

Appendix II

Toward Finding Paper-Givers and Funding for a Conference that might be entitled something like.

Groove/Grace/Focus/Flow and What Our Children Need to Grow

Many performing musicians around the world know what it feels like to be "in the groove"; Bateson and Huxley saw the central problem of humanity as the quest for "grace"; people with a variety of neurological disorders can make their symptoms disappear whenever they "focus" their energies on a challenging activity, often musicking; what psychologists have described as "flow" experience is what brings us humans satisfaction and relief from boredom, apathy, anxiety. Ritual, drama, play and performance theorists talk about 'liminality.' Sports psychologists talk about being 'in the zone.' 'Entrainment' is a concept I've heard used to describe the micro-timing of satisfying human interaction and conversation. We can find more near synonyms -- participation, ecstasy, enthusiasm, peak experience, trance-dance, sacrament, all come quickly to mind -- that describe the feeling of being completely focused, flowing, liminal, in the zone, entrained, in the groove, achieving grace, but **what is the material basis for this feeling? How can we cultivate it in young children?**

How do we get into the groove? How do we find grace? What skills are needed? How are those skills acquired? What keeps us in groove/grace/focus/ flow once we are there? From the little measuring of micro-timing that has been done on grooving in jazz and in Cuban *tumba francesa*, it is clear that participants are 'in sync but out of phase,' slightly and subliminally in a consistent and patterned tension with each other in order to create a groove. Are focus and flow and "a state of grace" created the same way? Are there neurological and psychological levels at which all these concepts describe the same process? Or are there important differences in the processes that put sports competitors 'in the zone,' improvising musicians 'in the groove,' the driver of a car with music on the radio 'in flow?' What can the recent breakthroughs in brain imaging, neurology, psychology, tell us about how grooving/focusing/flowing skills are acquired and then 'sent' to the body, 'sent' to the unconscious, sent to the soul as grace? How is it that we remember so very well how to ride a bike or play a guitar that we can do it after years of not practicing? What is the better or more precise vocabulary for talking about the way learned skills sink deeper into the brain, nervous system and muscles? Is a more unified theory, method, vocabulary needed for understanding these processes well and fostering them? Can someone redefine some of these questions and sharpen the focus of this conference accordingly?

If we can compare these grooving, focusing, flowing processes across some disciplines, what are the implications for newborns, childrearing, education? Could grooving/focusing/flowing be a primary process of communication, a foundation upon which other forms of communication are built? Could some kinds of autism, attention deficit disorders, and a number of other very basic communication breakdowns be a result of not becoming proficient in this primary process of communication? How do children grow or fail to grow into fully functioning adults capable of grooving, focusing, flowing, and creating grace-filled lives for themselves?

For grooving see C. Keil and S. Feld Music Grooves and Vol. 39, No. 1 of Ethnomusicology. For neurological case histories, see Oliver Sacks' The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and The Anthropologist from Mars. For flow see M. Csikszentmihalyi's books. For both skills and grace see Bateson, Steps to an Ecology of Mind, pgs. 128-152, "Style, Grace and Information in Primitive Art." For a wonderfully clear synthesis see Victor Turner's "Body, Brain and Culture" in Zygon 18(3): 221-246. We have yet to see what others think of the chapters in Section 2 of Born to Groove. Do we need "triune brain" and "common glad impulse" contributors? An "ethology of the arts?" A revival of "culture & personality" studies?

If you would like to give a paper at this kind of conference or you know of anyone with a possible contribution to make, please contribute to the Born to Groove website and/or write to me at 22 Wells Hill, Lakeville, Ct. 06039. Can we find just one or two paper-givers from four or more fields (neurology? psychology? music? dance? kinesics? linguistics? drama? human development? performance studies? media? anthropology? small group sociology? communications? education? what other fields?) and make a start?