

Island Thirty – Isle of 'Transpersonal Relational Poetics' & 'Fundamental Creativity'

(Extract from: *Muse of the Long Haul -
Thirty-One Isles of the Creative
Imagination*)



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Publisher: Mercurius Press, Australia, 2013 and 2022. NB: An early version of this piece is published at Scribd as part of a series drawn from the soon to be print published non-fiction book on experiential poetics entitled: *Muse of the Long Haul: Thirty-One Isles of the Creative Imagination*.

Island Thirty – Mid-Life Poetics Statements

We are close to the end of our journey to explore various ideas, literary movements and stories capable of inspiring creative artists. As with the next chapter, this one will also seek to outline elements of my current ‘poetics’—i.e. my way of approaching all forms of ‘creative writing’. This Chapter (or Island) features two important mid-life ‘poetics statements’ developed by myself in conjunction with Dr. Sue King-Smith. The first, written around 2008 (and modified several times thereafter) concerns ‘Transpersonal Relational Poetics’. The second, written around 2014 and posted to the Zoetics website, concerns the concept of ‘Fundamental Creativity’ and relates to the role of this form of creativity within the Zoetics psychological system.

1. Intro to ‘Transpersonal Relational Poetics’ Anti-Manifesto (circa 2008) With input by Dr. Sue King-Smith

The current version of the ‘Anti-Manifesto for a Transpersonal Relational Poetics’ is published in full below and represents my second mid-life ‘poetics’ statement. Note: although the text gets fairly academic in places an astute reader of *Muse of the Long Haul* will see that it contains many insights arising out of ‘visits’ to other Islands.

Before reading it is probably useful to know something about the origins of ‘Anti-Manifesto’. In 2008 after some years reading books on contemporary poetics and discussing these ideas with my partner and fellow poet, Sue King-Smith, I wrote the ‘Anti-Manifesto’—largely in an attempt to bring together in my mind all of the ideas about the place of creativity (in the lives of individuals and in society generally) that I’d found useful over the years. The resultant statement was posted to my authorsden homepages and gradually up-dated as ideas were elaborated on and as my time permitted. I noticed recently that the page has been accessed steadily over the past five or so years recording many thousands of hits from all corners of the globe.

Similarly, in 2009 the European poetics magazine *Poe-zine* quoted extensively from the introduction section in its edition on ‘relational poetics’ (5th edition, 2009). This came after the Romanian magazine *Stare de Urgenta* (out of Chisinau, Moldavia) had used the ‘Anti-Manifesto’ and other texts by a range of thinkers to outline the main principles of ‘relational poetics’ (described as an alternative poetics for our time). Similarly the [‘Romanian Bodies’ blog](#) of the Bucharest based poet, [Razvan Tupa](#) also used the ‘Anti-Manifesto’ and other works to describe the history of relational poetics. Tupa also developed and road-tested a range of ‘relational poetry’ techniques that were introduced to young poets interested in writing poetry informed by relational theory (via a funded tour beginning in Eastern Europe and ending in France).

I have named it an ‘anti-manifesto’ in deference to legitimate Postmodern insights regarding the potential totalitarianism of any text regarded as ‘the gospel truth’ about any particular topic (including poetics). ‘Anti-manifesto’ should not be seen as a creative path to follow, so much as a complex field of references to explore in an open-minded way.

STATEMENT 1: Anti-Manifesto for a Transpersonal Relational Poetics

My early writings (1993-2005) only rarely experimented with inherited modernist ideas about form (I wrote mainly in free verse, for example). More recently, however, I’ve

experimented much more with form by producing texts arising out of what my partner Sue and I have labelled 'Transpersonal Relational Poetics' (TRP). The idea behind TRP is to allow into poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction aspects of what David Bohm refers to as 'the implicate order' (note: most of us rarely step outside the narrowed down 'explicate' order we inherit via socialisation and enculturation processes). This new 'poetic' also makes use of aspects of 'Relational-Cultural' theory (which, in turn, is based upon intersectionist models of oppression). It also draws upon Groffian and revised Jungian notions of a transpersonal unconscious.

Writers influenced by TRP are thus interested in developing a non-oppressive 'language' that expands our consciousness of the many 'sentient others' that we share the planet with. It does this by allowing them direct access (by way of 'constraints' at various formal levels) to the poet/writer's text. To this end, the hologrammatical language proposed by the physicist David Bohm as well as the more sensuous/animistic (perhaps pictographic) language that David Abram (in his book 'The Spell of the Sensuous') seems to be calling for serve as inspirational models --likewise, insights drawn from the 'L=a=n=g=u=a=g=e poets' and some postmodern feminist writers.

This 'allowing in' of sentient others is sometimes envisaged in terms of 'procedural' experimentation with alienated language forms. From a TRP perspective it could be argued that many 'sentient others' existing in the world today are excluded and routinely objectified, by the actions of highly alienated elites whose world-views are, in turn, founded on highly alienated language systems. As with mainstream postmodern literary movements, TRP also aims to deconstruct 'language created' notions of a highly independent (rather than interdependent) 'subject/self'. By highlighting, critiquing and undermining the artificial lines between poet/writer and the world's excluded (but relationally relevant) 'others' TRP uses creative expression in a range of media to undermine multiple forms of oppression. In particular the writing practices, production modes and cultural tropes associated with 'literature' in Western hyper-capitalist societies (with their celebrity authors, authorial branding practises and commitment to a generalised cult of individuality) is critiqued. In short: TRP aims to expose and oppose the plutocratic foundations of contemporary hyper-capitalism, seeing its political and economic developments as anti-democratic indicators of social and cultural decline—i.e. 'information entropy'.

Another dimension to the TRP approach involves insights drawn from the New Physics (Quantum physics and contemporary cosmology/astrophysics). Heisenberg's 'uncertainty principle' is seen as an escape exit from the objectification, de-humanisation and narrowness implicit to Cartesian-Newtonian physics (and Newtonian-Darwinian science generally) with its deterministic desire to create an authoritarian 'theory of everything' that excludes free will and mind. TRP takes it that 'mind' is no mere epiphenomena of 'matter' and that 'matter' itself is at bottom a wave phenomenon not unlike 'mind/consciousness'. It is possible that matter is in part dependent upon consciousness to 'collapse' (as per Quantum mechanics) into its only apparently materialist, *singular* worlds/universes (see the previous Island concerning 'Trickster Gods and the Quantum Muse'). TRP thus embraces the possibility that the new science is converging to some extent with traditional spiritual perspectives drawn from many of the world's spiritual traditions. Creativity, from this perspective, is a fundamental 'free-wheeling' feature of mind and matter. In the process of creating works of art writers,

poets, etc. attempt to select positive possible futures from all the possible futures on offer (either literally - as with 'parallel worlds' theory - or potentially - as with Bohm's interpretation of Quantum mechanics) at any given moment from the 'Multiverse'.

Transpersonal Relational Poetics also takes inspiration from the efforts of Biosemioticians seeking to extend language bound (therefore 'human bound'), notions of semiotic processes to include explorations of information exchange mechanisms fundamental to living nature (and perhaps even to inorganic matter). Edwina Taborsky states 'Physical reality exists only within morphological forms, and equally, conceptual reality ... functions only within morphological forms. I refer to the process of morphological generation as semiosis. The morphological form in itself, material and conceptual, is termed a Sign or a morpheme.' [from 'The Methodology of Semiotic Morphology: an Introduction']. From a TRP perspective it is likely that human information ('sign') exchange systems like language, music etc. (usually studied in the Humanities and Social Sciences) are simply extensions of more fundamental molecular and sub-atomic information exchange systems/processes that have helped organise all matter and mind since the 'programming of the universe' billions of years ago (at least). Biosemioticians and proponents of TRP are agreed that there is a need to sustain a dialogue in this area between the life sciences and the humanities/social sciences.

From the technical perspective TRP makes use of (and builds upon) Oulipean techniques associated with 'Constraints Based' writing (though with minimal emphasis on mathematical concepts), various 'Language' poetry techniques, non-Western techniques related to anti-colonialist/ethnopoetic insights, as well as a range of revised and updated 20th century avant garde techniques/concepts e.g.: 'writing as process', 'chance operations', 'deconstructive appropriation' etc. Certain TRP techniques might also be viewed as original. The interactivity (and process/relational possibilities) offered by the WWW is also under exploration by TRP writers (as is the concept of the 'quantum computer') - though such technologies are examined/assessed against their potentially oppressive applications. Another area of interest is creativity in relation to personal healing and political activism. In this sense some concepts drawn from 'narrative therapy' are also relevant to a TRP perspective and praxis.

A TRP perspective holds that all the earth's life forms (including of course 'humanity') are facing unprecedented challenges at this point in time. Many of these challenges/crises are directly related to the ways in which human beings are conditioned to think and feel about the world around them, about their society and about the many sentient others that they share the planet with. [The concept of a diseased planetary 'noosphere' is seen as a powerful insight.] Communication systems that replicate destructive, diseased states of consciousness/ways of 'being in the world' (i.e. that justify or even promote alienated, oppression-promoting thought/ feeling/ action) need to be overhauled by way of creative acts that include experiments with form; the goal being to open us up to more humane, more ecologically positive, communication models. In terms of individuals the new creative 'relational languages' TRP explores might help 're-reveal' to us our lost sense of connectivity -to ourselves, other life forms on earth and to the cosmos/multiverse generally. The goal of TRP inspired works is to reverse the everywhere tendency to close off, objectify and constrain life's complex relational possibilities.

SOME THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS to 'TRP' and 'Relational Poetics'

1) Tupa mentions the poetics of Martinican writer, poet and literary critic [Edouard Glissant](#) as a fundamental precursor to 'Relational Poetics'.

2) The concept of 'intersectionist oppression' is also foundational to TRP - go to Wikipedia's commentary/summary of the concept of ['intersectionist oppression'](#) as well as discussion of Robert Mullaly's book *Challenging Oppression* which deeply influenced our thinking.

3) [Relational-Cultural psychology](#) with its emphasis on: 1) self in relation, 2) assessing the quality of relationship networks, and 3) its critique of simplistic individualism has been influential on TRP models.

4) A range of concepts in the natural sciences that offer alternatives to simplistic 'Darwinist' theories (and 'economic Darwinist i.e. Neo-Liberal theories) that are obsessed with the predator-prey/hyper-competitive vision of interspecies and intraspecies 'evolution/adaptation'. Various ecological/biological principles opposing simplistic Darwinism have contributed to 'TRP' theory including: [mutualism](#), [commensalism](#) and [co-operation](#).

5) The concept of the [Rhizome](#) as adapted from ecology and reworked by Deleuze and Guattari and contrasted with 'arborescent' (hierarchical) botanical metaphors/models has contributed to TRP.

6) [David Bohm's](#) notion of the 'holomovement' and 'implicate order' as well as his notions concerning non-oppressive language forms have influenced TRP.

7) Certain insights drawn from Quantum Physics and modern cosmology have undermined classical Newtonian-Cartesian and Einsteinian perspectives on matter. Nevertheless, remnant 'Newtonianisms' persist in many humanities and social science disciplines—especially in psychology and sociology. In terms of the consequences of the Quantum and Multiverse revolutions on contemporary creativity movements see my article/talk: [Trickster Gods and the Quantum Muse](#). NB: a number of concepts drawn from Quantum theory and related to Quantum psychology inform the TRP approach and practice, notably: [non-locality](#), the [uncertainty principle](#), the concept of the '[multiverse](#)', the [many worlds interpretation](#) of quantum physics, the concept of the [quantum mind](#), theories concerning [quantum entanglement](#) and the idea of quantum [superposition](#). [See also '[Quantum Man](#)' sculpture - for example of quantum influenced art - as well as the [Quantum Poetics](#) of US poet Amy Catanzano (from Jerome Rothenberg's blog site) which is a thorough attempt to develop innovative poetic forms to match developments in Cosmology and the new physics (go also to YouTube '[Multiversal](#)' for video summary)].

8) Concepts such as NOSC (Non-ordinary States of Consciousness), COEX systems, the 'transpersonal unconscious', the Perinatal Birth Matrices (PBM 1-4), etc. as formulated by [Stanislav Grof](#) and other transpersonal psychologists have also influenced

TRP (especially Grof's book *Beyond the Brain*).

9) Contemporary developments to Jung's archetype theory - especially into the areas of developmental psychology and quantum influenced psychology are also inspirational - as an example go to Charles D Laughlin's essay '[Archetypes, Neurognosis and the Quantum Sea](#)' (Journal of Scientific Exploration, 1996).

10) Various concepts drawn from [narrative psychology/therapy](#) are particularly useful to those interested in TRP and Relational Poetics.

11) [David Abram's](#) attempts to adapt phenomenological thinking to ecological issues is also inspirational - especially his work on alienated language in *The Spell of the Sensuous*.

12) [Biosemiotic](#) explorations of information exchange systems fundamental to all organic (bio) and non-organic (elemental) matter transformations have contributed to the TRP goal of expanding 20th C insights regarding signification processes beyond postmodern (Derridean) language and culture bound explorations. Biosemiotics and information theory teach that the Universe organises animate (and perhaps even inanimate matter) according to fundamental semiotic/information exchange principles. Poets and



writers need to be aware that they inevitably articulate these fundamental information exchange principles when they create, edit and disseminate literary texts. (Victoria Alexander's work [The Biologist's Mistress: Rethinking Self-Organisation in Art, Literature and Nature](#) is particularly useful to those wishing to assess the consequences for writers and artists of recent Biosemiotic research). Semiosis and information exchange processes are increasingly

seen as 'relational' at the deepest levels of molecular and sub-atom organisation i.e. in terms of Quantum Fields etc..

13) New holistic (i.e. New Physics influenced) economic theories that recognise the dangers to social cohesion/stability, the environment and the psycho-spiritual well-being of individuals of our current dangerously outdated (19th century) addiction to Newtonian-Cartesian influenced mechanistic models of economics whether of the New Right (New Liberalism/Economic Rationalism) or the old 'communistic' left. [Dr. Edward Ayoub's](#) fascinating article on Kant's notion of 'radical evil', Quantum influenced economic models and the dangerously outdated mechanistic underpinnings to Neoliberal economics (an ideology pushed by oppressive elites worldwide over the past 30 years or so) is relevant here. So too are the principles of '[community economics](#)' and '[solidarity economics](#)' espoused by a range of contemporary thinkers and activists (Ethan Miller's chapter - starting p.16 - regarding '[Ontological and Ontic descriptions of economic theory](#)', part of his fascinating work *Rethinking Economy*, is an inspirational starting point for a much needed full-scale examination of the potentially 'world de-creating', certainly 'oppressive', dangers of much current 'economic' theorising (which often functions as a barely disguised justification for myriad forms of social oppression). TRP specifically posits

'money' (in all its historic and contemporary manifestations) as both a socio-culturally constructed information exchange mechanism (similar to language systems, computer languages and mathematics) AND a complex 'biosemiotic' information and energy exchange system.

These theoretical underpinnings should be taken as additional to our attempts to re-work a range of mainstream postmodernist theories in the humanities and social sciences concerning the non-transparency of language and sign systems (as well as their poetic/literary manifestations e.g. L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry). These additions represent an attempt to: a) affirm and emphasise the anti-oppressive 'relational' context to all poetic-literary exchanges, and b) rid deconstructive theorising on poetics (as evident in humanities and social sciences disciplines dealing with the arts and communication theory) of residual Newtonian 'materialist' perspectives on matter and mind.

STATEMENT 2: 'Fundamental Creativity in Life and Society' (circa 2014)

By Dr. Ian Irvine (with input from Dr. Sue King-Smith)

INTRODUCTION: This article discusses the recent history of social ideas about 'creativity' and assesses its role in the lives of individuals and groups.

1. Zoetics – A Brief Description

Zoetics is the art and (new) science of using creative activities and creative thinking to assist the life force in individuals and groups. It also seeks to use creative processes to promote inter-relational integrity.

Zoetics holds that higher level (cultural) communication systems replicate biological (e.g. cellular, molecular, sub-atomic etc.) communication systems. Traditional creative activities (art, music, creative thinking, writing etc.) are thus derivatives of (and adjuncts to) deeper creative forces fundamental to life itself and perhaps even fundamental to the behaviour of matter in the multiverse.

Zoetics encourages any expressions of creativity that may assist people wishing to live lives devoted to 'fundamental creativity'.

Origins: The term 'Zoesis' comes from the ancient Greek term for 'life energy'. In this form it was eventually linked with early Gnostic cosmologies that saw 'Zoe' as a creative female saviour figure sent down to earth to assist humans on behalf of a transcendent mother goddess/principle, i.e. Sophia. In some Gnostic texts 'Zoe' is redefines ancient descriptions of 'Eve'.

These ancient archetypal associations to the term suggest that creativity is closely linked to the workings of the life force and as such is capable of transforming suffering into something more positive. This appeals to us in a general way, but Zoetics as we use the term is more properly grounded in recent developments in: 1) the New Sciences (especially Quantum Mechanics, Biosemiotics, Cosmological thinking and theorizing on Information); 2) contemporary

Transpersonal and Relational-Cultural Psychologies and 3) Recent theorizing concerning the nature and role of Creativity in individuals, society and organic life generally. Zoetics thus promotes an expansive, non-mechanistic and anti-oppressive approach to Creativity of relevance to the great challenges confronted in of our time.

MAJOR TRENDS IN THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF CREATIVITY

Since the Enlightenment the concept of 'creativity' in Western societies has been given certain (to some extent historically specific) attributes:

1. Its higher order manifestations have tended to be associated, almost exclusively, with a small 'creative community' in the cultural arts and sciences - a community conscious of 'gatekeepers' and under pressure as a result of fall-out from broad social changes related to industrialization, e.g. consumer capitalism, specialization, secularization, and urbanization. In the 19th century, specialisation and secularization are of most interest to the understanding of creativity to be outlined here. By the mid-20th century 'hyper capitalist' developments, mediatisation and the cult of fame/celebrity become most relevant.
2. In the face of these developments some of these creative communities embraced critiques of mainstream society that led to: a) the development of *avant gardist*/alternative/Bohemian lifestyles; b) the idealization of aspects of life judged as 'pathological' by industrialized society, e.g. '*flaneur* directionlessness, experimentation with mind altering substances, the cultivation of 'extreme' psychic states and personality traits, and a belief in sexual experimentation as a form of existential liberation.¹
3. These creative minorities also, on the whole, developed (and then defended) various models of what we are here calling 'fundamental creativity', against what they saw as 'oppressive', 'life-negating', 'conformist' and 'functionalist' definitions of 'creativity'. In practice this led to critiques of mass entertainment (in the cultural sphere), as well as bourgeois society's tendency to call anything new in any domain of human activity 'creative' - regardless of social context and consequences.²

Taken collectively these developments had unfortunate consequences for the historical

¹ When advocated in the 19th century by the likes of Rimbaud and early Modernist groups like the Decadents these approaches formalized an impulse toward liberation - from bourgeois moral norms, from industrial mechanization, from urban alienation etc - experienced by millions of people, making them appropriate to some extent to that era. Although we acknowledge an important place for creative (particularly 'Dionysian') critiques of conformist notions of pathology/health in society, we feel that the commodification of 'creative' pathology that occurred in the 20th century asks today's artists/writers etc. to stringently question the internalisation of these Dionysian forms of 'rebellion' as primary in our era. Consumer capitalism feeds on trivia, celebrity gossip, popularized psychoanalysis, grotesque spectacle etc. as a means to obscure the all-pervasive 'hyper-object' status of its economic and bureaucratic systems - systems that increasingly lack 'relational integrity'. To be complicit with this process of obscuration is to our mind a problem for contemporary creatives. The ancient 'uncertainty', 'unpredictability', 'playfulness', 'rebelliousness', 'liminality', 'tricksterism', 'chaos', etc. associated with 'creativity archetypes' world-wide is honoured by the Zoetics approach to creativity, however, we introduce the concept of 'affirmative destructuring' to allow us to better discern between life-enhancing versions of Dionysian creative expression and destructive/life-negating versions (e.g. as per in the service of contemporary hyper-capitalism. [For a description of what we mean by the term 'affirmative destructuring' see later in this text].

² Interestingly, many of these creative communities only grudgingly accepted notions that developments in the 'sciences' might involve fundamental forms of 'creativity'.

relationship between ordinary people and their beliefs about creativity - i.e. how they understood it and how they decided to express their own creativity. Let's list some of the consequences:

- a) Specialisation and fame culture acted to disempower ordinary citizens from creative activities due to feelings of worthlessness in the face of 'expert creatives'.
- b) Ordinary citizens increasingly came to view creative activities as 'goal directed' activities. Unfortunately, the following goals came to be seen as the most praiseworthy: individualist pursuit of recognition/fame, individualist pursuit of 'spectacular existence/experiences' and individualist pursuit of economic gain within the hyper-capitalist system (i.e. artistic success became identified with entertainment industry creative archetypes, e.g. super rich rock stars, movie stars and popular novelists).
- c) Ordinary citizens came to feel that many creative minorities idealized personally pathological and socially destructive lifestyles in their pursuit of the above goals. Creativity led to excess rather than balanced living. As popular notions of creativity became associated with oversensitivity and madness - as per the Romantic cultural stage - and alienation, degeneration, excess etc. as per the Modernist phase the end result was a widening gap between the general public and society's creative minorities. Worryingly, this trend coincided with the advent of an industry of mass entertainment heavily mediated by technological innovations that made musicians, film stars, published storytellers, etc. seem ever-more 'superhuman'. As a direct result of this development millions of ordinary people turned away from regular healthy expressions of creativity in their own lives. This trend also had relational consequences since in pre-industrial societies creative expressiveness - e.g. through song, dance, story-telling, theatre etc. - was primarily an *interpersonal experience*. By the mid-20th century tens of millions of people in Western societies were opting for passive consumption of other people's creative output e.g. via radio, films and, later, television.
- d) After slipping into passive consumption of mass culture and rejecting their own creative-expressive essence, ordinary citizens, simultaneously lost touch with notions of 'fundamental creativity' as espoused in various forms by Modernist creative minorities. These same citizens then fell victim to highly centralized hyper-capitalist and technocratic views of 'creativity' in the West. In the communist states the situation was possibly worse with authoritarian politicians acting to define both proper creative conduct and definitions of 'creativity' (e.g. 'social realism') that were highly repressive. Not surprisingly, confusion reigned among ordinary people - at least among those who even asked themselves serious questions about the relationship of creativity to life and society.
- e) This period saw pre-Modern local and communal (as against globalised and individualist) understandings and expressions of creativity attacked and dismantled at an alarming rate - especially for those still living in traditional societies. This trend resulted from both economic globalization (an offshoot of colonialism) and Western cultural globalization - i.e. the mass media developments associated with hyper-capitalism. However, it must also be acknowledged that innovative Modernist ideas about creativity (and ways of expressing creativity) were also implicated in this dismantling - even if in many instances the artists and writers in question were, at some level, critiquing aspects of Western-style Modernity (as in Kafka's fiction, Eliot's poetry, Mann's novels etc.). These social, cultural and economic developments together led to a thoroughly individualist, and - importantly for our purposes - increasingly 'anti-relational' understanding of creativity. The 'relational

integrity' fostered by localised traditional definitions and group experiences of creativity was often undermined - at great expense to both creative minorities (especially in the hyper-competitive mass entertainment 'industries') and the general public.³

- f) The previously discussed social, scientific and economic developments also collectively led to ordinary people losing any notion of what I will here term 'creative living'. Sever citizens from deeper participatory understandings (and expressions) of creativity and you also sever them from important resources necessary for deep and ethical living. The most dangerous development here was a broad tendency (by the general public, governments, the corporate sector etc.) to ignore the importance of 'fundamental' forms of creativity to the psycho-spiritual and even psycho-physical wellbeing of individuals and as a consequence entire societies. Here the rise of mechanistic scientific views of life (i.e. we are all sleek Darwinian beasts) and excessively competitive and production-oriented economic views of life (e.g. von Hayek's version of the older '*homo economicus*' - economic man - idea) were used as theoretical frameworks to justify the irrelevance of creativity to *real* life. In schools and universities Humanities and Creative Arts courses and programs were either neoliberalised, rationalized or completely cut.

3. THE NEED FOR NEW LIFE-ENHANCING UNDERSTANDINGS OF CREATIVITY: INTRODUCING THE IDEA OF 'FUNDAMENTAL CREATIVITY'

These developments, we hold, are not healthy - either for individuals or for societies. New understandings of 'creativity' that encompass well-thought out ideas about the place of 'fundamental creativity' in life and in social relations need to be developed or reawakened and defended in order for us to face the species challenges we now confront. We believe these new or revived understandings of fundamental creativity will need to focus on the idea of 'relational integrity' in all cultural, social and economic spheres.

Luckily, developments in the sciences and in relational and transpersonal psychology now help us to effectively challenge outdated, negative understandings of creativity. Such developments, point toward a more life-affirming and positive role for 'fundamental creativity' - both in individual lives and in social relations.

In simple terms Zoetics emphasizes:

- 1) ... the centrality of creativity to all organic (and perhaps inorganic) matter. Creativity is an adjunct to the life force generally and as such for humans it represents a fundamental cosmological principle necessary to the survival of all life forms and perhaps to the creative development of the entire uni(multi)verse.

³ Even the much heralded 'inter-relational' dimension to the internet (at first glance a communication technology ideal for re-democratizing 'creativity' and replacing the 'passive consumption' model associated with much 20th century mass media) represents, in truth, a thoroughly disembodied and globalised (non-local) model for creative exchanges/expressions. Watching legions of office workers ignore those around them as they chatter into mobile devices on the way to work in the morning illustrates the point perfectly.

- 2) ... the central role of creativity in moment to moment decision making in the lives of ordinary people. To live creatively is to live in the moment, also in an expansive/imaginative, empathetic, balanced, fearless way. Creative living, we hold, is the right of all human beings and should be nurtured in children from the earliest moments of their lives.
- 3) ... the central role of creativity in disarming individual life-negating habits and world-views and undoing life-negating ideologies that promote oppression and environmental destruction
- 4) --- the fact that any understanding of creativity that assists in blocking the nurturance of 'fundamental creativity', as well as the pursuit of 'creative living', in individuals and among social groups, is not a form of 'fundamental creativity' itself since it betrays the 'inter-relational integrity' associated with forms of fundamental creativity.
- 5) ... the idea that introducing 'fundamental creativity' into one's life, and promoting it in a nation's social institutions and social relations, can be viewed as a form of 'creative living' of great value to most people and to entire societies.

4. ON THE ROAD TO 'CREATIVE LIVING': THE CONCEPT OF 'AFFIRMATIVE DESTRUCTURING'

The term 'affirmative destructuring' needs to be introduced at this point since the concept and the processes it describes are implicit to expressions of what we are terming 'fundamental creativity'. The processes associated with 'affirmative destructuring' ...

- a) make visible social and cultural contexts impacting on individuals and groups that tend to be ignored, discounted, repressed, etc. by a range of sociopolitical elites;
- b) question and seek to disarm life-negating personal belief systems and habits, as well as oppressive social and cultural paradigms by way of energized, imaginative, empathic, playful, i.e. 'creative' actions and activities;
- c) use a range of creative activities and strategies to assist people to pursue 'creative living' via deeper relational connectedness/integrity, ongoing psycho-spiritual growth and personal authenticity;
- d) assist individuals seeking to free themselves from the 'automated futures' they feel condemned to. i.e. they assist people to *visualize and manifest more positive futures - beneficial alternative worlds* - by helping them overcome feelings of powerless and an inability to change life situations, world-views etc. for the better.
- e) are, on the whole, quickened by experiences of: nurturing/safety, empathy, friendship, physical well-being/health, freedom to play/experiment, feelings of connectedness to others/community/nature and expressive freedom. These represent pre-conditions for maximum progress since life energies and creative energies in a sense merge, thus providing the creative person with personal resources capable of triggering healing responses and positive change (key outcomes associated with affirmative destructuring).

5. FUNDAMENTAL CREATIVITY AND SHADOW

Although we hold to a profoundly positive role for creativity in the lives of individuals and in relation to the cohesive functioning of social groups we do not want to give readers the

impression that Zoetics is based on the kind of New Science/New Age populism frequently found in apolitical self-help books. Indeed, we hold to creativity's positive purpose precisely because we feel that the pursuit of 'fundamental creativity' implies a *transformative process* that often begins, like Jung's adaptation of spiritual alchemy to modern psychology, in the Nigredo (or *massa confusa* [L]) stage. Creativity is essential to individuals and communities because it has the capacity to free up and enliven stagnant, frozen or repressed psychic energy through the mobilisation of emotion, play, catharsis, symbolism, reflection, narrative, imaginative trying on of possible worlds/futures/pasts, etc. The creative process acknowledges shadow, trauma, repressed emotion etc. and then sets about transforming it.

This is a life-enhancing process if successful, but we need to remember that true creativity may come into its own precisely in the midst of trauma, limitation, oppression, inauthenticity, in a word: 'suffering'. The world *as is* no longer serves the needs of an individual or a group; something new needs to be birthed if people are to attain fullness of being. The liminal nature of creativity is due to its function of confronting this exhausted state - this potentially terminal state - and like the proverbial phoenix it makes something out of mere ashes - rides the air waves of anxiety, frustration, despair, stress, suffering, etc. until a breakthrough, something radically new/different, comes into the world. This is to say that 'fundamental creativity' often blossoms in a field of death, ruin or defeat, and is therefore easily blamed for, or confused with, the pre-existing suffering it seeks to address and ultimately transform.

In some cases, the creative transformative process may fail - such is the nature of the world, in real life overcoming adversity is never guaranteed. The Zoetics approach to creativity accepts that sometimes even creativity cannot find a way through a personal or social block or problem etc. on the way to a new paradigm, perspective or way of being etc.

6. ZOETICS AND SPIRITUAL SYSTEMS, RELIGIONS, IDEOLOGIES AND LIFE PHILOSOPHIES

Zoetics and the concept of 'creative living' uncover energies at the very heart of our day to decision making/choices about how we live our lives. In this sense they clearly imply a philosophy of life. Unlike many philosophies, ideologies and religions, however, Zoetics sees spirit of exploration, acceptance of uncertainty, and love of novelty (key aspects of genuine creativity) etc. as central to creative responses to life challenges, problems/issues, etc. This approach represents one defence against authoritarian certainty, inflexibility and ideological rigidity. Our other main defence against dogmatic inflexibility, but also against novelty for novelty's sake, is the principle of 'relational integrity' - a concept based upon modern research into the differences between oppressive and life affirming relationships. These twin defences attempt to ensure that Zoetics remains non-prescriptive and anti-dogmatic, since in principle Zoetics suggests tools by which we try to select positive futures (i.e. futures that maximise relational integrity) whilst living fully in the moment. This approach means that Zoetics can accommodate any ideologies, life philosophies, spiritual systems and religious perspectives that promote relational integrity, freedom from oppression and creative living. In short: each person to their own path within these minimalist constraints.

Author Bio (as at December 2022)

Dr. Ian Irvine (Hobson) is an Australian-based poet, lyricist-musician, fiction writer, non-fiction writer, editor and creative arts and humanities lecturer. His work has featured in publications as diverse as *Humanitas* (USA), *The Antigoneish Review* (Canada), *Tears in the Fence* (UK), *Linq* (Australia) and *Takahe* (NZ), as well as in a number of Australian national poetry anthologies: *Best Australian Poems 2005* (Black Ink Books) and *Agenda: 'Australian Edition'*. He is the author of four books and co-editor of three journals and currently teaches in the Professional Writing and Editing program at Bendigo Kangan Institute (Bendigo, Australia). Between 2012 and 2018 he taught in the same program at Victoria University, Melbourne. He has also taught Medieval and Early Modern history, as well as Contemporary Social Theory at La Trobe University (Bendigo, Australia) in the 1990s and holds a PhD for his work on creative, normative and dysfunctional forms of alienation and morbid ennui. Between 2018 and 2022, almost 100 of his songs (totalling 9 studio albums) were professionally produced and distributed via international Indie music networks. Many of the songs have been played on underground, Indie, Alternative Rock, community and commercial radio stations in numerous countries, and a significant number have charted.