

**The delicate aesthetics of  
leading- learning  
and risk taking as aesthetic  
experiences**

Eliat Aram

For Metanoia Institute, Finland  
August 2013

**Art:**

**A medium for communicating and evoking feelings**

Leo Tolstoy (1828 – 1910)

the form, or the artefact: the organisation structure, boundaries, inside and outside; external and internal; includes the primary task of the organisation

the attitude of the leader/change agent to the work, including their relationship to their role

the experience in the daily humdrum ordinary work

# The Artefact of Design

Linear design:

an organisational hierarchy where the decision making is at the top and so is the accountability (at least where ethical practice is in place)

enough certainty to assume that action-plan A will lead to result B

self belief and self confidence of the leader at a level of self sufficiency, or in other words, planning which is centred on the individual

## Emergent or Participative design

an organisation which is more aware of its informal hierarchy, perhaps has a different image of itself, such as a network, although at the same time would recognise that the formal hierarchy has ultimately the accountability for the results recognising that there is high degree of uncertainty around us which means that our planning might only be incremental, needs to be open to changes and adaptable and may even require fundamental change to it

To achieve this we require:  
a culture of collaboration and participation  
leader with enough self resource and trust in colleagues to know that we can  
work towards the plan 'together'  
in other words, planning which is centred on the system of the group or groups

*"It has sometimes seemed to me that the conferences are a marvellous way to demonstrate the inter-relatedness of events and to demonstrate that nothing happens in a vacuum."*

*Margaret Rioch, why do I work as a consultant?, Group Relations Reader II*

*"To succeed in a problem-continuing environment post-industrial politics must become both more informed and more participative than the politics of industrialism, more devolved and open to more rapid and continuous feedback. Post-industrial man will spend more of his time in politics than industrial man and more in the planning processes associated with it. He may be presumed to have the leisure".*

*From Triest & Emery, 1973, Towards a Social Ecology – contextual appreciations of the future in the present*

# Attitude:

*"The deepest reason why we engage in this work and in similar pursuits is mystical and spiritual... Heaven forbid that we might have anything to do with anything that might be soft.. pleasant.. and yet, what on earth is our 'systems theory' all about, if not the merging of the one in the all?..."*

*(Rioch, M, in GR II, p. 372)*



“ as a matter of fact, the image has to be understood phenomenologically in order to give it psychoanalytical efficacy. The phenomenologist, in this case, will accept the psychoanalyst’s image in a spirit of shared trepidation. He will revive the primitivity and the specificity of the fears. In our civilisation, which has the same light everywhere, we no longer go to the cellar carrying a candle. But the unconscious cannot be civilised.”

*Gaston Bachelard, 1958, The Poetics of Space*

“ ... several things dove-tailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously – I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason”.

*Keats, 1817, from 'letters to  
George and Thomas Keats*

# John Dewey (1859 – 1952)

“The intelligent mechanic, engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his materials and tools with genuine affection, is **artistically engaged**”

# Experience as Art

how is it that the everyday making of things grows into that form of making which is genuinely artistic?

How is it that our everyday enjoyment of scenes and situations develops into the peculiar satisfaction that attends the experience which is emphatically aesthetic?

“Every integral experience moves towards a closure, an ending, since it ceases only when the energies active in it have done their proper work. This closure of a circuit of energy is the opposite of arrest, of stasis. Maturation and fixation are polar opposites. Struggle and conflict may be themselves enjoyed, although they are painful, when they are experienced as means of developing an experience; members in that they carry it forward, not just because they are there”.

Dewey, in *Art as Experience*, p.307

# Concluding remarks

Our work of art is our pursuit for social relevance and our quest for impact and applicability; and it is when we engage in our pursuit passionately and thoughtfully, with a commitment to the impact and results of our actions, without ignoring the risks we take and how we would be accountable, then we are evoking the aesthetic experience that we can then call leadership.