

*Anything that happens, happens.
Anything that, in happening, causes something else to
happen, causes something else to happen.
Anything that, in happening, causes itself to happen again,
happens again.
It doesn't necessarily do it in chronological order, though.*

Douglas Adams, Mostly harmless

So I keep wondering.....



This is the 5th book in a series of reflections on the workings of the creative mind. I take a lot of side paths, for most ideas are not found on the road straight ahead. The associative aspect of creativity is about surprise and *jumping to ideas*. Combining completely different things or ideas may lead to amazing, new concepts –or ... a dead-end. You wander, tinker and observe. Basically there is no field that the creative mind should leave untouched. Asking ‘stupid’ questions seems just as valid a step as trying to answer ‘unasked’ questions. And so is failing: there is hardly anything from which so much can be learned. As Samuel Becket said: ‘Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. *Fail better.*

Creativity explored

In Gulliver's footsteps

(4) VOYAGE TO HOUYHHNHM

Previous publications in *the series*.

(0) **Introduction**. Brave New Books 2018.

ISBN 9789 4021 80633

(1) **Voyage to Lilliput**, Brave New Books 2019.

ISBN 9789402187106

(2) **VOYAGE TO BROBDINGNAG**, Brave New Books 2019. ISBN:

9789402194975

(3) **VOYAGE TO LAPUTA**, Brave New Books 2020.

ISBN: 9789464059434

Forthcoming:

(5) *VOYAGE TO THE CREATIVE SELF*

Copyright © Hans Kokhuis 2021

ISBN: 9789464350289

First published in the Netherlands by BraveNewBooks.nl

Information

www.bravenewbooks.nl/creativityexplored.hanskokhuis

<http://www.hanskokhuis.nl/StartEnglishIndex.html/>



Copyright / right to copy:

The idea behind the series is to share my experiences and insights. Hence everything you find worthwhile in this book can be used, retold, copied, or transcribed. The sole provision is that you mention the source and respect the context. Please appreciate that you should not copy the book and go sell it. In that case preferably write one yourself and, for example, publish it via BraveNewBooks.nl

For Sem & Eva,

Thank you for the sunshine in my life.

Thank you,

Ton Brekelmans for valuable comments

Michel Decré for [mu] calligraphy p. 11

Frits Jansen for discussions, coffee & photograph p. 111



It is a good viewpoint to see
the world as a dream.

When you have something like a nightmare,
you will wake up and
tell yourself that it was only a dream.
It is said that the world we live in
is not a bit different from this.

Hagakure: the way of the Samurai

The 4th voyage in the series

I do not claim that this series will make you a creative genius. What may happen is that your *common creative sense* is rallied. The series provides a mirror; it questions our routine ways of looking and interpreting the world. In an all-consuming landscape of social media, impressions and opinions, it is wise to take some time to listen to your own talents and ideas.

In **Voyage to Lilliput** the focus is on perception, '*cleaning windows*', detecting frames and filters that so easily put us on the wrong footing. There is a fascinating world behind the façade and so full of possibilities.

Voyage to Brobdingnag: It is frustration that spawned Murphy's Law: The plan was good, how could it fail? Indeed you may not like it but our span of control is limited. We don't control other people's opinions, or the traffic, or the weather, or the economy. What we can learn to control is the way we deal with it, our attitude. Adopting a creative attitude opens up a world of possibilities. There will be confidence that the new path will present itself at the right time. You will be amazed at how it just might have been 'waiting' for you, *serendipity by letting go*. Creativity is an aid in creating a meaningful life, and strengthens our ability to follow a steady course through the chaos and rush of life. It may help to see in it all new combinations with synergetic qualities, exemplified in the tangram puzzle.

Water is a combination of hydrogen and oxygen; the magic is in the combination water. Likewise combining different creative talents is an exciting challenge. **Voyage to Laputa**

reviews the traps, opportunities and magic in steering the creative process, leadership and different intelligences in practice.

The journey explores different models of organization, design and scenarios with A.I. as opposed to our sense of wonder. It is about transparency for the ethical consequences of new algorithms. Managing the imagination depends on a keen eye for



the relation between people and environment. Creative leadership works best when directed at transformation with integrity. It is respect for the individuals' diverse talents that make the right mix.

The **VOYAGE TO HOUYHHNHM** most affected Gulliver. For this book it led to self-reflection as we are confronted with the dual nature of man: part god, part beast by separating them in HOUYHHNHM and YAHOO, horses and humans. It points at the anger and fear we have with developments beyond our control: data mining by big tech, politics based on profiling and use of social media, in short the split between the rational (HOUYHHNHM) and the emotional, human: YAHOO.

Common sense

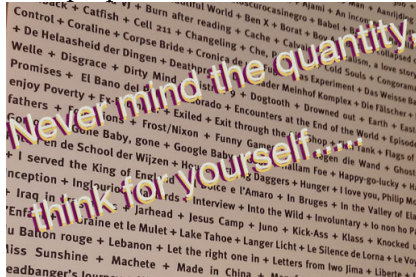
Creativity is a leap of faith over your imagined walls. Earlier on I referred to 'inside the box' as opposed to 'outside the box'. The brain**box** that made us ask basic questions as a child. In a way it means returning to your inner child asking the *why-question* more often. The creativity in our common sense never fails to amaze me! But there seems to be an efficient training model that cuts off this sense of wonder.



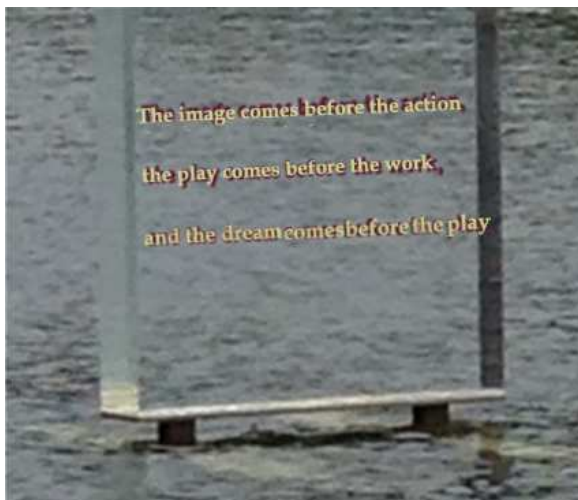
Just consider the most prevalent way of teaching and testing: the multiple-choice test. I grew up with a different way of testing: the open question. With mc-testing I have always had this feeling that it creates the idea that there is a world full of choices. The idea is a far cry from reality: whenever I find myself in certain situations they are open: *I have to think about it, what to do and how to solve the problems.* MC gives the idea that there are always 4 clear alternatives, mostly 2 are absolute nonsense and 2 may be the right one. This is so very much unlike real life that the idea that school feels responsible enough to test children in this manner makes me shudder. Life certainly is no MC-test, but it *makes people believe* that you don't have to think for yourself because there is always an alternative. Even when your choice is the wrong one it is not your fault but because of the choices offered.

What really happens is that people stop thinking in their own original manner and style.

Intellectual fodder is administered without any choice. Outlying ideas and opinions are prevented and conformity becomes the rule. How does this prepare children for an unknown future?



The whole idea seems based on the Renaissance thinking-model that if you want to manipulate people into your way of thinking, you offer them 2 choices. In fact that is what most (if not all) salesmen do and it tends to trap people. Another reason might be that MC-tests are really easy to check, so efficiency before effectiveness.





The space between 0 & 1

Somehow I feel that the magic of creative thinking is contained in the above question. When a student asked his zen master if a dog had the Buddha nature, he answered 'mu': *not this-not that, no-thing, not yes-not no*. This is an escape from the binary way of thinking. It is not black it is not white: freedom from opposition or *unity in opposition*. It makes you look without taking a position – perhaps as near as to objectivity as one can get – a kind of 'neutral position'.

You probably have seen the idea behind the above question: *you see* blackened tree stumps (=facts / left brain half) and you imagine and then create the full picture (right brain half). A very creative feat: 2 brain halves are connected and produce something new!!

You see something that is *not* there!



Working as a translator at Philips in the 70s, I read some experiments that were carried out with quality circles the managers had learned about in Japan. Amazingly it did not work out so well in the Dutch situation: when workers were invited to share improvements on product and process, quarrels occurred! People felt that the way they'd been working was criticized. All in all I found that here one approach was put onto another without any regard for the cultural differences. Dutch people don't like to be criticized, they start defending and arguing, and Japanese workers sort of put themselves in the neutral '**mu**' position and do *not take sides*. They could look at the process and comment *objectively*.

All in all I think one of the greatest benefits to the creative process would be care and attention for this '**mu**' position: moving in the space between *yes & no, 1&0, and postponing any judgement* and daring to doubt. Gulliver on the other hand is still caught in the binary choice: he wants to be someone else. He can not use the space between Houyhnhnm and Yahoo.

Creativity, why bother?

"If it's such a good idea, why hasn't it been done before?"

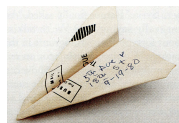
Why can't we just go on in the way we have been doing so far?

Why start dreaming when you know it seldom works out.

Why make it all so complicated: if you have a problem find an expert to solve it.

Why change, we dominate the market anyway!?

Why involve others in a decision process (?) with my experience and gut feeling I know what's best; go check my resume.



These may seem all more or less valid questions, until you look what they hide and mask: fear, anxiety or alarm for the unknown: *change*.



The questions often camouflage beliefs and opinions based on experience (hopefully) or simply on the idea that anything unknown is

dangerous. Of course this is a natural reaction for we want to live by a coherent worldview. Growing up in a certain culture has primed us to see in a particular way we regard as *normal*. We have learned to interpret certain combinations as ok and others as not ok. Tests have found that when a group of students had a glass of orange juice and then were to write on a sticker 'CYANIDE', put the sticker on the glass, *they didn't feel well*. Even when they had written it themselves, knowing it not to be true! A firmly held opinion is basically 'old think', you know it and repeat it. And while it may have helped to solve problems in the past, new circumstances may – and often will – prove too much. Survival and success depend on flexibility to remain *fitting*; being the fittest may look good in competition but when push comes to shove *fittingness, agility or adaptability* and *resilience* is the key to success.

Creativity is not just a kind of pill; take it in the right dose and I will be transformed. Much of the creACTivation occurs in the midst of life's challenges. Books, Internet and workshops are a kind of laboratory where you can infuse ideas and concepts. It is daily life practice where ideas will pop up. It can be in row in the supermarket or wandering through nature, once you have uploaded the concepts your brain will work it out, and surprise you. Give it time and relax, don't force it.

The idea is that when you *act* [which may mean sit still or day-dream] you control your moods. Changing positions also helps to not get glued to a particular way of thinking.



By not reacting quickly with 'for' or 'against' an idea – suspending disbelief, thinking 'MU' – can be a stepping-stone to another reality. If you dare to take other angles and perspectives with people and ideas, you will also see new opportunities. It's like

a chopper for an overview and by jumping from converging to

diverging the impossible becomes obvious. *And afterwards the new stares one in the face.* When accepted ways do not work so well, new shoes must be given a chance. What you need is a systematic *detour* into unknown territories, the creative flight for new ideas. One may feel this as paradoxical—and yes it is. For, you may see the tree but the roots are a different story. It is **both** a *high flight* **and** *deep* diving process. No wonder that well thinking people fear the



uncertainty. The invitation for adventure, the call for the creative instinct brings in change. For me this is a **4-step route** to our *basic needs*.

The origin of SH-I-T-E



Well as all *trickster* stories tell us, when you are unaware of your basic needs, you end up in 'shite'. So when James Hillman, Mary E. Loomis and June Singer and many others refer to the *trickster* in myths and (fairy) tales they recognize this archetypal figure. For the AmerIndians in the form of *coyote*; in Greek Mythology Prometheus is a *Titan* and trickster figure, as are Dionysus and Hermes; In the Garden of Eden it is the snake; in the Low

Countries it is Thyl Uylenspieghel and Reynard the Fox. In West African, Caribbean tales it is *Anansi* who takes the role of trickster in the disguise of a spider.