# *The Council of Elrond* challenges the 'Sylvia Plath' effect: Authenticity and values in creative endeavour

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**Abstract**

*This paper argues that learning to maintain authentic motivation, as described within Self-determination Theory, is an important buffer against eroded mental health in creative work and should be part of the educational support of creativity. This argument is necessarily tentative for it is made at a time when the educational focus on creativity is already complicated by confusion around the meaning and value of creativity, and when our understanding of the social effects of creative behaviour is limited (Craft, 2003). Nevertheless, it is the view of the author that it has become necessary to 'engage' the authenticity construct for the welfare of a student population destined for workplaces where creativity is expected. Therefore, in this paper an attempt is made to grapple with what it is about authenticity that enables creative work and to determine whether authentic behaviour is desirable. It is concluded, on current evidence, that encouragement of authenticity is called for and should benefit students and their communities, but that commitment to such an educational project would test current education resources. Instances of creative life and work, such as that of scholar-author J.R.R. Tolkien and poet Sylvia Plath, provide illustration for some of the concepts employed and it is suggested that 'The Council of Elrond' episode in 'The Lord of the Rings' contains elements useful for illuminating the notion of authenticity. Recommendations of creativity researchers regarding the development of authenticity in educational settings are presented.*

## Introduction

There is currently a great deal of interest in creativity and it seems that there are many reasons for that interest. Increased interest in creativity has been linked to the intentions of organizations seeking competitive advantage (Dewett, 2003), to changes in media technology (Castells, 2004; McLuhan, 1969; Ong, 2002), and to many people's desire to exercise their creativity in creative work (Florida, 2002). Gibson (2005) observes that creativity is a popular *word* in educational parlance, which offers hope of fresh approaches in education, but which has many meanings and is used to justify diverse ends. Contemporary interest in creativity would therefore seem to be linked to a range of cultural, organisational, and individual processes and agendas.

For educators, this creates an exceedingly complex context, within which to consider how to 'address' creativity and some authors see the educational support of creativity as a highly complex issue. While Florida (2002) embraces creativity as a new 'norm' and is encouraged by the quality of the 'ethos' displayed by the emerging 'creative class', others suggest that the desirability of norms of cultural change is not apparent (Craft, 2000, 2001, 2003; Gibson, 2005). Craft (2001) argues, for example, that although there are sound reasons for encouraging creativity through education, there could also be "socially and environmentally destructive aspects to fostering a culture of innovation" (p.28). Craft (2000) and Gibson (2005) are concerned about the consequences of encouraging creativity without due attention to the development of appropriate values. Gibson (2005) is also apprehensive about the potential for educational misuse of romanticized notions of creative *authenticity*.

In the Self-determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000b) perspective on authentic motivation, authentic or autonomous behaviour is not a romantic notion, but is based in human propensities for growth and self-regulation. In this view authenticity involves acting from interests and integrated values, and promotes creativity and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Thus, the development of authenticity involves

processes, which would seem to address the concerns of Craft and Gibson above. Furthermore, when people are not propelled by authentic motivation in creative work their pleasure in the work and emotional health can be impaired (Kaufman & Baer, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Therefore, in order to fulfil duties of care toward a student population destined for workplaces where creative performance is now a high priority (Reid & Petocz, 2004) an educational focus on authenticity seems appropriate, even urgent. However, according to Gibson (2005), authenticity is not a concept that teachers find readily comprehensible. Nor, he suggests, are teachers finding it easy to comprehend how the value of creative work or products can be determined.

This paper is concerned with understanding how authentic motivation enables satisfying creative work and considers the relation of authenticity to creative values. Some illustration is drawn from the lives of creative people. Particular attention is given to J.R.R. Tolkien's creative effort in writing the massive, fictional work, *The Lord of The Rings* [1]. During this long process, spanning several years, Tolkien guarded the authenticity of his work and maintained emotional health. As such, his example can be contrasted with the case of Sylvia Plath, a poet who appears to have struggled to maintain authenticity in her work, suffered eroded emotional health and eventually committed suicide.

The discussion begins by briefly considering how educational interest in creativity is currently justified and argues that major differences in the ways that creativity is conceptualised point to different ways that creativity can be considered valuable. While authentic creativity might require extensive educational supports, it has value for students and their communities, which is different from the value of being able to produce novelty on demand. As self-authored behaviour involves operating from internal rather than external control, coercive work management practices can potentially reduce authentic motivation and induce stress in creative workers (Mumford, 2000).

Selected aspects of authentic creativity are then explored -- particularly the involvement of *interest* in its process, phenomenology and 'inward' awareness and in the formation of identity and values; and the role of meaningful goals in heightening persistence, vitality and well-being in creative work. Some thoughts are tendered concerning the role of positive marginality and its associated *constructionist* consciousness (Unger, 2000) in facilitating authentic creativity in real social contexts. It is suggested that there may be important aspects of consciousness to consider as the cultural emphasis on creativity continues. However, as authentic motivation often spontaneously 'occurs' and compels creative activity in a self-directed way, it is not likely that creativity can be restrained or controlled in the current climate of creative opportunity. Educators might, however assist in its optimal development.

In an effort to make the notion of 'authenticity' graspable, I suggest that *The Council of Elrond* episode in *The Lord of the Rings*, which describes how the *Ringbearer* takes up the quest of the *Ring*, might make an approachable metaphor for conceptualising what it means to act *authentically*. Some recommendations of researchers concerning how authentic creativity can be encouraged in educational settings are also presented.


**How valuable is creativity?**

Gibson (2005) suggests that creativity is the "current icon of the educational world" (p.149). He observes it to be a popular "hurrah!" word, for which many educators express approval, but which is used and understood in a variety of ways. He observes that justifications for encouraging creativity in education fall into two main categories -- justifications that emphasise the instrumental or economic reasons for encouraging the creativity of students and those, which emphasise the value of individuality and authentic self-expression. Gibson argues that there are questionable aspects to both of these discourses and that both are potentially harmful if educators adopt them without careful interrogation of their underlying assumptions. For him, these justifications become problematic when teachers, as "custodians of value" (Gibson, 2005, p.164), are directed via current policy initiatives to assist students in fashioning creative products, which

have both *originality* and *value*. The definition of creative products as either original and valuable, or novel and appropriate, is common throughout the creativity literature (Mayer, 1999) and in the West, creativity is often defined as the *ability* to produce work that has these characteristics (Lubart, 1999). The first of Gibson's concerns is that, "in the absence of any sustained epistemological or ethical discussion of what *are* valued goals, creativity appears supine to the needs of the economy with education policy at heel…" (Gibson, 2005 p.156). He finds it equally problematic that teachers, lacking a clear sense of what it means to foster authentic expression and originality, are unsure about when and how to intervene constructively in the creative processes of students. He argues that uncertainty about how to encourage or support creativity reduces teacher confidence and effectiveness and may also leave students, and their creativity, exposed to the demands of economic rationality, without having learned to use their creative ability to "search for the rightness of underlying values" (Gibson, 2005, p.156).

Economic interest in creativity has generated global commercial demand for, what Florida (2002) terms 'creative talent'. Australian creativity researchers, Reid and Petocz (2004) note that the demand from industry for creative graduates is greater than tertiary institutions can currently supply. Their research interest is in uncovering how creative university students learn, so that educators might better develop student creativity and prepare them to take up creative work. Dewett, Shin, Toh and Semadeni (2005) make similar observations concerning the urgent need for more creative, business-related PhDs in order to meet demand. Thus, as Gibson (2005) indicates above, educational interest in encouraging student creativity, at school, undergraduate and post-graduate levels, appears to be aimed, in large part, at supplying the 'needs of the economy'.

However, as Gibson (2005) also notes, there are other kinds of justifications for educational interest in creativity, which focus on the value of creative authenticity. A number of creativity theorists regard creativity as an 'optimal' form of human functioning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Simonton, 2000). In Ryan and Deci's (2000a) conceptualisation of optimal functioning in humans, creativity is part of people's natural activity and constructiveness when psychologically healthy – and is optimal when the motivation behind it is *authentic*. Authentic motivation refers to when "people stand behind a behaviour out of their interests and values" (Ryan & Deci, 2000b, p.69). They observe important functional and experiential differences between *intrinsically* motivated behaviour, which people engage in for inherent satisfactions and which enhances creativity, and behaviour motivated by external coercions, such as a bribe or fear of surveillance.

Arguing along similar lines Craft (2000) proposes creativity as a 'postmodern virtue'. To do so she draws on the ideas of Bohm and Peat (1989) who argue, similarly to Ryan and Deci (2000a), that intrinsic motivation supports healthy creativity, and extrinsic controls are incompatible with the creative process. Yet Craft (2000) sees the potential for creativity to be "used for both constructive and destructive ends" (p.157). It is perhaps difficult to reconcile the argument on one hand, that creativity involves virtue and optimal functioning, with the concern on the other that creativity may not always be desirable.

Much of the difficulty in evaluating the value of creativity may arise because of the diversity of perspectives and interpretations of creativity occurring in both the scientific literature (Feldman, 1999; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988) and popular discourse (Gibson, 2005). Dietrich (2007) refers, for example, to the 'monolithic entity' fallacy, a problem of the creativity literature, which, he argues, can at times make it seem as though creativity is entirely the result of either divergent thinking, right brain thinking, defocused attention, mental illness or altered states – which he points out is clearly *not* the case as creativity is also the result of non-divergent thinking, left-brain thinking, focused attention, and healthy or normal mental states. Thus the literature itself may support the impression that creativity is not an important aspect of thinking, not relevant for everyone or not desirable. In addition, different aspects of creativity are investigated using a range of methodologies, making it difficult to compare or integrate perspectives (Feldman, 1999). Moreover,

the singular term 'creativity' is used to denote a number of behaviours, which may not, as Csikszentmihalyi (1996) suggests, be related.

The definition of creativity as *the ability to produce novel and appropriate products* is applied to a range of behaviours as disparate as making non-complex, novel and appropriate responses reinforced by small rewards, as observed in behaviourist studies of creativity (Eisenberger & Armeli, 1997; Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2001) and long-term, self-directed endeavour resulting in culturally important work or discoveries, as exemplified by outstanding creators such as Tolkien, Monet, Darwin or Einstein. Social-psychologists insist that these behaviours are not comparable (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001; Hennessey & Amabile, 1998). Hennessey and Amabile (1998) suggest that while the studies by Eisenberger and colleagues may show that divergent thinking for simple tasks can be enhanced using rewards, research also shows that creativity in complex tasks is reliably diminished by material rewards, except under specific circumstances, where the individual has learned to maintain control over his/her intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 2001; Hennessey, 2000). Rewards, surveillance, threats or schedules will not reduce intrinsic motivation, if the person's sense of self-determination is preserved (Hennessey, 2000) – but achieving this may require experience or dispositional factors.

The same definition of creativity can also apply to some kinds of psychopathological behaviour (Simonton, 2005). Simonton (2005) suggests that people with mild psychopathologies can sometimes contribute useful 'variations' for cultural selection and may have thinking styles that favour absorption in their work and persistence in activities. Dietrich (2007) argues, however, that "mental illness does not have a link with creativity; it has a link with a specific kind of creativity – if that" (p.26). With this qualification, he is perhaps questioning how broadly the term creativity should be applied – an issue, which will not be discussed here.

But educators might, at the very least, acknowledge that not all behaviours currently deemed 'creative' are necessarily equivalent, either in similarity of mental processes involved or value to the person and community, and instead consider what is education's interest in creativity? Where does the value of the various aspects of creativity lie? Certainly educators cannot be interested in promoting psychopathology. Trainable creative thinking skills should, however, be useful in a range of ways -- but behaviourist approaches promote the idea that 'creativity' can be manipulated through the use of tangible rewards, in which case there is every reason to be concerned about the ethics of creativity. But what, if anything, do we have to fear from authentic creativity?

In the Self-determination Theory (SDT) framework (Ryan & Deci, 2000b), autonomy is described as self-authored or authentic behaviour and is regarded as "an appropriate objective toward which socializing agents should strive" (Burton, Lydon, Alessandro, & Koestner, 2006, p.751). The highly autonomous individual makes conscious decisions based on integrated values and is observed to be "far from infinitely malleable" (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997, p.716). Autonomous/authentic motivation is a composite of two types of motivation – intrinsic and identified motivations. Intrinsic motivation, which "exists when people freely choose to perform an activity out of a sense of interest" (Burton et al., 2006, p.750), is conceptualised as a 'developmental trajectory', which propels humans toward cognitive and personality development, self-regulation and social integration -- and is theorised to facilitate selective investment in genetic predispositions toward strong interests or talents by ensuring that to do so "feels fun and vitalizing" (Ryan et al., 1997, p.720). *Identified* motivation, represents the extent to which a person's identified goals are genuinely meaningful. It can motivate persistence during tedious parts of a task (Burton et al., 2006). These two types of regulation work together to maintain effort and well-being as people work toward their goals (Burton et al., 2006). They are also, involved in building an increasingly functional, autonomous 'self', a process which involves higher order, reflective thinking about one's actions, internal states, goals and values (Ryan et al., 1997). But, these motivations rely on adequate fulfilment of psychological needs for

competence, self-determination and relatedness. Adequate fulfilment of these needs promotes vitality, interest and creativity (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Thwarted satisfaction of the needs, "invariably results in negative functional consequences for mental health and often for ongoing persistence and performance" (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Seen through the lens of this framework, authentically motivated creative activity is part of a process of development, which conduces toward social integration or contribution. It may not be the intention of people involved in such a process to produce novelty, but to do things, which are meaningful in the context of their own development. Perhaps one's significant developmental work can *be* one's creative contribution. This would be consistent with Raven's (2002) assertion that creativity must be understood in the kinds of activity a person is strongly predisposed to carry out and in his or her motives.

The issue of variation in conceptualisations of creativity is therefore a critical one for educators to confront. Competing conceptualisations, such as the divergent views of behaviourists and social-psychologists highlighted above, have major implications for how creativity can be valued from an educational perspective and for how it is supported in educational environments. On one hand creativity is viewed as part or product of the holistic evolution of the individual toward functionality and social integration, a process, which is not helped by tangible reward or other forms of perceived control (Ryan & Deci, 2000c), and on the other, creativity is viewed in terms of generative thinking skills, which can be increased through reward and training (Cropley, 1999). From an educational point of view, the issue requires serious consideration, for at least two reasons. First, regardless of which theoretical position one intuitively favours, development of creativity should ideally entail taking cognisance of both approaches -- and of the two, the holistic approach poses the most daunting challenges for educators. As Nickerson (1999) notes, encouraging students to develop values conducive to creativity, to be reflective, curious, and open to new ideas, "demands a great deal of the classroom teacher" (p.419), especially, he adds, if teachers themselves do not value these attitudes and habits of mind. Secondly, if authentic motivation is indeed integral to the processes of complex creativity, proliferation of the unqualified belief that creativity can be enhanced by reward actually has the potential, in organizational situations, to reduce employee creativity and endanger mental health.

On this topic, Frey and Jegen (2001) state that while there is extensive and compelling empirical evidence for the *crowding out* of intrinsic motivation by monetary rewards, this evidence has not been well integrated into economic thinking, partly because it opposes "the most fundamental economic "law" that raising monetary incentives increases supply" (p.3). They are troubled by the possibility that management practices based on prevalent economic models have the potential to reduce intrinsic motivation. Mumford (2000) too indicates that managing creative people in a way that allows the creative work-style to proceed, requires careful revision of common organizational practices involving evaluation, incentives, goals and schedules, for traditional management practices have the potential to reduce intrinsic motivation and induce stress in people carrying out creative work.

Educators should therefore be concerned about preparing students to enter work environments where a tradition of applying coercive, extrinsic motivators to enhance work performance may persist alongside growing demands for creative work. This is especially important because of the indications that failure to maintain intrinsic motivation and authenticity when performing creative work can have seriously debilitating effects on both creativity and mental health. Creative activity is something that many people desire and value, but if an educational approach promotes creative skills or abilities, without acknowledging the challenges inherent in both developing authenticity and performing creative work, it falls short of addressing student needs.

**Challenges of Creative Life**

Some aspects of creative jobs can be extremely stressful (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Kaufman, 2002; Policastro & Gardner, 1999). There are many pressures, for example, of being a leader in a field or in weathering the periods of boom and bust that can mark creative careers (Kaufman, 2002). Time pressures can reduce a person's ability to think creatively (Friedman & Forster, 2005; Policastro & Gardner, 1999). Some domains offer limited opportunity to make a reasonable living by being creative (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Furthermore, a person who creates, often has a great personal 'investment' in his/her creative work, such that the loss of creative motivation or criticism of that work can be experienced as painful -- as seems to have been the case for poet Sylvia Plath (Runco, 1998). Plath's eventual suicide has raised a great deal of speculation as to why she took that course. But suicide among female poets is apparently common enough that some psychologists have referred to the phenomenon as the 'Sylvia Plath' effect (Kaufman & Baer, 2002). Although Kaufman and Baer (2002) identify this as a complex problem with many contributing factors, they indicate that the construction of women's social roles can intensify pressures surrounding creative women and make it difficult for them to ignore coercive or distracting extrinsic factors. They suggest that the problem, which also affects male poets to a lesser degree, is at least partly due to the difficulty of maintaining authenticity during creative work. Extrinsic pressures can also prove debilitating for eminent creative people by undermining confidence and emotional health (Kaufman, 2002). Kaufman and Baer (2000) propose that to preserve mental health in creative work, creators, especially poets and writers and more especially female poets and writers, might need to learn to manage the intrusion of extrinsic motivational constraints in order to allow the intrinsic motivational factors to predominate.

In this light, the creative effort of J.R.R. Tolkien, in writing his complex and epic tale, *The Lord of the Rings*, should provide a useful study in creative authenticity. Tolkien, whose life appears quite unremarkable in other respects, with no scandals and no mental illness, wrote the book over a period of more than twelve years. At the same time he wrote other works of fiction, performed time consuming academic duties, participated in family life, endured criticism from colleagues, resisted publisher pressure to write a different kind of book, and was disinterested in goals of money or fame (Carpenter, 1977). On completion of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien was able to claim, "It is written in my life-blood, such as that is, thick or thin; and I can no other" (Carpenter, 1977, p.204). From this we may gather that the work was effortful and difficult, yet intrinsically motivated and authentic. However, Shippey (2000) points out that at that time in the 1950s, no market researcher could have predicted the book's eventual incredible success and the lasting influence it would come to have on reader tastes, for it was "long, difficult, trailed with appendices, studded with quotations in unknown languages…and utterly strange" (p.xxiv). So how is it that a person can persist at such an exacting, risky task over such a long time? Much of the answer may lie, as indicated in the SDT framework, in the strength of a person's goals and ability to maintain *interest*.

**The Value of Interest**

From the earliest days of creativity research until now, the involvement of intrinsic motivation in creativity has been noted and emphasised (Albert & Runco, 1999). Intrinsic motivation takes centre place in Amabile's (1983) *Componential Model* of creativity, a model which is widely used in education and organizations (Craft, 2001; Dewett, 2003). But it is not always apparent, how intrinsic motivation works in the creative process. So, in this section some detail about the properties of *interest* is provided to give an indication of just how integral intrinsic motivation can be, not only in maintaining the focus and energy for creative effort, but in the development of the creative person and his/her value relationship with a particular subject matter.

Interest researchers regard enduring *individual interest* as a psychological state or disposition that involves value and affective aspects (Hidi, 2000; Krapp, 2003; Renninger, 2000). Krapp (2003) argues that a person will only be interested in something over a long period of time if the activity is rationally assessed as

valuable and is continually experienced as emotionally satisfying. He reasons that for this to occur there must be sufficient fulfilment of the basic needs for competence, self-determination and relatedness, as postulated by SDT. Therefore long-term or complex creative work should proceed most efficiently and with least stress, when a person is working in an area where they feel competent, where they have emotional support or can experience some sort of social relatedness through their work; where the person feels like the originator or director of the work, and where the work is perceived by the person as valuable and emotionally satisfying.

There are different types or levels of interest. Some interest is short-lived or *situational,* while in the case of *individual interest* there is an "ongoing and deepening relation of a person to particular subject content…It includes a more enriched kind of value than does situational interest as well as an increasingly consolidated base of discourse knowledge" (Renninger, 2000, p.373). In the deeply interested state there is no "gap" between what people wish to do and what they have to do (Krapp, 2003) and this enables the focus that sometimes gives rise to the effortless cognition of the *flow* state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Dietrich, 2004; Krapp, 2003; Renninger, 2000) and gives to creative work its 'autotelic' or self-sustaining quality (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Interest, especially strong interest, has a number of advantages or benefits for creativity. It improves thinking ability (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000) and increases feelings of vitality (Nix, Ryan, Manly, & Deci, 1999). When people are interested they show increased ability to generate ideas, make connections between ideas, solve problems and cope flexibly with change or new situations (See Friedman & Forster, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Many studies have demonstrated improved creative processing even at moderate levels of interest (Collins & Amabile, 1999). But a person with a strong individual interest will tend to be unsatisfied with current levels of knowledge in his/her interest area and will be motivated to increase competence (Krapp, 2002). Over time the interest content is *internalised* (Renninger, 2000) and can become a stable part of the personality (Krapp, 2002, 2003). At the same time, the person's sense of personal competence with respect to the interest area tends to increase (Renninger, 2000). Perspectives on the effect of cognitive load in learning tasks are also relevant here, as they suggest that as competence levels increase people's need for autonomy in learning also increases (van Merrienboer & Sweller, 2005).

Having a strong interest in a particular area is, not surprisingly, a common thread running through the life-stories of many highly creative people (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). J.R.R. Tolkien's biography provides an excellent illustration of the developmental potential of strong interest. Carpenter (1977) recounts how, as a boy, Tolkien enjoyed Latin lessons with his mother, experienced moments of intense awe and curiosity in his encounters with ancient language and spent a great deal of time doing, what he called, 'Private Lang' – private language study. For his own pleasure he constructed languages based on the principles of actual languages, and read a great deal of ancient story and mythology. Tolkien at times felt that he understood ancient language and story intuitively and this sense of connection to the subject matter seems to have heightened his interest. Eventually, in the developmental manner indicated by Renninger and Krapp above, this deep, individual interest in language pervaded all areas of his life. It was exercised in his scholarly life as Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, and in his writing of fiction. It was in his family life when he read or told fairy stories to his children and it was indulged in his leisure time when he regularly spent time with friends, among them C.S. Lewis, discussing mutual interests in language and writing. Tolkien did much of his fictional writing for his own satisfaction. He never held out much hope of publishing *The Silmarillion* , 'the work of his heart' (Shippey, 2000) -- but he wrote it nevertheless. What can be seen in Tolkien's example is that strong interest can provide a powerful impetus for building competence and identity, provides energy and enjoyment and can support creative effort without any need for external motivators.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) posits that there may be many bases for the kind of unquenchable curiosity that drives interest and creativity. However, he believes that knowing where such curiosity comes from may be less important than recognizing interest when it shows, so that one can "provide the opportunities for it to

grow into a creative life" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p.182). Nickerson (1999) believes that neither creative cognition skills nor domain knowledge is as important for creativity as desire and internal motivation, for he states: "With sufficient motivation, one is likely to obtain the necessary knowledge and to discover useful heuristics; without it, knowledge of any kind is unlikely to do much good" (p.420).

However, importantly for educators, it appears that identifying one's interests is not as straightforward as it might seem. Renninger (2000) reports that, "individual interest is not necessarily something of which a person is always reflectively aware" (p.379), and has found that both younger and older people may have little sense of what truly interests them or of how to enrich the value of an individual interest by increasing knowledge in that area. Indeed, Wilson and Dunn (2004) have reported that gaining self-knowledge is difficult. It may be that those who have come to recognise where their interests lie, and so are able to develop their interests in a reflective way, are in the minority. People may require assistance to access the benefits of interest if life events cannot be relied upon to show us where our interests lie.

Perhaps this is why it fascinates us to learn of instances where a moment of childhood awe seems to foretell creative achievement in adulthood. In his book, *The Soul's Code,* James Hillman (1996) showcases a number of such instances. Nobel Prize winning writer Elias Canetti developed an "unquenchable yearning for letters" (in Hillman, 1996, p.28) as he watched his father reading the daily newspaper. Filmmaker Ingmar Bergman recalls his boyhood yearning for a 'cinematograph', and how, after attending the circus with his parents, he was moved to build feverish fantasies around one of the female performers (Hillman, 1996, pp.197-202). Feldman (1999) refers to such moments as "crystallizing" experiences, moments when a mind becomes "focused and organized toward a known purpose" (p.172). Hillman frames these early episodes as glimpses of the personal 'daimon' – clues to a person's 'calling'. His discussion does not illuminate the role that these early experiences might often play in *schooling attention* (Renninger, 2000) and helping to motivate a lifetime of focused knowledge gathering.

But Hillman's (1996) approach is a reminder that the phenomenology of creativity, with its various aspects -- 'crystallizing' experiences, deep focus, flow, intuitions and insights -- has commonly been perceived, not as trivial, but as compelling and meaningful. Some regard mystical ideas about creativity as misconceptions (Isaksen, 1997). But, as Ong (2002) observes, 'depth psychology' is the product of a modern 'literate' consciousness. Before psychology all human behaviour had to be theorised in non-psychological terms. It is worth noting that even with all of our modern scientific research we may be no better than our ancestors at describing the phenomenology of creativity. For as Schooler, Fallshore and Fiore (1995) point out in their summing up of research into creative insight, there may be no way to approach the *feeling* component of insight, except through metaphor – for example, a blind person achieving sight. It seems quite fitting to refer to the *feeling* of a 'crystallizing experience' as a sensation of destiny or calling, if in that moment, as Feldman (1999) observes, one feels focused toward a known purpose.

Part of the intention of this paper is to consider how aspects of authentic behaviour might influence people's values. If the experience of creativity is in some way tied to religious thought as is sometimes suggested (Albert & Runco, 1999; Craft, 2001; Crook, 1980), then the topic might fill many volumes. But there are perhaps some general observations that can be made with respect to how strong interest might influence values. Not everyone, it seems, is aware of having an interest (Renninger, 2000) -- and strong individual interests developed through acquired knowledge are likely to be even less common. One might then expect some differences between the values of people with deep interests and those who are not aware of having an interest. One could predict that interested people would value their interests, the state of being interested, acquiring knowledge, and opportunities to expand and use their knowledge. This seems consistent with Florida's (2002) observation that creative people value *creativity* -- which might seem like a shallow value to those who regard creativity as a 'trivial pursuit' (Policastro & Gardner, 1999). But, if we consider that deep interest is a dimension of creative work that imparts meaning to activity, 'feels fun and vitalising',

and fosters a sense of identity, then we can begin to understand the valuing of creativity, not as a liking for the trivial (even though this might sometimes be the case), but as affirmation from creative people regarding the positive role of interest and creative endeavour in their lives.

An additional possibility is that people with strong interests might value conditions that allow intrinsic motivation and fulfil needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness. They might, for example, as Amabile and colleagues predict for intrinsically oriented people, be more likely to "choose professions that will allow them active, self-reliant involvement in their work; continue their educations (formally and informally) beyond college…and express higher levels of positive affect when engaged in complex challenging activities" (Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994, p.965). Thus from the basic formation of strong interest, there seems to be a line of potential, maybe predictable, effects on the development of competence and identity and further to the formulation of values and lifestyle and career choice.

**Goals with Value**

Kaufman and Baer (2002) have suggested that in order to maintain mental health in creative work people need to minimise extrinsic distractions and maximise intrinsic satisfaction. It seems that maintaining intrinsic motivation and focus can be difficult, because we are not necessarily very good at regulating our behaviour with reference to the inner cues that can tell us how to promote our own best performance and well-being (Hennessey, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000c). It seems advisable to act from our interests, if we know what they are, and to choose valuable goals, for recent evidence shows that it is important to have, and to internalise, meaningful goals, which can energise effort during those times when the work is tedious or difficult (Burton et al., 2006). When it comes to selecting conscious achievement goals there is evidence that what we value and why we value it can impact either positively or negatively on our overall well-being and interest during creative work (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

It seems that some values tend to interfere with intrinsic motivation and focus and it is worth being aware of the research work in this area. Although it is often observed that material rewards can be powerful motivators (Ryan & Deci, 2000c), there is considerable accumulated evidence showing that, "when materialistic values direct one's behaviour individuals are at increased risk for diminished well-being and psychopathology and become less concerned with the welfare of others" (Kashdan & Breen, 2007, p.522). Moreover, materialism is associated with lower ability "to take action in congruence with core interests and values" (Kashdan & Breen, 2007, p.533). This appears to hold even for business students whose extrinsic values match the values promoted by their departments (Vansteenkiste, Duriez, Simons, & Soenens, 2006). The indication is that in a culture, which gives high priority to materialstic values people easily pursue goals that are not ultimately able to fulfil their psychological needs.

Research indicates that excessive focus on self-image can be detrimental as well (Ryan & Brown, 2003). In SDT terms, autonomy is not a philosophical construct -- it is experienced as a sensation of doing things of one's own accord. Ryan and Brown (2003) suggest that a person who is overly concerned with how he/she appears to others is not easily able to experience a sense of freedom in working toward goals, whereas a person who feels competent, autonomous and related gains self-esteem and so does not need it. SDT researchers reject the idea that people *need* either self-esteem or power, identifying these as need substitutes, which people pursue when their actual needs are thwarted or left unsatisfied (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Research has shown that whenever people experience a reduced sense of competence or feel controlled rather than autonomous during creative tasks, creativity is diminished (Amabile, 1979, 1982, 1985; Amabile & Gitomer, 1984; Amabile, Goldfarb, & Brackfield, 1990; Hennessey, 1989, 2000).

In contrast, goals, which are relevant to the person in terms of personal growth, health, improving relationships and community contribution have been found to reliably enhance feelings of global well-being,

as well as persistence, learning, vitality and satisfaction, especially in autonomy-supportive conditions (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004). Vansteenkiste et al. (2004) reason that intrinsic goals are motivating because in working toward such goals a person is better able to experience satisfaction of the basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness.

But are successful creators really motivated by intrinsic motivations and intrinsic goals, without some sort of desire for wealth or kudos? There is some evidence that extrinsic rewards can enhance creativity in some people, provided intrinsic motivation is already high (Collins & Amabile, 1999). It may be hard to specify what types of goals people will find genuinely meaningful as people differ in the meanings they attribute to goals. Nevertheless, educators might wish to capitalise on the motivating qualities of intrinsic goals when framing learning activities (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004) – especially in light of the evidence that excessively materialistic values have hidden ill effects. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) reports that although the ninety-one eminent creators interviewed in his study certainly differed greatly in many respects, without exception they expressed the sentiment that pleasure in their work took precedence over any consequences of that work, such as money or recognition. This is consistent with the view that creativity and mental health are greater when extrinsic factors are minimised.

In Tolkien's case, a pattern of characteristics and values emerges from which it is possible to discern that his needs for competentce, autonomy and relatedness were fulfilled and that he was not motivated by desire for wealth or fame. His biographer, Carpenter (1977) confirms that Tolkien "had a perfectly accurate idea of what he could do, and a firm belief in his ability both as a scholar and a writer" (p.129). But he was also humble and often joked about being a "feeble member of the human race" (Carpenter, 1977, p.129). He was an inquisitive and self-directed learner throughout his life and was undoubtedly master of his own projects. He had good family relations and some very firm friendships, which supported him emotionally and allowed him the security to do his work. In turn he seems to have cared greatly about his family, his friendship group, his students, his readership his general community and, so it seems, humanity in general. On the topic of materialism Tolkien had strong thoughts. Carpenter (1977) paraphrases Tolkien's belief that, "Our myths may be misguided, but they steer however shakily towards the true harbour, while materialistic 'progress' leads only to a yawning abyss and the Iron Crown of the power of evil" (p.147).

Thus Tolkien's values and attitudes certainly exemplify the kind of value base that SDT predicts is beneficial for intrinsic motivation and creativity – and psychological health. His vehemence on the topic of materialism is striking, but perhaps it is understandable. One of the rationales provided by psychologists for the failure of excessive materialism to satisfy human needs is, that it imposes a form of psychological control, which ultimately crowds out engagement in pursuits that are truly fulfilling (Kashdan & Breen, 2007). As Tolkien had a full and creative life, perhaps he was precisely the kind of person to recognise what research now indicates – that people obtain greater satisfaction from meaningful activity than from chasing after wealth or fame, either for its own sake or to boost self esteem.

Amabile (2001) finds that the work style and philosophies of John Irving, another successful writer also "fit well within Deci and Ryan's (1985) theory of self-determination" (p.335). She relates, for example, Irving's emphatic assertion that during the writing of a book the writer's focus must be with the book itself and that to be concerned about whether the book will be a financial success can only be "a disaster". Consistent with the SDT observation that developing one's areas of interest is experienced as 'fun and vitalizing' (Ryan et al., 1997), Irving explains that he is able to work very hard at his writing, because he experiences his work as 'pleasure'.

In contrast to Irving, it seems that poet Sylvia Plath, by her own admission, struggled to divest herself of concerns with the reception of her work (Amabile et al., 1994). Plath wrote: "Editors and publishers and critics and the world…I want acceptance there, to feel my work good and well-taken, which ironically freezes me at my work, corrupts my nunnish labor of work-for-itself-as-its-own-reward" (Hughes &

McCullough, 1982, p.305, cited in Amabile et al., 1994, p.950). Her words support Irving's contention that if one's focus is eroded by concerns extrinsic to the work itself, it can prove disastrous for creativity. Whatever additional factors may have been involved in Sylvia Plath's declining mental state -- whether, as Runco (1998) suggests, her investment in creativity was too great or whether relationship issues eroded her self-confidence -- it is clear that she knew from personal experience which mental attitudes best facilitated her creativity. She was fully aware that her concern with externals was 'freezing' the authentic creative process. Both Plath and Irving attest to the importance of maintaining intrinsic motivation in creative work by managing the intrusion of extrinsic concerns. But presumably these creators did not learn about their creative processes by studying psychology manuals. It seems that one learns about the processes of authentic creativity through the experience of creating authentically – through attending to the internal cues that signal how well the creative process is going.

Creativity requires development of an 'introspective' capacity (Policastro & Gardner, 1999). Czikszentmihalyi and Sawyer (1995) suggest that the ability to access the 'subconscious network', is *learned* through immersion in activities such as education, reading, private study and interaction with colleagues and mentors. Because accessing the subconscious network requires periods of deep focus and time off task, and the time required for insights is unpredictable, creative work is not well suited to time schedules. Thus Florida (2002) notes that, "the creative capacity cannot be bought and sold or turned on and off at will" (p.5). He observes that in workplaces where creativity is desired, rules and schedules have had to cater to how the creative process works, rather than the other way around. How to promote this introspective feature of creative consciousness is therefore an important aspect for educators to consider if they wish to develop authentic creativity. In the next section I draw attention to a different aspect of authentic consciousness, which also has implications for educators interested in promoting authenticity.


**Marginality, Consciousness and Values: Some thoughts**

Autonomy, non-conformity and independence of judgement are regarded as 'core' or common attributes of the creative person (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988). However, while these 'attributes' are deemed important for creative work, which often lacks social approval (Mumford & Gustafson, 1988), they are often thought of as socially undesirable (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). But is this a reasonable view? Where do characteristics of autonomy and non-conformity come from?

The literature points to many 'origins' for independent thought and behaviour. Simonton (2005) suggests that non-conformity, insofar as it is sometimes associated with some mild psychopathologies, can, in some instances, be regarded as biologically determined. But, he observes that the cluster of characteristics necessary for creative work can arise in other ways, such as living in a rich and diverse cultural environment. People can also develop independent styles of thought through autonomous, developmental processes (Ryan et al., 1997). Children who grow up in secure, encouraging environments also tend to be more autonomous and curious (Ryan et al., 1997) and are less likely to develop a focus on self-limiting 'oughts' (Higgins, 1997). Marginality has also been observed to foster non-mainstream thought and has a connection to creativity (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994; Gardner, 1993). Therefore, it would be inaccurate to suggest that non-conforming behaviour is either always of the same type or always socially undesirable. Many creators seem to prefer being outside the norm (Feldman et al., 1994; Gardner, 1993), which may seem like fickle behaviour. But I want to suggest that this attitude is explainable and justified in terms of the 'consciousness' that often accompanies significant forms of creativity -- a consciousness that is aware that culture has been crafted and is changeable (Feldman, 1994).

Unger's (2000) investigations of the connection between positive marginality and social activism provide informative insights into how such an independent consciousness can come about, why one does not simply 'give it up' and return to a traditional worldview, and the role it can play in facilitating authentic creativity.

Unger notes that marginality can have positive and negative aspects. On the negative side, she observes that many people carry the burden of stigmatisation and lack of social power, whilst locating the problem in their own inadequacy. But, she argues, marginality can also engender a desire to bring about positive social change – and she finds that, "consciousness determines whether marginality becomes activism" (Unger, 2000, p.163). Through her research, Unger has found that people who have encountered problems with society are more likely, than people whose relationship with society is relatively problem-free, to question dominant social beliefs and hold a "constructionist epistemology". She defines *constructionism* as: "belief in the relative nature of truths, concern for subjectivity, focus on the individual as a source of authenticity and authority, and acknowledgement of the role played by chance in the determination of events" (Unger, 2000, p.174). She frames the relationship between positive marginality, consciousness and social action as follows:

> Positive marginality appears to promote constructionist epistemology; in particular, awareness that injustice is rooted in structural processes rather than personal inadequacy. Thus it supports a vision of collective as well as individual responsibility for change (Unger, 2000, p.177).

By referring to the SDT framework for understanding autonomous motivation, it becomes possible to understand how a "constructionist epistemology", which de-emphasises cultural authority, could activate strong motivation for social action by facilitating a conceptual shift from feelings of personal inadequacy, helplessness and alienation to competence, self-determination and social connectedness. Not only is motivation ignited in this circumstance, but the intrinsic goal of aiding community is spontaneously engendered as well.

The relationship of marginality to creativity actually has broad social relevance, for as Policastro and Gardner (1999) have observed, this relationship does not apply only for the seriously oppressed. Each of us, they point out, is a deviant from a hypothetical norm. They have suggested that our creative potentials often lie in our uniqueness, but that creative people are distinguished by their motivation to "convert differences into advantages" (Policastro & Gardner, 1999, p.223). What Unger (2000) shows is that the transformation of difference into strongly motivated action, may often depend upon a shift in consciousness, which allows transition from external control to internal control – or in the terms of Higgins (1997), from concern with 'oughts' to concern with 'ideals'.

It may be hard to see how social activism is in any way like other kinds of creativity. But, arguably the desire to communicate about topics of concern or make a positive difference to society is not confined to politicians and social activists. Vygotsky (1971) claims that even art reflects the 'social' in us. To understand this we might consider Jaynes (1976) view that it is by metaphor that language grows and that as human culture becomes more complex new metaphors are needed to describe the new facets of culture. Aiken (2001) argues in a slightly different vein that the artist's ability to evoke emotional response through metaphor and symbol also has practical value for allowing humans to communicate about emotions that cannot otherwise be easily expressed.

It is even possible to see a positive marginality and social activism at work as part of Tolkien's writing of *The Lord of the Rings*. Kocher (1972) points out that Tolkien was interested in prompting us to recover knowledge of ourselves and our relationship to the natural environment. He hoped that in our emotional responses to the language, action and mythic dimensions of the narrative, forgotten values would be remembered. Tolkien was deeply concerned about the press of industrialisation and its negative impact on the countryside and on people (Carpenter, 1977; Curry, 1997; Shippey, 2000). He was also interested in sharing his love of language and fairy story with other like-minded people and he believed that this "taste" was a natural one, which humans have demonstrated throughout the centuries (Shippey, 2000). While he was conservative in many ways (Carpenter, 1977), he was also a rebel, resisting mainstream acceptance of industrialisation and challenging the rules of literary taste. By writing *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien put his marginal, or privileged expertise into social service.

Among the implications that might interest educators if the kind of consciousness described by Unger (2000) regularly underpins and enables a great deal of what is commonly acknowledged as creative, is that some of the core characteristics of the creative personality, such as openness to experience, independence and non-conformity (Simonton, 2005) must often come about as a result of experience.

Secondly, as Unger (2000) reports, people with more constructionist epistemologies tend to hold "socially progressive attitudes" (p.175) favouring, for example, equality between men and women and tolerance of personal difference. Perhaps this deviation from the 'norm' occurs because the person who has realised that social norms can support social injustice might easily think it morally or logically untenable to adhere to norms in an unreflective way. In a pervasive constructionist epistemology, all discourses may be suspect and therefore one could not expect such a person to 'conform'.

But is this kind of non-conformity necessarily undesirable? There are similarities between Unger's description of a constructionist mindset and the attitude of 'mindfulness', in which psychologists have a current interest. Far from disparaging this mindset, Brown and Kasser (2005) find that because mindful individuals perceive internal and external realities clearly they "exhibit higher personal well-being on a wide variety of indices"(p.351), and their values, which are more 'intrinsic' than extrinsic in nature (focused on growth, relationships and community rather than financial success, image and popularity), incline toward such behaviours as 'choicefulness', ecological responsibility and lower levels of material consumption. Thus, if we combine these observations concerning the choiceful, tolerant values of mindfulness and constructionism, with the earlier speculations that people with strong interests would tend to value creative or intrinsically satisfying activity, a value set emerges which is consistent with Florida's (2002) observations that the 'creative class' values creativity, individuality, difference and merit; embraces diversity, and seeks authenticity in life experiences. Although, there may be situations in which extrinsic values can be more adaptive than intrinsic values, on this brief survey at least, it does not seem that intrinsic or creative values are in any way less worthy or responsible than extrinsic values. Therefore, if, as Craft (2001) and Gibson (2005) discern, there may be negative aspects associated with the increasing emphasis on creativity, the evidence explored in this paper suggests that the issue does not lie with creative values. However, the suggestion that well-being is enhanced when people act mindfully from interests and integrated values does tip the scales in favour of authenticity as the healthy option.

On close inspection fostering authenticity looks to be a complex enterprise, with many facets to consider. As Nickerson (1999) observes, it demands a great deal of the classroom teacher. But, clearly, the difficulty of the task does not alter the imperative to make the effort. As creative work is on the rise, preparing students for work must include giving attention to the development of authenticity in order to provide them with understandings that can help them manage mental health in creative effort. In addition, I believe the evidence is strong that authentic behaviour is worth encouraging on its own merits. Furthermore, because neither education itself, nor industry can own or control creativity or alter people's desire to be authentically creative, instead of debating the desirability of supporting creativity, the orientation of educators toward creativity might more profitably become one of serving its optimal development. In acknowledgement of the difficulty of conceptualising what it means to act authentically, below, I suggest *The Council of Elrond* as an analogy for thinking about authentic endeavour, which may be of some use to the metaphorically minded.

### *The Council of Elrond* as a Model for Authenticity

Here I suggest that the *The Council of Elrond* chapter in *The Lord of the Rings,* can provide a helpful 'model' for understanding what it means to act authentically in creative work. On the basis of reliable Tolkien scholarship, I believe a fair argument can be made that a 'feel' for the experience of creative authenticity is what Tolkien intended readers to take from this episode. There are indications that in the formulation of this episode Tolkien draws on his own experience of authentic decision-making during the writing process. Thus

I hope to further reinforce the points I have been making throughout this paper, that authenticity is central in creativity and that creators are often acutely aware of the need to remain authentic in their own work.

There are a number of reasons for expecting to find evidence, in Tolkien's fictional work of awareness of creative authenticity. Firstly, Tolkien was interested in promoting the value of a certain kind of authentic creativity. He perceived, much like Bohm and Peat (1989), Ryan and Deci (2000) and Craft (2000), that humans are capable of two types of creativity. The first, is "a living, realized sub-creative art" (Tolkien, 1988, p.53) -- a process that follows universal creative laws. He believed that desire for this kind of creativity lies behind our emotional response to stories of elves and enchantment. This type of creativity is, in Tolkien's opinion, disinterested in delusion or domination, and "is inwardly wholly different from the greed for self-centred power which is the mark of the mere Magician" (Tolkien, 1988, p.53). Tolkien also held the opinion, not uncommon among scholars of oral tradition (e.g. Foley, 1987), that 'myth' has psychological power. Thus for him, a well-crafted myth or fantasy story could refresh people's knowledge of the difference between the two types of creativity (Tolkien, 1988). He believed that humanity on the brink of runaway industrialism might benefit by remembering its timeless reverence for the sub-creative process, and so a central purpose at the heart of Tolkien's writing of *The Lord of the Rings*, was to remind us of this potential in ourselves (Kocher, 1972).

Secondly, it has been observed that Tolkien is very much present in his writings (Helms, 1974; Shippey, 2000). Shippey (2000) notes that while Tolkien professed to dislike 'allegory', he took a narrow definition of the term, and did in fact write 'autobiographical allegories'. Both Helms (1974) and Shippey (2000) regard some of Tolkien's shorter works, such as *Leaf by Niggle* and *Smith of Wooton Major,* as stories that tell us about Tolkien's inner life – and much of what Tolkien was concerned to reveal was the tension in his mind "between the demands of his job and his increasingly urgent drive towards non-academic creation" (Shippey, 2000, p.266). Shippey stresses that this revelation through story was deliberate. Tolkien wanted us to know. It was his belief that in order to construct myth, one needs to experience or, at least, see clearly the things one is mythologizing (Kocher, 1972; Tolkien, 1988). Shippey believes that it is our ability to read metaphorically that has made Tolkien's stories relevant to our lives. Perhaps Tolkien's metaphors skilfully approach or trigger cognitive sensations and emotions that, as Aiken (2001) and Schooler et al. (1995) observe, cannot be approached in any other way.

The inhabitants of Tolkien's fantasy world of Middle Earth are divided -- in a manner which approximates the autonomy/control distinction of Self-determination Theory and is therefore convenient for the purpose of explaining 'authentic' motivation -- into two main groups: the Free Peoples and those under the influence or control of Mordor. This division reflects Tolkien's philosophy that, "every intelligent being is born with a will capable of free choice, and the exercise of it is the distinguishing mark of his individuality. Nothing can be more precious" (Kocher, 1972, p.57). The *One Ring* at the centre of Tolkien's tale, which can attract all beings to itself and bind them in 'darkness', has the ability to coerce a being away from the desirable state of having 'free will' or self-control, to a state of no longer being in control of the 'self'. It can turn beings into 'wraiths' – hopeless and hollow, overtaken by a shadow world where they no longer see the world of 'light' and are capable only of following the will of external masters (Kocher, 1972). Ryan and Deci (2000a) also find it apt to describe controlled and autonomous motivation in terms of "the darker and brighter sides of human existence". But they do not refer to the negative effects of extrinsic control as 'wraithing' -- literally becoming 'bent' (Shippey, 2000). They observe the dark side of humanity in the symptoms of psychopathology and alienation.

Is it not reasonable to expect, then, that resisting and eliminating the *Ring of Power,* which is Frodo's task in *The Lord of the Rings,* is not only Frodo's burden and challenge in the fantasy world of Middle Earth, but also Tolkien's challenge to himself in the real world? No less than Bohm and Peat (1989), Craft (2000) or Ryan, Deci and colleagues, Tolkien's interest is in revitalising human health (Kocher, 1972). But his

expertise was not drawn from psychology or science. It was drawn from his knowledge of myth and story and from his own creative experience, which as Shippey (2000) notes, Tolkien regarded as wholly legitimate" (p.241) creative work.

But Tolkien did at times question the 'rightness' of his motivation. In *Leaf by Niggle*, Tolkien allegorises his own struggle to bring his creative work to fruition amidst a host of competing duties, responsibilities, wishes, doubts and fears (Helms, 1974; Shippey, 2000). Shippey (2000) explains that Tolkien held a coveted Chair at Oxford University and was at times under significant collegial pressure to increase his academic publications instead of 'trifling' with such works as *The Lord of the Rings*. He was also concerned that he might have set himself too ambitious a set of tasks and worried that his health might fail before he could complete them. Uncertainty about the 'value' of his project, relative to these other concerns seems to have brought writing to a halt at least once. But, as the Niggle story shows, Tolkien became aware that some of his best work was in fact a result of having "been forced daily to grapple so closely with the hard facts of actual existence" (Kocher, 1972p.150). Thus Tolkien resolved his dilemma decisively, and, "work began again on *The Lord of the Rings*" (Helms, 1974, p.117). So it is indeed possible that the events of *The Council of Elrond* and Frodo's heroic choice to take up the quest reflect Tolkien's own creative experience – his own carefully considered commitment to a valued *intrinsic goal* – a task for which he was uniquely suited and internally motivated.

A full exploration of these ideas would be lengthy. But there are a few aspects of *The Council of Elrond* episode that may provide analogies useful for thinking about the meaning of authenticity. After the careful deliberations at *The Council of Elrond,* where it becomes clear what action must be taken concerning the Ring, Frodo, in autonomous fashion, *offers* to take it to Mordor. He is not coerced in any way -- and here the wise Elrond makes a speech emphasising that Frodo's choice to carry out this task is the right choice, but only if he takes it freely. Kocher (1972) stresses that the wise leaders of Middle Earth are "careful never to put pressure on another's choices" (p.57). Thus, the way Tolkien constructs Frodo's motivation has relevance for the present discussion of authenticity, because Frodo recognises that this task 'belongs' to him – a description which might well encapsulate Tolkien's own sense of 'fitness' and responsibility for the task of constructing a revitalising 'mythology'. For Frodo, as for Tolkien, becoming the Ringbearer is burdensome, because it is hard to carry the *Ring* without being 'bent'. For Frodo the danger of losing his authentic 'self' is symbolised by the *Ring*, whose 'will' must be kept at bay so that the task can be completed. For Tolkien, the danger lay in the expectations and prejudice of others, time pressures, doubts, fears, and personal inefficiencies. But, for both, taking up the challenge is the right thing to do, the only thing to do and each chooses freely in full cognisance of the risks, so that ultimately there is no 'gap' between what must be done and what is chosen. On the basis of all that has been presented in this paper about the importance, for creativity, of acting freely in accord with authentic values and meaningful goals, it is difficult to reject the idea that Tolkien has brought his perceptions of creative endeavour into the narrative and has built into his mythology first hand experience of what it takes to carry out authentic work.

Whether it is informed by Tolkien's experience or simply by his imagination, *The Council of Elrond* , at the very least, provides apt metaphors for the processes of clarifying our goals and motives and making autonomous choices, which researchers advocate as important for creative work. Ryan and Deci (2000c) argue, much as Tolkien does when he contrasts the destructive nature of Mordor control with the mindful autonomy of the wise leaders of the West, that this process of conscious inspection of our motives and inner states is especially important because culture bombards people with extrinsic distractions that can confuse them about the value of the very things that promote well being. They observe that, "we now have a highly developed technology of rewards and self-conscious use of rewards to harness human capital" (Ryan & Deci, 2000c, p.16). Tolkien was concerned with this aspect of culture and the human propensity to be influenced by it – and at some subconscious level it seems that what Tolkien had to say makes sense to the millions of readers who have read his book. Shippey (2000) believes that the immense popularity of *The Lord of the*

*Rings* has come about because, just as Tolkien thought, people can read metaphorically and we do understand, often subconsciously, what he was saying. Shippey states: "We do not expect to meet Ringwraiths, but 'wraithing' is a genuine danger; we do not expect to meet dragons, but the 'dragon-sickness' is perfectly common; there is no Fangorn, but Sarumans are everywhere" (p.328).

**Building authenticity in educational environments**

While Tolkien seems to have discovered or developed the ability to regulate motivation through attention to internal cues and life circumstances, in the educational pursuit of optimal conditions for le creative authenticity it becomes necessary to consider how to put learners in contact with their inner world and assist them to be mindful of the external world. Ryan and Deci (2000b) and others (Collins & Amabile, 1999; Hennessey, 2000) argue for the importance of allowing students to experience competence, interest and optimal challenge at school and for reduced emphasis on rewards and incentive programs. This is so that students can learn to identify their interests and learn about their responses to them. Research has established also that by using intrinsic goals when framing learning activities, student engagement and persistence in tasks is enhanced (Vansteenkiste, Lens et al., 2006; Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). Furthermore, it has been found that people can be trained or 'immunized' against the effects of extrinsic motivators (Hennessey & Zbikowski, 1993). Kaufman and Baer (2002) suggest, that, by making people aware of their own tendency to be manipulated by external controls, this kind of strategy could be a helpful buffer against mental illness in creative work. Also relevant to this issue is the growing body of research documenting the effectiveness of developing 'mindfulness' as a means of guarding against entrapment in unproductive belief systems (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Langer, 2000). Students might additionally be encouraged to reflect where appropriate, as if at Elrond's Council, upon their goals, motives, 'fitness' for the task, and their beliefs about the usefulness or value of outcomes as they undertake creative work. There is much in these strategies, I would argue, to address the concerns of Craft (2000) and Gibson (2005) regarding the ethics of creativity and to prepare students for the challenges of creative work.

**Conclusion**

Both industry and individuals seek the benefits of creativity. While industry may seek the competitive advantages creativity can offer, individuals often seek the satisfaction that creative activity provides. But, the process of creativity requires experiencing, evaluating and managing internal states to allow interest and authentic involvement to predominate, which means that the processes of creativity have social consequences in a culture where emphasis on creativity is growing:

First, the 'consciousness' of creativity, which is often simultaneously mindful of the constructed nature of the social environment and of the satisfying phenomenology of creativity, may be expected to promote distinctively creative, socially influential values. I have tentatively suggested, with reference to some current research, that these will most likely be informed by the 'intrinsic' satisfactions of meaningful work and activity rather than by exclusive adherence to externally decided markers of what is socially desirable. Florida's (2002) observation that the 'creative class' values creativity, individuality, difference and merit, seems consistent with this evaluation. Therefore, I conclude that authentic values themselves cannot be regarded as undesirable, even if they imply the inevitability of ongoing social change.

Secondly, the health of people in creative work is at risk, if the nature of creativity and creative work is not allowed to inform work management practices – especially if workers themselves are not aware of the importance of maintaining authentic motivation during creative work. The incidence of mental health problems in creative populations, especially the high rate of suicide among female poets, adds a level of urgency to the need for educators to heighten student understanding of the role that authenticity plays in

creative work and health. Conflict between the demands of creative work and women's social roles, may place them at particular risk of mental health problems in creative work

In this paper I have suggested that *The Council of Elrond* episode in Tolkien's book, *The Lord of the Rings*, provides apt and perhaps useful metaphors for the processes of conscious interrogation of goals and motives that individuals might undertake as they embark on creative work, to ensure that interests and valued goals will energise the creative work to the exclusion of extrinsic concerns. Tolkien seems to have been aware of the importance of this kind of process in his own creative work and perhaps we can take his suggestion as advice from one who made the long, creative journey without falling completely into the 'darkness' of ill health or undermined values. As a general guide to thinking about authenticity, I have suggested, as Tolkien wrote, and as Self-Determination Theory research shows, that the work of creativity needs to be taken freely – that is, it should be performed from authentic motives – from our interests and deeply held values. Therefore prospective creators will benefit by asking themselves if the work they are contemplating is work they can endorse and really want to do.

## Note

1.   *The Lord of the Rings* was initially released in three volumes -- *The Fellowship of the Ring* in 1954, *The Two Towers* in 1954 and *The Return of the King* in 1955, by George Allen and Unwin (Shippey, 2000). However the edition cited is the 1966 publication, which contains all three volumes. See reference list: Tolkien (1966).

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