THE OPPRESSION OF CREATIVITY IN SOCIETY AND EDUCATION – THE ROOTS, THE SIDE EFFECTS AND SOME CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

By

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Abstract

There is a reoccurring theme these days. It is evident in many areas – in many forms. In the texts of the philosophers, in the sub-texts of the artists, in the lyrics of heart-felt songs, in the smiles of our faces. Something is missing. Something is empty. Something that has not always been absent. From our hearts, from our souls. From our bodies, our minds, our earth, our spirits. Something that without, we cannot be complete - cannot live up to our full potential. We cannot be our unconditionally happy, fulfilled, authentic selves.

We live in a constant struggle - a struggle to attain some sense of this completeness. Few have attained it. Many have been in the face of it - making them aware of what they are living without. But most wonder what it is that is missing – why it is such a constant struggle to live in a content, peaceful state.

This thesis is my response to this. In an attempt to understand and learn from this struggle, I have broken this thesis down into three parts and have analyzed what I believe to be the roots of this problem, the side-effects that we have been facing and then offer some creative solutions that may be achieved by means of incorporating a more creative approach to education that allows students to experience a freedom from the oppression and experience authenticity in a way that allows students to learn from and grow amongst this great source of wisdom.

In my thesis I am looking at more of an historical approach when dealing with the roots and the side-effects as I have discovered through my research that the underlying issues have deep historical origins and the side-affects that our society live with daily
have been plaguing us for many centuries and have left many scars that will not easily fade. I also rely heavily on autobiographical enquiry as philosophy that has been grounded in my own creative (mostly musical) experiences. I have chosen to reflect mainly on these models in an attempt to allow my authentic voice to clearly be heard as my opinions are based on my lived experiences (not contemporary philosophers experiences) and the awareness that being creative has revealed to me about my personal struggles living amongst this historically rooted oppression and my struggle to maintain authenticity and autonomy in our current socio-cultural circumstances.
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An Artist's Reflection on Western Society

Introduction

Current Western society has been described by many as a ‘technological,’ or ‘technocratic’ society. I tend to prefer the term technocratic. So, what exactly does this mean? How has technocracy been affecting our society – our culture? And, how is our society and culture’s overall creativity being affected by this?

In an effort to provide a well-balanced definition of technocracy I will provide both a definition from a more ‘technocratic’ point of view - being more of a factual, objective and logical standpoint (without getting into personal analysis), as well as a definition from what I believe to be a more balanced view - an ‘aesthetic’ view (based more on my own understanding and that of supporting philosophers). The ‘technocratic’ view is representing the more typical values and attitudes held in society at large and the ‘aesthetic’ view being more representative of the ‘counter’ or ‘creative’ culture in Western society.

I hasten to add that in this endeavor and for all of my following explorations on the subject of this thesis, I will rely on mostly autobiographical philosophy as my methodology, narrative enquiry and the metaphor of vocal and instrumental music.

What is Technocracy? (A Technocratic Definition)
To begin the ‘technocratic’ definition I have gone back to the root of the word based on Greek prefixes/suffixes. The word “techne” does not mean knowledge itself but knowledge used for a purpose or “know how” (Galka, 2010). This includes skill and knowledge together as elements of a craft and the process of creation (Xenophon, 1968).

“Cracy” – comes from Cratus, a Greek God who was the personification of strength and power. In Greek, “Cratos” means "strength" and when it is spelled “Kratos” it means "power" (Galka, 2010). And finally “kratein” means "to rule" (Cratos, 2010).

So, according to the Greek translation, I have gathered that the Greek definition of technocracy means strength and power coming from knowledge and skill and using this strength and power to rule.

To provide a less literal definition of the word and some literature on the definition of a technocratic society, I will use the literature provided on websites titled The Networks of European Technocrats and Technocracy.ca as a ‘technocratic’ authority of this meaning.

According to The Networks of European Technocrats, technocracy is a vision to deal with our complex world by using knowledge and skill as the abilities to anticipate and help shape the future. It suggests we can define forms of technocracy as a movement, a social system, politics, bio system, etc., but the fundamental idea remains the same; the strength of the technocracy comes from the knowledge and skill that they have and is then used to “shape the future.”

I found the website technocracy.ca elaborates more on exactly what knowledge and skill are being utilized here, why it is being used, and who it was originally developed by.
As stated by technocracy.ca, technocracy has its roots purely in science. It could even be defined as a technology, as in the application of science, to serve a social goal or problem, rather than a political ideal. It was developed by scientists, engineers, and other specialists seeking to understand the role of high-energy technology in our society (such as electrical generators, large earth movers, manufacturing plants, and fast, motorized transportation).

So if technocracy is defined as a social system used to shape society that is guided and shaped by authorities of scientific and technological knowledge and skill – what then characterizes a technocratic society?

A Technocratic Society (A Technocratic Definition)

As suggested by The Networks of European Technocrats (2009) Web site, a technocratic society is a society that is based on knowledge and skills. A society where every human being and animal are in the right place to fully enjoy life with the best standards as possible and where citizens acquire the knowledge and skills to be both intelligent consumers and users of technology.

As stated by technocracy.ca, the goal of a technocratic society is to provide the highest standard of living possible to all citizens for the longest period possible. So, clearly, both authorities state that a technocratic society is set into place to provide citizens with the highest possible quality of living.

The attributes of a technocratic society were also outlined in the website
technocracy.ca. They suggest that there are many attributes but have listed only a few.

These are:

---A thoroughly scientific method of control of the technology of our continent.

---Democratic controls for all non-technical issues and decisions.

---Maximum freedom for all citizens in terms of latitude of purchasing power and personal rights.

---Highest possible standard of living for ALL citizens in terms of income, housing, health care, education, and leisure.

---Sustainable resource management through conservation and industrial efficiency.

---Elimination or vast reduction of various social ills, such as poverty, crime, pollution, insecurity, and disease.

And on the question of "is technocracy a form of government?" technocracy.ca maintains:

Technocracy is not a form of government. Technocracy is instead a method of control of technology. It outlines the basic operating characteristics for a high-energy, abundance-producing society. The technical controls of Technocracy are not interested or designed to interfere in people's lives, only instead to provide the best standard of living with which people can enjoy life.

I will now be analyzing and discussing these definitions in more detail in the 'Aesthetic Definition' of Technocracy.

What is Technocracy? (An Aesthetic Definition)

As I consider myself to be coming from a more artistic, counter-cultural (or non-mainstream) viewpoint, the following 'aesthetic' interpretations of technocracy and a technocratic society are based more on my personal aesthetic interpretations of what these definitions mean to me as well as the beliefs of specific philosophers that share these
beliefs. And because technocracy is a system related to society - I do feel it is very important to define technocracy by not only what it is commonly known to be, but also to define it by what it is not.

Our society has been dominated by an unquestioning faith in science and technology for over 300 years, making western society and the mainstream culture what it is today. This faith has been capitalized upon by the market and then has been further used to maintain and even tighten the technocratic grip on society by means of mind control to fulfill its economic ends. Because this source of our culture is almost completely dominated by science and technology and means – based motivation, also known as ‘instrumental reason’ it has left much to be desired in terms of what feeds and nourishes the human and their society as a whole. To reach one's full potential – a person must be stimulated and nourished by more than what the rational, objective, scientific mindset can offer to them. The stimulation of the intellect is only, at best, a part of what a human being needs to reach its full potential and achieve true happiness.

When the intellect is the only part of the human that is stimulated, the other parts - the physical, the emotional and the spiritual, are left under stimulated and weak – leaving us in a state of dis-ease and easy prey for forces that attempt to control us. Ironically, this technocratic ‘source’ of our culture is really quite ‘lacking’ culturally.

I would like to expand on this concept of what makes a ‘balanced’ human being – one at their full potential - with a quote by a writer on health, sexuality and spirituality, Richard Craze in his book *Tantric Sex*:

The human being is a very complex organism. We have a physical body,
an emotional response, an intellect and a spiritual aspect. We cannot ignore any one of these four elements. If we try to we are less than complete, less than whole. We need to look after our body, exercise it, feed it well and properly. We need to recognize our emotions, enjoy them, enrich and enhance them. Our intellect needs to be stimulated, challenged, expanded, increased and worked. Our spirituality needs to be expressed, nurtured and incorporated into our daily lives.

If we try to cut out any one of these aspects we can make ourselves seriously ill or depressed. Human happiness involves a constant search for an expression of these elements, a way of bringing them into harmony with each other, of utilizing them and improving them. Only by combining, by uniting, by implementing a holistic approach can we rise higher and attain perfection (Craze, 2007, p. 2).

In my view, a holistic, balanced and harmonious approach to human life and culture has been greatly lacking in Western society. I also think it possible that it is lacking more, in general, in our current time than ever before – and I do believe this has been caused by our society’s unyielding faith and practice in objective science and technology and the way the market has used this to oppress our authentic, healthy, balanced ‘Being’ and control us to fulfill their economic ends. I also believe that this fate has not necessarily been something we have authentically chosen, but rather something that has been chosen for us by means of technocracy’s dominating and ruling nature and the underhanded forms of control this mindset and the market’s capitalization of this mindset have achieved.

So if technocracy has been the dominating force of our society and culture for over 300 years – have there ever been critics of this unbalanced and unharmonious approach to living? In my research I have found rich sources on social, cultural and aesthetic issues posed by the impact of science and technology and the market on advanced and developing countries. I would like to highlight and reflect on some of these
critiques to draw attention to the pitfalls of technocracy.

A Critique of Technocracy

Even in the beginnings of technocracy – the intellectuals of the day had foreseen the consequences of this way of thought. According to Robin Clarke (1974) in her article, *New Values Created by a Technological Society*, in the 18th century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau proposed a highly personal form of liberation for the individual whom he saw as being enchained by the artificial needs of civilization which had divorced man from nature and in doing so destroyed his real identity (p.2). It is clear to me that Rousseau understood the needs of man and the necessary balance that was needed to achieve a fulfilling life – a need that was not being met in the 18th century – and still is not being met today. A key difference between then and now is that, the people of that time were probably aware of the unhappiness caused by this imbalance but today something even worse has happened – we have become numb to it. Now we fill our unhappiness with toxins – alcohol, drugs, fast food, sugar, shopping, TV and other addictive, intoxicating forms of pop culture as artificial fillers. This is little but a temporary escape from the reality of, (as Rousseau stated) the loss of our real identity.

Another intellect famous for his critique of technocracy is the English poet, William Blake. According to Clarke, William Blake is renowned for his misgivings about the “dark satanic mills” he saw incipient in the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution (p.3). Many of his poems concern the problems of the rational - the objective, and the form of philosophy he deplored as “Newton’s single vision”. For Blake, science was an
acceptable instrument for viewing the world, but only if it was part of what he called “four fold vision”. His poems tell extensively of this, by way of the four Zoas. For Blake, Uri Zen was the Zoa of Reason, cold and scientific; Luvah, the Zoa of Energy, Passion and Feeling, pitying and weeping; Los, the Zoa of Prophetic Power, and Tharmas, the Zoa of Spirit (Clark, p.3). I find this analogy very interesting, as it closely resembles the four elements that I had mentioned earlier – the mind, (Uri Zen) the emotions, (Luvah) and the spirit, (Tharmas). I can also understand the importance of Los, the Zoa of prophetic power when concerning instruments for viewing the world – but one very important element is missing – the element of the senses, or body. Nevertheless, Blake was especially aware of what was missing in the culture of the time and had clearly foreseen the dark side of technocracy.

There have also been some important names from our century. To begin, in 1954, Jacques Ellul published The Technological Society in which he clearly declared the dangers of the technocratic ideal and the immense imbalance it has created for humans and society. For Ellul, scientists were "sorcerers who are totally blind to the meaning of the human adventure" (p.15) and whose efforts would bring about a "dictatorship of test-tubes rather than hob-nailed boots" (p.16). Every technical advance, Ellul argued, produces more problems than it solves if the advance is examined in a sufficiently wide context. Because only a part of human’s and society’s needs are taken into consideration when creating new technical advances, there have been serious repercussions to the other parts.

Ellul also highlights the ‘cratus’ side of technology and how technology has also been used to control and manipulate humans – stripping them of their autonomy. He calls
this "loss of control". According to Larry Hickman (2001) in Philosophical Tools for Technological Culture, Ellul argued that what he termed "technique" has become autonomous, that it is outside of human control, and that it has totally unsurpassed human freedom (p.149). Technology, as he described it, is so pervasive that there appears to be no means of evaluating it from outside, much less any way to control it. It obeys only its own laws, its own logic, and it is self-augmenting. Human beings can no longer understand or regulate it. It is like a cancer growing within human society (p.149). Ellul also saw no possible human or historical possibility of controlling technology. According to Ellul, humans have created an inhuman force that has become greater than they. It threatens to destroy them (p.149).

Although Ellul was seen by many to have quite a pessimistic take on the technological society, his views provide a significant analysis of the dangers of technocracy. I also agree that, in general, a “loss of control” has occurred, and that technique has surpassed human freedom, however, I think it is possible to understand and regulate this through awareness. And as he may be right about there being no possibility of controlling technology, there is the possibility of bringing more of the missing undervalued elements of human life back into the forefront by means of education. And yes, the hold that technocracy has over our society does threaten to destroy us – and this very well may happen (more so than it already has) if humans are not exposed to more humane living conditions and the severe imbalances in our society begin to be rectified.

Like Ellul, Martin Heidegger was profoundly troubled by the status of contemporary technology and also declared a "loss of control". According to Hickman,
Heidegger did not speak necessarily of the autonomy of technology as Ellul, nor did he argue that it has completely crowded out human freedom. For Heidegger, it was not so much that technology has caused human beings to lose control, but that it has caused them to *lose their way* (p.152). Technology has created an over-objectified, construed view of reality that gives a false rendition of what he called "Being" (p.152). The "enframing" of contemporary technology, by treating objects, means, and even human beings as stock parts, prevents Being from "coming to presence," or being revealed (p.152). In other words, technology is keeping us from functioning at our fullest potential – it has stopped us from *finding our way* or living authentically.

Heidegger, like Ellul, also makes a strong point about the foundations of technological advances being from an unbalanced, means - based foundation that may cause even bigger problems than it originally intending to solve. Heidegger believes that a proper attitude toward technology would involve a return to such a custodianship of Being (p.152) that would not work against the greatest benefit of humans, but for it. But instead, contemporary technology has entered into an adversarial relationship with being. Contemporary technology has "masked Being rather than allowing it to shine" (p.152). It has devalued the concept of living authentically for the sake of monetary gains and power.

So if this ‘technocratic’ state of our society and culture has as much influence and control over us as these philosophers argue, how has this managed to come about?

**The Technocratic Influence**

The “.kratus” or power of the technocracy or technologically motivated society and
its ability to have such control over western society is its ability to be in a sense, faceless. Society being dominated by the motivations of more objective, scientific, and technological influences is so perfectly normal and expected we see no ill in it. Anything other than an objective view upon things simply doesn’t hold as much weight. That’s just the way it is. Our passions have been suppressed for so long, we don’t even remember how it should be. This is clearly revealed in the unfortunate lack of appreciation our society (in general) has for the arts and intrinsic values. We don’t “officially” live in a technocracy, however, our society is dominated by technology and this is used to maintain control, so we pretty much do live in a technocracy – just not officially. Technocracy seems to prefer being ‘faceless’.

In Theodore Roszack’s book *Making of a Counter Culture* (1969), he speaks about how the technocracy is not generally perceived as a political phenomenon in our advanced industrial societies even though it holds immense influence. He suggests it holds the place, rather, of a “grand cultural imperative” (p.6) which is beyond question, beyond discussion. He suggests that one of the strongest characteristics of the technocracy is to “render itself ideologically invisible”. Because it is not exactly a political phenomenon, it can work “transpolitically following the dictates of industrial efficiency” (p.6). And it is in this nature that the technocracy is able to increase its influence and consolidate its power. I really like the argument Roszack gives as technocracy being like an umpire in a ball game. As the umpire is neutral, he is normally the least obtrusive person on the scene, yet in a sense, the umpire is the most significant figure in the game since he alone sets the limits and goals of the competition and judges the contenders.

And so, there is this unyielding phenomenon that has a great hold over society that
is so encapsulating, it is not even considered by society to be a source of oppression -
when it very much is. Roszack suggests that technocracy’s control is a perfect form of
totalitarianism, as it has the surrounding culture under authoritarian control yet its
techniques of control are very subliminal. He speaks of the “regime of experts” (p.9) that
rather than coerce, choose to “charm conformity by manipulating the securities and
creature comforts of the industrial affluence which science has given us.” Roszack also
speaks of how an obvious strategy of technocracy is “to levell life down to a standard of
so-called living that technical expertise can cope with and then on that false and exclusive
basis, to claim an intimidating Omni competence over us by its monopoly of the experts”
(p.12). We have been charmed to the point of complacency, apathy – charmed by a
faceless charmer.

According to Roszack, this view is also shared by Herbert Marcuse in his
analysis of this "new authoritarianism". Marcuse speaks of technocracy’s “absorbent
power” in its “capacity to provide satisfaction in a way which generates submission and
weakens the rationality of protest” (p.14).

So, what, more specifically is it that technocracy has such authoritarian control
over? Well that is a question that could have many answers, but what I am most
concerned about is its subliminal manner of oppressing our individual ability to live to
our fullest potential. This concept of living to ones full potential is also what I believe
Craze was speaking of when he spoke of the necessary balance and healthy relationship
with the four elements, the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical. Rousseau was
speaking of this when he talks of a “real identity” and what Heidegger means when he
speaks of “coming into being” and the realization of this. This concept has more recently
been described as being true to one's "authentic" self, a term first defined a few decades ago by Lionel Trilling in an influential book, *Sincerity and Authenticity*. This concept of "authenticity," and technocracy's control over it has more recently been explored by Charles Taylor in his book *The Malaise of Modernity*.

**The Authentic Self**

The concept of the 'authentic self' comes in many names. In just the last 13 pages it has already been suggested as a "reaching of one's full potential", of "attaining perfection", being "balanced", attaining one's "real identity", and " 'Being' coming into presence" to name a few. I would like to expand on this concept and offer even more definitions of it with the help of some various philosophers of aesthetics and more specifically Charles Taylor.

Taylor has a similar opinion as I when he speaks about a decline in the authenticity of individuals, society and culture in Western society. This is the irony of the technocratic ideal. Amidst all the progress is also a decline - a decline that began around 300 years ago with the industrial revolution. However, Taylor also suggests that many feel an important decline has occurred more recently - since the Second World War, or the 1950s or so. He calls this the "disenchantment" of the world. When instrumental reason took over and replaced sacred objects with instruments for our projects, things began to get all messed up. As Taylor explains, "The creatures that surround us lost the significance that accrued to their place in the chain of being" (Taylor, 2002, p.5).

More recently, mass production has increased the rate of this disenchantment and
it is spreading all over the world (also known as globalization). This disenchantment has also been called "loss of magic" according to Taylor (p. 3) and "suffering from a lack of passion" as Kierkegaard saw in "the present age".

The problem with this is when decisions that affect society, individuals and the planet are determined by "cost benefit" analysis we are not being guided by our own decisions but rather ones that demand to maximize output (p. 5). So when society, and individuals are being dictated by these ends, we have a loss of individual autonomy and this is stopping us from living to our fullest potential, living authentically. As Taylor explains:

The institutions and structures of industrial-technological society severely restrict our choices. They force societies as well as individuals to give a weight to instrumental reason that in serious moral deliberation we would never do, and which may even be highly destructive. (Taylor, 1991, p.8)

So according to Taylor, due to technocracy’s alliance with instrumental reason, we are, by the means of another’s choices, forced to sacrifice our morals, or what our authentic choice would be if it had the freedom to choose. If this is true that would mean that our society makes it very difficult for us to be true to our authentic selves.

So what then does it mean to be true to our authentic selves? Well, to begin, according to Taylor, the concept of authenticity originated from the eighteenth century notion that human beings are endowed with a moral sense, an intuitive feeling for what is right and wrong (p.25). This concept is an important belief of authenticity as it tells us what is ‘the right thing to do’. Being in touch with our moral feelings would matter here, as a means to the end of acting rightly, rather than the means being for economic gains. So being in touch with this sense of ‘what is right’ would be an important thing to attain
in order to be true and full human beings (p.26). Another very similar idea considered essential to being a ‘full being’ is having a source of God, or the idea of Good deep within us that passes through our own reflexive awareness of ourselves (p. 26). Rousseau suggests that this same idea of ‘following a good voice’ is our following a voice of nature in ourselves. To me, it’s not so important what exactly this voice is, but that there is a guiding voice. The important point to realize is that unfortunately, this voice is very hard to follow amongst our current socio-cultural climate as we are conditioned to block this voice out.

So, being in touch with one’s sense of ‘what is right’ is an important part of the notion of authenticity, but just as important as this is the notion first introduced by Rousseau, of what Taylor calls “self-determining freedom” (p.26). Taylor describes this as being “the idea that one is free when they decide for themselves what concerns them, rather than being shaped by external influences” (p. 26). He also describes this as being free to do what one wants without interference from others as that means being shaped by society and its laws of conformity. In other words, an autonomy of choice is an important aspect of authenticity.

Another notion of authenticity is an idea first suggested by Herder (1877) in his book Ideen, viii.I. In this book, Herder put forward the idea that each of us has an original way of being human. Each person has his or her own "measure" in his words (p.291). This suggests that there is a certain way of being human that is unique for each individual. A certain way of being human that is my way. And in this case, that would mean that one’s life has a point. A point to discover what it means to be true to one’s self, and if one cannot discover this they may miss what being human means for them.
So, what does this involve, being true to one’s self? Well, along with the notion of being in touch with moral feelings of ‘the right thing to do’, being true to one’s self also means being true to one’s own originality, and that is something that can only be articulated and discovered individually. This raises another important point about authenticity. If one’s discovery of their authentic self can only be found by means of their own self-discovery, it can only be found within. The model to live cannot be found outside of ourselves (Taylor, p.29). And in articulating this, one defines themselves – their original, authentic selves. Or as Taylor says, “It is what gives sense to the idea of "doing your own thing" or "finding your own fulfillment." (p. 29). Unfortunately, the conformist nature of our society is at odds with the realization of this.

Something that I also consider to be an important notion of authenticity and the ‘finding of one’s true self’ is not something that can just be discovered and then forever utilized, but is rather, constantly evolving. In his article Pop Music for Assembling an Authentic Self (2009), from Authenticity in Culture, Self and Society, Joseph A. Kotarba describes authenticity as a form of evolving biographical work. He suggests that the self is constantly in a state of becoming and needs to involve a form of openness to change and to the “endless mutability of self and identity in a changing world and within the context of age-related changes in social roles”. (p.153). This really resonates with me, as being in touch with one’s true self means that you are constantly learning from it and growing, and evolving with the associated changes in one’s life.

So if authenticity is something that can only be discovered from within, how can the ‘finding of your own fulfillment’ occur given the dominating oppressive forces of society that have been so successful in influencing our ability to discover this? One
possible answer is through creative exploration.

The notion that each one of us has an original way of being human entails that each of us has to discover what it is to be ourselves. Taylor argues that this discovery can't be made outside of ourselves by consulting pre-existing models, so it can only be made by articulating it afresh, from exploring within. He suggests that the most effective manner of achieving this is by giving expression to what is original in us (Taylor, 2002, p.61). This notion is what Taylor calls "expressivism" of the modern notion of the individual.

Because this notion involves 'expression', this suggests a very close connection between self-discovery and artistic creation, as creation directly involves, at the very least, an exploration of the emotions. According to Herder, with an expressivist understanding of human life, the relation with the self becomes very intimate. He also suggests that creation is the paradigm mode in which people can come to self-definition. Taylor also supports this view and believes that "self-discovery passes through a creation, the making of something original and new" (Taylor, 2002, p.62). He then goes on to describe how when one forges a new artistic language, one becomes what one has it in them to be. He feels that self-discovery requires making (p.62). This is a concept that I have also found to be true and think it would be hard to find an individual that has experienced artistic creation that would disagree with this notion. This is one of the greatest benefits of artistic creation – the exploration of the self, and the great learning that occurs from this exploration.

And so, this brings us back to the original problem of our authentic selves being oppressed. According to Taylor, being in contact with one's own inner nature is in danger
of being lost partly from the pressures towards outward conformity, but also due to our society’s roots in technocracy and instrumental reason and its oppression of this authenticity.

To further discuss the forms of technocratic oppression, I will be breaking things down in a way that examines the ways it has affected us emotional, spiritually, intellectually and physically. I also believe that in order for our authentic selves to function at their fullest potential, these aspects of ourselves should be in a healthy, stimulated state and that there needs to be a healthy balance between these aspects in order for our authentic selves to function at their fullest potential. I also believe a very large part of the oppression our authentic selves is the oppression of creativity in our society. I will be exploring these ideas in detail in the next section.

The Technocratic Society (In Four Parts)

A technocratic society is typically defined as being a society that is based on knowledge and skills. It is a society that is set into place to provide all citizens with the highest quality of living where citizens acquire the knowledge and skills to be both intelligent consumers of technology and users of technology.

So where has this society dominated by technocracy left us socio-culturally? In an attempt to organize this section in a cohesive manner, I would like to break this down in a way that examines the ways it has affected us emotionally, physically, spiritually, intellectually and finally creatively. However, it is important to realize that they are all closely intertwined.
Emotionally

In our technocratic society – I cannot help but to feel that our emotions are seen in some respect as ‘the enemy.’ In most situations, emotions are seen as a negative thing – and if someone is described as being ‘emotional’ this is usually speaking of the ‘bad’ emotions - anger, tension, melancholy, sadness. Why is this so? What about the positive emotions of love, passion, happiness, peace – freedom. Why is there such a negative connotation associated with the ‘emotions.’ Could it be that our society is perhaps dominated by negative emotions? Could it be that our unbalanced technocratic society has fallen short on the celebration of our positive emotions, (or emotions in general), as well as subjectivity, resulting in an inability to have a happy healthy emotional life because the negatives have been allowed to ‘take over’?

If this is really the case, which many would argue, what role would technocracy have in all of this? Well to begin, in widely understood terms, ‘emotional’ intelligence is the opposite of the more ‘logical’ intelligence. This could also be described as a more ‘subjective’ way of thinking and the opposite as being the more ‘objective’ way of thinking. These concepts are critically explored by a leading philosopher of aesthetics, Colin Lyas, in his book *Aesthetics* (1997) as being:

An objective assertion refers to a property out there, in the object. A subjective assertion expresses some state of the psychological life of the subject. To say a strawberry has a certain mass is to say something objective. To say one likes the taste of strawberries is to say something subjective. (Lyas, 1997, p.113)
However, many leading thinkers of our time tend to disagree wholeheartedly with even the notion of the ‘objective’ as even the objective must be experienced by means of the subjective, thus making the concept of the ‘objective’ an approximation. As Lyas explains:

Any access to objects has to be through experiences of subjects. But aren’t these, as experiences of subjects, simply subjective? How, as Bishop Berkeley pertinently asked, can I be assured that there is any objective world beyond my experiences, since all I have is the experiences? (Lyas, 1997, p.114)

And according to Soren Kierkegaard in his book Concluding Unscientific Postscripts, (1846) “subjectivity is truth” (p. 203 IX 169).

So as far as the ‘role’ technocracy has in our fulfillment of the emotional aspects of ourselves, it is very essential to recognize that the notion of the ‘objective’ has been seen as the only ‘truth’ in the technocratic society. However, this is biased toward the logical way of thinking. In technocracy, the objective is placed on a pedestal as the subjective is more or less dismissed as merely ‘personal experience.’ Emotions are simply ‘subjective’ responses and don’t hold much value. But according to leading philosophers, it is the subjective that holds more weight.

In a technocratic society, this objective, or ‘logical’ way of thinking has been greatly celebrated, encouraged and exercised – leaving the subjective or ‘emotional’ side greatly uncelebrated, discouraged and out of shape. And if our emotional intelligence is
left weak and unappreciated – it would essentially become dis-eased. This would allow for two very debilitating things to happen. The first is what I mentioned before – the domination of the emotions by the negative. And it seems to be that increasing numbers of people are fighting depression, anxiety, anger management disorders and addiction issues (just to name some of more common disorders). According to The Canadian Mental Health Association web site, (2009), 36% of Canadians have themselves experienced depression or anxiety. And according to The Canadian Center for Addictions and Mental Health, (2009):

"Twenty percent of the general population suffers from a mental illness or addiction in any given year and 3% suffer profound suffering and persistent disablement. The impact of this is staggering: over 1.5 million Canadians are currently experiencing clinical depression, a disorder that affects 10-15% of Canadians at some point in their lives. One of every eight Canadians will be hospitalized for mental illness at least once in their life, more than are hospitalized for cancer and heart disease."

According to The World Health Organization web site, (2009), “These illnesses account for the greatest degree of disability, worldwide.” This disability is then further complicated by the effects it has on employment, social relationships and family functioning.

With these striking statistics it would be hard to deny that our society is suffering emotionally. Is this perhaps because we are being forced into believing the false notion that an objective point of view is the only ability of real value?

Interestingly enough, the domination of the emotions by the negative, or mental illness can also be seen as the domination of the emotions by the relentless insistence on
'objective' truths. Not only are these truths compounded by a nagging insistence, but they are embraced by an uncontrollable passion. As Kierkegaard states:

Madness never has the inwardness of infinity. Its fixed idea is a kind of objective something, and the contradiction of madness lies in wanting to embrace it with passion. (Kierkegaard, 1846, p. 194 IX 162)

Believing the false technocratic idea that truth needs to be objective and final, the madman loses touch with their personal subjective emotions and their then, 'out of touch' emotions are further compounded by misdirected passion. As Marino explains in his Commentary of Kierkegaard In the Present Age (2001):

False worshipper that he is likely to be, the objective thinker supposes that there is nothing more to being in truth than being possessed of true conceptions. Consciously or unconsciously, the madman turns all self concern out. Gone is the self knowledge of care. Gone, too, is the gentleness of longing. In some fixed and fixing idea the inwardness of the infinite is brought to a finite point. The passion of madness is a passionate insistence upon the objective truth claims of some lunatic idea. Madness for Kierkegaard is the consciousness being objectified, limited and ultimately finite. (Marino, p.32)

He also states:

The madman is trapped in their objective, impassioned finality.....Trapped without the infinity of knowledge - Trapped without altruistic care for oneself or others – Without love, compassion, hope....(Marino, p.33)

So now, what about the second ‘general’ emotional problem our society has been stricken with? Well, the second debilitating emotional problem our society is suffering from is a kind of ‘detachment’ from the emotional self - a sort of ‘numbness,’ so to speak. In this case the ability to experience all ranges of emotions has been retarded in a sense, leaving one greatly out of touch with many of their emotions and as a result are, to some
extent, out of touch with their authentic selves and completely vulnerable to mind-controlling forces (which will be discussed in greater detail in the intellectual section.)

This emotional problem could also be argued as being compounded by - if not stemming from our technocratic society’s insistence on the ‘truth of objectivity,’ and our numbness directly linked to the suppression of our subjective sensitivities.

In both of these cases it would be difficult for an individual to actually ‘love’ oneself and hence achieve peace and happiness.

Earlier the attributes of a technocratic society were outlined from the website technocracy.ca. One of these attributes was described as being, an “elimination or vast reduction of various social ills, such as poverty, crime, pollution, insecurity, and disease.” However, does a dis-eased emotional self of lead to poverty, crime, pollution, and insecurity? Well if you are emotionally unfulfilled and cannot love yourself – how could you love and respect others? The earth? Is this perhaps the main cause of poverty? How many homeless and poverty stricken individuals have serious emotional disorders and have not achieved higher education and marketable skills? How many individuals suffering from poverty and lack of self-respect resort to crime? How can one love the earth if they cannot love themselves – as children of the earth? How can you feel secure about yourself if you cannot find the recipe for happiness without the help of a drug? And does this all lead to even greater dis-ease, an even greater lack of self love and respect?

Once again I see another irony in the technocratic ideal.

It is my view that providing a healthy emotional environment for humans
emotional selves to thrive in – an environment that values the subjective and objective ways of viewing the world as being interconnected, and both of value would more effectively achieve these idealistic technocratic goals which I would argue are not being met in our current society.

Physically and Spiritually

More than the other aspects of our authentic selves, our physical and spiritual aspects are so closely intertwined that they are in many ways one and the same. Due to this ‘sameness’ I will focus on both of these aspects in the same section. When I speak of the ‘physical’ I mean both our relationship with our body and senses and our relationship with the earth. And when I speak of the spiritual – I am speaking of our personal relationship with the unseen aspects of the body, the earth, and the great source of sustenance, knowledge and inspiration that lies between. It is an awareness that these sources of ourselves cannot exist without each other - that they are interconnected, that allows us to be in touch with the subjective and personal aspects of ourselves and life itself.

So how are our physical and spiritual selves faring in our highly objective technocratic society? Probably the most important thing to realize is that technocracy has been successful at creating an unbalanced society and individual and has in many ways achieved this by separating us from our physical and spiritual selves. Not only has technocracy done this but it has also created a separation between the two aspects of ourselves that really cannot exist without each other – our physical and spiritual selves.
Our Connection with our Bodies and the Earth

In our technocratic, objectively motivated society, our personal connections and experiences - our subjective, sensual experiences and connections to our bodies and the earth - have really been viewed as the most unimportant aspects of ourselves. One look at the statistics of obesity and diet-related illness in the western world and the obvious devastation of the earth and its once majestic and bountiful plants and animal species will clearly show that a lack of appreciation for the physical has clearly dominated our socio-cultural views. I personally find it quite insulting to humankind that our society has just very recently began to admit that "yes there is a really big problem with the earth" and "yes we are to blame for it."

But can we really be blamed for our naïve and careless attitudes toward our relationships with our body and our earth or is there something much larger at work here? I believe that as our society slowly became dominated by a technocratic ideal - we slowly lost touch with our deeply impassioned, innate and very necessary connection to our body and senses and our earthly world.

This is a concept that has had much light shed upon it by some prominent existentialist philosophers; Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and more recently David Abrahm.

According to Abrahm, Husserl speaks of a purely subjective world of our immediately lived experience as we live it, prior to all our thoughts about it, called the ‘life world’ (Abrahm, 1996). It is this reality in which we experience our senses in the
raw - in the moment, with their heightened passions and pure delights. It is our connection to and appreciation of this magical experience that technocracy has suppressed from our personal experiences, society and lives by making us believe that there is only worth in the ‘objective’, the un-sensual. In David Abrahm’s book The Spell of the Sensuous, he refers to Husserl’s philosophy, saying that:

It was Husserl’s genius to realize that the assumption of objectivity had led to an almost total eclipse of the life world in the modern era, to a nearly complete forgetting of these living dimensions in which all of our endeavors are rooted. In their strive to attain a finished blue print of the world, the sciences had become frightfully estranged from our direct human experience. Their many specialized and technical discourses had lost any obvious relevance to the sensuous world of our ordinary engagement. Oblivious to the quality laden life - world upon which they depend for their own meaning and existence, the western sciences, and the technologies that accompany them, were beginning to blindly overrun the experiential world – even, in their errancy, threatening to obliterate the world-of-life entirely. (Abrahm, 1996, p.41)

Our sensual, impassioned, subjective bodily experiences have been overrun and unappreciated by the logical, technical and objective worldview of technocracy – creating a ‘crisis’ in Western civilization, as we have lost touch with experiential world. I believe this is becoming more and more evident, especially these days. In Abrahm’s book, he also speaks of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of the body being very different from the common or ‘technocratic’ notion that dominates our conceptions. According to Abrahm:

The body I hear speak of is very different from the body we have been taught to see and even to feel, very different, finally from that complex machine whose broken parts or stuck systems are diagnosed by our medical doctors and “repaired” by our medical technologies. Underneath the anatomized and mechanical body that we have learned to conceive, prior indeed to all our conceptions, dwells the body as it actually experiences things. This poises an animate power that initiates all our projects and suffers all our passions. (ibid, p. 46)
Because we have in many ways been conditioned to view our bodies as mechanical, objective and un-sensuous, we have lost touch with the great source of wisdom, creativity and inspiration that is within our sensual, bodily experiences - in the moment we experience them. Unfortunately our objective, technocratic conceptions have taken over our immediate, passionate, life-filled, sensual experiences. We are not truly experiencing our lives in the way we were originally intended to – we are ‘out of touch’ – living a ‘mirage’ As Abrahm explains:

the common notion of the experiencing self or mind, as an immaterial phantom ultimately independent of the body can only be a mirage: Merleau – ponty invites us to recognize, at the heart of even our most abstract cogitations, the sensuous and sentient life of the body itself. This breathing body, as it experiences and inhabits the world, is very different from that objectified body diagramed in physiology textbooks, with its separable ‘systems’ (the circulatory system, the digestive system, the respiratory system etc.) laid bare on each page. (ibid, p.45)

Our society has taught us to lose touch with our bodies, our senses, our true experiences.

Our Disconnection from the Earth = Our Disconnection from our Bodies

To understand how technocracy has been able to re-define our relationship and sensual connection with our senses we can find the answer in noticing how technocracy has removed us from our natural surroundings – the earth and all its bounty.

As humans are actually a part of nature and not separate from it (as technocracy has prescribed), removing us from nature and the earth’s harmonious natural rhythms has had a grave affect on humans to the point where we have, in many ways, lost touch with
our physical and spiritual selves – lost touch with our unique, personal beauty. Lost touch with the rhythms and wisdoms that speak to us through our senses and our instincts. The world we live in, without the freshly exhaled sweet air from the trees and plants and soil to breathe - without the tranquil, calming sounds of the birds, the insects, the wind and the water to hear - without the soothing greens and browns and blues of the natural with her bright colored flowers dancing in the foreground to see – without the pure, fresh, earth and sun filled natural foods to nourish our bodies and souls and without the powerful, nourishing energy of the natural world in all her raw beauty – we have forgotten ours. We need the earth’s beauty in our lives to remind us – we are all of the same beauty – the same wisdom. “The recuperation of the sensuous is the rediscovery of the earth” (ibid, p.63).

Living amongst the lifeless cities – surrounded by the virus that has diseased our natural mother with its concrete, its electricity, its noise and pollution - our deep impassioned connections to our senses have suffered – suffered to the point of near non-existence. We have little to nourish us in our diseased surroundings:

The breathing, sensing body draws its sustenance and its very substance from the soils, plants, and elements that surround it; it continually contributes itself, in turn, to the air, to the composting earth, to the nourishment of insects and oak trees and squirrels, ceaselessly spreading out of itself as well as breathing the world into itself, so that it is very difficult to discern at any moment precisely where this living body begins and where it ends. (ibid, p.47)

This disconnection to our bodies by means of our diseased unnatural surrounding is passionately described by Abrahm by means of a personal sensual experience in which he was temporarily removed from the technological forces of his neighborhood during a
power outage that lasted for days in Long Island. As he describes:

For those few days and nights our town became a community aware of its place in an encompassing cosmos. Even our noses seemed to come awake, the fresh smells from the ocean somehow more vibrant and salty. The breakdown of our technologies had forced a return to our senses, and hence to the natural landscape in which those senses are so profoundly embedded. We suddenly found ourselves inhabiting a sensuous world that had been waiting for years, at the very fringe of our awareness, an intimate terrain infused by birdsong, salt spray, and the light of stars. (ibid, p.63)

In contrast, the mass-produced artifacts of civilization, from milk cartons to washing machines to computers, draw our senses into a dance that endlessly reiterates itself without variation. To the sensing body these artifacts are, like all phenomena, animate and even alive, but their life is profoundly constrained by the specific “functions” for which they were built. Once our bodies master these functions, the machine-made objects commonly teach our senses nothing further; they are unable to surprise us, and so we must continually acquire new built objects, new technologies, the latest model of this or that if we wish to stimulate ourselves. (ibid, p.64)

Isn’t that interesting? And really, it makes perfect sense....Especially what he mentions the unpredictability of the natural – constantly stimulating our subjective sensual experiences contrasted with the repetitive, machine - made objects, constantly stimulating our objective side – but it fulfills us not so we keep searching for more and more to keep us stimulated, when the irony is, it is the objective stimulation that is destimulating us from our true desires of the subjective sensual dimensions offered to us by the natural. As Abrahm’s continues:

So the recuperation of the incarnate, sensorial dimension of experience brings with a recuperation of the living landscape in which we are corporeally embedded.

This intertwined web of existence is, of course, the ‘life world’ to which Husserl alluded. This is not the biosphere as it is by an abstract and objectifying science, it is rather, the biosphere as it is experienced and lived from within by the intelligent body – by the attentive human animal who is entirely a part of the world that he, or she, experiences. (ibid, p.65)
I once heard that humans have only lived apart from nature for one second out of an hour of our existence – and I bet there’s a lot of truth in that. For the majority of human history we have not only been surrounded by nature, but lived amongst it, in harmony with it, beating at the same rhythm as it, listening, speaking and learning from it. But the lives that we now live in our technocratic societies are still very unnatural to us – and it hasn’t been very long that we have lived without the majesty of the physical in our lives. May this be the reason for all our physical suffering? Why we no longer hear our senses - know our true selves? I believe so… And here is a quote by Helena Norberg-Hodge that affirms this in the book *Being Bodies*, (1996):

As the pace of life continues to speed up, the rhythms of the body are denied. As we drive at unnaturally high speeds, our relationship to the earth is thrown of kilter. As we are forced to live in concrete structures of straight lines, move on tarmac and work in cubicles, we come to forget who we are until we no longer even see the unnaturalness of our lives and we cut off responses we might otherwise have to the suicidal direction of the global economy. (Norberg-Hodge, 1996, p.82)

Is this perhaps why so many don’t even realize the folly of their actions? Why so many disrespect their bodies and the earth with their actions and why so many continue on blindly, having no realization that they are completely out of touch with their natural selves? Have we lost touch with our true selves because we have lost touch with the earth as “the forgotten basis of all our awareness” (Abrahm, 1996, p. 69).

**The Physical and the Spiritual as Interconnected**
More than the emotions, more than the body or the mind, the concept of what the spiritual is, exactly, is more ambiguous. Therefore, before I describe the interconnectedness between the body and spiritual and how that part of humanity is faring in our technocratic society – I would like to first offer a personal interpretation of what the spiritual is, aided of course by experts on the subject.

**What is Spirituality?**

For myself, spirituality is about finding one's own inner peace – finding one's authentic self without the interference of the mind, or shall we say the 'ego' and having the ability to gain wisdom from that self. My own personal search for spirituality has brought me peace, a deep physical sense of knowing, creative inspirations and even wisdom. However, pursuing a connection with my spiritual self and striving to listen to what wisdom it has to offer is not often natural in our society. Having a connection with this great source of wisdom and inspiration takes much work as we hardly live in a society that is conducive to a healthy connection with the spiritual. According to Peter Russel, an expert on transcendental meditation and spirituality, “The essence of spirituality is the search to know our true selves, to discover the real nature of consciousness.” (Spirit of Now, 2009)

It has been from my experience that the ‘nature of consciousness’ he speaks of is our consciousness freed from the ego (or the mind controlled), fully in touch with the senses, in an ideal state of physical health, surrounded by the natural (in a healthy state) and in a positive, loving and peaceful emotional state. In this conception, consciousness is
where all wisdom, knowledge, energy, inspiration, peace, insight and love emanate from.

Some people call the origin of this consciousness ‘god’ or the ‘Tao’ (to name just a few).

I personally prefer the more subjective term of ‘the spiritual.’

Unfortunately, many forces in our society work against and constrict us from having a healthy connection to the ‘spiritual.’ So many of us go blindly through life living more in the ego than our authentic selves and have a deep sense of something that is missing. The part that is missing, however, is our connection to the spiritual. As stated by Peter Russel:

Throughout the history of humanity it has been said that the self we know -- the individual ego -- is a very limited form of identity. Ignorant of our true selves we derive a false sense of identity from what we have, or what we do -- from our possessions, our role in the world, how others see us, etc. Behind this identity is a deeper identity, what is often called the "true self." This can be thought of as the essence of consciousness. (2009)

Pursuing a healthy connection to our ‘authentic selves’ and living more consciously is, I believe the most direct way to true inner peace and happiness. As Russel explains:

When we discover this deeper sense of self we are freed from many of the fears that plague us unnecessarily. We discover a greater inner peace, an inner security that does not depend upon events or circumstances in the world around. As a result we become less self-centered, less needy of the other's approval or recognition, less needy of collecting possessions and social status, and become happier, healthier and more loving people. In many spiritual teachings this is called "self-liberation". (2009)

Is this ‘self-liberation’ not the prescription of peace and happiness that most people are yearning for?

One other dominant concept in the teachings of spirituality is that ‘the spiritual’
or, 'god’ is not just the essence of consciousness, creativity, energy, wisdom and love, but that this would also make it the essence of all of creation. And if the spiritual is the essence of the whole of creation, then there is a piece of the spiritual in every creature and living thing – including humans. This would mean that a search for a connection to ones authentic self would also involve a search for a connection to 'the spiritual.' As described by Russel:

Most spiritual teachings also maintain that when one comes to know the true nature of consciousness, one also comes to know God. If God is the essence of the whole of creation, then God is the essence of every creature, and every person. This is why the search to discover the nature of one's own innermost essence is the search for God. (2009)

So, if we are a fragmentation of the whole of creation, the big question is – How can one imprisoned in a technocratic society achieve a healthy connection to the spiritual and attain a connection with its greatness? Well, there are more ways than one – but I would argue that the answer lies in how our spiritual self is so closely related to our physical self and how it is difficult to have one without the other.

The Physical and the Spiritual as Interconnected

Concerning our relationship to the physical and the spiritual – well our relationship to the spiritual is our relationship to the physical. It is through my personal experiences and a deep sense of knowing that a connection to the spiritual is achieved by means of a healthy connection with one’s body and an appreciation for as well as a relationship with the natural, physical earth. And this does really make sense for me,
especially if you look at ‘the spiritual’ as being an energy force that belongs in every living thing, including the human body, it would make sense that if one achieves a healthy nurturing relationship with one’s body and if one understands the great value in the natural world and does one’s best to respect and surround oneself by it - taking in all the sustenance and rich energy it has to offer - it would also make sense that one would have more of a healthy relationship with the spiritual.

To understand this more clearly, I would like to share the ways that I have personally felt a strong connection with the spiritual by means of the body and the natural world.

My body has revealed to me the magic, the joy, the rejuvenation and the wisdom of the spiritual in many ways. Through the art of conversation and laughter, I have felt the power of the spiritual flow between myself and other people – revealing to me the compassion, love and joy that are shared between human fragments of the spiritual. Through dance, I have felt the energy of the spiritual flow through my veins and rejuvenate the parts of my body that are energetically weak, and have felt the freedom of the spiritual from allowing my body to move freely in any way it feels inspired to move. Through music I have felt the great wisdom of the spiritual flowing through other beings and being passed on to all the listeners, beating in their souls - and have felt the inspiration, wisdom and natural guidance of the spiritual in my own musical experiences – both in composition and in performance. Through exercise I have felt the increased
blood flow and the increased amount of oxygen flowing through my veins, cleansing my body from the daily buildup of toxins, removing the negative and replacing it with a fresh new vigor and weightlessness. Through sexual intimacy I have felt the combined energies of myself and my partner dancing together and fulfilling each others energy with beauty and love that penetrates the chakras and stimulates all the senses. Through eating healthy food I have felt the natural beauty of the earth and the love and care of the one who prepared it flow through my veins and deliver its powerful nutrients to all corners of my body. And through my breath – through healthy, deep, cleansing breaths that fill me with peace, feed me with inspiration and helps me to keep the wisdom of the spiritual flowing through my body. These are some of the ways that my body allows me to experience the spiritual.

In the natural world I have seen the majestic wonder of creation in the breathtaking mountaintops with all of their royal glory, keeping look over the many fragments of creation below… On the coast where the land meets the ocean in a dance between the fresh ocean waves, the sand and rocks - while breathing in the salty ocean air…..Swimming amongst the energy of the water as it rejuvenates all my chakras with the healing energy of water and allowing me the sensation of weightlessness, like flying – filling me with freedom. Walking through the dense lush forest of the Pacific Northwest, breathing in the sweet joyous smells of the freshness of the plants and trees - the freshly exhaled oxygen – nourishing my energy with the clean, fresh beauty of creation in its pure, raw, unspoiled form. Feeling the perfect warmth of the sun on my skin, feeding me with its nourishing vitamins and life’s splendor. The incomparable beauty of the sunset
with its glorious ensemble of perfect colors. Experiencing the greatness of creation in the
eyes of a wild animal in its natural habitat – an eagle, a deer, a bear - a whale - and feeling
a deep sense of love and appreciation for this animal and a profound sense of thanks for
just the glimpse of it – a moment of pure exhilaration. Being filled with joy from the
tender, nonjudgmental affection of a pet - teaching me that unconditional love, respect
and understanding can truly exist between animal species.

These are some of the ways the natural world allows me to experience the
spiritual.

Unfortunately in our society, these experiences with the body and the natural
world have been in many ways stripped of their glory – left unappreciated and walked
over in our society’s unyielding drive to create a more technocratic world. The wisdom
gained by the most necessary relationship between the physical and the spiritual is in
many ways unknown as technocracy ploughs along, destroying nature and our
relationships with it. The subjective spiritual wisdom once found in the body, the senses,
and the natural has been replaced by the objective dogma of written words, or religion.
We no longer look to the physical for nourishment. We have lost touch with the spiritual
by means of losing touch with the most essential connection to the physical.

I would like to share some wisdoms on the subject of ‘Our Body and Our
Economy’ by a Buddhist scholar Helena Norberg – Hodge in the book *Being Bodies*, who
believes that our societies separation of the physical and spiritual (among other
separations) began with Western Christianity. True spirituality was replaced by the
religion of Christianity and the body, nature and other sources of wisdom were denied.

According to Norberg – Hodge:

The dualism that separates body from spirit, and considers spirit as
superior to body, has a very long history in the west. In the early days of
Christianity there was a splitting of body and spirit, of women and man, of
feelings and intellect, of nature and culture. Furthermore, body, women,
feelings, and nature were deemed of a lower order, were marginalized and
denied. The growth of science and the thinking of Descartes made the
separations even more rigid. (Norberg – Hodge, 1996, p.79)

The forces of not just Technocracy, but also an objective, dogmatic religion have played
large roles in the separation of our interconnected selves – keeping many of us blinded
from the wisdom and nourishment of ‘the spiritual.’ As Norberg – Hodge states:

Indeed in the west there are so many forces separating spirit, body, and
nature that it takes constant effort to live from a deep experiential knowing
of interdependence. (ibid)

This 'deep experiential knowing of interdependence' does not just connect us to our
spiritual selves but it also allows us to find our own unique spirituality - understood
through our own, personal subjective experiences with the spiritual. And according to
Soren Kierkegaard in his The Present Age, “Man's only salvation lies in the reality of
religion for each individual” (Kierkegaard, 1962, p. 56).

This statement clearly says to me that an authentic path to the spiritual is not
achieved by means of someone else’s objective description of religion, but by finding
ones own subjective connection to the spiritual through an understanding of the
interdependence between all living things and an appreciation and respect for all natural
things.
So where has this separation in our society left us? Are we fulfilled? It seems that on a whole, we are not. The lack of awareness of this separation in our society has left us in many ways ‘empty.’ Norberg – Hodge explains this concept and the importance of realizing the interdependence of the natural world as it was explained to her by Ladakhi Buddhist’s foremost Buddhist scholar, Tashi Rabgyas. He said:

Take any object, like a tree. When you think of a tree, you tend to think of it as a distant, clearly defined object, and on a certain level it is. But on a more important level, the tree has no independent existence; rather, it dissolves into a web of relationship. The rain that falls on its leaves, the wind that cause it to sway, the soil that supports it – all form a part of the tree. Everything in the universe helps make the tree what it is. It cannot be isolated, its nature changes from moment to moment – it is never the same. (Norberg – Hodge, p.80)

Understanding that all of nature, all living creatures really have no independent existence – that we are all in a web of relationships and that these relationships need to be protected, appreciated and nurtured is an important awareness that is lacking in our technocratic society– leaving us in feeling that something is missing – and this something is not a small something. Wolfgang Welsch in his article Reflections on the Pacific speaks about how when he walks along the coast for hours, he feels more as if his relationship to the natural is more as if they were partners and companions. And he goes on to say:

when experiencing things this way, you will no longer walk along the coast like a modern, autonomous subject, dominantly observing beautiful or strange nature; rather; you will feel like a being very similar to or perhaps the same kind as the seal looking at you or the rock you are resting on (Para, 20)
However, the Ladakhi Buddhist people know this, and there is something quite different about their way of living. N. Hodge feels the Ladakhi Buddhist people in Tibet seem to have a deep sense of connection to each other and to the natural world, and therefore to themselves and to their bodies (p.78). She explains the feeling of being amongst them as “feeling a sense of my place, my rootedness on the earth, my feet against the soil, my body embraced by the heavens” (p.78). However, even in far off Tibet, this pure lifestyle of interconnectedness between the natural world, their bodies and spirituality is not safe against the encroachment of technocracy as N. Hodge explains that with the recent onslaught of “modernization” in Ladakhi, the connection between body and spirit, and between humans and nature, are seriously threatened by Western-style development. And she describes her experience upon returning to the US as being shocked by the society’s denial of bodily experience. She believes that life in the West is atomized and our experiences are separated, and placed in conceptual as well as very real structural hierarchies. She also agrees that the pace of life alone makes it hard for us to listen to our bodily responses to the world and that technologies which supposedly bring us together in fact separate us (p.79).

To sum this up – technocracy has separated us from a deep connection to our bodies and the natural world making us believe that we exist independently of our subjective relationship with the physical - replacing it with a more objective, cold, scientific relationship with our bodies and the natural world to the extent that it has robbed us of our unique form of self-liberation and wisdom - the greatness of the spiritual in our lives.
In the previous section on the ‘technocratic’ definition of technocracy – in the *summary of the attributes* of a technocratic society, technocracy.ca lists:

--Highest possible standard of living for ALL citizens in terms of income, housing, health care, education, and leisure.

--Sustainable resource management through conservation and industrial efficiency

--Elimination or vast reduction of various social ills, such as poverty, crime, pollution, insecurity, and disease.

However, I would like to argue that due to the neglect and lack of appreciation of the physical and hence spiritual in our lives many of these attributes are not being met. Some of our income needs may be met – but is it ever really enough if we are not spiritually satisfied? And about our housing - why are we not dwelling more amongst the beauty and nourishing energies of nature? And about health care – our society is more concerned with solving the health problems rather than preventing them by means of a more respectful relationship with our bodies – what we feed them, how we maintain them and how we provide them with life-giving energy. Our education system has fallen very short on teaching us the basic necessities of having a healthy connection with the physical and the spiritual – just the fact that children are not basic breathing techniques and that schools have pop machines in the hallways indicates that children are rarely being taught about the majesty of nature through direct experience in school. And unfortunately, one of the main leisure activities in the Western world is watching Television; not the most conducive to a healthy physical or spiritual life.

And what about sustainable resource management? I’m sure the current state of
our ecological crisis proves otherwise. You could say that industrial efficiency has occurred but at what cost to the natural world and our spiritual lives?

It could also be argued that poverty, crime, insecurity and disease would be to a much lesser degree if people had more fulfilling spiritual lives and knew some of the secrets to achieving more peaceful, loving, fulfilling lives with the help from the innate wisdom of the spiritual – if only it wasn’t so hard to find this in our society.

**Intellectually**

One might argue that intellectually, more than emotionally, physically or spiritually, technocracy has delivered in our society - and I would say that it has not been undervalued and unappreciated the way the others have however, there is a big catch. Because we are in some ways emotionally weak and out of touch with the physical and spiritual – it has also left our minds in a state that is vulnerable and easily controlled – a state that is dominated by our egos and naive to our authentic selves. This control is caused by ‘instrumental reason’ and its means of using the media and pop culture to maintain our society’s ‘consumerist ideology.’ Few people realize how incredibly oppressive our society is of our unique individuality as we are molded into the ideal consumerist ‘norm.’ Quite ironically, people tend to think it’s just ‘normal’ but really, it shouldn’t be. As stated by a recent authority on cultural theory, Terry Eagleton in his book *After Theory:*

Majority social life is a matter of norms and conventions, and therefore inherently oppressive. Only the marginal, perverse and aberrant can escape this dreary regimenting. Norms are oppressive because they mold uniquely different individuals to the same shape. (Eagleton, 2003, p.97)
And according to Soren Kierkegaard who in *The Present Age* called these ‘oppressive norms’ the ‘leveling process’ would agree. He says “the profound significance of the leveling process lies in the fact that means the predominance of the category ‘generation’ over the category ‘individuality”. (Kierkegaard, 1962, p.52)

These oppressive, conformist, socio-cultural norms that have been forced upon us have replaced our authentic selves with our individual ego (which is not that individual...) According to Russel, it is the ego that this consumerist ideology feeds into and says that “ignorant of our true selves we derive a false sense of identity from what we have, or what we do -- from our possessions, our role in the world, how others see us (Spirit of Now, 2009 p.23) And as we live amongst this ‘normal’ state of our egos -- we are not only out of touch with our authentic selves in pursuit of material value, we have lost appreciation for intrinsic values – lost our appreciation for a connection with our authentic selves.

**The Consumerist Ideology and Media Mind Control**

The control that the corporate machine of consumerism has over our society - especially those who are not ideally educated, has been plaguing and infecting our culture for many decades, if not centuries and it is only seems to be getting worse. Our culture is getting further and further away from being in touch with their authentic selves and understanding true value - intrinsic value and is still believe the lie that ‘money brings
happiness.' John Berger (2003) in *The Shape of a Pocket* states that a major source of world problems is this "consumerist ideology." (p.8) He explains:

Its aim is to delocalize the entire world to undermine the existent so that everything collapses into a special version of the virtual, from the realm of which there will be a never-ending source of profit. It sounds stupid. Tyrannies are stupid. This is destroying at every level the life on the planet on which it operates. (p.9)

To my understanding, when Berger uses the word 'existent' he is speaking of the authentic self and when he speaks of the 'virtual' he is speaking of the ego. And keeping the true self at bay is exactly where technocracy needs so that there will always be those 'suckers' that feed into the consumerist machine.

I also find the quote "This is destroying at every level the life on the planet on which it operates" is a very important point. Twenty years ago, this consumerist ideology was only present in the Western world, but now it is spreading globally. I will punctuate this with another quotation by Berger:

"Today the discredit of words is very great. Most of the time the media transmit lies. In the face of an intolerable world, words appear to change very little." (Berger, 2001, p.90)

The media, funded by the corporations, has assumed such control over the minds and governments of the people. It has convinced us with its lies so aggressively for so long that a large percent of the world lives amongst this virtual realm of non-existence. As Berger says; "Publicity is the life of this culture - in so far as without publicity capitalism could not survive - and at the same time publicity is its dream." (Berger, 2001, p.96) And according to Soren Kierkegaard in *The Present Age*, "Our age is the age of
advertisement and publicity. Nothing ever happens but there is immediate publicity
everywhere.” (Kierkegaard, 1962, p.35)

Our technocratic culture has convinced us of this dream – which is why nothing
happens – because the world we live in is not truly real, it is a virtual world manifested by
the media. This virtual realm that we live within has numbed us to intrinsic values and we
are naive to its powers. We are constantly fed life based on extrinsic values and the
constant suppression of the intrinsic to fuel the consumerist machine.

And how has this happened? It makes perfect sense to me that when you weaken
the emotional, physical and spiritual sides of man – you create a dis-ease that needs to be
cured. However, it is our societies technocratic approach to (rather than get to the root of
the problem and actually cure it) to cover up the symptoms with a prescription drug,
which in this case is mind control - to fool us into thinking that we really are ok – to
temporarily cover up our symptoms while at the same time numbing us from our true
desires as we walk amongst an illusory reality. Not to mention this drug is causing some
pretty terrible side-affects.

In the previous section on the ‘technocratic’ definition of technocracy – on the
question of “is technocracy a form of government?” technocracy.ca maintains:

Technocracy is not a form of government. Technocracy is instead a
method of control of technology. It outlines the basic operating
characteristics for a high-energy, abundance-producing society. The
technical controls of Technocracy are not interested or designed to
interfere in people's lives, only instead to provide the best standard of
living with which people can enjoy life.

It may be true that technocracy is not an organized form of government but in my opinion
it has provided fertile soil for the manifestation of control of its citizens in the same way governments do – it is just done in a very subtle manner. However technocracy maintains that “technocracy is only a method of control of technology.” Yet – does technology not have a huge impact on the lives of humans – even controlling us to many extents? It states that technocracy “is designed to provide an environment that will facilitate behavior conducive to this operating environment. People will have as much personal freedom, or likely even more, than in any modern democratic society” yet, doesn’t the modern society include advertisements, publicity and the pop art forms that feed into the consumerist ideal – keeping us blinded from true intrinsic values and our authentic selves? And finally, Technocracy also maintains that, “The technical controls of Technocracy are not interested or designed to interfere in people’s lives, only instead to provide the best standard of living with which people can enjoy life.” yet how can we authentically enjoy our lives when we don’t really have our ‘own’ lives? We have realities constructed by social norms and conventions that have in actuality, have separated us from our true selves – and most of us don’t even know it.

Creatively

By now it is pretty clear that my view of technocracy is not a very positive one, especially when speaking of the finding of one’s authentic self and individuality. So then, wouldn’t having a unique sense of self and a true individuality that is not fashioned by the oppressive forces of consumerism be a necessity when it comes to being creative? I believe it is. But, it is also more than that. Not only is it necessary to be in touch with
ones true self to be creative, but being creative also fosters ones connection with their individuality and allows ones true self to flourish. And in our society, this is something that needs practice....As Maya Angelou states, “You cannot use up creativity. The more you use the more you have.” (The Quote Garden, 2009).

In the same way, I believe that you can never be too in touch with your authentic self. However, the more you are in touch with it, the more you are your authentic self in all areas of one’s life. And what is a way for one to be in touch with their emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual selves at the same time? Through being creative.

So, if our emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual selves are being oppressed in our technocratic society, keeping us from our true selves - well that would also mean that technocracy is oppressing our ability to be creative as well, wouldn’t it? I believe so.

Because of the fact we live in a world that has severed us from our natural, nourishing, physical surroundings - we have lost touch of one of our greatest sources of creative inspiration and nourishment. Our disconnection to our natural physical world has also caused a rift in our personal connection to our bodies and senses – which is another great source of creative inspiration and wisdom. And of course, without a healthy relationship with the physical, we are also out of touch with possibly the greatest creative source there is - the spiritual. Our emotional selves, which is a very personal part of ourselves that is explored and reflected through creativity, are in a constant state of duress – as we are trained to repress our emotions, act a ‘certain way’ and not be ‘too expressive’ – or else you are ‘eccentric,’ ‘weird,’ an ‘oddball.’ Yet – being in touch with our emotions and being expressive is exactly what is explored and fostered when being
creative – not to mention, the emotions are also a huge source of inspiration and creative
guidance. And last but not least our intellectual side is unfortunately controlled by the
repetition of advertisement and publicity and pop culture – functioning at a low capacity.
The lack of a healthy, balanced connection with all aspects of ourselves is oppressing us -
keeping us from the natural harmony of the four aspects of our selves improvising
amongst a dance of creativity – a dance of freedom, expressing our authentic selves, our
subjective experiences – our truths.

Not only has a widespread oppression of creativity occurred by means of
inhibiting a healthy relationship with our four aspects of our selves – there is also the
irony of creativity at play. Rather than creativity being used to set us free and help us
connect to our true selves – our true happiness – creativity has also been used to control
us.

**Creative Control = Socio-cultural Control**

It makes me wonder sometimes, why so many people are innocent victims of
mind control by means of creativity. Is it perhaps that deep down, we all have the strong
urge to be part of something creative? The need to appreciate creativity? To have art play
a large role in our lives? Is this possibly why we settle for (and even like) the ‘junk food’
forms of art that we are commonly exposed to? Is it because this is all we can get? Or all
we know how to get? But surely there are higher forms of art out there – and there are,
but why are they so far from the mainstream? Is it because they are simply too much for
the average unbalanced, creatively detached person to understand? It seems so. And I would like to offer an explanation why using the art form of music as an example.

For the average person in our society, pop music and the common musical genres of our time are probably the most consumed form of creative art available. Even films and television – which are consumed as much as (or even more than), music would be nothing without the musical element. So it could be argued that music is one of the most consumed (and hence powerful) art mediums in our culture. The problem is - music is not always innocent.

According to many philosophers of cultural theory and pop culture – our authentic selves are being depressed by the oppressive forms of sound and music. Or as Jaques Attali calls it,” noise.” When I am speaking of noise, I am speaking of the mass music and sound that we are being bombarded with in our lives. The sound of the television, the music on the radio, the background noise of the busy city and the background music in the places we purchase things. This noise has been infecting our connection with our true selves and depressing us creatively to the point that, as Attali suggests in his book Noise, is a form of violence – a very sly, furtive form of violence. So sly that many in our society are even addicted to this violence.

Attali also suggests that by listening to this noise – this violence (rather than being numb to it and controlled by it), we can learn things about our society. Attali suggests;

We must learn to judge a society more by its sounds, by its art, and by its festivals, than by its statistics. By listening to noise, we can better understand where the folly of men and their calculations is leading us, and
what hopes it is still possible to have. (Attali 1977, p.3)

So what is all this noise saying? Well if you listen with an educated ear you can hear the tyranny of sound.

**The Wisdom of Noise**

Music, and the sounds we are surrounded by in our everyday lives have not always been un-innocent. But it was soon realized that because music was such a loved, celebrated and creatively quenching art form that it also had great influence on both the creators and the listeners. For example, it was once thought that musicians had great wisdom and supernatural, civilizing powers - which makes sense because music is sacred and ritualistic and very empowering to ones authentic self - by means of creativity. As Attali states:

> the ancient religions produced a caste of musician-priests attached to the service of the temple, and mythology endowed musicians with supernatural and civilizing powers. (Attali 1977, P.13)

But isn't it funny how our (Western) society only remembers these wise, spiritually empowered, supernatural wizards in storybooks? Where have all the wizards gone? Is it perhaps that they've been suppressed to the point of extinction? Leaving us with a watered down, prescription of sound (that won’t endow us with any powers? It actually causes the opposite.). And, yes – many of them have disappeared to the average listener. (That is if you don’t put effort into learning otherwise (of course)). As Attali states about our musicians, “They are, and remain, witnesses of the impossible imprisonment of the visionary by power, totalitarian or otherwise.” (Attali 1977, P.18)
So, is it possible that by subtly suppressing our creators of music that many of our visionaries are also being suppressed? Is this perhaps why our Western world has lost all our wizards? Is this perhaps one of the reasons why we are so lacking individuality, autonomy and the ability to think critically and creatively? I definitely believe that it is a contributing factor.

By listening to our “noise” (with a more aware, educated ear), we can become more aware of the forces that are working hard to imprison our wisdom and autonomy.

**Noise as a Weapon**

Today, Noise triumphs and reigns supreme over the sensibility of men ... Not only in the roaring atmosphere of major cities, but in the country too, which until yesterday was normally silent, the machine today has created such a variety and rivalry of noises that pure sound, in its exiguity and monotony, no longer arouses any feeling. (Attali 1977, P.10)

If this doesn’t describe how noise is depressing our authentic selves – I don’t know what would. In most of the inhabited places in the world – there is really never any pure, natural peaceful sounds. I can say that where I live, in East Vancouver, BC, Canada, I can hear the low rumbling of the industry on the water at all hours of the night – not to mention the noises of the day. What is this noise doing to us? I can speak from experience that before I listened to this noise with a greater awareness – I almost didn’t notice it. But now that I do notice it – I can feel its violence - harming my body, my emotions, my spirit and my mind. And now I understand the great unequalled importance of escaping from this constant cunning terror. Escaping to the mountains and the forests – and not just to be amongst nature, but to heal my ears and offer some short lived relief to myself. And
unfortunately the most our societies can do to alleviate this pain is to just become numb to it – but what has this done to our emotions? Our senses? Our spirit? Our intellect?

And the same could be said for the state of the mass music that we are bombarded with in our culture. There is no escaping it – even if one refuses to listen to the radio or television. We need to shop in stores, be social, amongst other things. Not to mention the music that can randomly pop into our head and muddy up our thoughts for hours...days!

What is this doing to us? Is it controlling us in some way? I seems so, and I will attempt to shed some light on how.

So, how exactly is music used as a tool of socio-cultural control? Well, music is sacred, music is ritual - a powerful medium that expands our intellects and awakens our spirits, emotions and bodies. So what did they do? They removed the sacred ritual from music. They removed the element of the ritualized live music spectacle, or representation, and replaced it with repetitive, stockpiled, mass produced molds, (as Attali states) that are devoid of meaning - hence “noise.” And it hasn’t just been deprived from our lives since the beginning of technocracy in the industrial age, no, the patriarchal church was the first force to begin to deface the mystical soul/mind/body strengthening powers of music. As Attali shows, there were laws that began in the 13th century against the empowerment of humans by means of music;

at saints' vigils, there shall not, in the churches, be any theater dances, indecent entertainment, gatherings of singers, or worldly songs, such as incite the souls of the listeners to sin" (Council of Avignon, 1209). During which it prohibited "granting assemblies of women, for the purpose of dancing and singing, permission to enter cemeteries or sacred places, regardless of considerations of dress," as well as prohibiting "nuns from
heading processions, either within their own cloister or without, that circle churches and their chapels while singing and dancing, something which we cannot allow even secular women to do; for according to Saint Gregory, it is better, on Sunday, to toil and dig than to dance" (Council of Paris, 1212). During which it obliged "priests to prohibit, under penalty of excommunication, assemblies for dancing and singing from entering churches or cemeteries .... And if anyone performs dances before the churches of the saints, may they be subjected, if they repent, to three years' penance" (Council of Bayeux, beginning of the fourteenth century).

And three centuries after him, during which time the political economy would continue where the Church left off, pursuing this relegation to silence, domesticating musicians, and imposing its noises. Beginning in the seventeenth century, economic mechanisms break their silence and stop letting men speak. Production becomes noisy; the world of exchange (Attali 1977, p. 22)

So first, they removed the element of the ritualized live music spectacle. Music and singing and dance were no longer acceptable - it was practically “sin.” But what is the sin of music, really? That it is empowering? That it is mind-strengthening? That it is an artistic form that awakens and strengthens all aspects of ourselves? Well - I guess that would be “sin” to some when it is much easier to control less-empowered people by means of hypnotizing them and numbing their sense of individuality and personal autonomy. Is this perhaps why it was so effortless for technocracy to come along with its objective, scientific, unbalanced ideals – further detaching us from our authentic, creative selves? Without us even realizing it? Or did Technocracy come first?

I can speak from personal experience that nothing fulfills my entire self the way that a really great live music show does. My body is nourished with the vibrations of the healing sounds of the instruments and voices and the movement of my body stimulates all my chakras as I improvise a dance fueled by my soul and the spirit in the air. My emotions and passions are freed to feel the presence of the moment as the musicians are
expressing to us their emotions, and the inspiration that they have is received from them — and one cannot help but connect to them as well as themselves emotionally. The mind is temporarily freed from the controlling forces of our creatively depleted surroundings and lives and the media mind-controlling machine. And our spirit is awakened, re-energized and nourished as the collective ecstatic energy of the audience spreads amongst each other as the spiritual inspiration received by the musicians is shared with the audience and in return gained back from the audience in a nourishing, reciprocity of spiritual celebration.

The ritual of the live musical spectacle is, at least to me, the most fulfilling, nourishing, awakening and pleasurable social activity available — but it is really a shame that it is not more accessible — more prevalent — more a regular part of socio-cultural existence.

So - if the sacred empowering ritual of music was suppressed beginning in the 13th century - how are musicians being “domesticated” and the power of music used to control today?

Well, our cultural festivals of live music and dance that were once so rich in energy and life bringing freedom were overtaken first by the tyranny of the patriarchal church and more recently by the growing world of the mass production. And now that growing world has been an adult in our society for awhile, socializing us through identity towards consumption, as Attali states, rather than through the spiritually awakening ritual of live music. To explain the tyranny of our wisdom and culture, Attali explains:
Since the first commercial records and their success following the Great Depression, and the invention, supported by radio broadcasting, of the long-playing record in the 1940s, the increasing mechanization of musical production has dramatically changed the conditions and meaning of that music.

Usage becomes transformed, *accessibility replaces the festival.* A tremendous mutation. A work that the author perhaps did not hear more than once in his lifetime (as was the case with Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and the majority of Mozart’s works) becomes accessible to a multitude of people, and becomes repeatable outside the spectacle of its performance. It gains availability. It loses its festive and religious character as a simulacrum of sacrifice. (Attali 1977, p.102)

And with the advent of commercial records and radio broadcasting the sacred ritual of live music was further suppressed and transformed by mass production into a world of repeated molds - the spiritual powers of live music become replaced by soulless, meaningless background music. As Attali states:

Little by little, the very nature of music changes: the unforeseen and the risks representation disappear in repetition. The new aesthetic of performance excludes error, hesitation, noise. It freezes the work out of festival and the spectacle; it reconstructs it formally, manipulates it, makes it abstract perfection. (Attali 1977, p. 106)

Basically, in mass produced music, the ‘human’ aspect of music has been removed, replaced by a technocratic mold. So now, not only has the ritual of the live performance been substituted, music has also lost its human meaning - hence “noise”. As Attali points out, “As background noise to a way of life, music can no longer endow with meaning.” (Attali 1977, p.101)

And not only has music in our culture lost meaning, it has also been used to
manipulate for the sake of consumerism. Take for example, Muzak, what we all hear almost every time we go shopping - hypnotizing us to purchase more and according to David O'Neill, one of Muzak's executives: "We do not sell music; we sell programming." (Attali 1977, p. 111)

The ritual of live music has now been replaced by music devoid of meaning and even worse, has been used to program our minds to purchase more and more. Music that has been so perfectly molded and over produced it has lost its soulful human element. Music that is not real - it doesn’t breath - it isn’t human - it’s merely a mold produced by a machine. And this mold is such the dominant strain of music that when many people get the chance to experience the spectacle of the live music ritual, they are often disappointed because it doesn’t sound exactly the way they remember it to sound.

They have lost their imagination - only wanting to hear exactly what they are used to hearing. Well what they are used to hearing is lacking humanism, lacking soul - it is the music of the consumerist machine that keeps their minds from being free - from being strong and creative, from being uniquely individual. It has clouded the minds of our society to believe a false “dream” of reality. As Attali states:

The life of their dreams is a "pop life," a refuge from the great uncontrollable machines, a confirmation of the individual's sameness and the collectivity's powerlessness to change the world, The music of repetition becomes both a relation and a way of filling the absence of meaning in the world. It creates a system of apolitical, nonconflictual, idealized values, It is here that the child learns his trade as a consumer, for the selection and purchase of music are his principal activities. (Attali 1977, p. 110)

Our society has been drugged and hypnotized into believing a prescribed meaning
and understanding of the world. We have been unconsciously fed the drug of mass produced music and culture that has stripped away our individual voices and personal wisdoms. We are led to believe a false representation of our lives so that we can be hypnotized into having a technocratic mindset that allows consumerism to thrive. As Attali confirms:

Music thus fashions a consumer fascinated by his identification with others, by the image of success and happiness. The stars are always the idealized age of their audience, an age that gets younger as the field of repetition expands. This channelization of childhood through music is a politically essential substitute for violence, which no longer finds ritual enactment. The youth see it as the expression of their revolts, the mouthpiece of their dreams and needs, when it is in fact a channelization of the imaginary, a pedagogy of the general confinement of social relations in the commodity. (Attali 1977, p. 110)

Our culture has been deprived of the majesty of musical empowerment of the ritual form and rather has been used as a tool of power, with its subtle violence of noise to silence and conform us. It is power. It is oppression. As Attali prophetically states:

music is used and produced in the ritual in an attempt to make people forget the general violence; in another, it is employed to make people believe in the harmony of the world, that there is order in exchange and legitimacy in commercial power; and finally, there is one in which it serves to silence, by mass-producing a deafening, syncretic kind of music, and censoring all other human noises. (Attali 1977, p.19)

Mass music is thus a powerful factor in consumer integration, interclass leveling, cultural homogenization. It becomes a factor in centralization, cultural homogenization, and the disappearance of distinctive cultures. (Attali 1977, p. 111)

So rather than music (and/or all creative arts for that matter) being a path to one’s authentic self – one’s personal autonomy – it has in many ways achieved the opposite. It has been used to numb us emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually with its
repetition and lack of the musical ritual - used to silence us by making us believe we have high quality creative arts in our lives (when most of us don't) and blinding us to the oppressive forces of commercialism - making us believe we need more and more things, and reducing our individuality to a common norm that is easily seduced, when really what we need is a release from the oppressive forces of our technocratic society. A release from the dehumanized, stockpiled forms of art and a path that leads us toward a more balanced life filled with knowledge of our authenticity and individual autonomy.

In the previous section on the ‘technocratic’ definition of technocracy it lists (as an attribute of technocracy), “Maximum freedom for all citizens in terms of latitude of purchasing power and personal rights.” Well, what about our right to be creative? To find, and explore amongst our authentic selves? In this respect – technocracy has not only failed to deliver – it has achieved the opposite. It has oppressed our human rights – our right to be creative – our right to be ourselves.

**The Strive for Creativity (and its many obstacles)**

Unfortunately this control by means of creativity is not the main problem here – it is only the root of the problem. The main problem is that because our society has neglected to place value in the quality arts and the holistic, balanced way that if forces us to experience a moment with all aspects of ourselves, we have, as a society, lost touch with our creative selves – our authentic selves. And a society that is lacking in creativity is not a very fertile place for the individuals that seek out creativity and who are striving.
for a creative voice to flourish, let alone a place for the non creativity-seekers to flourish creatively. Not a healthy place to connect to and grow amongst one’s authentic identity and live life to the fullest.

In this socio-cultural state of creative oppression that we live amongst, it is not surprising to me that most people believe that being creative is a ‘gift’ or something one must be born with. Something rare and uncommon. And unfortunately creativity has become rare and uncommon, but is this the true nature of humans or has this been imposed upon us by the technocratic influences of our society?

It is through my experiences as an artist that I now realize that we are all born with the creative ‘gift’ (possibly some more than others) and that creativity can actually be taught and fostered, and the priceless gifts it presents us with discovered – however the problem is that most people in our society – including most teachers (in public education and even commonly in ‘so-called’ creative art making education) believe the technocratic lie that creativity cannot be taught.

**Creativity (or lack thereof) in Technocratic Education**

So if we are all innately creative, why are some of us creative art makers and some not? The answer is simple. You cannot be an artist and be able to explore in an artistic medium if you don’t know the language (for lack of better words). For example, we are all creative every day in the way we communicate (albeit not adventurously creative), but putting words together to communicate was a learned ability. We weren’t just born with
the ability to communicate in our language - we had to learn the skills - the vocabulary
and the grammar to be able to have the freedom to communicate within our language.
And this did not happen overnight, right? We were not born with the natural talent to
speak a language, right? Well the same rule applies to art. You can’t just decide one day
to compose a decent piece of music without any prior musical knowledge. Just as you
cannot expect to paint a respectable work of art without prior knowledge - I know - I’ve
tried!

In order to have the freedom to dance amongst creativity takes work. It takes a
good teacher to teach you the vocabulary and the forms. As the common expression goes,
“There is no freedom without form.” And it takes practice and dedication on the behalf of
the student to develop the vocabulary and learn the form and, ideally, within this process
of learning a new language the student needs to be granted the freedom to explore
amongst the new found form with the new found vocabulary in order to practice and
develop creativity and self expression. The big problem, however, is that many teachers
often skip the last and most important step.

I have recently asked myself, and many others the question “Do you remember
ever being creative in the public school system?” I know that my personal answer is,”
almost never.” And the many people I have asked had very much the same response. I
remember being somewhat creative in my gr.10 and 11 English classes - once we were
asked to write a metaphoric poem and sometimes we were able to express our opinions
about some of the novels we had read - but that’s about it. I’d still say that less than 10%
of the class focused on fostering creativity. Then I though about my drama classes. They
had to foster creativity. And, upon reflection, I realized that maybe 15% of the class
focused on improvisation - the rest was all about memorizing lines and rehearsing them.

True we did have the ability to practice interpretation of the lines and characters,
but compared to actually writing our own lines or improvising our words and characters, I
wouldn’t say that interpreting lines is anywhere as creative. What about art? Well, I didn’t
take art in high school, but I remember everything in elementary school was all based on
a model - and whoever did theirs the neatest was the best. No room for trying out ones
own ideas and developing them. And, don’t forget the music training in school. That’s in
place to help develop creativity right? I don’t think so. It’s the same thing - no freedom to
create. “Sing these words exactly this way - play these chords on the ukulele.” And it was
always someone else’s tunes and melodies. And what teachers don’t realize is that if they
never allow students to have the freedom to explore and create it’s pretty much like
saying, “Don’t write your own tunes or melodies – you can’t do that! Don’t even try to
improvise - you have to be born with that talent! You can only learn the vocabulary and
the form. Creativity cannot be taught!”

It makes me very sad how much creativity in the arts were not
encouraged, in my education system. And unfortunately, I don’t think things have
changed that much. Sadly, nearly all (apart from one… not including myself) of the music
teachers in all of my Art Education graduate classes couldn’t improvise a note – and the
little music they attempted to write was very elementary. It was very sad as I knew that
there was nothing (or very little) creative going on in their music classes as it takes
understanding and knowledge and skill to teach something – which they didn’t have as
they were missing the last step (creativity) - and it really breaks my heart because I realize
that this is currently the norm amongst music teachers.

And what about my private music and dance training? Most people would expect
that sort of training to develop creativity, right? Wrong. It was all the same. “Learn the
dance moves exactly the way you are told to. Learn this choreographed dance exactly the
way the choreographer wants you to.” In dance, we never had the opportunity to
improvise and express ourselves with our own unique movements - to explore our own
means of expression. So oppressive! And music? Well, I was at least fortunate to have a
teacher that allowed me to choose the pieces I wanted to play so I had freedom of choice
there. And she also helped me develop interpretation abilities and visualization
techniques - but it was always someone else’s music. It was always someone else’s
dynamic markings and phrasing that I had to follow - the creative freedom I had was very
minimal - but still, my experience in creative art making was at least more than most
students were experiencing in their elementary or secondary school education. And that
little bit did make me a little different.

So why is it our society fails to foster our student’s creativity in even the ‘so-called’ creative arts education? Here is a quote by Stephen Nachmanovich from his book
Free Play, (1991) that prophetically states the suppression of creativity, beginning at a
young age and how it is achieved by means of both the education system and even our
culture:

The child we were and are learns by exploring and experimenting,
insistently snooping into every little corner that is open to us--and into the
forbidden corners too! But sooner or later our wings get clipped. The real
world created by grown-ups comes to bear down upon growing children, molding them into progressively more predictable members of society. Our newest and most powerful educational institutions, television and pop music, are even more thorough than school in inculcating mass-produced conformity.

People are grown as a kind of food to be gobbled up by the system. Slowly our eyes begin to narrow. Thus the simplicity, intelligence, and power of mind at play become homogenized into complexity, conformity, and weakness. We need to recognize that every bit of our culture is school; we are presented moment to moment with affirmation of some realities and denials of others.

Education, business, media, politics, and above all family, the very institutions that might be the instruments for expanding human expressiveness, collide to induce conformism, to keep things going in a humdrum level. But so do our everyday habits of doing and seeing. Reality as we know it becomes conditioned by tacit assumptions we come to take for granted after innumerable subtle learning experiences in daily life. That is why creative perceptions seem extraordinary or special to us, when in fact creativity is usually a matter of seeing through those tacit assumptions to what is right in front of our noses. (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.116,117)

It really does seem that our innate ability to be creative has been purposely suppressed. But has it been suppressed on purpose so that our unique individual voices could be silenced? Have our voices been silenced so that we would all be conforming members of society to feed the consumerist machine? Well, it seems that some people (especially creative artists) do feel that way. I also think that most people do believe that creativity cannot be taught, and this belief in itself is incredibly oppressive. If creativity cannot be taught, you might as well just sit in front of the TV instead of developing an artistic language in which to be creative. If creativity cannot be taught, well at least science and business can – and so it is not important to study any creative arts in school.

I believe this lie has been influencing our (and many other) cultures for far too
long. It not only infects our education system but our lives outside of school. Our family lives and our social lives. It’s time to educate the public with the truth - not the lies. It’s time to restore our unique individual voices and feed our society with the intrinsic values and the exploring and development of individual, authentic voices that can only be found in the creative arts. And yes, teachers can teach this.

**Empowerment by Creativity**

I believe that all creative forms of art are empowering to the individual different forms having different strengths and weaknesses of course, however, it really seems to me that people that have pursued creativity in one from or the other are not the common, ‘mass conformity’, ‘pop culture’ type. I would like to elaborate on this concept with a personal account of how the creative art form of music has empowered my intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of myself.

It’s very interesting - because as I have been immersed in the world of music creation for over a decade I have met many accomplished composers, improvisers and performers and there is definitely something different about the music creators – not necessarily the interpreters, but the composers and improvisers are unquestionably a different breed. But were they born that way or did music empower them to be outside of the norm? Were they born that way or did music empower them to be more aware? Were they born that way or did music empower them to be autonomous, and less mind-controlled than the non-music creators? Were they born that way or did music empower them with the personal strength to not only view the world and themselves differently but
also with the personal power to be vocal and to take action against the oppressive forces
that have been working so hard to make us believe in a false dream of reality. Well I
believe that yes, music has played a role - a large role. To defend this I would like to give
a personal narrative on how music has empowered my mental, physical, emotional and
spiritual selves and how it still continues to.

At the age of nine, I began to play piano. I had been involved in dance since the
age of 5 but it never really struck a chord with me - but when I started playing piano, it
was like a whole other side of me was found. I became more independent - having
something I loved and felt good about spending my time on, something that was unique
to me. None of my friends excelled at music, but I did. This pride that I felt from this
beautiful skill I was developing gave me strength - it also brought me a lot of happiness
as I discovered that when I was mad or sad, all I needed to do was sit down at the piano
and I’d feel almost instantly better - the emotional release if gave me healed my emotions.
Not only did it strengthen my emotional stability but school almost immediately became
easier. Within a year of starting piano I went from being in the top 10 of the class to the
top 2. School and all of its subjects made more sense and I knew I could conquer any
task. It became a breeze. This I gained from music.

My music training also helped me develop other artistic skills. In art, I paid much
more attention to detail and had greater motor skills and precision. In the following two
years, I was chosen to be a main character in a large theater production at school and the
following year in a community play. It was like a whole other part of myself was
awakening. The more I did music, the more alive and excited about life I felt. I also
became a nicer person. I wasn’t carrying as much of a grudge as I did when I was younger. Things didn’t really get me down much anymore. Consequently, I was much nicer to people that I didn’t really respect or that annoyed me. I was becoming more compassionate - more empathetic.

By the time I was fifteen, I began to feel a deep compassion for the cruelties committed to animals for the sake of money and this deepening source of compassion led me to become a vegetarian, which I am still to this day. After becoming vegetarian, my sympathy and appreciation for animals grew to a level that I had no idea was possible. I gained so much love from choosing to not participate in the cruel acts against animals. Friends of mine laugh at me when they see me say “Hi” and continue to ask how they are and to wish them a happy day to a seagull or crow or squirrel. But I’m not doing it to be funny, I’m doing it because it brings me great pleasure because I feel so connected to animals – as if we’re all family.

Soon after becoming a vegetarian I began to see the earth differently. I became the enforcer amongst my group of friends when it came to disrespecting her. I felt more of a connection to mother earth and wanted to defend her. And because of the confidences I gained from the arts, I had the personal strength I needed to voice my opinions. The more I had the strength to not be indifferent, the stronger I would feel. For the first time in my life, I began asking “why” and “do I believe in that” and if I didn’t, well, I wasn’t just going to not care - I was going to stand behind my principles and make whatever sacrifices I could make. And the more I questioned and the more I sacrificed for my beliefs, the stronger, more courageous and more alive I felt. It took acting on my principles to truly become more awake. “To know what is right and not do it is the worst
cowardice.” Confucius (Quote Garden, 2009).

The more I empower myself through music, the more I do what I feel and believe is right - the more I appreciate what it means to be alive. The more I feel alive – alive in my true self.

Now, I’m not just bringing this up because I am a vegetarian - I am bringing it up because in my experiences in the musical world, I have met hundreds of musicians and I have never met so many other vegetarians amongst a group of professionals. And most of the musicians I have met were not from Vancouver - so it’s not a Vancouver thing - they were from The United States, Britain, and Australia and New Zealand as well as Canada and a remarkable amount of them were vegetarians. In fact - come to think of it - I always knew all the vegetarians in the staff (Entertainment staff) because we all ate at the same mess - and I just realized that actually all of the vegetarians I met on the cruise ships over 5 years were musicians. And the other strange thing is that, in the professional world of performance (mostly schooled jazz musicians) it is predominantly male (at least 90%) and it is male musicians that I am speaking of. (I’m just pointing this out as I’ve noticed a stereotype about female vegetarians) So, I really do think that there is a connection there.

According to Eagleton:

Besides, those who deal with art speak the language of value rather than price. They deal with works whose depth and intensity show up the meagerness of everyday life in a market-obsessed society. They are also trained to imagine alternatives to the actual. Art encourages you to fantasize and desire. For all these reasons, it is easy to see why it is students of art or English rather than chemical engineering who tend to staff the barricades. (Eagleton, 2003, p.41)

So, if this hypothesis is correct and music does empower individuals to be more aware of
the mind-controlling forces that so many in our society have succumbed to - I guess it would make sense that the technocratic forces that have been tenaciously oppressing our physical/spiritual/emotional/intellectual selves wouldn’t want music (or the arts for that matter) to empower us individually - or for that matter, for musicians to spread the word.

Understanding the dangers of technocracy and the oppressive control it has over our authentic selves can be a powerful place to be. It is the understanding of the control that these forces have over our lives that enables us to be set free – if we are willing to contemplate and explore our selves amongst the freedom of creativity and reflect on our personal struggles to find ourselves as well as rejoice in the moments when we are in our authentic state.

The Finding of My Creativity

So how did I, as a musician find my own individual voice and break free from the constraints of the technocratic, ‘classical musical paradigm’ as I call it? (And I say this because most classically trained musicians are not able to play a note if there is no music before them or if it is not memorized, let alone write or improvise their own music.) Well - basically, I made the choice to be creative. I decided that I wanted to be able to compose music and that nothing was going to stop me. For some reason, I had enough faith in myself that I believed I could do it. So, how and why did I have enough faith in myself to not believe the lie? I personally think it had to do with the fact that I didn’t spend a lot of time in front of the TV - I read and played piano and did social things with my friends instead. I also had parents that allowed me to be my own person. They always believed in
allowing my brother and I much freedom - freedom of choices to be the people we wanted to be. We were also never led to believe being creative was something we ‘couldn’t’ do. So, thanks to the fact I was never forced to believe the ‘lie’, I just sat down at the piano and I began to write. And I must admit - it was incredibly elementary and simplistic to begin with - but I kept at it and taught myself to be a creative art maker.

Now does this mean that all students need to teach themselves how to create? Absolutely not. If I had had a teacher that could have shown me some of the things I came to realize on my own if would’ve saved me a lot of time, sweat and tears. And thankfully - there are teachers like that. Teachers of music that focus as much on the creative process as the vocabulary and form - teachers who encourage unique interpretations and improvisational/compositional skills - teachers that believe creativity can be taught and foster it in their students. Unfortunately, these types of musicians and especially music teachers are not the norm in Canada and most places other than the US. I am speaking of music improvisers and composers - musicians that know creativity can be taught.

On Fostering Creativity - Real-time Creativity

It is my personal belief that our technocratic society has been drugged or hypnotized into believing a prescribed meaning and understanding of the world. We have been unconsciously fed the drug of mass pop culture that has detached us from a healthy, balanced connection with our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves and keeping our creative selves subverted and depressed by means of the violent forms of
creativity and the belief in the lie that creativity cannot be taught - stripping away our individual creative voices and personal wisdoms. We are led to believe a false representation of our lives so that we can be hypnotized into having a technocratic mindset that allows consumerism to thrive and personal autonomy to be suppressed.

So when will humans in their authentic form be allowed to thrive? I believe the only hope lies in bringing about awareness of this oppressive reality and encouraging personal empowerment by re-introducing creative art making into the lives of our students.

So, how do we do this? Well, the first step is to believe it is possible. Don’t believe the lie - and don’t allow the students to believe it either. We are all born with the ability to be creative. Now, I am not saying that there are not people born with especially creative minds - but we should not just limit the powers and benefits of creation to just them. It has also been said that one must be born with creative inspiration and I also disagree with this. I think that imagination, inspiration and creation are skills that need to be practiced and nurtured and that it is always possible to be imaginative and to find inspiration.

From my experience, I did not begin to hear my first sonorous images (original musical ideas) in my head until I had been immersed in music for many years - so for me, having a moment of musical inspiration has been a learnt ability. And the first original music I began to hear was from the classical realm of what I was playing, so I do believe that if one has developed skills in an art form and is granted the ability to explore amongst it (by not believing the lie) that both inspiration and creation can be achieved.
Also, it really does make sense that the art you are inspired to create has been directly influenced by your surroundings. For example, all of the most famous composers in Europe all had very similar styles in their particular periods. Now – anything outside of their styles was something based on an original idea, but I believe it was not based on hearing particular original music in their heads. For instance jazz was not imagined in Europe - only elements of it were imported from North America. And the one very unique sound created in Europe - that of Schoenberg was based on an idea - a very mathematical calculated idea, so I would really find it hard to theorize that Schoenberg was inspired by a sonorous image when he came up with the idea of 12 tone music. Although, I'm sure that after he had exposed his ear to this type of music he could then imagine sonorous images of it and hence be inspired to create (by means of a sonorous image) in this style.

So how can we teach this ability to be inspired and create? Many ways. Firstly, students need to be exposed to art outside the realm of the banal repetitive molds that they are so used to. Just exposing children to art that is more complex can begin to open up possibilities and allow for a broadened imagination and strengthened minds. It will also broaden their appreciation of various styles and forms they are not used to. As the famous 20th century composer Arnold Schoenberg states in the book, Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg, "Pop music speaks to the unsophisticated, to people who love the beauty of music but are not inclined to strengthen their minds" (Schoenberg, 1984, p.119) He also states, "Today’s younger generation does not like music which they do not understand." (Schoenberg, 1984, p.119).

It has to be up to us as educators to expose students to mind strengthening art, as, chances are, they won’t search it out from themselves, simply because, most form of art
has been a junk-food form of art and that’s all they expect and desire from it. Just as we are controlled by our desires with unhealthy food, we are controlled by our desires in art. And of course the consumerist machine capitalizes on both audaciously.

Secondly, students should also participate in strengthening their mind by learning the logical side of art - vocabulary and form.

And thirdly, and most importantly, students need to be exposed and allowed to feel the creative process deep inside them to begin to exercise and foster their creativity. Students need to learn to explore amongst their own creativity – learn and grow from their creativity – learn from their authentic selves - connect to their authentic selves. As stated before by Maya Angelou, “You cannot use up creativity. The more you use the more you have.”

And how can this last concept be achieved by education? Through guided improvisation.
I believe the key to connecting the minds of tomorrow with the true powers of creative art-making is by allowing them to be one with it – swim amongst it – explore the once stagnant realm of vocabulary and form with new eyes. To play, imagine and create. To experience the internal majesty of their mental/physical/emotional/spiritual selves unified in a state liberated from the oppression of technocracy – a state where freedom is not only permitted but necessary – a state explored by means of improvisation.

And if for no reason other than this offering of liberation – it would be worthwhile to extend this to all students – young and old – beginner or advanced – in the sciences or the fine arts.....But there is also another great reason to allow them to explore in this realm of freedom, exploration, listening, reaction and creation. Improvisation allows us to experience a state that has all four aspects of ourselves stimulated and active – working together and creating together. And being amongst this state with all aspects of ourselves active, we feel completely alive, awake and joyful. It is in this state that we can create, learn and grow with our fullest potential as it is an ideal state. Improvisation is, to my belief, the one important thing that is missing from most people’s lives – keeping us from living our full potential – our full selves – our authentic selves.

So, what then is improvisation and how does this offer students a temporary release from the confines of technocracy while at the same time allow them to explore amongst a balanced union of the four aspects of themselves – to explore their authentic
selves - to learn, grow and gain personal strengths and wisdom from that experience?

Well I will begin with the answer to the first question, “what is improvisation?”

What is Improvisation?

Now because I am from the creative realm of music – I will speak about my understanding of improvisation in relation to music, however I do believe that this definition can be translated across the curriculum to include all forms of creative arts as well as all ‘performative’ skills such as conversation, speaking, debating, brainstorming, and writing for example.

In music (and all arts) there are two main forms of improvisation. Structured improvisation and free improvisation, (and of course many shades of grey between these two). In a more structured improvisational situation, more limitations are given. Now this does not necessarily mean that it is a more oppressive form of improvisation – it is just given some limitations so that the improvisers do not feel so overwhelmed by an unlimited amount of choices. As the common expression goes ‘there is no freedom without form,’ and this is especially true when dealing with inexperienced improvisers. As a matter of fact – when dealing with beginner improvisers, this form of improvisation is very necessary and the more limitations placed on what to improvise – the better it works.

And the opposite is true for free improvisation. There are very little, if any, structures or limitations set in place. There is usually a suggested idea or concept that has
been decided upon to express, or sometimes there is absolutely nothing to begin with
other than one musician beginning with an inspired sound that is then responded to – by
either a group – or by themselves – or both. In general – the freer the improvisation, the
more skilled and experienced the improviser (or group of improvisers) must be – as
making skilled, inspired choices is part of the improvisers craft and the more choices
there are, the harder it usually is to improvise.

So, understanding that there are both structured and freer forms of improvisation –
what exactly is happening during improvisation? Well, the best way I know to sum up
what is happening is ‘creation in the moment.’ And to explain this in greater detail I think
a definition of creativity is in order so that I can elaborate on the many aspects of creation
and how improvisation allows for this to occur, ‘in the moment’ and how it allows us to
experience an even balance of the four aspects of ourselves in a ‘dance of freedom.’

What is Creativity?

Of course, I have my own definition of what creativity is to me, but I wanted to
also research what it has been defined as from a more academic perspective. In my
research I frequently came across the concepts of two types of creative thinking -
convergence and divergence. In the creative process these two types of thinking are
working in tandem with each other to culminate in an end result. In a personal website
titled Creativity Index, (2005) by Leslie Owen, a professor of education and creativity, I
found a clear definition of these concepts.
Definitions of divergent thinking usually include the ability to elaborate, and think of diverse and original ideas with fluency and speed. Ideating and brainstorming are premiere examples of this type of thinking (Owen, 2005).

Convergent thinking is defined as the ability to use logical and evaluative thinking to critique and narrow ideas to ones best suited for given situations, or set criteria. We use this type of thinking when we make crucial and well-formed decisions after appraising an array of ideas, information, or alternatives (Owen, 2005).

Owen goes on to explain that both thought processes are necessary as one must first begin with divergent thinking in order to narrow-down and refine the ideas by means of convergent thinking. This process is then organically repeated in a reciprocal dance of creation to finally end in a finished product.

Another important point Owen raises, which is also shared by many other 'creativity' specialists, is the necessity of perseverance. She explains:

What separates truly creative greats from those who are less creative is the aspect of persistence. It is through dogged determination that highly creative persons take their energies and translate their dreams into realities. Sometimes this means that they literally breathe life into mere wisps of visions and then work tirelessly until these wisps are completed as something that can be viewed, felt, or understood by others. While full appreciation and acceptance of a painting, a poem, a theory, or a cantata, may sometimes take lifetimes, or even eons, for others to see the true value of a work, truly creative giants lives' are marked by their perseverance and continued beliefs in the power of their dreams.” (Owen, 2005)

This is a theory that I definitely share. I have heard so many people over the years tell me “your so lucky - you were blessed with such a beautiful voice - your so talented” (like I
was born with it) and more recently when I performed a piece I wrote for an Embodiment class one of the students said - "Wow! I can’t believe you wrote that!" yet she knew that I had a degree in composition and had been performing internationally for a living for many years. And as nice as it is to hear that - in a sense I find that those type of comments undermine all of the hard work and perseverance I have dedicated to achieve those talents. It is my opinion that people aren’t ‘born’ with these talents - they are learned - by hard work, good teachers and perseverance.

In my research, I also came across the authors Robert Sternberg and Wendy Williams and their book, *How to Develop Student Creativity* (1996). In their book, Sternberg and Williams take the concepts of divergence and convergence and add a third process in which they define creative work as a balance between three abilities that can be learned and practiced. These three abilities are:

**Synthetic ability** - This obviously includes divergent thinking as it is the ability to think of or generate new, novel, and interesting ideas. But it is also the ability to spontaneously make connections between ideas, or groups of things -- ones that often go unnoticed, or discovered by others.

**Analytical ability** - Again, this includes the ability to think convergently in that it requires critical thinking and appraisal as one analyzes and evaluates thoughts, ideas, and possible solutions. This type of thinking is key in the realm of creative work because not all ideas are good ones, some need to be culled. Creative people use this type of thinking to consider implications and project possible responses, problems, and outcomes. Commonly we think of this ability as "critical thinking" at its best.

**Practical ability** - The world is full of people who have good ideas, as well as ones who can pick ideas apart. However, the basic key to creative work must include the ability to use practical thinking. This is the ability to translate abstractions and theories into realistic applications. It is the skill to sell or communicate one's ideas to others, to make others believe that ideas, works, or products are valuable, different, useful, innovative,
unusual, or worthy of consideration. It is finding a potential audience for one's creative work. (Sternberg, Williams, 1996, p. 65, 66)

I really appreciated Sternberg and Williams detailed explanations of the synthetic (or divergent) and analytical (or convergent) processes of creativity and I do also believe that there is a definite place for the practical creative ability. However, I find the third process to be more of a means based process rather than creative thinking being for its own sake. Being creative does not mean that everyone has to like what you have created. Creating just for the sake of exploring ones self-expression is enough worth in itself - even if you are the only one to ever see or hear it. This ‘practical’ process seems to be of more use in the commercial/technocratic world. It is nevertheless a valuable ability if one is interested in producing art for a large audience or as a commissioned piece with a particular set of guidelines to follow.

Sternberg also has another interesting theory concerning creativity that he describes in a book co-written by Lubart in 1995. In this book he describes that ‘creative’ people are ones who make the decision to buy low and sell high in the world of ideas. As they describe:

The investment theory of creativity asserts that creative thinkers are like good investors: They buy low and sell high. Whereas investors do so in the world of finance, creative people do so in the world of ideas. Although people typically want others to love their ideas, immediate universal applause for an idea usually indicates that it is not particularly creative (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995, p. 23)

I couldn’t agree with these statements more. The act of creating begins with a simple idea, inspiration or simply willingness to explore ones own unique choices of expression.
In the creative process we explore our ideas, build on them, and in turn, make a wonderful end product from an original idea that would be nothing more than insignificant if the creative process was not used to manifest the idea into a work of art. And as we are all unique, the end result will have some unique quality after the creative process has been explored and a finished product has been realized. The problem is - very few of us are ever encouraged or taught the skills to apply the creative process - to make something from almost nothing.

What is Creativity? (A Personal Definition)

Creativity is a way of life - a way of living
It is about freedom - freedom of choices - freedom to create

Freedom to follow your authentic self's breath of inspiration
to follow the inspiration and worship the source

To worship the place the inspiration comes from

Worship by allowing the creative energy to flow from your divine source of inspiration

Kiss it, hug it, dance with it - show your love for it

To allow yourself the freedom of time and acceptance of your ideas,
Welcoming them with open arms into a free space of fluidity and growth

To praise your inspiration with your time and your dedication to it –
your undivided attention -

your breath,

your preparation,

your sweat and your tears

To allow you ideas to soar, to sink, to stop, to start, to run to crawl to cry to

laugh...

But allow - don’t be afraid of yourself - your creative self - your authentic self

To breathe the breath of freedom –

To choose to allow your creative energy to flow

To believe in your creativity - believe in yourself

To breathe in one of the true gifts of life

To make the choice, live the choice, breathe the choice, feed the choice

We’re all creative if we choose to be.....

**Creativity in the Moment**

So if creativity is a noun that sums up all of these things – what then is ‘creating.’

Well – it is basically the verb form – the active form. It is this ‘creating’ that is more or

less what is happening during improvisation. The many various aspects of creation –

especially the convergent and divergent aspects, are being explored in real time. A

spontaneous creating – making choices - allowing things to flow – listening to those

choices, reacting to those choices - exploring those choices. Listening and reacting to
one’s emotions, one’s body and senses. Listening and reacting to an unseen force of inspiration from the spiritual and exploring and exercising the forms and vocabulary that are stored in the mind in a dance of freedom.

Here is another definition of improvisation that was found in a book about organizational improvisation by K.E. Weick who has used jazz as an analogy of organizational improvisation. In his book, Weick quotes the jazz musician Berliner in defining improvisation:

Improvisation involves reworking precomposed material and designs in relation to unanticipated ideas conceived, shaped, and transformed under the special conditions of performance, thereby adding unique features to every creation. (2001, p. 286)

Weick also refers to another jazz musician, Max Roach:

One phrase determines what the next is going to be. From the first note you hear, you are responding to what you’ve just played; you just said this on your instrument, and now that’s a constant. What follows from that? And then the next phrase is constant. What follows from that? And so on and so forth. And finally, let’s wrap it up so that everybody understands that that’s what you’re doing. It’s like language. You are talking, you’re speaking, you’re responding to yourself. When I play, it’s like having a conversation with myself. (ibid: 291)

As stated, improvisation is about being in the moment - listening in the moment - reacting in the moment - responding in the moment - exercising preconceived vocabulary and forms in the moment and organically allowing things to flow, to grow, to create something unique - in the moment. Improvisation is the opposite of repetition – it is organic and reflects nature in its constant state of movement. And this organic, natural state of nature is also the organic, natural, authentic state of ourselves. And it is in this
authentic state that learning may be transformative. These ideas are also shared by Celeste Snowber in *Bodydance: Fleshing Soulful Inquiry through Improvisation*:

> Improvising alerts one to the present, and it’s often in this space of not knowing what may happen next what one learns ways to develop a physicality of knowing – a thinking on the feet. (2002, p.20)

> This methodology reframes inquiry as a place as a place of spiritual formation and sees it as a journey into ourselves – an inquiry of body and soul, a place where a space is opened up for the possibilities of inquiry to be transformative. (2002, p.21)

To help understand a bit more about the mechanics of creativity and how this is happening ‘in the moment’ through improvisation I will refer to the concepts of convergent and divergent thinking and how this happens spontaneously in improvisation.

The divergent way of thinking is usually indicated by the ability to generate many, or more complex or complicated, ideas from one idea or from simple ideas or triggers. And when improvising this is exactly what is happening. One usually begins with a single idea in which to explore within the act of improvisation. In improvisation, this idea is elaborated on and explored in different variations while all the while, the body and senses are reacting to the new choices that are being made and then reacting to them – being inspired by them - creating even more elaborations and even new ideas! This way of thinking includes and develops fluency, flexibility, elaboration, originality, complexity, risk-taking, imagination and curiosity (Owens, 2005). It is through my personal experience that improvisation explores and develops all of these skills while being in a free, spontaneous form of play that is incredibly freeing and fulfilling.
Creativity also involves another aspect of creativity called convergent thinking when choices are made in the creative process. This aspect of creativity is exercised through improvisation in real-time when one chooses to repeat, variate, discard and elaborate on ideas. These ideas can then be used compositionally (by means of more choices) in the creation of a final piece of work if desired. So – being able to improvise is also a key skill needed when composing a musical composition (unless one hears the entire piece from beginning to end in ones head and can transcribe things directly from that) Although even in this case, improvisation is still occurring – just in the mind – and the transcription of that is merely by means of memory. However, I really don’t think the composition transcribed would be *exactly* the same as once improvised in the mind as improvisation reflects the natural state of things moving and changing organically, as is done in nature – and is never repeated *exactly* the same way again.

**Experiencing Freedom Through Improvisation**

As I mentioned earlier, improvisation is the opposite of repetition – it is organic and reflects nature in its constant state of movement and creation. And this organic, natural state of nature is also the organic natural authentic state of ourselves. As Abrahm’s paraphrases Merleau-Ponty:

For Merleau-Ponty, all of the creativity and free-ranging mobility that we have come to associate with the human intellect is, in truth, an elaboration, or recapitulation, of a profound creativity already underway at the most immediate level of sensory perception. The sensing body is not a programmed machine but an active and open form, continually improvising its relation to things and to the world. The body’s actions and engagements are never wholly determinate, since they must ceaselessly
adjust themselves to a world and a terrain that is itself continually shifting. (Abrahm, 1996, p.69)

So – in many ways, improvisation in creative arts is really the closest we can be to the improvisation that is naturally occurring in the natural world, in our bodies and our senses – a reflection of and a connection to the untouched physical and spiritual and a way for us to connect with this purest form of creation – while at the same time discovering and exercising our emotional and intellectual selves. Improvisation is freedom – the freedom of exploring and creating amongst a state that reflects the natural.

Improvisation offers us relief from the technocratic world as it is basically the opposite of an objective, structured, repetitive, confined and dictated situation – it is freedom. Improvisation allows students to be released from the shackles of the mind controlling machine (well at least temporarily) to transcend their false reality in a way that can only be explored through free creativity. And as creativity can offer us this, improvisation is exploring creativity in its freest form – offering us one of the freest states possible.

And in freedom, we find relaxation. And in relaxation we find happiness – peace. It is this relaxed, happy, peaceful state that we will be able to release our greatest potential. And from this potential – we will explore, learn and create in ways never imagined possible.

**Exploring and Learning from Ones’ Authentic Selves Through Improvisation**

Not only does improvisation allow us to explore in this realm of freedom, it also
allows us to learn and grow from this exploration, developing our creative selves amongst
an enveloping, mental/physical/emotional/spiritual connection. I also believe that
improvisation is the best means we have of practicing creativity as it is based on freedom
and being immersed in the moment – in the moment with all aspects of ourselves
stimulated. And not only are these four parts of ourselves being stimulated, but
improvisation offers us a state where all aspects of ourselves are working together in a
balanced, reciprocal union.

As I believe that the equally most valuable aspect of improvisation is that it allows
us to be immersed in a state that is an equal balance between the four aspects of ourselves
– with these four selves being in their healthiest states possible, (as improvisation is about
freedom) I will explain in more detail how the four parts of ourselves are stimulated, how
they are working together, and, how improvisation is an ideal learning environment as it
allows us to learn from ourselves. As stated by Snowber:

> Improvisation is the pilgrimage to release the imaginative possibilities
> through our whole being. (2002, p.27)

**Physically and Spiritually**

As I mentioned before, improvisation activates the physical and spiritual in us as
it is a reflection of and a connection to the untouched physical creation that is continually
occurring in nature. And as our connection to the physical is also our connection to the
spiritual – improvisation allows us to explore the spiritual in ourselves, through our own
bodies – our senses - as it is our senses that are being highly activated in improvisation.

Our bodies are used as a means to help us connect and learn from the physical and
spiritual. As Snowber states in *The Eros of Learning*:

> Whatever we do, we do through our bodies: eat, sleep, type, teach, drive, or love. We live, breathe, and dwell in and through our bodies, but more often than not they unfortunately have been relegated to the status of instrument or tool, rather than being a place of discovery. (2005, p.219)

> The body is a huge teacher in our lives if we listen and our bodies can be a sacred space for continual knowledge and wisdom. (2005, p.219)

And it is within this awakened place of discovery that the learning process from the physical and spiritual occurs in improvisation – providing continual knowledge and wisdom.

Now, depending on which art we are speaking of, different senses are being activated more, but the important thing is that *for improvisation to work – we must acutely listen to our senses*. For example, the visual artist improvising must rely heavily on their visual sense and must observe, react and respond in a continual dance with their sense of touch – which is also being highly activated. The dancer must be continually observing themselves, reacting and responding to the visual, the sense of feeling their body’s movements, their sense of listening to the rhythm of their bodies, to the majesty of the music. And the musician must observe, react and respond reciprocally and continually to the visual stimulus of their hands on the instrument, feeling their bodies movements and rhythms and listening to the constantly changing and evolving rhythms and harmonies and melodies. And in all the arts – the sense of the inspiration from the spiritual is activated, further feeding the body and senses with more inspiration and providing energy to keep the senses activated, heightened and sensual. And! Awakening these energies contribute to more frequent bursts of inspiration and a closer relationship
with ones sources of inspiration!

Emotionally

More than anything, creating is about self-expression. And much of that self that expression is a reflection of ones emotional response to a particular idea, or feeling – or simply a way for an emotion to be sustained and worked through – without the use of words or thoughts of words (unless you are improvising words of course). Improvisation also allows us to explore and help understand our internal emotions in relation to our bodies – our senses and how these emotions feel in our bodies and the body’s reactions to these emotions. And as improvisation is creation in the moment – ones emotions can be explored in the utmost freest state to explore amongst, allowing things to be explored and discovered without judgment as the nature of improvisation is about free exploration, and this exploration does not have to be perfect. In fact, it is to be expected that something improvised will not be perfect (well unless you are a master improviser like Miles Davis or John Coltrane) and that’s ok! It’s all about exploration - working through the feelings – finding ways to represent the emotions being explored.

Just the ability to explore ones internal emotions in a free state is such a valuable experience in itself; it should be something that all humans should have access to. The exploration of an emotion is a way to celebrate positive emotions – rejoice in the greatness of a wonderful feeling – sustain it – and if desired, remember it by means of composition or even recording. And if this is a negative emotion – improvisation is a way to work through the feeling without words, and by doing this, one can leave the emotion
behind and be freed from it rather than carrying it around, having it weigh on you. People see psychologists to do this very thing. Imagine if it was part of the education system to empower each individual with a means of working through ones emotions through improvisation?

But improvisation can offer even more than this. As improvisation is a way to explore ones emotions, it is a way to discover ones deepest feelings, to experience them on a deeper level – to learn from these emotions and to have a healthier relationship with these emotions. Imagine this; rather than emotions being a negative thing in our society – they are celebrated as a way to connect with our true selves – a way for us to learn from our true selves and a way to express this self rather than keep it bottled up – or the opposite – bursting out of control. A way to have a healthy connection with our emotional selves and way to express ourselves as an emotional outlet is I believe something that our society is greatly lacking and is making us very sick. More than ever we need an outlet for our emotions – an exploration of our emotions and a way to learn from our emotions. As Aaron Copeland states in his book *Music and Imagination* (2006):

> The need to create - the answer is always the same - self expression; the basic need to make evident one’s deepest feelings about life. I must create in order to know myself, and since knowledge is a never ending search, each new work is only a part - answer to the question “who am I.”
> (Copeland, 2006 p. 41)

And as Attali explains:

> Through this freedom of exploration, the hopes are that through self-expression, ones deepest feelings about life will be revealed and hence a true unique, empowered individual will emerge. (Attali, 1977, p.143)
Not only is improvisation a powerful tool for exploring, celebrating, working through and learning from our emotions – experiencing ones emotions through improvisation also greatly increases overall self confidence (Weiser, 2009). As improvisation allows us to understand our emotions and connect and learn from our authentic selves – as Attali explained, this helps develop an empowered unique individual. And, I believe, this is the greatest source of confidence – feeling strong and secure in who you are and by knowing better who you are through the exploration of you emotions.

So, not only does improvisation contribute to self-confidence by having a deeper understanding of ones true self – it aids in ones confidence in other ways as well.

As improvisation is practicing spontaneity and creating ‘in the moment’ where nothing is expected to be perfectly practiced or executed, improvisation contributes to ones confidence by lessening the fear of failure (Weike, 1995) as there are no mistakes in improvisation – only choices that can be improved upon or learnt from. Similarly, improvisation lessens the fear of taking risks (Kabat, 2009) as you must take risk in improvisation as that is a fundamental part of exploration. The more risks taken, the greater the realms are explored and the more inspiration can be gained from one’s representational choices. And both of these skills, along with the other emotional benefits all contribute to performative literacy – the ability to be strong, confident, expressive and secure in social or performative situations. It has been my experience that fear of failure, lack of taking risks and poor performative literacy are very common in our socio-cultural settings, and quite frankly – I find people like that to be quite bland. But maybe it’s not
exactly boring that is the problem – it’s lack of self-confidence from not being secure with who they are and so they are afraid to express that openly. Or, it could simply be that they have had very few opportunities to be free and act in an improvised, expressive manner, so they are just not comfortable being that way. Whatever the reason, I definitely don’t find that to be the case amongst the creatively expressive individuals I know.

And - there is even yet another important emotional benefit that improvisation offers! As improvisation is free and generally unpredictable in nature, it allows us to learn how to creatively deal with constantly changing circumstances and lessens our need to anticipate and control all situations (Kabat, 2009). This is something I definitely notice in our society – especially amongst the emotionally numbed (which most of us are...) and the emotionally weak. The need to control situations (and people) and an inability to deal creatively to situations is (I’m sure) attributed to our societies lack of respect and appreciation of creativity and the oppressive state of mind control that distorts all facets of society.

Imagine if it was part of everyone’s education – in all levels of education - to have improvisation as an important part of the curriculum. It is my belief that improvisation can offer to students the very things that so many people in our society are lacking. A freedom from creative oppression, the freedom to explore, discover, create and learn from ones true selves and the ability to transcend the constraints of our society to allow for empowered, autonomous, authentic, balanced and healthy members of society to flourish. As Attali explains:
Through this freedom of emotional, soul and body transcendence exploration, one's deepest feelings about life will be revealed and hence an empowered autonomous spirit will arise. (Attali 1977, p.143)

**Mentally**

Not only is improvisation an ideal way to explore, create amongst and learn from the physical, spiritual and emotional – there are also many valuable intellectual benefits as well.

First and foremost, as I explained earlier, improvisation allows a relief from the shackles of the mind controlling machine and allows the mind to transcend this false reality. And as it is the intellectual self that is the most controlled by this dictator, improvisation allows the mind to work freely in a state it is rarely exposed to – a free state - in communion with the other aspect of ourselves.

As the nature of improvisation is about freedom of the moment, improvisation is a valuable tool to practice being in the moment - to focus on exactly what is happening and to keep that immersion in the moment continuing. This of course is incredibly valuable as being in the moment and focusing is something that leads to great success in any area and is something that many people in our society have a problem doing. And being in the moment is not only freeing and focusing – it is also a path to happiness. The authentic self lives only in the moment.

And once we are in the moment and focusing – at one with our true selves - our mind has the ability to think quicker and have better memory access (Weicke, 1995) which in itself carries many benefits. With our mind focused and working at an optimum state, we are able to quickly access and further develop previously learned vocabulary and
forms in a rich experience that allows various creative thinking skills to grow and become more fluent. And in practicing this, we not only improve our creative processing skills, but we also develop our decision making skills and ability to think quickly under pressure (Kabat, 2009), enhancing ones lives in all areas.

These improved skills will also greatly contribute to one’s performative literacy and lessen ones fear of failure, which will greatly contribute to ones overall confidence. And we can all use more confidence, can’t we, especially those who have not been given the opportunity to experience freedom to learn from ones authentic selves by exploring the majesty of creation through improvisation.

Group Benefits

Not only does improvisation allow us a means for us to learn from our authenticity, it also allows us to learn from each other when done in groups. Now that is not to say that we don’t greatly learn from ourselves when improvising in groups, because we do, but working in groups allows many other more social benefits as well.

Improvisation can be done alone or in small or large groups and in all forms of art - not just music and dance - as it is free and transcends boundaries by nature.

As improvisation is a freeing activity, improvisation done in groups can be a very relaxing medium in which students can explore amongst. And when a group is relaxed, they are more open, which is an ideal state for communication to occur (Kabat, 2009). And when communication in groups occurs, learning occurs. For example, when done in a group improvisation can greatly develop skills of listening to each other as ideas are
bounced off each other and responded to as a group dynamic is explored and unspoken
deep realms of creative beauty are discovered. In this group dynamic of listening to each other
and responding to each other's ideas, knowledge sharing occurs (Weicke, 1995), which
can be a huge source of knowledge and learning. It is also a very non-oppressive
approach to learning as the knowledge shared is usually reciprocal - not based on one
dominant figure. And when knowledge sharing amongst peers occurs, students are
exposed to different perspectives (Weicke, 1995) which in turn strengthens social bonds
and develops compassion and empathy for others. And once learning from each other
occurs, not only is compassion and empathy gained, but trust and respect for others
increases (Kabat, 2009) which improves relationships and makes it much easier to make
and sustain healthy friendships and relationships.

Not only does improvisation in groups offer a rich, enjoyable and creative way to
improve one's social skills by learning from each other, it is a highly valuable classroom
activity as it maintains class interest (Weicke, 1995) and is a great way for the classmates
to become friends (Kabat, 2009).

Group Improvisation also allows students to learn from both themselves (by
experiencing their reactions in the groups) and from each other through an exploration of
all parts of their freed, authentic selves - individually and collectively.

Imagine if it was part of everyone's education - in all levels of education - to have
improvisation as an important part of the curriculum. It is my belief that improvisation
can offer to students the very things that so many people in our society are lacking. A
freedom from creative oppression, the freedom to explore, discover, create and learn from
one’s true selves (and each other’s in groups) and the ability to transcend the constraints of our society to allow for empowered, autonomous, authentic, balanced and healthy members of society to flourish. As Attali states:

Through this freedom of emotional, soul and body transcendence exploration, ones deepest feelings about life will be revealed and hence an empowered autonomous spirit will arise. (Attali 1977, p.143)

**Improvisation – A Key Educational Element**

As I have stated before - creativity and the ideal form of practicing creativity - improvisation - is the key element in allowing students to learn from themselves. As Schoenberg states:

The genius really learns only from himself, the man of talent mainly from others. The genius learns from nature - his own nature - the man of talent from art. (Schoenberg 1984, p. 365)

It is my belief, that not just geniuses are blessed with the gift to learn from themselves, but that all humans are - if they are given the *chance to be creative*.

We, as art educators have a vital role to play in the evolution of the minds of tomorrow. We need to educate our students against the subtle mind-controlling forces of the political economic machine and awaken, empower, expand and strengthen their intellectual/physical/emotional/spiritual selves by allowing them the opportunity to strengthen their creative abilities and build up their defenses against the consumerist mind machine that has been asserting it’s power over our societies lives for too long now. We need to enrich the lives of our students by showing them the capacity to explore the
depths of themselves - to learn from themselves and each other - to find inspiration and to create. This, in effect will allow our students to transcend to a higher level of personal freedom, individual autonomy, authenticity and happiness.

Freedom to Create = Creating for Freedom
A Non – Oppressive Approach

Freedom - for me is being so completely absorbed in the moment that you are uninhibited by thoughts and engrossed by the beauty of the aliveness of the moment. Alive because all aspects of myself are activated and working together in a reciprocal union, feeding off each other, inspiring each other, celebrating the beauty of creative freedom with each other. Feeling the freedom of the natural, the organic, the creative, the authentic.

This, I believe is what all students are yearning for more than anything – a chance to feel free and liberated - to explore amongst this freedom, to learn and grow and create amongst this freedom - to be and further nurture the fullest potential of themselves in an environment that welcomes and inspires their true selves with open arms.

So how can we offer this rich, creatively inspiring environment to our students? Principally through a non – oppressive approach to Education.

Until very recently – approaches to education have been about knowledge transfer – the teacher being the authority and the students have no choice but to do what the teacher asks – learn from what the teacher tells them. But can a true deep, embodied knowledge be transferred this way? Can students develop lifelong self – learning from this approach? Not likely.
If knowledge is not something to be transferred from teacher to student, like water being poured from a pitcher into a glass, how can we as educators step out of our pre-conditioned authoritative instincts to involve the students in a higher type of learning that doesn’t just ‘lecture’ to the students but actually allows them to embody knowledge on a profound level?


To understand a little more clearly the mindset of the majority of teachers and students in our society, I find it helpful to think of the teachers as, at least many of them in my experience (metaphorically speaking), as being the oppressors and the students as the oppressed in an oppressed society. Now I am not intending to belittle the situations of extreme oppression that many people of this world still live under, but I think it is part of our job as educators to look at the problems our somewhat evolved society still faces and analyze the ways that we as a society are still oppressed. Because, the truth is, even though we aren’t females in Afghanistan, we *are* still oppressed in our society. Our intelligence, knowledge, capacity for critical thinking, creativity and the ability to know and learn from our authenticity *is* being oppressed.

The control that the corporate machine of consumerism has over our society -
especially those who are not ideally educated, has been plaguing and infecting our culture for many decades now and it is only getting worse. Our culture is getting further and further away from understanding true value - intrinsic value - and is still believing the lie that 'money brings happiness.' People are drowning in depression and slowly killing themselves and our environment with their decadent lifestyles, and they conveniently know no better. So, why are we so blind? Because (as I’ve described earlier) we are oppressed and don’t even know it. We are oppressed from having true knowledge and knowing our true selves. By not having the ability to learn from ourselves because we never had the chance before. Why? Because someone else always did the teaching for us - we were never involved in the process.

As teachers, we need to realize that because of the society we live in and its ‘hidden’ oppression, that we are also oppressed, and the unfortunate nature of the oppressed is to also become the oppressor. Here is a quote by Paulo Freire on this subject:

The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it.

They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account. (Freire, 1970, p.36)

So how do we go about educating without falling into the oppressor trap?

Teachers must first begin to be critically aware of the oppressions in our society and their roles as the oppressors and how it is manifested in their teaching styles. As Freire says, “The struggle begins with men’s recognition that they have been destroyed.” (Freire, 1970, p. 37)
Once an educator is aware of the forces that control us, they can then choose to slowly awaken the true selves of their students by putting them in situations that allow them the freedom to awaken the four aspects of themselves in an effort to learn, grow and create by themselves. To understand their authentic selves better and to learn from their creative responses and creations. I love the idea of the ‘praxis’ in education as Freire explains:

To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (ibid)

If students are given the freedom to explore in a free, organic, authentic state – it will empower them to rise above the oppression and transform their false realities into truly empowered, autonomous, free and happy realities.

So how do we create a praxis for our students to have a genuine learning experience amongst? Freire states that “For us, however, the requirement is seen not in terms of explaining to, but rather dialoguing with the people about their actions.” (Freire, 1970, p. 38) And dialoguing is improvisational in nature.

Teachers need to reevaluate their roles in the ‘quest for knowledge’ and realize that they are not to be leaders but equal members of the whole group if they are not to be the oppressors. This is the concept of decentralized control suggested by Brent and Davis, (2003) in Fels and Belliveu’s book, Exploring Curriculum - Performative Inquiry, Role Drama, and Learning (2008). In a classroom, this means that the actions are simply
initiated by the teacher and all the responsibility is then shared by all the participants (Fells, Belliveu, 2008). Teachers must be able to realize that their plans for the students shouldn’t be concrete and that they should be spontaneous, adaptive and hence alive to allow for a system of complex learning to unfold. Knowledge is seen as more of an evolving, progressive verb than simply a noun. When this is method is practiced, “teaching and learning seem to be more about expanding the space of the possible and creating conditions for the emergence of the as-yet unimagined, rather than perpetuating entrenched habits of interpretation“ (Davis, 2004, p.184). Not only will this provide a ripe environment for self-learning but it will allow for the students to feel empowered by their choices and help them build self-esteem, a sense of identity and build up their defenses against the mind-controlling forces that maintain to seize control.

I like to think of my role as a teacher as more of a facilitator of activities that make the students push their limits of knowledge, skill and creativity while at the same time causing them to ask questions they have never thought to ask before and explore new emotional, spiritual and physical realms through creativity. I prefer to teach my students through inspiring them, and leading by example – feeding their desires to learn and to want to learn. If my students like and admire me – they will be much more apt to learn in the environments I present. This, in effect, will foster trust in the teacher and allow the students to expand their minds and broaden their ways of seeing the world – while learning to learn from themselves.

Playing an equal role in the ‘dance of knowledge’ as the facilitator, rather than the
leader of the class in a ‘decentralized controlled’ atmosphere, a teacher can help the students emerge from the clutches of the oppressors. As facilitator, the teacher merely presents the students with new ideas to reflect upon and activities (that unfold in an unpredictable way, depending on the reaction of the students) that will allow them to make decisions and create dialogues with their peers - as well as the teacher - in a balanced learning environment - an environment of reciprocity that practices “thoughtful awareness” (Fells, Belliveu, 2008) and breeds surprising results. Freire explains this educational environment as being “co-intentional education” as the teacher and students are co-intent on the same reality. M Mitchell Waldrop describes this ideal atmosphere as an “endless dance of co-emergence” (p.12) in a place where a complex system can be spontaneous, adaptive and alive. In this system, the hierarchy of the classroom has been removed and the students can allow their spirits and curiosities to roam free in a dance of reflection and action! Being in this fertile environment of reciprocity, the students will build confidence and achieve a knowledge of their unique identities and talents. It is up to us teachers to give back to our student’s confidence in their own learning processes and in turn an independence from oppression. As Freire states;

A revolutionary leadership must accordingly practice co-intentional education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge.

As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement. (Freire, 1970, p. 40)
This idea of Friere’s, "committed involvement" is the commitment that students are lacking today in their desire to learn. I believe that once students re-awaken their involvement in learning and are given the freedom to explore, grow and create amongst their true selves they will also re-awaken their desire for knowledge and as a result feel more committed to their success. When this revolutionary educational environment is in place, the learning couldn’t help but be on a much deeper, embodied level that is more of a life-changing experience rather than an obligation to learn. This is what education should really be about. Don’t you think?

**The Curricular Journey**

In my educational pursuits, I came across the concept of curriculum as being described as a ‘journey‘, an arena of exploration and development – undiscovered places. It reminds me of the smell of a sweet new wind on the horizon of an unexplored territory.....A foreign journey through education.... As Lynn Fels describes in *Exploring Curriculum - Performative Inquiry, Role Drama, and Learning* (2008);

There is a metaphor I like to use: imagine curriculum as a journey where teacher and students shoulder their backpacks and travel together into unknown Territory. What happens, what we do, and how we respond to situations that arise are all part of a *curricular journey* (p.39)

I love the idea of “curricular journey” as a metaphor. Just adding the world journey reminds me of my travels and the new experiences I have lived amongst the fresh new winds of exploring new places and faces. The ‘freedom’ of exploration.

In my own curricular journeys, (as a teacher) I feel I am amongst the free oceans
and seas of the world - free from my own socio-cultural constraints and amongst a cutting edge style of creative, communicative education that is student centered and reflects the needs of not only the people of our society but people from all the different countries in the world. In this approach to curriculum, I do feel free - as free as I can feel - not as free as I'm sure I can still learn to be - but free enough.

As a teacher, I feel it is my job to provide a comfortable, friendly and welcoming environment for my students to feel as free as possible – and it is this environment that encourages authentic communication, creativity and the ability to learn from themselves and each other. Along with providing this atmosphere, I use my creative and engaging learning strategies to, as Lynn says, navigate the educational waters. A journey through the educational experience with the students as co-workers on a floating city. A city free from hierarchy, where we are all working together towards a similar goal or destination. A co-intentional goal that all members feel committed to as they are all equal in their contributions. A goal of intent towards education – where all students are committed to their involvement because they are part of it – not dictated by it. A goal of feeling a new invigorating scent of knowledge in the wind.

So how do we keep this journey fresh and smelling sweet? How do we keep the students intent on gaining knowledge? By allowing them the autonomy to be themselves – to learn from themselves and each other. Empower them and make them breathe the breath of life as they journey through their progression of education. Allow for the students to become empowered and gain strength and wisdom from their choices and
allow them a venue to express and connect to their individual voices. Individuals empowered by the freedom of making wise choices towards the greater good of all people and all living organism on the planet. A planet of justice, individual, free voices and the strength in performance to stand behind what we all truly believe in - peace and love for all the living things on the earth.....As Fels describes;

Inspired by Paulo Freire’s (1970) work Pedagogy of the Oppressed, a number of curriculum theorists encouraged educators to understand curriculum as a fertile venue for student voice, empowerment, agency, social justice, and activism. (Fels, Belliveu, 2008, p. 42)

I also love the concept of curriculum (as well as knowledge) as being a verb. Fels describes this as, “curriculum as a verb, an action, not as a noun, or an object” (Fels, 2008, p. 42). And this verb to me is also both an action verb - and a non-action verb that is capable of progression and integration amongst other verb forms. I think the verbs ‘journey’ and ‘explore’ are well suited for the jobs. I especially love those verbs because they are also conceptual nouns. The nouns curricular journey and educational exploration.

This has also been described as a “lived curriculum” rather than a “planned” one. As Snowber states in Bodydance: Fleshing Soulful Inquiry through Improvisation:

It is important to work within the scope of a “lived curriculum” as opposed to the curriculum-as-plan. The lived curriculum characterizes what takes place in the margins of learning, where both child and adult inter-connect with the world and the physical self. It is here where the nuances of gesture, smell, touch, sound and sight shape us and inform our lives. It is into these margins of sensuous knowledge, where all life, and not just what takes place within the walls of the classroom, can be seen as a place of learning and wonder. (2002, p.21)
It is the concept of curriculum as being a verb – a lived experience - that also allows for the ‘improvisational’ nature of this type of curriculum. And this improvisational nature is of great importance for educators as when things are improvised (or at least partially) they are always fresh and new and exciting for the students – and the teacher! Not to mention to allow for all the immense benefits of improvisation – for the students and the teachers!

The Curricular Map

So once you have established that you are on an alive, progressive journey involving equal participant towards the same goal - what does the map say? The map makes the situations fertile for new challenges, presents stimulating decisions, and allows us the opportunities to apply the new skills we learn in an invigorating and empowering way. As Fels explains;

A curricular exploration is what happens as the journey unfolds when confronted with new challenges, or decisions to make, or when we must apply the skills and ideas that we are learning along the way.

The final destination is not where the teacher first intended to go but is somewhere else challenging and exciting, resulting in unexpected learning that was never part of the original itinerary (p. 40)

This last concept of the final destination being unexpected is really a grand notion in the whole ‘freedom education’ concept. Keep the destination unintentional. Allow the teacher and the students to be equal agents in the outcome of the destination. Allow for a free development of knowledge to occur – allow improvisation and creativity to occur – on the part of the students and the teacher! Be the facilitator that allows creating and re-
creating of knowledge as well as student (and teacher) empowerment. Allow students to feel the fresh, sweet wind of knowledge and personal learning, creating and empowerment!
Improvisation Education

When adapting these important educational philosophies of keeping a non-oppressive approach and allowing for a free journey of curriculum to unfold - one in which the exploration, development and outcome of learning and creativity are created by the participants (and not just the teacher), teachers are in effect allowing for a magical outcome to occur - an outcome of unique, undiscovered territory - undiscovered because it has been created. And in allowing this to happen - for creativity and improvisation to occur in learning - where students are in a balanced environment in which they are exploring amongst and learning from their authentic selves, the magic of self learning and individual empowerment is able to blossom. And this is something that needs to be adapted into all areas of education. A freer, more improvised and creative approach needs to be not just a vital part of creative education but of all education in general - at all levels.

But what about creative education? What about the methodologies used in improvisation education in today's institutions and private lessons? They must use a free approach right? Well unfortunately, there are current problems in the methodologies used in improvisation education today, problems that are interfering with the magic. The deep scars created by the technocratic mindset have infiltrated even the freest and most creative skills being taught today.
Current Problems in Improvisation Education

Thankfully, the art of musical improvisation (in Western music) has been revived to a healthy state after nearly two centuries of being in oblivion. Thanks to the efforts of the early great jazz improvisers and the effects that their new contributions have had on the art of improvisation, the Western world has developed a rich and varied tradition of improvisation once again. (Although...you wouldn’t hear this if you tuned into one of the popular radio stations these days. The art of improvisation is and has been (since its revival) more of a counter cultural art form as this new, fresh and continually varying form of music is simply not repetitive and ‘catchy’ enough for the average technocratic mindset to appreciate – let alone adore. And it is such a shame as this freer form of music has so much to offer. Even when just listening! And, of course, (as I described earlier) most definitely when involving yourself in its charms.

So if improvisation has been able to fight its way back into musical culture – what is its current educational state? Well, to sum it up in a few words, I would say – not as free as you’d expect it to be.

The Early Improvisers and Self Teaching

The spirit behind jazz has been described by Jaques Attali, (1985) as one that promises new possibilities for creating and transforming identity, social relationships, and the very nature of the world in which we live (p. 85). This was the spirit that was the
driving force behind the early jazz improvisers. A fresh, new, liberating and creative spirit arose in Western music that borrowed the harmonic and instrumental developments of the current tradition and built a fresh, exciting, free, and individual space in which to develop. And it was this strive for freedom – along with its empowering benefits that was the driving force behind its development. And the original and novel accomplishments that came out of the early jazz musicians are (in my opinion) the greatest artistic achievements that have occurred in the twentieth century. But unfortunately, this dynamism is not matched amongst the improvisers today.

The biggest difference between the improvisers of today and the early jazz improvisers (early 1900’s) is the method used in which to grow as an improviser. The earlier improvisers, for the most part, had little training in theory and had to find out things in their own way by learning from themselves – exploring their instruments and the harmonic, melodic and rhythmic possibilities with very little guidance from other musicians – let alone academia. They learnt from listening to and playing with the musicians that they chose to be surrounded by, and the choices of material in their ‘bag of licks’ (vocabulary improvisers use to elaborate and expand their creative ideas with) was determined by their own decisions – their own intentions. This self determined intention and education of improvisation allowed for individual voices to flourish and original styles and voices to cultivate. What emerged was a clearly distinctive, individual style that made their work unique and identifiable. According to Ken Prouty, an authority on the subject;
Through “self-teaching,” commonly held as an essential marker of the non-academic jazz tradition, performers had the power to determine their own aesthetic course, instead of relying on an institution or instructor to do so. (Prouty, 2005, para.14)

And what about now? Well – to sum it up, there is so much ‘teaching’ occurring in the improvisation classes that there is no room for self teaching or exploration to occur – creating an overwhelming amount of musicians with the ability to improvise – without the ability to forge an individual voice.

So how and why is this occurring? Well to start.....Because almost all of today’s accomplished improvisers have come out of musical institutions, many have not been exposed to an environment that has allowed for them to reach their own individual potentials. And it is this current environment that I would like to comment on as to offer some suggestions on how it could greatly benefit from a freer approach to learning.

**Shortfalls in the Current Musical Academic Setup**

So, when I’m speaking of the current musical academic setup – I’m speaking of the setup of the improvisation performance classes – not of the musical setup in general and definitely not any of the traditional/serious musical performance setups as, I would like to focus on things that are, well, (in my opinion) not completely stuck in the dark ages.

To begin, I think it’s important to realize that the teaching of the skill of
improvisation has only recently been accepted into academia as a legitimate musical skill worth teaching. Unfortunately, due to the fact that improvisation had not been a part of the Western ‘Serious’ musical literacy, many musicians, including the music teachers found improvisation so unfamiliar and foreign that it was seen somewhat as a threat and was disregarded as simply ‘not a serious form of music’. It is no surprise that jazz and improvisation met much resistance, according to Prouty, from many musical academia throughout the 1970’s and in many ways still does. A perfect example of this is the current academic situation in my hometown of Vancouver, BC Canada. In Vancouver, there are two highly regarded universities, UBC and SFU, none of which offers a degree in jazz, let alone improvisation classes. There is however an abundance of serious music classes and various music degrees – just not in the realm of jazz.

So, regardless to say, the pioneering educators of improvisation had much to prove when organizing the curricula. Due to fact that jazz was not seen as a ‘serious’ form of music, the pioneers were forced to construct their curriculum in a manner that fit within the existing academic canon. Unfortunately because jazz improvisation was such an opposite form of music it fit quite badly within the constraints of the traditional music canon – causing much of the original ‘spirit’ as Attali stated of “new possibilities for creating and transforming identity, social relationships, and the very nature of the world in which we live” to be lost. The act of ‘conforming to’ rather than ‘creating anew’ was unfortunately the foundation in which the new tradition of jazz academia was built. As Prouty describes;

That jazz met resistance from many in musical academia at least through the 1970s (and arguably still does) is well documented. To overcome such opposition, jazz educators employed strategies for the teaching of jazz
improvisation that borrowed from methods and perspectives common to higher musical education, drawing upon the pedagogical power of the canon itself. (Prouty, 2005, Para. 20)

This 'academic' method of teaching improvisation unfortunately lost sight of the most essential aspect of improvisational learning – the learning from oneself.

The method of teaching improvisation in academia has very much become methodized and the same canon followed by most academic improvisation classes – putting the students at odds with the original nature of improvisation. As Prouty describes;

The discourse of academically-based jazz improvisation reflects the precarious existence of educators and students within it, caught between competing traditions of academic musical study, with its long established canons and methods and the expectations of an improvisationally-based idiom which demands individuality and freedom of expression. This forms the core of criticism of jazz improvisation in such contexts: it tends to be too codified, too easily constructed and replicated by student performers whose improvisations show little creativity. (Prouty, 2005, Para. 23)

I have to admit – when I took my first improvisation class, I was quite shocked. There was very, very little room for developing ones own ideas and even less room for being an active participant in the choices of vocabulary that were assigned for us to learn. In fact, it in many ways reflected the inflexible, formal approaches used in the serious music tradition. For example, everyone in the class was given a book of tunes, transcriptions and licks (vocabulary to improvise with). We all had to learn the exact same tunes and the exact same licks – no matter what your instrument was. There was no variation of licks that were more suitable for the particular instruments. There were also no choices made by the students about which tunes they preferred to learn, or which licks they liked. I found this quite annoying as I had to learn and practice tunes and licks that I
would never choose to play again and, quite frankly that I didn’t like at all. There was also a very narrow selection of musicians that were part of the listening aspect of the class and most of the listening done was a ‘see – that’s how it sounds’ clip rather than a deep listening exercise. And - in the two more creative assignments – in which we had to write a solo over a particular tune (the same one everyone did) it was definitely encouraged to use as many as the prescribed licks as possible and to have a certain ‘sound’. And, funny, the biggest thing I noticed among the improvisers in the class was a great lack of passion behind the notes they were playing. And how could there be when much of what they were playing was not truly coming from themselves and rather a mixture of the assigned licks? They were just going through the motions, without any emotions.

So - how then could we (while still working amongst the set canon) allow for a more student driven learning model? One that encourages self learning and allows the passions of individual creativity to forge a unique, empowered and distinctive voice?

Self Learning as the Answer to an Individual Voice

For me, the answer to a search for a more evolved approach to improvisation education lies in the initial inspiring spirit of the early improvisers. Yet, there is even more. The secret to reaching ones full creative potential is revealed in two parts.

One part being the realization that the socio-cultural climate we are amongst is inherently oppressive, keeping us in a constant state of imbalance between our physical,
emotional, intellectual and spiritual selves. And upon the realization of this imbalance - a 
strive for balance should naturally occur. This strive, of course, does keep us in a 
continual struggle – but this struggle is the only defense we have to keep us as aware as 
possible to the greatness of our authentic selves.

And in continually striving to be as balanced, as whole and as true as possible, we 
are more amongst a state that can teach us great things. A state that can reveal to us great 
things and a state that allows us to grow and reap the rewards of our struggle in the form 
of creativity. A state that allows for great rewards to be gained by the practice of self-
learning.

So, if creative greatness is to be revealed by means of self-learning from one’s 
balanced self, what then is the role of educators?

**The Role of Educators in Self Learning**

More than any other essential teaching skill, the one I believe is of most 
importance is the ability to set up a learning environment that encourages students to live 
as balanced as possible, so as to allow for the greatest amount of learning to occur from 
themselves. And of course, to set up an environment that not only allows for self learning 
but one that facilitates and builds upon the student’s innate abilities to learn from 
themselves.

To demonstrate how this may be achieved, I will use the model of a musical
improvisation class; however this may be adapted to all forms of creative art and even to other areas of education.

As the idea of helping students achieve a balanced and healthy connection with their true selves is, of course, a lofty endeavor, I do believe there are some very important wisdoms that may be passed on to students, allowing for them to have a greater ‘self’ of which to learn from.

In an effort to keep these suggestions balanced, I will once again organize my ideas into four parts – the physical, spiritual, emotional and mental.

The Physical

It is my opinion that the area that is most lacking in all education, but even more importantly in creative education, is the area that has been of the greatest source of inspiration to me – the physical.

In my experience, striving for a healthy connection with the physical has allowed for a huge source of nourishment and has brought forth spiritual, mental and emotional gains. To break down the physical into parts, I would like to focus firstly on the connection to the earth.

I once had a teacher (Dr. Celeste Snowber) ask the class to spend some time in solitude as an assignment for the week. For my time in solitude, I immediately sought time alone in nature with my thoughts, my body and my breath. This became a huge source of creativity for me. For me, this time was a cleansing, rejuvenating time that
allowed me to clear my thoughts and fill my body with deep cleansing breaths that not only filled my body with life force but also filled me with creative inspiration. I came to realize that what she was asking was for much more than us to merely spend some time alone, but to spend some time allowing our creative energy to refuel. I found this time in solitude to be so powerful that it has now become my greatest source of creative inspiration. When I need to be creative – I need to spend some time replenishing myself with the majesty of nature and the power of being one with it. Revealing the secret of creative replenishment amongst the animate would be a powerful lesson for all students.

Another powerful source of creative energy for me that has been found in the physical is my connection to my body. Bringing awareness into a deeper connection with my body has been a significant contributor to my ability to be in the present moment and to focus on that. This ability is something that is very necessary when being creative and when improvising. And because of the huge contribution that finding a deeper connection with my body has provided me I would like to comment on this further.

My connection to my body is (for me) in many ways, my connection to my breath. Learning to breathe deep, cleansing breaths has made an immense difference to my life in my ability to be more connected to my body, my senses - and to release any destructive emotions as to calm my mind to a state that allows creativity to flow more freely.

When I sing, my breath digs deep into my body and brings out with it my heartfelt emotions and allows for the therapeutic vibrations to resonate throughout my body, distributing healing energy throughout and into the world where others may share in it.
When I dance, my breath relaxes my body and allows me to move more freely, more naturally – organically, and allows for the cleansing breath to reach deep into my muscles as I move in ways that my body feels inspired to move – bringing with each movement revitalizing energy to all corners of my body.

When I improvise music, my breath allows me to focus on the moment, on my reactions to what I hear, what I feel – and it allows me to feel the rhythm deep inside of me – inspiring me to create with an organic flow.

When I write – I merely need to take deep cleansing breaths and words flow easily, naturally. And when they are not flowing naturally, all I need to do is bring my focus back to my breath and I know what to say.

The power of the breath is immense and this is something that should be in some way revealed to students.

I would like to share a breathing lesson that I have written to help students broaden their awareness of the majesty of the breath and the creative forces that stem from it. This is an example of a kind of breathing awareness exercise that may be read to students as they are in a relaxed position.

**Breathing Lesson – ‘The Rhythm of the Breath’**

Alive breathing.

Breathe in the rhythm of the moment - whatever the rhythm of that moment may be. Be
alive in the moment of the breath - of the vital life giving force of inspiration from being
alive. Focus on being with yourself in a moment and make that moment deeper through
the breath and the attention of breathing deeply. Focus on the breath.

Pay attention to your speed - What is the speed - the rhythm? Breath deeper. Breathe in
the life giving force of oxygen - of energy. Notice the rhythm.

Breathe in the sensations of life. Breath deeply - open up your senses.

With every breath allow your senses to open up, deepen. Feel the deeper connection to
your senses....

Feel your body become one with the ground - become one with the air.

Take yourself out of the everyday ‘life world’ and into the animate. Awaken your live
state. The state that is one with your senses – with the earth. Breathe deeply and into
whatever speed your body is now on. Begin to breath deeper and relax into an even
slower, deeper breath.

Breathe into your head - feel the open channel of energy that is exposed on the top of your
head. Breathe into wherever you feel tension - breathing in peace - the peace of the life
given force - breathing out freedom - freedom from stress - from the mind.

Focus on breathing deeper and deeper. Take even inhale and exhales.

Even pause between the next inhale if you want to experience life on a different body
rhythm - the rhythm of not breathing - if only for a second... - whatever you body wants to do...

Relax into the rhythm of your surroundings.

If you are indoors - breathe in the rhythm of the elements around you - the oak wood floors, the ground up stone - the living energies of the beings around you. Breathe in the majesty of the surrounding nature - the pulsing shades of the ever changing emerald leaves with their sweet blessings of enchanting secrets as they spread joy to all the beings around as the vary their rhythms and their breath to whatever change may come. Breathe in the breath of the trees with their sweet energized oxygen and the fresh ocean air that has traveled and seen more than any human could possibly see...

Breathe in the positives of your surroundings and breathe out the negatives. Use the greatness that is in your reach.

Awaken the ‘asleep’ world of the senses and get out of the senseless world of passing time ‘in the mind’ as that is exactly what our culture has been working very insidiously to implant in our bodies....Our rhythms are not our rhythms. They are the rhythms of our culture - the culture of constant stimulation - constant thoughts. Breathe in you own rhythm - breathe out the ‘other’ rhythms.

Become one with your rhythm.

Breathe in the wisdom. Be the wise, the ‘freedom fighters’ - through knowledge we can
choose our own culture... Be ‘freedom artists’ as we feed our the minds with the materials that remind us how to navigate our way through the choices we make and that acknowledges the wisdom that is embodied deep within our bodies. Be alive in the battle - believe in your words and respect them through your actions. Be true to the silent rhythm - the rhythm of the sensual body absorption - absorbed in the moment - prolonging the moment - being present in the sensual - Embodied. Breathe.

The Spiritual

As I have mentioned before (more than once) that one’s relationship to the physical is interconnected with one’s relationship to the spiritual. And I believe that this is an important lesson for teachers to pass onto their students. In many ways, achieving a strong connection to the earth and one’s body is the very foundation of having a stronger spiritual self as one’s physical connection to the earth allows for a deeper connection to the unseen creative forces in nature as it also allows for a deeper connection to explore the spiritual in ourselves – through the deep connection that the breath allows us to have with our bodies and our senses. And if one is more in touch with the spiritual – they are more in touch with the immense source of inspiration and creativity that comes with it. In short; the stronger the connection to the physical = the stronger the connection to the spiritual = more creative inspiration.

One other source of spiritual fulfillment that teachers would be wise to expose
their students to is examples of how the greatness of the spiritual has manifested in various art forms and how this cannot be more obvious than when one is amongst a group of people sharing in its greatness together. After all, wasn’t this the original notion of the church? For groups of people to come together to share in a reflection of a representational form inspired by the spiritual? And this does in many ways still exist in a pure form today in the sharing of art (in all forms) by artists (of all types) and the shared appreciation of a group of people forever bonded by this experience. For me, experiencing the spiritual has not only occurred in nature and in my body, but has occurred when I was blessed to experience truly inspired art that left me on a natural high for weeks.

So, merely reminding students to not forget the many areas in which to nourish their connection to and inspiration from the spiritual would be a necessary lesson in a class of improvisation. I would even suggest an assignment in where students were asked to search for and reflect upon spiritual experiences that they found to be inspiring.

The Intellectual

The mental aspect of improvisation is really the only part that is being taught today – however, the techniques in which to do this are unfortunately ancient. Ancient, of course because they have been based upon the canon of the more ‘serious’ music tradition - which I had described earlier as being ‘at odds’ with the ‘spirit’ of the earlier jazz improvisers.

In order for an improvisation class to be truer to the original spirit of
improvisation, self-learning must be a fundamental element in the attaining of
improvisational skills. For this to occur, the improvisation teacher should really follow
that of a freer, less oppressive approach to learning (as described earlier) which allows for
a more ‘co-intentional’ approach to students leaning which results in a more ‘committed
involvement’ by the students and more ‘student created’ end result.

To explain this in more detail, I will use the model of the jazz improvisation
classes I was involved in and adapt it in a way that still covers all the bases (prescribed by
the authoritative canon) but that allows for self learning to occur and for individual and
creatively inspired voices to blossom.

In the classes, the students were given a certain repertoire of tunes and licks to
learn (individually and then practiced regularly in groups). Now I understand that the
tunes and licks covered a specific range of styles and techniques that would need to be
learned, but there is no reason to prescribe the exact same tunes and licks for each student
(no matter their instrument) to learn. So, in this case, a better option would be for the
teacher to give the students a larger selection of tunes (for each specific technique/style)
that would then read through and the repertoire would then be chosen by the students, not
the teacher. The same would go for the licks. A large range of licks would be given for
the students to read through and choose which ones they would like to incorporate into
their repertoire. Also, for each particular technique or usage (for example licks over an up
tempo two measure II V I pattern) the students would be assigned to write their own licks
that would be memorized. Just making this simple adaptation would encourage self-
directed learning and more individual voices to bloom.
And when searching for, discovering and creating their own licks and compositions, the students should be encouraged to try to keep in the moment (with deep breathing) and to relax and enjoy the creative process! Students need to understand that not everything they play will be brilliant – but to not be discouraged – genius takes time! – and many not so brilliant moments in the mean time.

And as for listening, transcribing and memorizing transcriptions – a majority of this (apart from being presented in class time) would be given to the students as assignments for them to discover for themselves. For example, the students would be given a long list of musicians (that they could also expand on, of course) in which to explore in a specific era (for technical reasons). Say they were asked to find a particular musician (or musicians) in which they found their sound/style really resonated with them and then had to transcribe and memorize some of their licks. In this way, they would be learning from deeper, self-directed listening and would discover musicians and ideas that really had meaning for them. All of these student directed choices would then have much more meaning to them and (I bet!) there would be many more individual voices emerging.

And finally, if the students in the class were then to compose, arrange and perform a piece (or pieces) in the favorite style that they had discovered over the class and include an improvised solo that was encouraged to be a combination of the chosen, transcribed and created licks (or whatever!) – I think the original spirit of the early jazz musicians would be more reflected and honored, not to mention, the students couldn’t help but
infuse passion into the performance because it would be self created.

**Emotionally**

As the representation of emotions is in many ways one of the defining principles of great art – the power of the emotions and the inspiration they may feed ones creativity (and one’s self) with should not be simply overlooked in a class as creatively significant as an improvisation class.

Musical expression is really an end result of a combination of the consequences of the physical, the spiritual and the mental that are being reflected by the way the emotions understand these parts of ourselves in the moment. And this is ultimately what is trying to be expressed in all art forms. Students should be greatly encouraged to befriend their emotions, whether good or bad and to welcome them into their music rather than to hide, box up or numb them. Emotions should be revealed to students as being a huge source of inspiration and a way to work through their emotions and explore them and as a powerful way for them to learn more about themselves through their emotions.

A suggestion to help students connect and explore their emotions through improvisation would be for them to choose a particular emotion that has been consuming them recently and then to compose a chord progression, (simple or complex) inspired by the emotion that would be improvised over with the main purpose being to allow the emotion to direct and inspire the choices of notes played. The students should also be warned that the emotion may morph into other emotions, or may take unexpected turns –
and to welcome anything and everything that comes as a ‘soul-searching’ exploration.

This exploration should be recorded (if just for the student’s ears alone) and then the moments that truly captured a reflection of the particular emotion (or emotions) could be used (ideally) in the composition of a piece if desired or simply added to their repertoire of ‘licks.’

And this, of course, leads to another suggestion to help students connect with and explore amongst their emotions. As I described before, part of learning the skill of improvisation is to have a decent amount of vocabulary to work with. Well - this vocabulary could be organized by way of more than just the technical applications – it could also be organized by emotions, or (as some don’t like to attach words to emotions) colors could also be used to organize them.

And more importantly than all this, exploring the emotions through improvisation should be revealed to students as a outlet for them to have a safe place to explore, to feel, to expand, to release, to grow and to create amongst – in the most personal form possible. To fulfill whatever potentials one’s true self has to reveal and learn from. This in many respects is a celebration of ultimate freedom – and hence, ultimate learning, which is, in our society, something we all yearn for.

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1 By this I mean emotionally explorative in the sense that the emotions can reveal many
In Conclusion

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It is my personal belief that a holistic, balanced and harmonious approach to human life and culture has been greatly lacking in Western society as a whole – for a very long time. I also think it possible that it is lacking more, in general, in our current time than ever before – and I do believe this has been caused by our society’s unyielding faith and practice in science and technology. I also believe that this faith has not necessarily been something we have authentically chosen, but rather something that has been chosen for us by means of Technocracy’s dominating (kratus) nature.

There is no denying that thanks to technology, many, many life-changing and wonderful innovations have resulted. However, due to the lack of balance in the technocratic philosophy - amidst all of the innovation is a dark underbelly of disease affecting human life and culture in profound ways. And this is the irony of the Technocratic ideal. The foundation it is built on is corrupt and its corruptness cannot help but bleed into all areas of our sociocultural fabric. And it really is sad! Because if humans had been exploring technology and science and objective truths with a less flawed foundation – a foundation that valued the subjective, that valued creativity and not to mention the physical, spiritual and emotional, just imagine what we could have - and still can achieve! Not Technocracy.... Techno Creativity! Imagine if we could add the wisdom from the physical, spiritual, emotional and creative to our already developed technocratic mindset? Imagine what would be possible? As far as I’m concerned, it would

things about the other aspects of ourselves as well – hence the ‘soul.’
probably be so fabulous, it is virtually unimaginable.

Unfortunately though, the notion of the ‘objective’ has been seen as the only ‘truth’ in technocratic society leaving anything other than the ‘objective’ struggling for breath amongst the dominating nature of the ‘kratus.’ This has been suffocating our emotional, physical, spiritual and creative selves and forcing our intellectual selves into a conformist mold, creating an increasing ‘crisis’ in Western civilization.

Because of the fact we live in a world that has severed us from our natural, nourishing, physical surroundings - we have lost touch of one of our greatest sources of creative inspiration and nourishment. Our disconnection to our natural physical world has also caused a rift in our personal connection to our bodies and senses – which is another great source of creative inspiration and wisdom. As humans are actually a part of nature and not separate from it (as technocracy has prescribed), removing us from nature and the earths harmonious natural rhythms has left us with nothing to nourish us in our diseased surroundings. We have in many ways been conditioned to view our bodies as mechanical, objective and unsensuous and have lost touch with the great source of wisdom, creativity and inspiration that is within our sensual, bodily experiences - in the moment we experience them. Unfortunately our technocratic conceptions have taken over our immediate, passionate, life-filled, sensual experiences and we are not truly experiencing our lives in the way we were originally intended to – we are ‘out of touch’ – living a ‘mirage.’

And of course, without a healthy relationship with the physical, we are also out of touch with one of the greatest creative and soul nourishing sources there is - the spiritual. The subjective spiritual wisdom once found in the body, the senses, and the natural has
been replaced by the objective dogma of written words, or religion – or doesn’t exist at all. Because we no longer look to the physical for nourishment.....we have lost touch with the wisdom of the spiritual by means of losing touch with the most essential connection to the physical.

Our emotional selves, which is a very personal part of ourselves that is explored and reflected through creativity, *not technocracy*, are in a constant state of duress as we are trained to repress our emotions, act a ‘certain way’ and not be ‘too expressive.’ Yet – being in touch with our emotions and being expressive is exactly what makes us individual and unique. Not to mention, it is very necessary for optimum emotional health.

Because we are in some ways emotionally weak and out of touch with the physical and spiritual – it has also left our intellect in a state that is vulnerable and easily controlled – a state that is dominated by our egos and naive to our potential intellectual capabilities. This control is done by means of the media and pop culture and our societies ‘consumerist ideology.’ Most people don’t realize how incredibly oppressive our society is of our unique individuality as we are molded into the ideal consumerist ‘norm.’ Quite ironically, they think it’s just ‘normal,’ but really it is an oppressed state of the mind functioning at a very low capacity.

To sum this up – technocracy has separated us from a deep connection to our bodies and the natural world making us believe that we exist independently of our subjective relationship with the physical, spiritual and emotional - replacing it with an objective, cold, logical, scientific, conformist and totally unrealistic understanding of the world to the extent that it has robbed us of our unique form of self - liberation and self
learning discovered through the greatness of creativity. The lack of a healthy, balanced connection with all aspects of ourselves is oppressing us - keeping us from the natural harmony of the four aspects of our selves improvising amongst a dance of creativity – a dance of freedom, expressing our true selves, our subjective experiences – our authenticity.

And unfortunately, not only has a widespread oppression of creativity occurred by means of inhibiting a healthy relationship with our four aspects of our selves – but there is also the irony of creativity at play. Rather than creativity being used to set us free and help us connect to our true selves – our true happiness – creativity has also been used to control us. Rather than creativity being a path to one’s authentic self – one’s personal autonomy – it has in many ways achieved the opposite. It has been used to numb us emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually with its repetition and lack of true creative involvement (like creativity or improvisation). It has been used to silence us by making us believe we have high quality creative arts in our lives (when most of us don’t) and blinding us to the oppressive forces of commercialism, making us believe we need more and more things, and reducing our individuality to a common norm that is easily seduced, when really what we need is a release from the oppressive forces of our technocratic society. A release from the dehumanized, stockpiled forms of art and a path that leads us toward a more balanced life filled with knowledge of our authentic identity and individual autonomy. In this respect, the ‘kratus’ of technocracy has been very successful in oppressing our most personal human right – our right to be creative – our right to ‘be one’ with our authentic selves – and to learn from that authenticity.
So, if this is the case – if our society is truly being underhandedly oppressed by Technocracy, how then are we to regain our creative rights and be our creative, authentic, autonomous selves? By means of education.

There is however a problem. The current standards and methodologies in practice in the majority of the educational institutions – including the post-secondary institutions as well as the creative art making institutions and private educators are still being dominated by the technocratic ideals that have been influencing our sociocultural fabric for hundreds of years – and it unfortunately has left many scars that will not fade soon enough. So for there to be any hope of a new, balanced, techno-creative society to begin to be forged by means of education – educators, most importantly, will need to be educated in a revolutionary, creatively inspired way, a way that celebrates the importance and wisdom in all aspects of ourselves – the physical, spiritual and emotional as well as the intellectual. A way that brings awareness to and builds defenses against the dangers of Technocracy and Media Mind Control. A way that promotes a non-oppressive approach to education to allow for the freedom of unique, empowered individuals to emerge. A way that not only believes that creativity can be taught, but that holds the value of promoting creativity in all aspects of education as a fundamental and essential requirement of education. A way that understands the most valuable and organic form of practicing and learning from creativity is through improvisation. And a way that can reflect the improvisation that is naturally occurring in the natural world, in our bodies and our senses. A reflection of and a connection to the untouched physical and spiritual and a way for us to connect with this purest form of creation – while at the same time discovering and exercising our emotional and intellectual selves. A way that offers us...
relief from the technocratic world as it is basically the opposite of an objective, structured, repetitive, confined and dictated situation – it is freedom. A way that enriches the lives of our students by showing them the capacity to explore the depths of themselves - to learn from themselves and each other - to find inspiration and to create.

This, in effect will allow our students to transcend to a higher level of personal freedom, individual autonomy, and unconditional happiness. And is this not what all students are yearning for more than anything: a chance to feel free and liberated, to explore this freedom, to learn and grow and create amongst this freedom, to be and further nurture the fullest potential of themselves in an environment that welcomes and inspires their authentic selves with open arms?

More than any other essential teaching skill, the one I believe is of most importance is the ability to set up a learning environment that encourages students to live as balanced as possible, so as to allow for the greatest amount of learning to occur from the healthiest and most authentic state of themselves. And of course, to set up an environment that not only allows for self learning but one that facilitates and builds upon the student’s innate abilities to learn from themselves – through involved and committed creativity and self – learning.
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