

Journey of Inquiry – Part One

Learning Biography

Towards integrated learner curiosity.

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1. Introduction & Synopsis

We need to create a culture that leaves room for the constant “contamination” of a hundred subjective and objective experiences, in an atmosphere of reciprocal help and socialisation. Implicit in this thesis is a decisive response to a child’s need to feel whole. Feeling whole is a biological and cultural necessity for the child (and also for the adult). It is a vital state of well-being (Malaguzzi in *Reggio Children* 1996, p 34).

Synopsis

This learning biography uses narrative to explore personal knowledge being formed about the cause, nature and function of curiosity and its relationship to learning, within a cycle of inquiry into spirituality. Looking closely at pedagogues Paulo Freire and within the Reggio Children project, along with psychologists and philosophers such as Carl Rodgers and John Macmurray, it begins to articulate a vision of integrated learner curiosity and a personal expression of an ancient way of looking at knowledge. Ambitiously, it also critiques a university’s early beginnings in practicing emerging theories of person-centred education and challenges academia to embrace the potential of the Reggio “hundred languages” in understanding adult learning.

Having lived a life rich with curiosity and learning, I am now curious about curiosity. From my earliest memories, I engaged deeply with the world around me. I have been highly motivated to learn through being curious. I have felt great joy and great sadness through this trait and state, and have come to embrace it – and consciously, carefully harness this Promethean flame.

Through this short learning biography I aim to make meaningful connections between critical events and context that illustrate the above; between the evolution of one upwardly spiralling cycle of inquiry (*see Definitions, p 9*) into an emergent spirituality; and with theorists including Freire (late 1980s, 1998), Malaguzzi (1993, 1996), Loewenstein (1994), Csikszentmihalyi (1997), Macmurray (1932, 1935, 1938) and Rogers (1961).

With this 'tip of the iceberg' process, I will attempt to show how I have constructed some early, personal knowledge about what curiosity is, why I am so curious, how it can be observed and nurtured, how it leads on to my deep learning, and how I can progress this innate ability into an integrated self and higher states of functional effectiveness and personal affectiveness.

These questions are a beginning, and a point of ongoing reflection. They should not be seen as promising conclusions, although some early knowledge has been formed.

By the end of this new episode in my self-directed learning journey, I see curiosity as a natural instinct that can be turned on or off, up or down by myself, by others, by my environment. Conditions such as stimulation, 'satiation' or 'interim knowledge construction' (Loewenstein 1994, p 75), encouragement, dialogue, time and space, documentation, reflection, and freedom from fear have all impacted this natural flow. Ultimately, I see myself as responsible for making choices that will affect this process.

There has also been a parallel and comparable process of meta-cognition. I have deliberately stimulated, then directed and contained my enquiring mind in an epistemological spirit. This has been educational, in the fullest potential of the word.

It has also been difficult, with curious sidetracks to wander down, shaky bridges to cross – yet sweet-scented flowers to inhale. This paper has made visible my curiosity about spirituality; to have inscribed a personal creed is a rose beyond measure.

As the first, small cohort in a new MA in Person-Centred Education that, by its very nature, defies archaic and narrow notions of intellectual articulation and assessment, the path has been both troublesome and transformative (Gill 2007). Inevitably perhaps, the early practice has fallen short of the theory and potential; not through any individual shortcomings, but by the sometimes-gradual nature of change within institutions and society. The loss of course inspirator Michael Fielding at the very beginning has been keenly felt, but he has continued to inspire.

I have walked through spring, summer, autumn and winter in just a few months. I have seen that curiosity, like morality, can *progress* with “effort, struggle, heartbreak and failure”, not simply *evolve* (Macmurray 1938, p418), from a simple spark into a warm, eternal flame – giving energy and focus to my life long learning. I have seen my curiosity *about* curiosity move from restless interest into authentic, personal knowledge.

Such is the alchemical nature of transformation – personal, organisational and systemic – in life and education.

2. Definitions

Curiosity inspires my creativity and learning almost every day, even when I am sleeping. I have many questions, not always possible or easy to answer. One question leads to another, as knowledge is formed and re-formed. I see myself as a human being in the process of becoming (Rogers 1961).

Conditions for curiosity to be sparked and flourish have abounded within my family, in alternative and mainstream educational settings, out in the world and within myself. They were also noticeable occasionally by their absence.

There is a distinct and complex relationship between my curiosity and learning, which I will look closely at by offering definitions of the terms and by examining key incidents and aspects of my life. In essence, one leads to the other, in an upward spiral towards knowledge, although as you will see it is not so linear.

Defining Curiosity – The Thirst For Knowledge

I begin to conceptualise curiosity in an ‘epistemic sense’ (Berlyne 1954a in Loewenstein, 1994 p77), based on close observation of my own experience and a synthesis of sources including Macmurray (cited in Fielding 2000), Rogers (1961), Petersen and Seligman (2004), Malaguzzi (1996), Loewenstein (1994), Noddings (1995) and Csikszentmihalyi (1997). **I see curiosity as a passionate human instinct causing attention to focus on phenomena (the something) and noumena (the unknown something) in need of satiation, which acts as intrinsic motivation for the ongoing pursuit and construction of personal knowledge.**

Put more simply I *feel* curiosity in my being as an almost **unavoidable thirst for knowledge**, agreeing whole heartedly with the first wave of thinkers on curiosity such as Cicero and Aristotle, then later Freud (in Loewenstein's 1994 psychological review and reinterpretation).

There are other senses categorised by Berlyne (1954a in Loewenstein, 1994 p77-) that have traction for me, however it is the "epistemic curiosity" that has been most observable in the spirituality cycle of inquiry. That is, "curiosity as a desire for knowledge" as compared, for example, to "curiosity to alleviate boredom" (or "diversive curiosity").

Learning as acquisition, being and becoming

Synthesising the work of Rogers (1961), Smith (1999, 2003) and others, while looking at my own experience, I work with a definition of learning as **a formative process involving the acquisition of useful skills and knowledge, progress into the experience of being human (living consciously and fully in the moment), and progress along the path to authentic human becoming** ("to be that self which one truly is", Rogers, 1961 pp163-182).

Knowledge as personal meaning and achievement

As we open Pandora's box, let's now look at knowledge. Reggio Emilia's Loris Malaguzzi (1996, p 36) yet again speaks to me:

...knowledge not merely as the broadening and selection of meanings, but also as the achievement of well-being, augmented powers, extensions of the self.

I use knowledge here to describe personal knowing. Looking at epistemological traditions, I am oriented towards constructivism, with an acceptance of the Piagetian need for ‘logical necessity’. (Noddings 1995, p 98-120, Goldin in Noddings 1995, 116). I see what I ‘know’ as different to what you ‘know’, outside of logical necessity, eg. “the physiological reality of hearts and lungs” (Inhelder & Piaget 1979, p165-176 in Campbell 2007).

Throughout this paper you will see the three terms among other concepts contextualised and linked, and make your own interpretation from this.

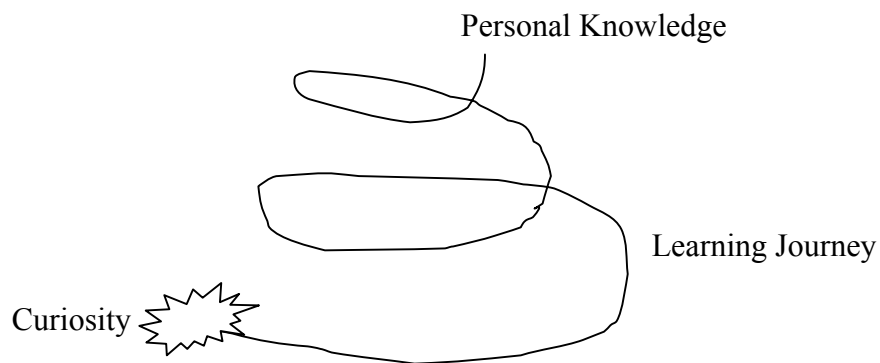


Diagram 1 – Initial concept of the curiosity-sparked path to knowledge.

Documenting a 'Cycle Of Inquiry'

There are countless examples of life episodes and context that could be chosen to document this passionately curious person's thirst to understand the questions being posed, that is: *What is curiosity? Why am I so curious? How can I see it, feel it, nurture it? How can I learn from it? How can I integrate myself through being curious?*

So I have chosen one central, definitive cycle of inquiry (Gandini & Goldhaber 2001) to ground the writing in my own experience – spirituality. What could be more formative. But what is a 'cycle of inquiry'? For Reggio pedagogues Gandini and Goldhaber it is a conceptualisation of documentation as a **“continuous process of framing and reframing a research question and gathering, organizing and interpreting data generated from it”** (Goldhaber 2007) and connects with my concept of learning itself.

...a cycle of inquiry, which goes through a number of steps or phases in its progression... neither linear or tidy... we move through this cycle in fits and starts, sometimes jumping forward, sometimes dropping back. Nevertheless, as this cycle repeats itself in an upward spiral, all its participants build an understanding that grows more meaningful and deeper over time. (Gandini & Goldhaber 2001, p135.)

Hence, documenting the spirituality thread can be seen as a distinct cycle of inquiry, a way into the knowable and unknowable complexity of curiosity and learning. My use of the concept has been adapted to this context, as an adult participant observer/researcher, where the questions are being observed, framed and re-framed retrospectively.

What we lose by taking up the wealth of the Reggio example into this context is the university's current inability to accept my "hundred languages" (Malaguzzi, 1996, p 3. See Appendix) such as personal artefacts, sound recordings, paintings, photographs, short films, conceptual artworks. Academic language alone must suffice for now. Perhaps this will change over time, as person-centred education truly progresses and transgresses.

Curious about the Cosmos

Key questions of spirituality that provoked my curiosity within this cycle changed from child to adult, but became known to me as "*Who am I, in relation to the world around me, to the cosmos, to infinity?*" The difficulty of finding simple answers to such a question has likely been one of the driving forces behind my boundless curiosity. It is a cycle without end, the appetite cannot be 'sated', as Kant (in Loewenstein 1994, p77) would have it, hence it is ongoing. This paper marks a key moment in the cycle,

A personal creed

By spirituality, I refer to **an eternal, immovable sense of a unifying force greater than but existing between all humans; to the interconnectedness and impermanence of all life forms, matter and energy, the force that is everything and nothing all at once. To all that is knowable and unknowable.** I like to hear quantum physicists and spiritual leaders talk together and find I cannot discern one from another. In that way, at its most integral level, the subject/object split is non-existent. I am integrated and whole when I am connected to this force. Usually this happens when I am in nature.

HH The Dalai Lama's masterpiece *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*, along with some of Einstein's metaphysical work, natural theologians like Macmurray and the Reith Lecturers create a place I can call home.

3. Overview of Methodology

I am narrating evidence of having examined my curiosity, primarily in regards to the spirituality cycle of inquiry, from a number of different perspectives including families and institutions, historical events, life transitions, mentoring relationships (Lawrence 2002), turning points and transitions (Bridges, 1980 in Lawrence 2002).

I have been well supported by Dunne, Pryor and Yates' (2005) research companion to consider identity, self-narration and other qualitative research methods from a variety of perspectives. Looking at their sense of Bruner (1999: 174) within this, I site this paper in his 'narrative thinking' as distinct from 'logical-scientific thinking', seeing my Self as agent in the construction, re-construction and analysis of my own learning.

Bruner & Giddens (1991 in Dunne Pryor and Yates 2005, p 150-154) do much to support me in re-entering formal education, as I attempt to reconstruct a self and envision holistic education, through this intense process of learning biography. I must note that my request to include formative songs was dismissed. Thank goodness for Malaguzzi! (See Appendix.) Perhaps education never gets as holistic as the early years. I do not think I am alone in that thought.

Bruner rather gently makes the point that 'it has been the convention of most schools to treat the arts of narrative – song, drama, fiction, theatre, whatever – as more "decoration" than necessity... (Bruner 1999 in Dunne, Pryor and Yates' 2005, p 151).

Despite its current limitations, this meta-documentation process (along with supporting documentation through blogging, a private learning journal and bedside notebooks) has been profound. Hand in hand with key stimulation, observation (including single-point of focus meditation) and analysis, dialogic and reflective methods and academic reading, it has allowed me to remember, relive and capture memories about the experience of curiosity and its relationship to learning.

Of all methods employed, blogging my learning journey in virtual, global community, self-reflection and reflecting in an extended non-virtual learning community have been the most profound. But as fascinating as reflection on methodology as been for meta-cognition, further material prepared must be saved for the future.

4. Curiosity Theorists & Towards Integration

I have defined my understanding of curiosity, learning and knowledge, and introduced the cycle of inquiry into my emerging spirituality. Now let us look more closely at some of the key theorists that are helping progress my conceptualising of curiosity as the catalyst for core learning in my life and a pathway to integration.

I will use Freire's proclamation and definition of curiosity as the spark for this non-linear, upward spiral of knowledge, then link this to Loewenstein's *Review and Reinterpretation of The Psychology of Curiosity* (1994), with particular reference to Berlyne and Piaget. I will also continue to draw from Rogers (1961) and Malaguzzi (1996), and look briefly at Csikszentmihalyi (1997).

Kicking Off From Freire's Pedagogy of Curiosity

Paolo Freire's theorising of curiosity was central to his work. At the peak of his career he stated on national Brazilian television:

I believe in the pedagogy of curiosity... the pedagogy of the question and not of the answer (Freire in Papert, late 1980s).

Later, in *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998), one of his final works, Freire moved on to astutely describe:

Curiosity as restless questioning, as movement toward the revelation of something hidden, as a question verbalized or not, a search for clarity, as a moment of attention, suggestion, and vigilance, constitutes an integral part of the phenomenon of being alive. There could be no creativity without the curiosity that sets us patiently impatient before a world that we did not make, to add to it something of our own making (pp37-38).

Piaget's Disequilibrium – Curiosity as Incongruity

This resonates greatly, and connects with Rogers views on curiosity as a drive towards human becoming (1961) and Loewenstein's (1994, p80-) review of curiosity cause, incongruity and drive theories. I have space here to simply link Freire's restless / impatience view and the incongruity theorists notion that there is a *natural human need for sense making*, which has received broad support (Loewenstein, p 83) and also links with my experience. This can be summarised as being that "we are predisposed to see order, pattern, and meaning in the world". Piaget, a key inspiration for the Reggio pedagogues, is cited as an example of incongruity theory:

Piaget viewed curiosity as the product of cognitive disequilibrium evoked by the child's attempt to assimilate new information into existing cognitive structures.

(McCall & McGhee, 1977 in Loewenstein, p.82)

Flow & Curiosity

Freire's definition also connects with Csikszentmihalyi work on flow (1997). According to Csikszentmihalyi, nothing is interesting unless we focus our attention on it. In his view, like Freire's, we can develop our curiosity (and fight boredom) by directing our attention to what interests us – either consciously or unconsciously.

I agree with his view and know the simple, positive psychology of flow, being fully absorbed in challenging tasks, much like the benefits of meditation – well known now for over 5,000 years. I have seen curiosity as directing this attention.

Independent of Csikszentmihalyi, having read him towards the end of this journey, I see he and I accord on many of the conditions for curiosity (in his case flow) to flourish, such as conversation, stimulation, creativity and leisure (time and space).

Defining & Preventing the Subject/Object Rupture

– Towards Integration

Now back to Freire and his rapture for curiosity, yet inherent rupture. He provokes me consider how to answer my early questions of *How can I learn from curiosity? How can I integrate myself through being curious?* His approach to progressing his ‘pedagogy of curiosity’ is inspiring but problematic. After Berlyne’s simplistic categorisation of *epistemic curiosity* to describe the thirst for knowledge, Freire presents me with a greater challenge and opportunity.

It is my conviction that the difference and the distance between *ingenuity* and critical thinking, between knowledge resulting from pure experience and that resulting from rigorous methodological procedure, do not constitute a rupture but a sort of further stage in the knowing process. This further stage, which is a continuity rather than a rupture, happens when ingenuous curiosity, while remaining curious, becomes capable of self-criticism. In criticizing itself, *ingenuous curiosity* becomes “*epistemological curiosity*”, as through greater methodological exactitude it appropriates the object of its knowing. (Freire, 1998, p37.) (*own emphasis*)

I will engage with Freire's use of 'epistemological curiosity' and 'ingenuous curiosity', but do not see one as superior to the other. Indeed, Freire's words inspire the exact subject/object rupture he seeks to avoid. His words have become a call to my emergent idea of an 'integrated curiosity' to avoid this.

I do indeed see the need to develop questions beyond the initial state, but which questions and why? The journey of this learning biography can be seen as a tangible example of Freire's epistemological curiosity in action. One would not step foot inside a university without being willing to embrace this.

What Freire does not do adequately, and universities seem similarly inclined, is to stress the *importance and equality of ingenuous curiosity*. There is a sense in his writing of the patriarch telling us to "grow up". I hear the voice of the 'child' being suppressed.

The curiosity of simple rural people...is the same curiosity, in the sense of a kind of awe and wonder in the presence of the 'not I', common to scientists or philosophers, as they contemplate the world. Scientists and philosophers, however, overcome the ingenuous curiosity of simple folk and become 'epistemologically' curious. (Freire, 1998, p37)

What does this inspire us to consider in our longings for an evolved praxis of person-centred education? Please, whoever you are, go to Reggio Emilia and then let's talk.

In order to continue with this argument and further my understanding of the conditions for curiosity to flourish, I must now share with you the opening vignette in the narrative of my spirituality cycle of inquiry.

Primary Spirituality Vignette

– The eternal flame ignited: star gazing in the bush

I was around 9 years old. My father took me camping in the remote Australian desert to sleep below one of the biggest, brightest and most intriguing night skies you could imagine. It was a pure experience. My father's unveiling of the night sky created Piaget's disequilibrium within me. I felt I would be torn apart by the insignificance of my own tiny being if I did not start finding congruent answers to my place within it.

Looking back I can see the immense time, space, stimulation, dialogue, relaxation, safety and boundless scope for awe and wonder that existed in that moment, on that night, during that week well away from normal life. All of which can be seen as conditions in which my curiosity flourishes.

The child's sense of awe and wonder need not be 'overcome' as Freire puts it. It is pure knowing, not in a 'logical scientific' sense, but knowledge all the same. I knew, intuitively, when I looked up at the stars as a child everything I have now come to know through greater searching, objective examination and adult inquiry, as seen in the personal creed.

In support of Ingenuous Curiosity

The 'child' or ingenuous curiosity must be heard, in all its richness. The child's knowing is potentially deeper than the adults. As Picasso said, "It took me a lifetime to learn to draw like a child" (1933). By the time we have learnt how to spell epistemological, the baby has long since floated away. As Albert Einstein said:

It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from *stimulation*, stands mainly in need of *freedom*; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail. (Einstein 1950.) (own emphasis)

As the wise Fox in *The Little Prince*, held well above the contempt our hero felt for scientists and philosophers, would have us know:

Here is my secret. It is quite simple: one sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes. (de Saint Exupery 1946, p 72)

The semantics of ingenuity and ingenuousness say a great deal about Freire's and my own theorising of curiosity. To overcome *ingenuity*, the power of creative imagination (from *ingenium*, inborn talent) seems a denial of what it is to be human, a denial of the potential of holistic education.

Carl Rogers (1961) takes up this duality in his chapter within *On Becoming A Person*, "*Person's or Science? A philosophical question*" and gives primacy to the initial, subjective state of curiosity, which he sees as experiential, perceptual, immersive, the "one", primarily feeling. I am calling this the Child-Like Curiosity. In opposition to this, he sets the Scientist. The objective, critical, 'other', thinking way or realm. He sees both as valid ways of processing phenomena.

It is indeed in the matrix of immediate personal, subjective experience that all science, and each individual scientific research, has its origin (Rogers 1961, p 217).

An Early Definition of Integrated Curiosity

Freire's provocation has pushed me to conceive of a state of curiosity and acceptance of a way of knowing that can embrace both the adult and the child, the subject and the object. It is a state of knowing and managing my learning that avoids the rupture, that embraces the whole. It sees curiosity not as right or wrong, but as always open and becoming. It discerns when to be free and poetic, when to be rational and rigorous.

By framing my spirituality cycle of enquiry as *epistemic curiosity* (Berlyne in Loewenstein 1994) from the very beginning, I suggest that the means are themselves the end. From the moment of engaging in epistemic curiosity – the thirst for knowledge – we already begin to know. In this way also, Freire is wrong to frame his 'ingenuous curiosity' as inferior and separate to his 'epistemological curiosity', they are but two iterative points on the upward spiral into knowledge, being and becoming, neither better or worse than the other. Another way to look at it is that they are two paths to knowledge (see Diagram 2, p 29).

5. Personal Context

Having introduced theories of curiosity and begun to develop an integrated approach in response to Freire's dire dichotomy, let's start grounding this more deeply in real life. Who is this spiritual, curious person?

Diversity of interests & action

Having worked closely with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1993) I see myself in nearly every intelligence, to a lesser or greater extent. This is not to say I am intelligent, but that my curiosity has a wide range of stimulus to attend to, that my learning must be multi-threaded if I am to become who I am, that my thirst is great.

Since embarking on transformative tertiary studies in communication and cultural theory at 17 (with Foucault, Sartre, Sontag and friends), I have contributed actively in diverse fields of inquiry from stakeholder relations to activism to education.

I have experienced and, in a few cases worked to establish or develop, 16 formal education environments, as student, teacher, founder and now parent – and written an early years vision for government. I am now developing progressive educational approaches to blogging for individuals and organisations, among other projects of course ;-)

Freire's sense of curiosity as 'restless questioning' is, indeed, very poignant for me.

A Summerhill-inspired school in my early years, along with a fairly free, creative childhood had a lasting impact on my curiosity. We usually had to make our own fun, I was bookish, nature loving and had much freedom to play and roam. I came to know learning as a profound, multi-sensory, self-directed, communal and open process from a very young age. The conditions I have identified for my curiosity to flourish were usually in abundance – such as time, space, dialogue, reflection, stimulation, freedom from fear and encouragement.

Hence, family, social and historical context, and educational institutions have had a major impact on the development of my curiosity and learning.

6. Life Vignettes Continue the Spirituality Cycle

The following critical life vignettes are offered to further illustrate the spirituality cycle of inquiry. In retrospect I can see the question that arose from ingenuous curiosity during the star gazing, resolved then evolved into various new cycles of epistemological curiosity as:

“Who am I, in relation to the world around me, in relation to the cosmos?”

There will also emerge further examples of the conditions in which curiosity has flourished and, occasionally, been hindered (such as fear). These will then be summarised briefly in the next chapter.

The fire is tended by Alma Maters

As I grew older, yet also before the star gazing story, my mother’s more cerebral interest in theology and the nature of existence infused my being. John Macmurray’s Reason & Emotion (1932) was handed down. My Grandmother’s six children and 18 grand children created something of a bohemian, erudite subculture where learning was nurtured and celebrated.

The Big Questions were always welcomed in our houses. I was given Antoine de Saint Exupery’s The Little Prince and felt like I had come home. Dialogue was rich and passionate. Books by Carl Jung and Patrick White were passed around the elders with love and conviviality. My questions about life, the universe and everything were stimulated through literature, film and conversation and encouraged. My mother has often said “children are natural philosophers”. My father (educated to age 15) said “Bullshit, let’s just go fishing.”

She and her mother had both studied philosophy, which I have an affinity for but also a resistance to, knowing the purity of the truth I can gain simply by bathing in a rock pool or going camping, thanks to Dad.

It could be said that the archetypal genders were reversed. My father gave me access to deep 'ingenuous' knowledge, while my matrilineal line helped develop the epistemological, analytical rigour. The need for an integrated curiosity becomes clear, where both ways of knowing are embraced like true Alma Maters and Paters.

A Mentor in Headmistress' Clothing

The headmistress of the elite ladies college I attended between 15-17 was not well understood or liked. But I sat at the front her of comparative theology classes and when I was not scared of her, when I felt safe to ask questions, we created a rich, relationship, that encouraged my natural affinity, my ingenuous curiosity to research its own way into spirituality through Presbyterianism, Buddhism and beyond. I came yet again to experience curiosity (about spirituality) positively, as a way to be known and loved as a unique human being. I was wholeheartedly encouraged.

Existential Crisis at 26

For many years during early adulthood, I lost connection with the spiritual riches of my childhood. My curiosity was bought by a career, by being functional and robotic in corporations. By the time I was 26, I had soul lag. Ever precocious, it was time for a mid-life crisis.

My spiritual curiosity fought to be heard, reborn. I was ravaged and emptied by depression. Slowly, the questions that the child could never verbalise became known. “*Who am I?*” “*What is my connection with the cosmos?*” “*What are the conditions for happiness?*” My reason for wanting to live became a quest to find answers to these, not just for myself, but for others. I was reborn by the most basic and natural form of curiosity I can imagine, “*Why am I here?*”

Integrating into Wholeness

At 31 I was a mother with a baby girl, crawling through the mirror tunnel in the Reggio Project’s *Hundred Languages of Children* exhibition. I had tried many paths to meaningful work. In many ways my thirst for knowledge had been sated, but there was a new phase in the cycle about to emerge. In that moment, fresh seeds were being planted for what seems to have become a lifelong curiosity about education. Seeds that connected to the gentle cry for an integrated way forward, where adult and child, masculine and feminine, subject and object could come together.

The Reggio Project sparked, and continues to spark my curiosity at all levels, more deeply than any other educational environment I have encountered. It became the inspiration for me to work with my local community to attempt to found a holistic centre for excellence in early learning.

I published academically on the similarities I had seen in Reggio between their practice and Buddhism. My spiritual cycle of inquiry led me to consider the potential for education to contribute to the progress of the human spirit through education.

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The curiosity sparked by the stars as a child took me through life transitions, institutions, family and mentoring relationships (Lawrence 2002) into learning, being and becoming. It gave me a path on which I still travel, “patiently impatient” before a world I did not make, to add to it something of my own making (Freire 1998 (pp37-38)).

7. Summarising Conditions for Curiosity

Throughout this paper I have refer to the conditions under which my curiosity has been sparked and progressed into different ways of knowing.

These have, to some degree, been linked to key theorists, but are essentially drawn from my own experience – in regards to the spirituality cycle of inquiry as well as general observations about curiosity and the meta-cognitive process of developing this learning biography.

To summarise now, I see these conditions as being highly interconnected, overlapping in their nature and outcomes and can be seen as:

- Time & space
- Stimulation
- Documentation & reflection
- Encouragement
- Dialogue
- Freedom from fear.

A special note on freedom from fear

In attempting to distil nearly four decades of passionate curiosity into 5,000 words for an unknown university institution to assess, I became fearful of The Box not allowing me to breathe, to be authentic. Fearful that rigour and the search for certainty would overtake meaning. When I feel this fear, my curiosity is gone. It was a relief on the first occasion I met my supervisor to hear her talk about this kind of fear. To put it out there openly. Naming it, normalising it, sharing it, made it disappear. Macmurray and AS Neill (1992) talk a lot about the need for learners, for people to be free from fear if they are to learn and be happy.

Fear is the great emotional force which inhibits action. Life is, in its nature, spontaneous activity. To be alive is to express, in an unembarrassed commerce with the world outside us, that life that is in us in action. Fear freezes the spontaneity of life. (Macmurray 1932.)

8. Personal Knowledge Formed

In keeping with my conceptualising of learning and knowledge, I will not refer to conclusions, but to personal knowledge formed. Piaget's logical necessities of the physiology of hearts and lungs and such are not at stake here.

At the end of this journey of inquiry, I have come to know curiosity as the spark for my learning, about spirituality, about all. I have seen my ingenuous curiosity, my awe and wonder at the mysteries of the universe and my place in it come full circle through Freire's call for epistemological rigour to what I knew already from that first moment under the stars. I have developed traditional skills and knowledge about curiosity, articulation, about learning itself, about living, about being. I have developed and integrated both. I can make choices about when to 'know' and when to continue finding out.

I have begun to articulate another form of knowledge, connected to Freire's sense of ingenuous curiosity and to my own experience of awe and wonder. It is equal, pure and transcendent. This knowledge cannot be easily expressed in academic language and will need other arts to express it. Zen Buddhists recognise it as *te*.

Through taking up Freire's challenge I have been able to articulate what curiosity is to me and go some way to understanding what its relationship is to my learning, construction and re-construction of knowing.

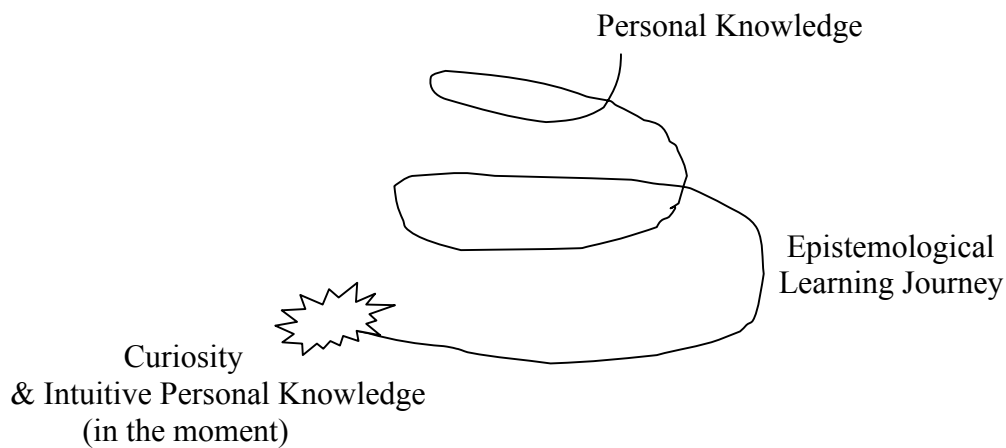


Diagram 2 – Progressed concept of the curiosity-sparked, two paths to knowledge (as provoked by Freire 1998).

But better still, I have been able to take the rapture for questioning through rupture into integration. My knowing will not be your knowing, my process, this journey has been my own.

Simply, I have come to know and love my curious self, in all its dimensions and points upon the upward spiral. I have come to be whole, to be “that self which one truly is” (Rogers, 1961 pp163-182.) I honour and thank the course instigators for giving me this opportunity.

In closing for now, I am fascinated by the possibilities within Alan Watts’ provocation with *te*. There is something sacred in this excerpt about the nature of curiosity, and that Promethean flame we must never let burn out when trying to ‘educate’ or be ‘educated’. (But the metaphor, conjuring Dr Frankenstein’s – could that be the current education system’s? – monster leaves me looking for something far more whole and natural.)

In sum, then, *te* is the unthinkable ingenuity and creative power of man's spontaneous and natural functioning – a power which is blocked when one tries to master it in terms of formal methods and techniques. It is like the centipede's skill in using a hundred legs at once.

The centipede was happy, quite

Until a toad in fun

Said, 'Pray, which leg goes after which?'

This worked his mind to such a pitch,

He lay distracted in a ditch

Considering how to run. (Anon.)

(Watts, 1957)

9. Appendix

I will close with dear Loris Malaguzzi's now famous poem, a prescribed entry point to experiencing the Reggio Children early years educational project – a project demanding ongoing attention for education of all ages.

The Hundred Languages of Children

No way. The hundred is there.

The child

is made of one hundred.

The child has

a hundred languages

a hundred hands

a hundred thoughts

a hundred ways of thinking

of playing, of speaking.

A hundred always a hundred

ways of listening

of marvelling, of loving

a hundred joys

for singing and understanding

a hundred worlds

to discover

a hundred worlds

to invent

a hundred worlds

to dream.

The child has

a hundred languages

(and a hundred hundred hundred more)

but they steal ninety-nine.

The school and the culture

separate the head from the body.

They tell the child:

to think without hands

to do without head

to listen and not to speak

to understand without joy

to love and to marvel

only at Easter and at Christmas.

They tell the child:

to discover the world already there

and of the hundred

they steal ninety-nine.

They tell the child:

that work and play

reality and fantasy

science and imagination

sky and earth

reason and dream

are things

that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child

that the hundred is not there.

The child says:

No way. The hundred is there.

(translated by Lella Gandini)

(in Reggio Children 1996, p 3)

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