

# CULTIVATING THE ARTS IN EDUCATION AND THERAPY

A David Fulton Book

MALCOLM ROSS

# Cultivating the Arts in Education and Therapy

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Malcolm Ross

*University of Exeter, UK*

with

Jolanta Gisman-Stoch

*University of Silesia, Poland*

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For  
Kicoula

## ***The Blue Boat***

*How late the daylight edges  
toward the northern night  
as though journeying  
in a blue boat, gilded in mussel shell*

*with, slung from its mast, a lantern  
like our old idea of the soul*

Kathleen Jamie, *The Tree House*

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# Prologue

‘Yes, of course, if it’s fine tomorrow,’ said Mrs Ramsay. ‘But you’ll have to be up with the lark,’ she added.

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night’s darkness and a day’s sail, within touch.

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

I have been asking myself these last weeks, ‘What can I do with wonder?’ It being summer as I bring this writing to fruition, and my element being Fire, I am filled with wonder just now, which has made it a pressing question for me. What does one do with wonder? But I discover that I have been doing the right thing all along. The writing arises, in its way, as an impulse to praise, or, as the English poet W. H. Auden apparently held, as ‘a rite of worship’. Auden believed that a poet feels the impulse to create a work of art when the passive awe provoked by an event is transformed into a desire to express that awe in a ‘rite of worship’. To be fit homage, this rite must be beautiful. I doubt that this work of mine is beautiful, but I think it might be ‘a rite of worship’.

In his play *The Habit of Art*, Alan Bennett presents Auden towards the end of his life, a literary treasure, but no longer expected to provide much more by way of national enrichment. Here he is, depicted in conversation with his biographer, Humphrey Carpenter.

Carpenter: Are you writing?

Auden: Am I dead? I work. I have the habit of art.

A speech or two later, Bennett has Auden elaborate a little:

Auden: Poetry to me is as much a craft as an art and I have always prided myself on being able to turn my hand to anything – a wedding hymn, a requiem, a loyal toast...No job too small. I would have been happy to have hung up a shingle in the street: ‘W. H. Auden. Poet’.

Auden's speech is very much in tune with a passage in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* in which he insists that the arts are mastered in much the same way as virtue is acquired, namely by cultivating the habit of them. Neither art nor virtue is a gift of nature. The notion of 'the habit of art' is central to this book. I argue that in their twin aspects of *techne* and *poiesis* the arts constitute an order of being – even a holy order – demanding devotion and continual practice. I am aware this is a large claim, and some of my readers will no doubt feel it is a very tall order indeed, where their pupils and patients are concerned. Nevertheless, I am with Aristotle on this.

I shall be trying in what follows to persuade the doubters that the arts must be reclaimed from the 'pastime' curriculum of our schools and from either a merely diagnostic or palliative role in therapy and analysis, to become a way not simply of education and healing, but of life. For, as Iain McGilchrist points out in his book *The Master and His Emissary* (2010), the arts give expression to our deepest yearnings as human beings. 'Through the arts', he writes, 'we reach out to the beyond: to our transcendent, our "immortal" longings'. McGilchrist challenges what he sees as the dominance of the analytical, calculating left hemisphere of the brain in contemporary western culture at the expense of the older, empathic, contemplative right brain. His defence of the right hemisphere chimes precisely with the whole thrust of this book. Having argued that the beautiful inspires a 'disinterested' rather than an erotic or possessive love, he concludes:

Through the assaults of the left hemisphere on the body, spirituality and art, essentially mocking, discounting or dismantling what it does not understand and cannot use, we are at risk of becoming trapped in the I-It world, with all the exits through which we might re-discover the I-Thou world being progressively blocked off.

(2010: 445)

The Syncretic Model of creativity in the arts presented in this book follows the cycle of change that constitutes the ancient Chinese theory of the Five Elements. It works as a powerful and beautiful metaphor for making a habit of the arts. To be fully human, we must practise the arts through a wide range of disciplined activities of making and receiving, of giving and being given, of conscious articulation and unconscious dreaming, until they form the defining habit of personal being: until they become second nature to us.

*Littlehempston, Devon*  
July 2010

# Introduction

To be in the Burren is to be reminded that physical matter is simultaneously indestructible and entirely transmutable: that it can swap states drastically, from vegetable to mineral or from liquid to solid. To attempt to hold these two contradictory ideas, of permanence and mutability, in the brain at the same time is usefully difficult, for it makes the individual feel at once vulnerable and superfluous. You become aware of yourself as constituted of nothing more than endlessly convertible matter – but also of always being perpetuated in some form. Such knowledge grants us a kind of comfortless immortality: an understanding that our bodies belong to the limitless cycle of dispersal and reconstruction.

Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places* (2007: 173)

In April 2005, at Cambridge University, a group of educational researchers got together for a day, under the auspices of the British Educational Research Association, to explore what they describe as 'three issues vital to education in the twenty-first century'. The issues were creativity, wisdom, and trusteeship. The keynote speakers were Anna Craft, Professor of Education at the University of Exeter; Howard Gardner, Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Guy Claxton, Professor of Learning Services at the University of Bristol Graduate School of Education. None of these names needs an introduction to readers of a book such as this. They are authorities in their fields, contributing to knowledge and understanding spanning learning, healing, culture and human development. Over many years they have each made significant contributions to the literature of creativity. The seminar was followed by a debate among a number of the participants, and the outcomes are gathered in a book entitled, *Creativity, Wisdom and Trusteeship: Exploring the Role of Education*.

Anna Craft and her colleagues are disturbed by various trends in contemporary education: the almost exclusively economic interpretation of creativity as wealth creation (now widely advocated across the education world) with little regard for cultural and ethical considerations; the advance of an almost cynical pragmatism among students that values education only for its cost-effectiveness in the job market; the absence from schooling of long-term investment in developing human empathy

and compassion; and the loss of the notions of societal trusteeship and respect for tradition in the scramble for economic success worldwide. The book shines a steady and revealing light on each of these complex and critical issues – and it makes me feel at home, as will become clear when, in the main body of this book, I explore in more detail what Craft and her colleagues have to say.

I find myself in broad agreement with them, and where I differ, it is rather a matter of emphasis than substance. But, more to the point, they seem to have obligingly left room for me – if that is not too presumptuous. They don't see the arts as part of their brief in assessing the problems they identify or as part of the solution they alight upon. I shall be claiming, to the contrary, that the arts are core to the redress we are all seeking. My book proposes another, I think powerful and appropriate, avenue of opportunity for the reconfiguration of our educational, but also of our cultural and therapeutic endeavours. The Syncretic Model, presented in the opening chapters, provides a new (though very old) framework for thinking about creativity (wisdom and trusteeship too) – for thinking about *cultivating the habit of art*. I am delighted to acknowledge what I believe to be a strong kinship with the contributors to *Creativity, Wisdom and Trusteeship*, and am grateful to them for providing exactly the professional context that my own book needs to bring it down to earth and into the real world where what one thinks might make a difference.

You don't have to be a believer to read my book, but you might become one. The person who introduced me to traditional Chinese Five Elements theory, the philosophy behind traditional Chinese acupuncture, is, of course, a believer. When Donna Ashton, my acupuncturist, embarked upon a programme of treatment to heal my broken ankle, she believed (a) that she would be successful, and (b) that her success would come as the direct result of her rebalancing the life-force circulating through the organs of my body, by reconnecting my bodily energy system (my ch'i) to the natural energies, rhythms and influences operating in the cosmos at large, i.e. in nature. Donna believed that my ankle's stubborn refusal to heal, six months on from the accident, was due to blocks and imbalances in the meridians that channelled the life-force around my body. She was confident that her competence was sufficient to identify the source of the trouble and correct the problem I was having.

Donna understood that in looking to repair my body she would need to take into consideration my general mental and spiritual wellbeing. In fact, she made clear from the start, having given me a thorough examination, that where I was concerned, she would begin by treating my spirit. I was, she sensed, at a low ebb, depressed by the accident itself and by what was beginning to feel like a permanent incapacity. After six weeks of treatment, already feeling so much better in myself, an x-ray at the hospital confirmed to my consultant that the break had begun to heal. He was surprised; I was grateful. Everything had been set for surgery. Six months into the treatment with Donna, another x-ray showed the healing to be complete; no trace of the break remained. What is more, speaking now particularly of my mind and spirit, I knew that

Donna had turned my life around. Writing this book could not have happened without her.

During the course of the treatment I had become fascinated by the ideas and principles behind it. Donna agreed to talk to me about Five Elements theory. She lent me books and suggested others I might look at. I almost immediately saw a marked convergence between the Chinese Five Elements model and my own model of the creative process in art – developed in my work in arts education and therapy over the course of many years. This book describes the conversation we had about the two systems and how we came to devise what we have called a Syncretic Model, drawing together over 2,000 years of Chinese thought on the one hand and contemporary Western social psychology on the other. To me, the Chinese model offered another way of thinking about the creative process of art-making, with practical implications for the arts curriculum in schools, for the application of the arts in therapeutic practice and for the training of arts teachers, arts therapists and cultural animators working in the community.

The Syncretic Model serves to extend, even transform, the model I have long been working with. Five Elements theory works for me, not just as a beautiful story but as a potent and endlessly illuminating source of understanding and spur to a regenerative practice. I don't know if it tells us how the world actually is. For Donna it describes a living reality, a system of dynamic energies operating with and through us and creating the force field that is our living, ever-changing environment. Five Elements theory, also called the Five Phases of Change, is for Donna a potent prescription for affecting changes in the patient's body, mind and spirit. As such it forms the basis of her practice as a healer – and it works. For me it has become a new way of understanding how creativity is a force present in the world – and, in particular, present in the world of the artist. I have learned in the course of writing this book to respect powerful, 'hidden' influences at work within and beyond me, helping bring it to fruition. I shall have more to say about this. Meanwhile, I am content that the Syncretic Model attempts a fresh way of understanding how cultivating the habit of art can make a difference, individually and collectively. I should like to think that this book opens, for arts teachers and arts therapists, the prospect of a different story of creativity.

Part I

Theoretical

# I Towards a participatory practice

This chapter provides the research context for the introduction in Chapter 2 of the Syncretic Model of creativity in the arts. In particular, it sets out the difficulties teachers of the arts have traditionally had in finding a constructive, participatory role when promoting their students' creativity. The chapter covers my own research and teaching since the late 1960s in the quest for a new pedagogy. Key figures in that search include Robert Witkin, D. W. Winnicott, Hans-Georg Gadamer, R. G. Collingwood and Rom Harré, whose cyclical model of the Identity Project is subsequently adapted to create the Syncretic Model itself.

To Constantine Levin the country was the background of life – that is to say, the place where one rejoiced, suffered and laboured; but to Koznyshev the country meant, on the one hand rest from work, on the other, a valuable antidote to the corrupt influences of the town.

Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*

A strong tradition suggests that artistic talent is in the gift of the gods, and that, for the lucky few, progress towards success and the continuing command of talent is a matter to be settled between the artist and his or her muse (to use the old parlance). In other words, there's not really much for the teacher of art to do apart from opening the students' eyes to the canon of works constituting the best that has been done in the past, and instructing them in the most popular, practical techniques having contemporary currency. But where their distinctive talents are concerned, in the development of the young artists' defining styles or voices, and in regard to their individual and unique creative energies and imaginations, the teacher must stand back and allow nature to take its course, offering critical and sympathetic encouragement in equal measures, judged appropriate to the circumstances. Teaching the arts, on this reckoning, would amount to little more than servicing a given talent; it would seem that there is little or nothing to be done 'from within the student's expressive act', as

Witkin expresses it in *The Intelligence of Feeling*, since, the act being finally private, there is *no means of an outsider's gaining access to it*.

It is the purpose of this book, as it was of Witkin's, to examine this tradition and to counter it by proposing a *fully participatory practice*, whereby the teacher becomes the intimate companion of the student as a developing artist as she/he works the expressive impulse into a satisfying feeling-form, or moves from merely passive reception of a work of art to a full, imaginative engagement with it. To this end, a model of the creative process in the arts will be presented that provides the teacher with a clear strategy of intervention, a model that is also, at the same time, a set of guidelines for creative self-help.

The different arts therapies have their own professional traditions of intervention, ranging all the way from 'hands-off', reflective dialogue to 'hands-on', free play with the client. Here again, the model proposed in the following chapters will offer clear guidance for a participatory strategy, but only where *the healing potential of real artistic experience* forms the basis of the therapist's convictions concerning their work. Arts therapists who tend to see the arts simply as diagnostic tools or as activities preliminary to treatments of a different sort (e.g. verbally mediated psychoanalysis), may well find my suggestions problematic. Nevertheless, I ask them to read on – not least because I shall try to engage with these concerns. Since the model, to be called the Syncretic Model, for reasons that will shortly become apparent, provides a way of thinking about artistic creativity, it will also suggest a participatory practice to cultural animators and artists working in community settings, providing opportunities for arts experience outside the formal settings of arts therapy, education and training.

The British economist Amartya Sen has proposed a neat formula for what he calls personal 'capability' – the development of which, in its citizens, would seem to be the just aspiration of any civilized society:

$$\text{TALENT} + \text{OPPORTUNITY} = \text{CAPABILITY}$$

Sen assumes that everyone has talents if given the opportunity to discover and express them. We can judge no-one's 'capability' without understanding the nature and extent of the opportunity they have had to develop and hone their gifts. In so far as everyone has the inclination to and wherewithal for personal expression, they have a talent for the arts. In some of us that talent will be remarkable both in its specificity and its force. Nonetheless, everyone carries the impulse of self-expression and a propensity for reading the 'signs' of art, and whether their talent is exceptional or run-of-the-mill, 'opportunity' will determine the extent of their artistic capability, both in terms of personal fulfilment and their contribution to the wider community. Opportunity in the arts takes many forms. It might mean having a sympathetic parent or relative (e.g. Van Gogh's brother, Theo); finding a spiritual home (e.g. Joseph Conrad, England); finding a creative partner (e.g. for Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears); finding a



sensitive and inspiring mentor (Antony Caro and Henry Moore); making artistic friends (Paula Rego and Vic Willing at the Slade). Opportunity clearly embraces the spheres of education – both formal and informal – and of therapy. My hope in writing this book is that it might offer its readers a way of rethinking the character and quality of the opportunities they represent for their students and clients. If their practice were, as a result of reading this book, to become more fully participatory, I would claim a higher rating for the opportunities they were offering to a ‘talent’ in the process of its conversion to ‘capability’.

The notion of teaching – or healing for that matter – ‘from within the expressive act’ became the principal pedagogical message to emerge from the research project on the arts in secondary schools in the UK that Robert Witkin and I undertook for the Schools Council in the early 1970s (the ‘Arts and the Adolescent’ project – Director Peter Cox, Principal of Dartington College of Arts). Doing our research, we found arts teachers largely devoid of a pedagogy where their students’ creative work was concerned – pupil creativity then beginning to become a popular idea in schools, particularly where arts and English teachers were concerned. Inspired by Herbert Read’s and the Modernist movement’s enthusiasm for child (and so-called ‘primitive’ or naïve) art, famously expressed in Read’s dictum ‘every child an artist’, teachers of the arts were beginning to reach out beyond conventional methods of instruction, but were hesitant about intervening in the mysterious and apparently private processes of creativity, which, to be fair, were little understood at the time. In his book *The Intelligence of Feeling* (1974), Witkin set out the project’s conceptual framework for teaching creativity in the arts. Teachers were invited to understand the creative process as a reflexive exchange between feeling and medium, with the making experience culminating in a feeling-form or art work that satisfied the child’s expressive desire.

We called this formative process *subject-reflexive action*, in that it was action in a medium determined reflexively by a subjective feeling for the formal outcome that was desired. It was the child’s ‘intelligence of feeling’ in action. Expressive work proper was judged to be directed by feeling impulse rather than procedural rules, by having a good ear; a good eye, a touch, a sense of timing, of rhythm, a feel for how formal decisions are made, the ability to think in terms of contrasts and harmonies, balance and tension, suspension and climax, grace and surprise. All of which meant that a pedagogy centred on teacher rule-direction had to be replaced by one centred on the child’s expressive impulse and feeling for forms that were significant, that signified, for them.

If it was now the teacher’s task to work with the child’s feeling impulse, i.e. with their subjectivity, how was she/he to evoke and recognize it? The project distinguished between reflexive and reactive feelings. ‘Reactive’ feelings – usually strongly experienced – demanded instant release in action, their, often violent, outcomes being an emotional reaction to a situation, a cathartic discharge triggered by a threat to or disturbance of the subject’s homeostatic state. ‘There’s a snake on the path there;

watch out!' – followed by a squeal as the threat is seen and appropriate evasive action taken. The 'expressive' squeal has no part in 'subject-knowing'. It is intelligent in the sense of its being a practically effective response to danger (a signal to others among other things), but it does not belong to the realm of reflexivity, whereby new understandings of the subjective life are accomplished. No consideration of 'significant forming' occurs in the generation of the squeal. It is about rapid responses and is, generally speaking, soon over and done with. Some 'reactive' responses, like crying in grief, for instance, resolve themselves more slowly and have a longer-term impact upon the restoration of psychological balance and the recovery of feelings of wellbeing.

On the other hand, 'reflexive' feeling, the project argued, works towards new forms of apprehending experience: the spur to action is lacking and instead we are aware of the need to stay with the experience and allow for the gradual shift in apprehension that characterizes deeper, often unconscious, processes of assimilation and accommodation to take their course. We are in the realm of 'knowing'. We might feel the need to take time out, to be alone for a while, to 'sleep on it'. We deploy reflexive feeling when we deliberate on matters of taste, when we make aesthetic judgements, when we brood quietly and expressively upon emotional experience and its deeper meaning, when we wait for feelings to become intelligible to us. The impulse of reflexivity is towards holding on to experience and being enriched and enlarged by it; reactivity, on the other hand, seeks to void, or distance the self from, what is simply too painful – because too disruptive – to bear. In the creative experience of art-making, reflexive feelings guide the formative process by allowing the artist to make the series of adjustments that will bring the work closer to the heart's desire. Reflexivity, the continuous to and fro in attention to a feeling of 'rightness', will, if all goes well, finally issue in a form that is good enough to capture, hold and deliver the artist's knowing.

Teachers involved in the Arts and the Adolescent project needed a new pedagogy that would help attune them to their students' subjectivity, and support authentic self-expression as intelligent feeling at work: in other words, to work from 'within the child's experience'. I was later to discover a similar emphasis in the writings of English philosopher R. G. Collingwood, notably in his book, *The Principles of Art*, in which he argues that the arts 'properly so called' militate against 'the corruption of consciousness'. Collingwood makes a sharp distinction between art that has its roots in human 'expressive' activity and what he calls 'pseudo' art, which makes use of artistic technique (and mystique) to pursue the imperatives of political propaganda, commercial advertising and the marketplace.

With the child at the centre of the arts curriculum, we offered the project's teachers a set of steps by which to proceed, a procedure intended to make the student's expressive act the centrepiece of the creative arts curriculum, and was intended to help the teacher remain in touch with the student's subjective project as it progressed. Underpinning the whole project was Witkin's theory of 'subject-knowing', essentially making the connection between expressive action and self-actualization, a theme that

was concurrently also being developed elsewhere by Abraham Maslow (1968) and, somewhat later, to be proposed by Rom Harré (1983). Our project of the 1970s saw the role of the arts teacher to be the fostering of the student's confidence in their feelings and of their resourcefulness in expressing them 'reflexively'. The creative arts were to counterbalance a curriculum that we felt put too much emphasis on purely vocational or academic goals. As Witkin puts it in his book:

If the price of finding oneself in the world is that of losing the world in oneself, then the price is more than anyone can afford.

(1974: 1)

Our message for arts teachers was that it would not do simply to induct the child into the world of the arts and neglect the world of art in the child.

In the event, although the project created serious interest amongst arts teachers at the time, and doubtless helped to promote the child's own creativity to centre stage in the developing debate about the arts in the curriculum, I'm not sure that the pedagogic model itself was to prove all that useful in helping the teacher to a more interactive engagement with the pupil. The initial step of 'setting the sensate problem' proved for many teachers less successful than allowing the children to find the problem for themselves and tune in to it, problem-finding being at least as important an aspect of creativity as problem-solving. It began to look like a rather contradictory move, made to ensure the teacher's status as the one setting the agenda in the classroom. The second step, 'making a holding form' (capturing the basic impulse for the work in a rough outline or sketch), remains a powerful practical idea for helping to set boundaries, for maintaining focus for the individual creative project, and for allowing both teachers and developing artists systematically to track work in progress. The final step, 'the movement through successive approximations to a resolution', made assumptions about art-making as a kind of systematic, whittling-down exercise that were not always borne out by experience. In effect, certain aspects of the recommended routine still seemed to imply a rather too controlling role for the teacher.

In terms of the interaction between teacher and student, I later found a more telling approach in Winnicott's model of the client-therapist relationship. Winnicott insists that no therapeutic progress can be made unless the therapist and the client are capable of playing together. Winnicott was basing his practice as a healer on his observations of mothers playing with their children. Quite apart from the diagnostic and monitoring information provided for the therapist by playful interaction with the client (he worked mostly, though not exclusively, with children), Winnicott was actively supporting the child in their playing, making the playing serve the healing. We shall be returning to Winnicott's notion of play in the therapeutic context later. What reading Winnicott did for me as an arts teacher was to suggest a model for a more directly interactive relationship with the student's work, a relationship in which I might well

actually play with/for the student as well as share in a playful and intimate conversation about the ongoing work.

The idea of a playful conversation came to the fore in the research on assessment in the arts for which I was responsible in the 1990s. My partners then were Hilary Radnor, Sally Mitchell and Kathy Bierton (*Assessing Achievement in the Arts*, 1993). Exploring the ways teachers approached assessment in the arts, we became aware that, at least where their students' creative work was concerned, there was a great deal of uncertainty and dissatisfaction. Beyond praising those who were trying hard, few teachers had any other strategies of appraisal with which they felt comfortable. Again, as with the earlier Arts and the Adolescent project, there seemed to be no adequate pedagogy available to teachers of creativity that would provide a proper basis for assessment. Many had strong misgivings over the subjectivity of their own responses even when 'moderated' by formal collective decision-making and adjudication. It was at this time that I first encountered Rom Harré's 'expressivist' model and what he calls the 'Identity Project'. This rather more dynamic way of looking at expressive creativity seemed preferable to the step-by-step approach Witkin and I had envisaged earlier, and, together with my new team, I developed Harré's ideas as the basis for modelling the arts curriculum, and hence for assessing pupils' aesthetic achievement.

Combining Winnicott's influence with Donald Schön's work on the reflective practitioner, we created a procedure for a negotiated form of assessment that we called the reflective conversation. The reflective conversation brought the student and the teacher into a playful, exploratory relationship with the teacher tactfully inviting the student to reflect on the making process and assess their own achievement together with the teacher. The teacher brought their professional responses and reflections to the conversation and a joint statement based on the conversation was agreed. Whilst persuaded of the principle, the teachers found it difficult to put into practice simply because it was so alien to their experience. Something of a sea change in the student-teacher relationship, let alone in the teacher's professional repertoire of skills, would be required to make it happen effectively. And in management terms, the argument was that it would require far too much time to implement, given the pressures on the timetable etc. A nice idea, then, but of limited success.

Harré's model of cultural development has been powerfully influential in my own teaching and research ever since. His thesis was that we build individual identity through participation in a cycle of expressive activities, based on a pair of constructs: private-public, individual-collective. The private-public construct represents what he calls expressive 'display', whereas the individual-collective construct represents expressive 'realization'. He makes these pairs serve as two dimensions of a cyclical matrix, thereby generating four quadrants (or domains) of activity. Harré takes the child's language development as a case in point in explaining his model.

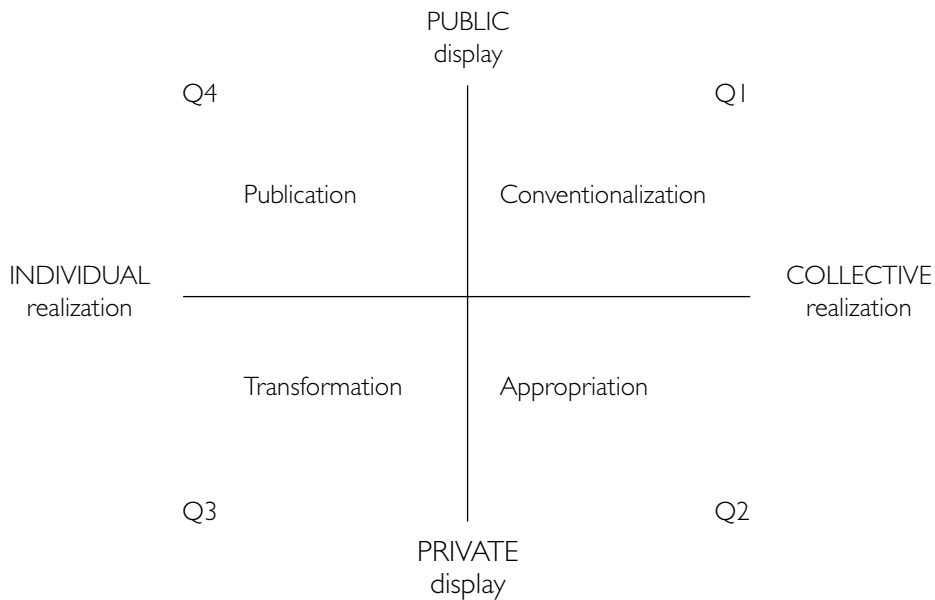


Figure 1.1 The Harré matrix

- Q1: Conventionalization. Infants are born into the public–collective real world of cultural artefacts and conventions. They are born with the aptitude to learn. They do so largely on the ‘immersion’ principle: surrounded by language users, they gradually become users themselves, through imitation, instruction, interrogation and repetition.
- Q2: Appropriation. From the public–collective, infants adopt and adapt the language to their own private needs, initially familiarizing themselves with it by playing – usually with the mother. They gradually become independent members of this particular language-using club themselves.
- Q3: Transformation. Infants discover that they can engage with a private–collective language in novel ways, ways of their own, to explore and charge the world with private–individual meanings of their own. Language becomes a medium for their own creative problem-finding and problem-solving.
- Q4: Publication. They respond to the pull to express their individual ideas in forms of public discourse, so that they can be shared with others, validated and authorized. They become members of the wedding.
- The cyclical movement continues as the cultural gatekeepers authorize their use of the language and secure their individual expressive work for the common wealth (return to Q1), thereby renewing the cultural stock. The Identity Project is continuous through life and the developing expressive use of language characterised by each of the successive phases plays a crucial part.

Harré's model struck us as having immediate application to the (public–private, individual– collective) trajectory of the expressive arts curriculum, which we went on to formulate, indicating as we did so the specific role attaching to the teacher's interventions, stage by stage.

- Q1: Conventionalization. The student learns about the world of the arts, its conventions, institutions, history and techniques, through 'immersion'. The student becomes an arts user and practitioner by imitation, instruction, interrogation and repetition. Teachers will reinforce these spontaneous activities by ensuring the student's exposure to the traditions and conventions governing participation in the arts world, past and present.
- Q2: Appropriation. The student adopts and adapts the languages of the arts to their own purposes and begins to use them expressively – initially as exploratory play. The student develops their own voice, style, tastes and repertoire of skills and preferences among the works of the heritage. Teachers will be on the lookout for, and nourish, the student's emerging artistic preferences and personality, encouraging and resourcing their playful experiments.
- Q3: Transformation. The student discovers their own artistic creativity as the capacity to convert materials into the media of symbol use, to produce signifiers of their own. Teachers empathize with the student's particular expressive project, closely monitoring the connection they make between feeling and form (their subject-reflexive activity), watching for signs of loss of connection or authenticity, technical stress, lack of appropriate cultural references, signs of emotional dissonance etc.
- Q4: Publication. When the student is ready, the teacher provides encouragement for a sharing of the work with others and participation in a shared, reflective evaluation of it. The developing artist is sensitively helped to let the work go, submit to public examination and move on.

Although the model presents these expressive 'episodes' as a sequence, they ought perhaps to be seen as continuous threads in a flowing tapestry of interconnected activities. The student's overall trajectory may be sequential, but progress from moment to moment is both forward and back, retracing steps and renewing connections across the matrix where fresh material from a different stage is necessary to boost or adjust the direction of the project in hand. This flexible to-ing and fro-ing is represented in the project's published material by arrows crossing back and forth across the phase boundaries. The model is spelt out in terms of the student's personal art-making; it is very easily adapted to their creative use of artworks by other artists – their encounters with the collective arts repertoire. Devising the model was a matter of recognizing our own experience as artists and arts teachers. It served to help us think about that experience systematically. It did not embody its reality; it

systematized it conceptually. It helped to answer the questions: What do arts teachers do next? How do their different interventions add up to a coherent experience for the student, a comprehensive pedagogy, experienced as companionship? Before leaving the Assessment Project I shall quote, by way of illustration, from one of the reflective conversations.

I am in conversation with Louise, a 15-year-old secondary-school student. We are in the presence of a life-size, unglazed head, modelled by Louise as part of her art GCSE coursework. The excerpt picks up the conversation about a third of the way in. We have established that the head is female and that she has emerged from a process of improvisation, i.e. was not pre-planned. I suggested that the head, with her eyes closed, looked rather like a death mask. The commentary is by Sally Mitchell.

*Louise does more than appropriate the idea of the death mask from Malcolm, she begins to transform it through her own sensate ordering. This process continues as she goes on looking, her responses always finding justification in the physicality of the piece, in the form which is the trace of her forming.*

*At the end of the extract, Louise registers her sense that she is being asked here to address her work in an unfamiliar way. She feels herself on slightly shaky ground, not sure perhaps of how legitimate her responses are or how to provide them. For a time, the actual exploration is suspended, while the conversation partners reflect on what they have been doing.*

L [pause] I haven't really looked at her and said what I think. You know, I don't really know.

M But you're doing it now?

L Yes.

M How does it feel to be doing it?

L That's...

M I mean, does it feel wrong to be doing it?

L No, no, no! It's stimulating my imagination, which is good.

M I mean, you made her... very much with your hands and your eyes without reflecting too much.

L Yes.

M Almost, I suspect, that sort of...even unconsciously. You've gone on making her and said, 'This is right now, and...'

L Yes.

M '...that's not quite balanced. I like that colour, I'll have a bit more like that. Now we've got her.' So it was like that?

L Yeah.

M We're trying to say, 'What have we got? What have we found?' It's like you've been...