



Everyday Creativity as a Path to Integrative Insight

A Review of

Everyday Creativity and New Views of Human Nature: Psychological, Social, and Spiritual Perspectives

by Ruth Richards (Ed.)

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Reviewed by

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In consultation with editor Ruth Richards, the contributors to *Everyday Creativity and New Views of Human Nature: Psychological, Social, and Spiritual Perspectives* have built a prismatic rainbow of meaningful abstractions that combine to focus pure light on truths about everyday creativity in the human condition. This book will become the established standard in creativity research for the third millennium, and it will be a valuable reference for creativity researchers and a wonderful introduction to creativity research for everyday readers who want to help the world grow toward integrative creativity in everyday life.

Some of the authors' contributions build upon the work of Frank X. Barron (e.g., 1969), who changed the way we think about creativity by pinpointing the roles of meaningfulness and originality. Barron paved a way for research about previously unnoticed creativity. His work shined a spotlight on the creative possibilities in all of us and in every day.

In *Everyday Creativity*, many of the chapters also build upon Urie Bronfenbrenner's (2005) person, process, context, and time approach to developmental psychology and his emphasis on facilitating child development. As editor and contributor to *Everyday Creativity*, Ruth Richards documents the profound, broad, and pervasive influences of developmental, philosophical, aesthetic, sociohistorical, clinical, and psychological approaches on her own work and on the book's other contributors' views. Mooney's (1954, 1963) "four Ps" of creativity become part of the foundation from which Richards adeptly edits to build a masterwork about "small c" as an incomparable BIG NEED in contemporary life.

Reading *Everyday Creativity*, I was struck by the authors' views about contemporary life and our need to encourage each other to move toward positive change. We can no longer frame "creativity" as the talent of a select few. And we should not allow the popular misconception of creativity as the domain of tussled-haired, "lunatic" geniuses to endure. As colleagues and experts in the arts, cognition, development, creativity, and related disciplines, it is incumbent on us to loudly proclaim a model toward positive personal and cultural change that derives from what we now know about everyday creativity: Creativity produces original and meaningful product(s) that derive from person(s), process, and press (per Richards, pp. 37–48; see Table 13.1).

Another point argued forcefully, but from slightly different perspectives by many of this book's contributors, is that the prodigious, nonlinear, dynamic system of life on earth has reached or is near a tipping point (e.g., Schuldberg; Zausner; Averill and Sudararajan; Richards). At this critical juncture, it is gratifying to see that scholars who understand everyday creativity have stepped forward to guide us toward positive integration and collaborative choices.

David Schuldberg's illumination of life in a "somewhat complicated system" (e.g., 58–60; involving *person* and *press* in nonlinear *process*); to Tobi Zausner's insight that human creativity is a gift that carries a burden of responsibility (e.g.,

pp. 76–77); and beyond those to Mark Runco's clear explanation of personal creativity within a Piagetian and constructivist framework—these chapters allow the reader to understand and appreciate the relative importance of the creative process and interpretation within sociocultural contexts. Beyond Part I of *Everyday Creativity*, a theory of organic selection (via Loye, Arons, Abraham, and Eisler) offers hope for improving the human condition (and the planet's condition, too) through everyday creativity.

Numerous contributors to this book identify connections between human creativity and quest. Traditions for meaning making from East and West meet creativity research and theory as authors build on insights from science and connect them with insights about what is meaningful in human life. As I read Combs and Krippner's essay about creativity and consciousness within a Piagetian and meaning-making framework ("Zen Buddhism," pp. 132–135), I was reminded of Kenneth Pargament's (1997) summons of psychological science to build our understanding of the distinctions that humans draw between the sacred, the mundane, and the profane. In his well-known book on the psychology of religion and coping, Pargament pointed to the critical nature of meaning making in coping, health, and well-being. Among the authors in *Everyday Creativity*, Combs and Krippner, Richards, Goerner, and Eisler are especially eloquent in describing studies of human meaning-making, quest, and choice.

As I read beyond Part I and into Part II of the book, I found myself building an outline of topics I'd include in a hypothetical course titled "Creativity and Constructions of Meaning in Human Life." I hope I'll teach such a course soon because Richards's edited book would be a perfect text for it. Together with Peterson and Seligman's (2004) volume on human virtues, *Everyday Creativity* would catalyze fantastic class discussions among students who are ready to think about the implications of a worldwide movement promoting integrative, everyday creativity.

There are numerous intriguing surprises dispersed throughout *Everyday Creativity*. If the reader is like me, he or she will try to set the book down without success. I read each chapter with genuine and enthusiastic fascination. Can everyday creativity lead to love? To sympathy? (See Loye, pp. 155–159; Eisler, pp. 264–271.) Did you know that both people and societies can destroy or build from the same set of crises by way of trajectories into or away from the curves of an underlying "S-function"? (See Goerner, pp. 224–226.) Did you know that small fields of high energy and order can build within larger fields of chaos? Or that being bipedal profiles the paradox between our hope toward the creative process and our fearful gaze down into the precarious human condition? (See Arons, pp. 177–180.) I hope you will be tantalized by those tidbits and read *Everyday Creativity* to help create a better world.

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