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**PROCEEDINGS**

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# Creating a ‘Future’ Artist: A Holistic Perspective

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## Abstract

Some contemporary researchers in the field of humanities conclude that people have lost the connection with humanity, and that we need to get back ‘on track’ and in touch with our true human nature. In ancient times shamans and medicine-man have guided their immediate group through hardships and times of turmoil connecting the tribe with the past, present, and future. In this presentation, I argue that artists are today’s shamans and that, as educators and researchers in the field of arts, we need to explore the options and (re-)open the pathways for a greater understanding of the whole being on an interdisciplinary level. From the Greek classics through Carl G. Jung, philosophers, and psychologists, including systems of holistic healing, have devised schematics of 4 basic elements. By drawing explicit parallels, I wish to draw attention to the questions: why is it that our society, hence our education system, only nurtures two sides of our being, the physical and the intellectual, and not the full package? Is it because they are intangible? How do we bring in the emotional and spiritual education? The research implications refer to the emotional side and perception of music, art, and theatre and the tools to transform or translate our feelings and worldview through the arts. These universal themes seem to leave more questions within the fabric of our education and knowledge. The need to broaden the narrative is apparent. How do we employ the available strategies and tools to create the ‘future artists’ or ‘artists of the future’?

## Introduction

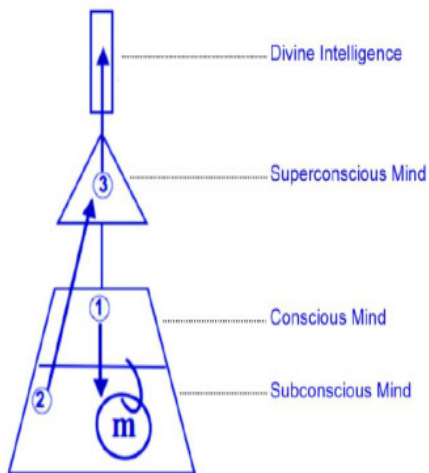
As stated in the abstract, I am addressing the issue of artistic education from the standpoint that our society as a whole needs to awaken and progress on a larger scale and that artists of today, as shamans once were, can become aware facilitators of the transition.

## The Past. Shamanism

In order to begin the talk about ‘artist of the future’, I believe that we have to go back to the past. A past so far into our human roots that it becomes universal in its function, meaning, and symbolism to every culture on every part of the planet. As many contemporary shamanism researchers suggest, shamans were, and in some cultures still are, the connectors and channels of their immediate community to their individual and collective spirituality. They are healers, spiritual leaders, and interdisciplinary artists who tap into the collective unconscious to bridge the gap between ‘this’ and ‘the other’ side. To be able to do that, shamans often rely on awakening the ‘other forms’ of consciousness and states of elevated awareness. They are willing to ‘travel’ to the underworld and the heavens, climb the ‘Cosmic Tree’ (Eliade, 1990, 2003), experience death, and transform their human form into other forms of animals, spirits, or other entities. Many of the mentioned ‘archaic techniques of ecstasy’ are well documented in the works by one of the modern-day pioneers of academic research in shamanism and history of religion, Mircea Eliade, and many authors since, and include the use of “the drum... or the use of narcotics during séances” (Elijade, 1990, p. xiii). Shamans, medicine men and other similar figures throughout human history at various locations all over the World have always been a bridge between “the radical separation between profane and sacred and the resultant splitting of the world” (Elijade, 1990, p. xii). Yet, in all the instances and manifestations of shamanic experience, the function is geared from a place of connection. The connection of the immediate

group to a single source, to our common roots, to our universality.

As time unraveled and brought developments of religious and spiritual ideas, many organized religions and their ‘high priests’ replaced the tribal shaman. The high priest became the spiritual leader of the community and, surpassing the ‘natural connection’ insisted on the doctrine of the religious concept, alienating the group members from their true source even further. Contemporary society has brought that model, coupled with the relentless pressure of the neoliberal economic model, to a virtual standstill of spiritual evolution on a larger scale. The scope of this work does not allow us to further duel in this arena. Still, volumes of works have documented the evolution of religious, social, and philosophical ideas that have brought our human society to this point. That was certainly Carl Gustav Jung’s (1957) belief, and in his book, *The Undiscovered Self*, he argued that many of the problems of modern life are caused by “man’s progressive alienation from his instinctual foundation” (pp. 557–558). And people still look for ‘the connection.’



**Figure 1. Levels of conscientiousness (Vitale & Hew Len, 2008, p. 30).**

In the first place, they look for a connection to themselves. As seen in many cultures around the world, all people share the three basic lev-

els of consciousness: 1) our waking, or the conscious self; 2) our sub-conscious self that stores all of our feelings, memories, dreams, intuitions, premonitions; and 3) our super-conscious self (see Figure 1). At all three levels an individual is always aware and in contact with the past, present and future and is directly connected to the source. In order to reach the super-conscious, as we strive for a connection with the conscious, we have to first reach deep into the sub-conscious and surpass the invisible border of ‘fear’ to be able to reach it.

And that ‘fear’ comes from the unknown, from not knowing our true nature, and not being aware or connected to all the elements of our being.

### The Elements

From the Greek classics through Carl G. Jung, philosophers and psychologists, including systems of holistic healing, have devised schematics of 4 basic elements. For Plato, they were represented by Earth, Air, Fire and Water with both masculine and feminine qualities (see Jung, 1978). These are also used as basic groupings in astrology for horoscope signs. Even if astrology is not considered an exact science, its’ implications are seen in everyday life. For Aristotle, these were Hot, Cold, Moist and Dry with corresponding soft and hard qualities. In psychological types of Jung (1978), they are represented by Feeling, Thinking, Intuition, and Sensation, each with introverted or extroverted aspects. In many Holistic systems of learning and teaching, they represent integral parts of a single being – Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, and Spiritual (Johnson, 2020).

What is common to all these elements and qualities is that only their connectedness creates a whole being. The being is not a mere sum of its parts, but rather a multiplication of interconnected relations between these elements and qualities. We cannot simply extract a single component and look at it from its own perspective. Instead, we should look at it from a singularity perspective of all the contributing factors that have been brought upon a being. Those include

the individual and societal circumstances that Jung recognizes as individual, or better known as the Ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. These ancestral memories, which Jung called archetypes, are represented by universal themes in various cultures, as expressed through literature, art, and dreams. Jung (1978) labeled these archetypes the Self, the Persona, the Shadow, and the Anima/Animus, creating another 'System of four' (Jung, 2002).

In yet another universal system of communication – MUSIC – four elements are represented by Rhythm, Melody, Harmony and Orchestration (Thomson, 1957, p. vii). Thompson also encompasses Counterpoint as an element but since it is an optional feature of music, I have decided to exclude it from this system. Even though one can argue that music can exist when it is only represented by rhythmic values/instruments, the larger scope of that is that in Universe – everything is vibration. To perceive a rhythmic pattern, at least three beats would have to be separated by two identical silences, creating a sinusoid pattern, a pulse, with a vibratory manifestation (a sound) in the audible specter. Many of those sounds create a melody; the resonating and sympathetic frequencies of those melodies awaken harmonics – hence, creating harmony. At this point, I rely on the physics and acoustics of the sound rather than looking at the quality of the event from a purely 'musical' implication of the interaction between Rhythm, Melody and Harmony. Furthermore, it is implied that even if one instrument (or a sound source) creates a sound, the element of Orchestration has been fulfilled; hence, all of the elements have been represented.

By drawing explicit parallels to all these systems, I wish to draw attention to the following questions: why is it that our society, hence our education system, only nurtures two sides of our being, the physical and the intellectual, and not the full package that includes the emotional and spiritual education? Is it because they are intangible?<sup>1</sup> How do we bring in the emotional

and spiritual education? These questions are particularly crucial to arts education from the perspective of artists as modern-day shamans. I strongly believe in the power of arts to open more opportunities to awaken the forgotten parts of our being and tap into the collective unconscious. Artists are the ones to connect their immediate group and awaken our common nature.

Acknowledging that shamans often hear their 'calling' (Stutley, 2004, p. 6) at a young age and that artists are drawn to their creativity from an early age, one could see yet another parallel. Then, shamans require a profound knowledge of the 'other' and have in their best interest the well-being of the whole group. In reference to the 'other', shamans undergo a series of ritualistic attunements in order to be able to channel the otherworldly phenomena. How do we learn that? How do we teach our artists to be able to channel their emotional being and connect it to their immediate group?

## Education

From the earliest days of our schooling, we have been educating our intellectual and physical beings. The emotional and spiritual parts of our being are left to family/parents, society, religious systems, and various methods but rarely through an organized system within the school setting. There have been some attempts to organize emotional and spiritual education and bring it into a system (Piercy, 2013). Yet, the truth is that if you would to ask students to name 10 feelings or emotional states, we would be faced with a bitter truth. I bring this from a perspective of a person who teaches university-level students and occasionally prepares high-school graduates for subsequent education level. It is not that students are afraid to explore these dark and mysterious alleys; they just have not been exposed to thinking (or feeling and sensing) in that direction. It is like going

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is considered a 'hard science', in not so tangible, after all, as it dwells in and deals with the area of human emotions, memories, beliefs, and mind.

<sup>1</sup> One could rightfully argue that psychology, that

through life with our left hand never knowing what the right hand does. It is time to put both hands to work together! A whole new (or not so new) area of research in education exists that is pointing us into this direction (e.g., Johnson, 2020; Piercy, 2013).

A brief and concise overview of what Holistic education represents is given by Andrew P. Johnson (2020), in his book *Holistic Learning Theory and Holistic Education*. Some of the most influential writers related to the subject are Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) with his 'flow' theory, stemming from Positive psychology, then John P. Miller (2019) with *Holistic Curriculum* and Jon-Roar Bjørkvold's *Muse within* (Bjerkvol, 2005) in a sense that they inspire educators and in Bjørkvold's case a whole nations' education system.

### Conclusion: The Future

In assessing the aspects of the 'future' from the title of this paper, I must address the duality of the given idea. Namely, two meanings are to be perceived. One refers to the being of the artist that is to become a 'fully aware shaman' sometime in the future, and the other one is when that artist leads us, the immediate group, the tribe, into the 'future'. So, to create an artist of the future, we need to invest in the education of its being by opening the channels of emotional and spiritual awareness. Only then can we expect a 'healed' healer to heal the community and take us further into the 'past', through the 'present' into the 'future'. It is all about the integration of a being and the integration of experiences. This is a highly individual path, but education, particularly artists' education, is a highly individual endeavor that requires and deserves a kind, meaningful and holistic, individual approach.

As a music educator, I translate all of these concepts primarily into music education and envisage the opportunity and the ability to share these insights into human nature with our students. They can think of themselves as light-bearers in these dark times. Our impact on our immediate community is profound particularly

because our listeners are emotionally and spiritually moved when they experience music, and we connect to the energies of the venues in real-time. The music happens here and now and is the catalyst for spiritual and emotional connection, both individually and collectively.

Teaching emotional and spiritual awareness is no easy task, and a great responsibility lies on the backs of today's aspiring artists to save us from ourselves and connect us to a better future. That responsibility is also on the shoulders of their present educators – us.

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