

What is Creativity?

The common assumption about creativity is that we were either born with it or we weren't. Or that some people are creative and others aren't, and that's just the way it is. But, I'd like to look at that more deeply, and also broaden our definition of what creativity is.

Creativity isn't something that necessarily has to do with the arts, with painting a picture or writing a song. I'd like to suggest that we can also be creative as cooks, as gardeners, and when playing with our children. We can be creative in all kinds of ways in life. And so, how is that sense of creativity accessed?

Back in Greek and Roman times, creativity was considered to be a gift from the gods, and they had a name for the gods. In Greek, it was "daemons." In Latin, it was actually "genius." Back then, it was thought that something outside of ourselves, as individuals, would inspire us to be creative. However, somewhere over the last couple of thousand years, the sense that creativity is somehow beyond us as individuals has been lost to a large extent, and we consider creative people to be geniuses *in themselves*. "He's a genius. She's a genius."

The sense of creativity being a mysterious gift from something beyond and larger than ourselves has been lost along the way, and to our detriment, I think, because now it feels like something that we're trying to do by our own bootstraps. We try to squeeze creativity out of ourselves, and the older interpretation of it being a gift, a muse from beyond that inspires us, has been lost. And yet, it's still available if we choose to see it that way. If we choose to be available rather than forcing it. If we choose to be receptive to see what arises within us, without demanding, just waiting with curiosity and alertness, and allowing that space to arrive within ourselves, and then learning how to act out of that space.

I'm not saying that technical skills aren't required. Technical skills are clearly needed for things such as painting, dance, and music etc. But, we've all met people who are skilled technically and still not creative, still not open to that source of inspiration from beyond. Inspiration comes from the same root source as the word "respiration," to breathe in and out again. It's really that rhythm: to be willing to receive into these bodies, into this world, and to respond to that inspiration with action, with creative thought and movement. And, in the end, there's no real separation. It's like: dance-dancing-dancer. There's no separation.

Creativity is being open to that which is beyond our control. It's not something that we can demand to be there; it's not something that we can manage. It is something that we can respect, honour, appreciate, be grateful for, and receive when it's given. I hope that elicits some sense of what we can mean when we talk about creative action in this world.

And it is not simply the domain of the arts. We can be creative when playing with a young child, while gardening, when cooking a meal, when searching for a solution to a problem. This creative receptivity can be received and expressed in many ways.