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Prof. Boiko

Dear Skooter,

How is it going? It seems to be an eternity since I last talked to you. As for me I am over here at MIT working from sunup to sunset. There is little time for fun anymore and I seem to have lost my sense of the little pleasures in life. That is what MIT will do for you. Well enough said about me, what about you? How is the band doing? I remember last time I saw you guys performing was at the senior field day. You guys did great by the way. I miss the old days when we used to jam out, out in the garage with you playing the guitar and me beating away at the drums. Hard to believe that I enjoyed playing music so much that I haven't touched a drumstick over here at MIT since I left in June. On another note it may seem a surprise but I thought of writing to you because the other day I came across a short essay by Arthur Koestler discussing creativity and the three domains that compose it; the "Haha!", the "Aha" and "Ah...". At first I thought his theories could not relate to a musician because I mean what performing music has to do with laughing and crying. But as I finished reading it, it seemed to make sense when I thought of what goes on when you perform on stage.

In his essay Koestler introduces a new theory that describes the three domains of creativity that he discusses "artistic originality, scientific discovery, and comic

inspiration”. To better understand the domains he paired each one up with a reaction: comic inspiration - “Haha!”, scientific discovery – “Aha”, and finally artistic originality – “Ah...” Before I further dwell into describing his ideas we need to establish a term commonly used by Koestler in his essay, which is bisociation. In bisociation, two or more different frames of reference are combined to coexist on several planes at once. The three reactions follow no set sequence, the “Haha” is caused by the “collision of the bisociated contexts”, and the “Aha” feeling can be associated with the word “eureka” who signals their fusion into a solution with truth to it and the “Ah...” reactions signals an emotion brought on by an artist focusing on beauty. Do you see what I mean by not having understood what it has to do with creativity? I do not know about you but I have never heard about creativity referred to as laughter. Believe it or not it does relate to your experiences when coming up with and playing a song.

You are probably thinking to yourself “What on Earth does laughter (Haha!) have to do with music?” Well it is not so much the laughter as we know it when we just laugh but it is a much deeper sense of laughter brought on by conflicting frames of reference. To your surprise there are two frames of reference that are conflicting with each other in you. I remember how you would normally be found playing an acoustic guitar during lunch because it is easier to carry than an electric guitar, playing away with tabs you had gotten from rock bands. No hard to believe you are into this genre of music since you are in those rebellious years. Koestler provides an example in the essay discussing how a person identifies him or herself with an actor and feels the same emotions as the character being portrayed by the actor. The same idea can be applied to you. Your performances arouse certain emotions or symptoms in an audience in respond to a song you may have

written. The audience knows that it is nothing more than just lyrics. But as in Koestler's example, instead of coexistence between the two planes, you get a collision. The performance causes the "Haha" reaction because you managed to have an audience relate to. The "Aha" involves putting the two frames of reference together. Skooter the friend and the performer. Which is the part where the scientific discovery is made "eureka", and the two frames of reference coexist. The "Ah..." experience is used to express the beauty found in art. This happens to your audience when listening to your music because they may feel like they don't have a care in the world, at peace; a sense of nirvana brought on by art your unique style of music. Music, which does not have to necessarily have lyrics but sound.

As I was reading I came across a quote I found rather interesting: "Language can act as a screen between the thinker and reality. Creativity often starts where language ends, by regressing to preverbal levels, to more fluid and uncommitted forms of mental activity."(Koestler 14) When I first read this I didn't pay much attention to it but as I looked at it a second time I realized that things make sense because he is stating that we can go back to an early period of thinking in which we used to relate things. Koestler provides an example of "visual thinking" (12) as an early form of cognitive thinking by associating one thing with another unlike thing to reach the bisociative context he describes. You can think of this as a moment when music is being played that does not have to necessarily have words but the tone, tempo, rhythm and various aspects put into the beats of different types of music help to link sound with the meaning it is trying to reach. Do you remember "William Tell Overture" by Rossini? The music played is catchy and the tempo and fast beat to the music gives the listener the sense that someone

is being chased. I don't know if you know the story behind it but that is actually what it is about. You can see how the sound from the orchestra brought out a meaning, a sense of pursuit, to understand the purpose of the song. This is basically the same thing you do when playing a song.

Margaret A. Boden had her own input on creativity in her book called "The Creative Mind". She says that creativity falls into two categories: Psychological-creativity which "involves coming up with a surprising, valuable idea that's new to the person who comes up with it" and Historical-creativity, "a new idea that means no one else has had it before: it has arisen for the first time in human history." (2) Skooter, you probably realized that you would fall under the P-creativity because in composing music you are making your own guitar tabs, personal lyrics with their own sense of style and uniqueness. I am not trying to take away from your creativity but I am letting you know under which category you would fall in because what you do has been done at one point in history. For example, to best describe H-creativity it would more than likely involve someone like Elvis who pioneered the wave of rock bands and was deemed as the bad boy during his time. He is credited for starting this style of music, hence his title as the King of Rock.

Boden expands on her theory of the three forms of creativity aside to her definition and categorizing of creativity. The three form of creativity constituted "making unfamiliar combinations of familiar ideas.", "exploring" and "transformation" (3-4). The first form of creativity is straightforward which I witnessed myself at one of the Blue Man Group's performances. I say this because they use random objects such as pipes and weird objects that you would normally think there is no way to produce music

with and actually turn it into something beautiful and enjoyable. These random objects that the Blue Man Group uses in playing music create an amazing effect drawn from the bizarre instrumentation being used. The “exploring” form of creativity involves exploring different options available that have been there before but never used. This you surely do every time when writing a song. The songs your band composes are different from each other to get a specific feeling across whether it is a change in the tempo, from slowing down to achieve a melancholy mood to speeding up as in the case of “William Tell Overture”. The choice of instruments used such as an electric or acoustic guitar which each in its own way makes a song different or by simply switching around the vocals. These options have always been there but you were used to a certain style of music. “Transforming” is when you have reached your limits and need to change, transform, something that has been originally thought of before to exceed your limitations. This may be pretty tough to relate to music but the best I can think of is remember that time when you wanted to switch things up from the typical drums, electric and bass guitar with some orchestra instruments? You were trying to accomplish something new not to music in general but to your style and asked Sarabeth to play the electric violin. Due to it you were able to go beyond the typical instrumentation associated with a rock band by mixing up instruments and thus reaching what at first seemed unreachable, not doable. The altering of the style in music can relate to what Rollo May discussed in The Courage to Create. May talks about the “creative courage” which involves the “discovering new forms, new symbols, new patterns on which a new society can be built.”(21) Music in general is constantly in a developing stage with new ideas being brought up with all the time. If you take a look back at the couple of decades

you see that things have changed from the sixties and eighties to the present. Courage itself has played a major part in music and can be seen as the basis for starting something new. There is the whole change from rock to disco to rap. Each started in their own times to appeal to a generation. Today it is the rap that appeals to the younger generation because it provides a sense of going against the rules, letting loose and becoming wild.

I thought I would let you in on what I have read recently and see what you thought about this whole issue on how creativity can be defined. Koestler and Boden provide two different interpretations about creativity but in a way have the same basis of mixing unrelated things into one as the core of theory and the impact a performer like you can have on society as a whole. I would like to hear your input Skooter since you are a musician and involved with creativity all the time. Hope to hear from you soon. Laterz.

Your bud,

Ralph Maldonado