, Intelligence Quotient, above 160. But what is “intelligence”, and how can it be measured with any reliability? Terman’s definition does in fact match the first part of that offered by the Oxford Concise Dictionary — “Exceptional intellectual or creative power”. However, repeated studies have found that highly intelligent people are very often not very creative.

The second part of the Oxford Dictionary definition appears to be based on that offered a century ago by the great British genius and student of genius, Sir Francis Galton, who insisted that the term only applies to someone with creative ability of exceptionally high order, as demonstrated by actual achievement — involving originality and giving the world something of value it would not otherwise possess.

Galton does, I believe, bring us much closer the truth. Genius is about creative achievement rather than intelligence, and the Encyclopedia Britannica adds that it implies a degree of original greatness which is beyond ordinary powers of explanation, and that the word is applied specially to creative minds such as those of poets and artists in contrast to those whose work is the result of study, education and acquired specialist knowledge.

In other words, genius is about creating something special, bringing into existence something original and exquisite, giving the world a beautiful and unique gift that has not been produced simply by intelligent thinking and clever reasoning — an expression of a vision, a desire, an inspiration from the heart.

Not surprisingly, then, genius seems to be most commonly recognized in the world of art and literature — where form is more important than function and where the new creation can readily be imposed for easy inspection, and perhaps reproduction, onto a lump of stone, a stretched canvas, or a few sheets of paper — more so than in practical everyday achievements in the world of business and commerce. This still leaves the definition wide open of course because we would not all agree on what is beautiful or even original, which is precisely why the genius of many great artists has only been recognized long after their death.

Genius and Subconscious Creativity

The real key to understanding genius is found in the etymology of the word itself: “Latin — gignere, to beget”. Begetal, a rather old fashioned term now, has to do with reproduction and the fathering of children. In other words, works of genius are produced by the inspirational process of creativity described earlier, Subconscious Creativity, according to the sexual model Solomon has given us by divine inspiration in the “Song of Songs”. Works of genius are produced by individuals — any individuals, not an elite, gifted few — who have somehow discovered and practiced this method of working, and diligently carried their inspirations through to a level of unusual excellence and perfection.

The Spirit of Genius

The Romans, who may well have obtained their insights from Solomon originally or from those taught by him, believed that when a man was born, God also created a spirit — a genius — to work with him throughout his life. Thus they thought that a man — every man, not just a select few — “had” a genius whereas today we speak of a person “being” a genius. A man’s genius, which was regarded as being his higher intellectual self, was also regarded as sharing in the divine nature.

This ancient Roman concept may not be too far distant from the truth, for Solomon himself taught that every human being does have a spirit which returns to God at death (Ecclesiastes 12:7) and this could well be the source of the higher intellectual or true inner self — the creative Adam for our Eve — that seems to take the male role in our creative work. For far too much of human history, unfortunately, the social and economic conditions into which the vast majority of people have been born have not been conducive to the discovery and development of that higher intellectual potential, especially for women.

This “genius” may also be the source of the special gift that God gives to each human being, as was suggested earlier. The obvious and crucial implication is that each and every one of us has the capacity for genius in a certain field, if only we take steps to equip ourselves with the technical knowledge and specialist skills required to express it — preferably motivated by a desire to give something of value and beauty to the world.

The Genius of the Beatles

Students of genius tell us that the work of genius is not simply superior to that of ordinary people, but all together different in kind, set apart in some elusive way, on a much higher plane. This observation has in fact led some psychologists to suggest that the genius differs from ordinary people just as ordinary people differ from apes! Interestingly, although the creative model given us by Solomon shows that such a suggestion is complete nonsense, it does confirm that works of genius are produced by a totally different method of working to normal.

Significantly however, it also shows, as we have seen, that the working method of genius is actually available to every one of us, which is precisely why two young lads from Liverpool — John Lennon and Paul McCartney — were able to compose musical works comparable to those of Mozart and Beethoven, and why music scholars are able to find strong similarities in the complex musical structures employed.

The reason is that none of them produced their works by some kind of formal intellectual application of technical musical form any more than a peasant produces beans or babies by the application of theoretical biochemistry. All four individuals produced their music by the same non-intellectual method that is available to each one of us if that is the area of our interest, a method was described earlier.

Attaining Excellence

However, although works of original and unique excellence are created by the subconscious, inspirational method of genius, as an expression of a desire in the heart of the creator, what might be described as non-original, non-unique excellence can be created on purpose as a deliberate response to real needs, as we have also seen.

This second process, as Solomon suggests, is illustrated by the sowing of seeds and the cultivation of plants, as in a garden or vineyard. Although the outcome may be excellent, which helps explain the great satisfaction enjoyed by gardeners, it may not necessarily be unique to the creator, and many other people could respond to the same needs or purpose in a virtually identical manner — just as anybody can grow excellent carrots, potatoes and cabbages if they go about it in the right way.

As human beings, we seem to have three ways of “making” physical “things” — 1) by manufacturing, using the hands, tools and machines, 2) by sowing seeds and growing plants, and, 3) by human and animal reproduction. The degree of perfection of the things produced by the first method, obviously depend heavily on a person’s skill and knowledge. However, given the right conditions, the second two methods produce far superior, near-perfect results automatically, unless we mess them up in some way.

Using these two “automatic” methods, the lowliest peasants, as already noted, can produce excellence — near-perfect beans and babies, both of which are as far superior to any manufactured object as the work of genius is to that produced by the efforts and skills of ordinary intellectual thinking and striving. The lesson of the “Song of Songs” is that these two natural technologies for making things — i.e. plants and animals — actually typify the two creative mechanisms of the human mind, Conscious and Subconscious Creativity.

By means of the principles Solomon describes in the Song, creative excellence is guaranteed — as long as we provide the optimum conditions and simply allow the processes to operate naturally, as long as we stop stopping them working. The basic key to genius, then, is enlightenment — the realization that we possess the creative potential that Solomon is describing, just as we have the ability to produce children or cultivate a garden.

Genius, it seems, is more about attitude than ability, about excellence more than originality. For, as we have seen, although a work may begin with inspiration — one of the methods of genius — it may well be poorly carried through and so fall well short of its potential unless there is a resolute commitment to excellence.

Here, then, at the conclusion of the “Song”, is your personal invitation to achieve excellence, amounting even to genius.

29 YOUR IMMENSE POTENTIAL

Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon

He let out the vineyard to keepers

Each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver.

My vineyard, my very own, is for myself

You, O Solomon, are welcome to your thousands

and the keepers of the fruit two hundred

Song of Solomon

In the concluding verses of the “Song”, here and in the final section, Solomon refers, significantly, back to major metaphors that were introduced at the very beginning — typifying the creative use of the conscious and subconscious mind. In this penultimate section in particular, mention is made again of the vineyard, which as we have seen represents the girl’s — and our — creative potential, as suggested by the stress on the vineyard being her very own, for herself to cultivate, as and when she chooses. That she is now intent on doing.

Your Astonishing Potential

Solomon’s vineyard is described as being very productive and valuable, perhaps referring to his great creative achievements in writing books, poetry and songs, designing the Temple and organizing the nation, as well as dispensing wisdom to world rulers. However, scholars refer to this brief section as a “boasting song”, as the girl seems unimpressed by Solomon’s vineyard, so perhaps the surprising message may well be that we each, like the girl, have immense creative potential, equal to that of the greatest who ever lived, waiting to be cultivated. We are all human beings, all made in the image of God, all endowed with the spirit that imparts genius.

Let us, therefore, not seek to emulate someone else and stand in awe of their accomplishments — the Mozarts, Einsteins and Henry Fords — although we may learn important lessons from them, let us rather discover and develop our own unique potential.

Voice of Experience

“I don’t think that there is a process of creativity in these people that is terribly different to ordinary people . . . I think the average person is almost indistinguishable from the Mozart or Beethoven . . . We have so little self-confidence and we just look at our heroes and talk about them as being something beyond us” (Marvin Minsky — The Society of Mind).

“The creative Force of the universe is working through you. You can be as great an outlet for it as anyone who has ever lived . . . Make it your dominant desire, magnetise your mind with it, and you will draw to you everything you need for its accomplishment” (Robert Collier -- The Law of the Higher Potential).

30 THE INVITATION

O you who dwell in the gardens

my companions are listening for your voice

Let me hear it.

Come to me, my lover

and be like a gazelle or a young stag

upon the mountains of spices

Song of Solomon

The subject of this mysterious final verse of the “Song” is the same as that of the very first verse, namely the reality of your creative subconscious mind, as typified by the lover and a gazelle.

Your Invitation to Excellence

It seems that the lover — with whom the girl has now entered into a creative marriage — has many companions who are also looking for partners. They, like the gazelle we read of earlier, are ready to hear the love call. In other words, the whole world is invited to find their creative love and to respond, just as the girl has done. Excellence and genius — like the wisdom of the Proverbs — are not reserved for an exclusive few, but for the many, for all who care to respond to Solomon’s message in the “Song of Songs”.

Are you one of the millions of “mountains of spices”, waiting to be explored, aroused and made fruitful? If so, your creative love is ready, willing, and eager to respond to your beckoning with the speed of a gazelle, fast enough even to outrun the lions and leopards of the mountains.

The encounter to which you are called is an amorous one, not an intellectual one, and perhaps Solomon, under divine inspiration, is counseling that the way to make your commitment is to speak, to let your creative love hear your voice, perhaps simply by prayerfully reading, with heartfelt meaning, the words uttered by the girl in the opening and closing verses of the “Song” — thereby adopting the submissive but responsive attitude that is critically important in working with the creative subconscious mind. If you do so, be fully assured that your creative subconscious will respond, for that is how the amazing human mind works.

Voice of Experience

“I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me” (Proverbs 8).