

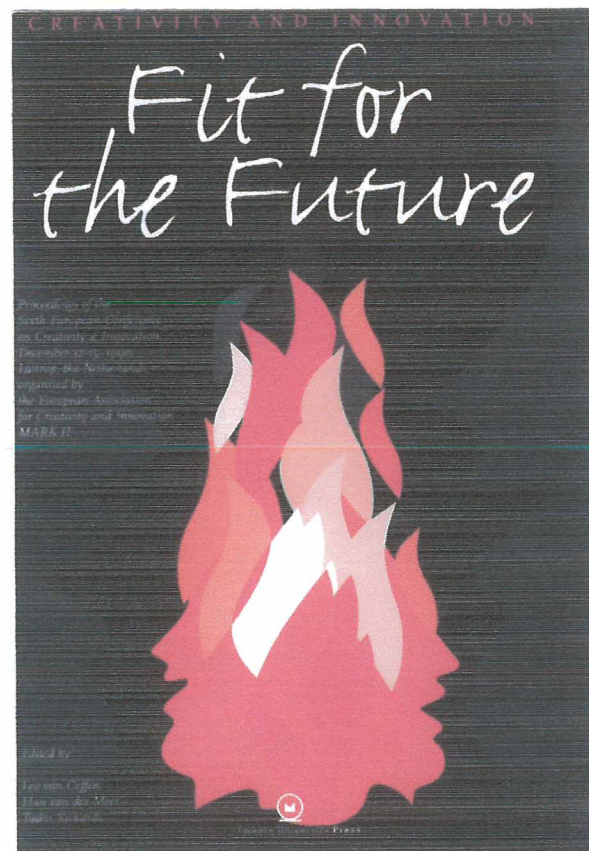
'Einstein has no Sons'

Jos van Dijken[‡]

'Fit for the Future'

Onder bovenstaande titel werd van 12-15 december 1999 de *Sixth European Conference on Creativity & Innovation* gehouden. Ik heb daar 2 keer een seminar verzorgd.

Naderhand werd door Twente University Press in Enschede het congresboek uitgegeven. ISBN 9036515904. Redactie Leo van Geffen, Han van der Meer en Tudor Rickards. Mijn geschreven bijdrage is hierin opgenomen en een kopie daarvan vind je op de volgende pagina's.



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What the world needs are men and women who invest themselves twice. First in hearing and then pursuing their personal destiny in life. To enhance this, success needs to be redefined. For destiny in life means at the least: contributing with your talents. Like an Einstein did. But nobody should aim at equalling or even surpassing him. Secondly – and even more important – invest in enabling a younger generation to do the same. For that we have to explore and exercise new ways for equal conversation. In this regard even Einstein should have been a learner.

An important example

This will not be a purely scientific paper. My prime interest is the life-development of men. I believe that the world needs creative men and women who invest their lives twice. I'll expand a little on both investments using data from science and some stories to illustrate my point. Next to counselling people in their life-questions I study a lot of biographies. So especially Einstein's life is used as an example. Though, as a former civil engineer, I can sense a little of his scientific contribution, I won't go into his theories.

Personally I do agree with Albert Einstein on certain premises. For example this one.

Perhaps you know the opening shots in the movie *I.Q.* In 1994 Fred Schepisi made the film *I.Q.* and a lot of authentic sayings from Einstein are interwoven in a comedy in which the great scientist helps Eduard, a young automobile mechanic, to start a relationship with Einstein's niece Catherine Boyd. The movie is situated in 1954, so Einstein is 75 years old at the time. Walter Matthau plays the physicist and in the opening scene he wonders, as Einstein once did: "Are we all victims of a cosmic accident or is there a Grand Design?" Einstein believes the latter, so do I. Man has a destiny in life. Or in Einstein's words: "I will never believe that God plays dice with the universe." As a man of science he was convinced that behind apparent chaos a latent order exists. "You experience, so to say, that God could not arrange the order in nature in another way than in the way it exists in reality."

Defining destiny

His mentioning of 'a Grand Design' brings me to the first investment that I consider important. Society in the 21st century is helped when men and women hear, and then pursue, their personal destiny in life. Destiny, destination is in my opinion a keynote and I use it in its old, original sense. Unfortunately I have to use English, in Dutch this is better understood. The word 'destiny' (in Dutch: bestemming) means that something is designated, pointed out by the 'voice' (in Dutch: stem). It's something man hears and receives. That's the original, religious use. In later times the word gets secularised and in modern psychology the word has a connotation that is almost the opposite of the original use, namely: self-determination. In the original, destiny is all

about your orientation in life. Meaning and direction are connected with an order that exceeds you. You find yourself in life and discover what *your* life is all about.

In the movie *I.Q.* you see Einstein discussing with Eduard, the auto-mechanic who fell in love with Catherine, the girl Eduard first met in his garage, together with her dull fiancé. Einstein asks: "Eduard, what makes you think that Catherine would be better off with you?" Eduard reacts: "I don't know. Just a feeling." So Einstein questions: "A feeling? What kind of feeling?" The mechanic replies: "When she came in the garage, it was like everything slowed down and got very clear. Everything seemed to fit. You ever had that feeling?" Then Einstein sighs: "Yeah, one time in 1905."

It's not possible to say with certainty that Einstein in 1954 said this. But it is very probable. Because Albert Einstein experienced in 1905 his finest hour in life. Everything was very clear! In 1905 – he was still unknown to the world and only 26 years of age – he wrote 3 articles for a magazine and was famous from then on. Now destiny in life means at the least contributing with your talents. Like an Einstein did.

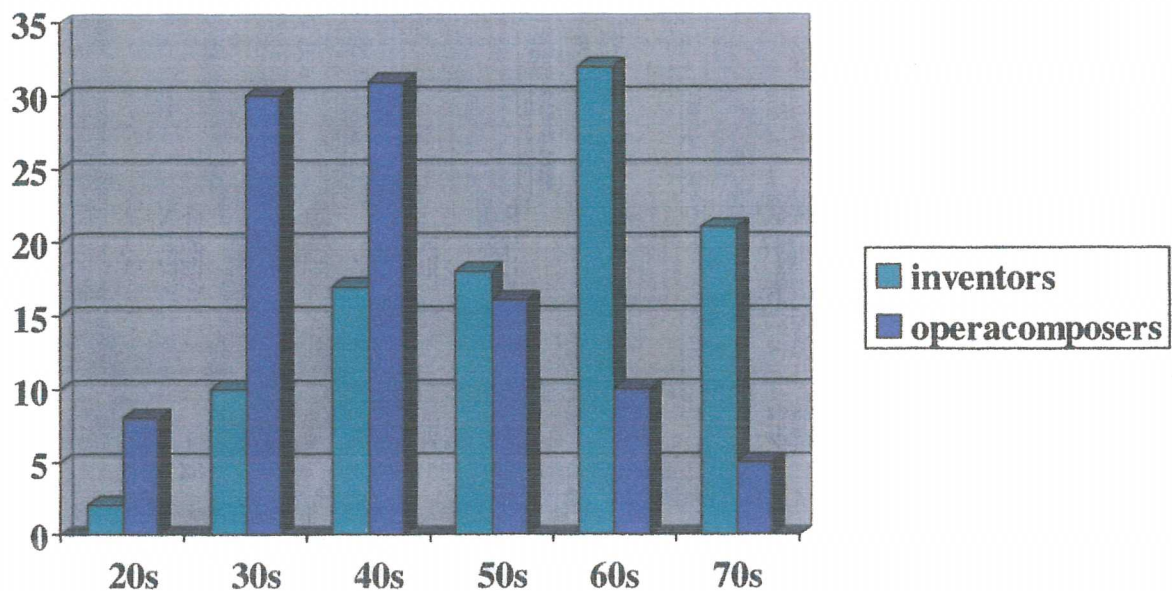
Different professions in different decades

But people differ. In every field of creativity contributions are made in varying stages of life. This schedule presents the enormous variety in quantitative measurements of productivity.

professions	men	works	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s
scientists								
philosophers	42	225	3	17	20	18	22	20
classicists/theologians	43	326	6	17	21	21	16	19
biologists	32	3456	5	22	24	19	17	13
botanists	49	1889	4	15	22	22	22	15
chemists	24	2420	11	21	24	19	12	13
geologists	40	2672	3	13	22	28	19	14
inventors	44	646	2	10	17	18	32	21
mathematicians	36	3104	8	20	20	18	19	15
artists								
architects	44	1148	7	24	29	25	10	4
chamber musicians	35	109	15	21	17	20	18	9
dramatists	25	803	10	27	29	21	9	3
librettists	38	164	8	21	30	22	15	4
novelists	32	494	5	19	18	28	23	7
opera composers	176	476	8	30	31	16	10	5
poets	46	402	11	21	25	16	16	10
	706							

The table shows creative productivity in 6 decades, from men between 20 and 80 years of age. I owe this to Wayne Dennis who studied the works of 706 men. For a better understanding it is important to realise that all men in this schedule became at least 80 years of age. So men like Van Gogh, Mozart or Einstein (he died at age 76) are not included. With the next graphic it is also clear that the figures can only be judged with internal criteria. In their forties opera composers are peaking, while inventors have their main productivity when they are over sixty.

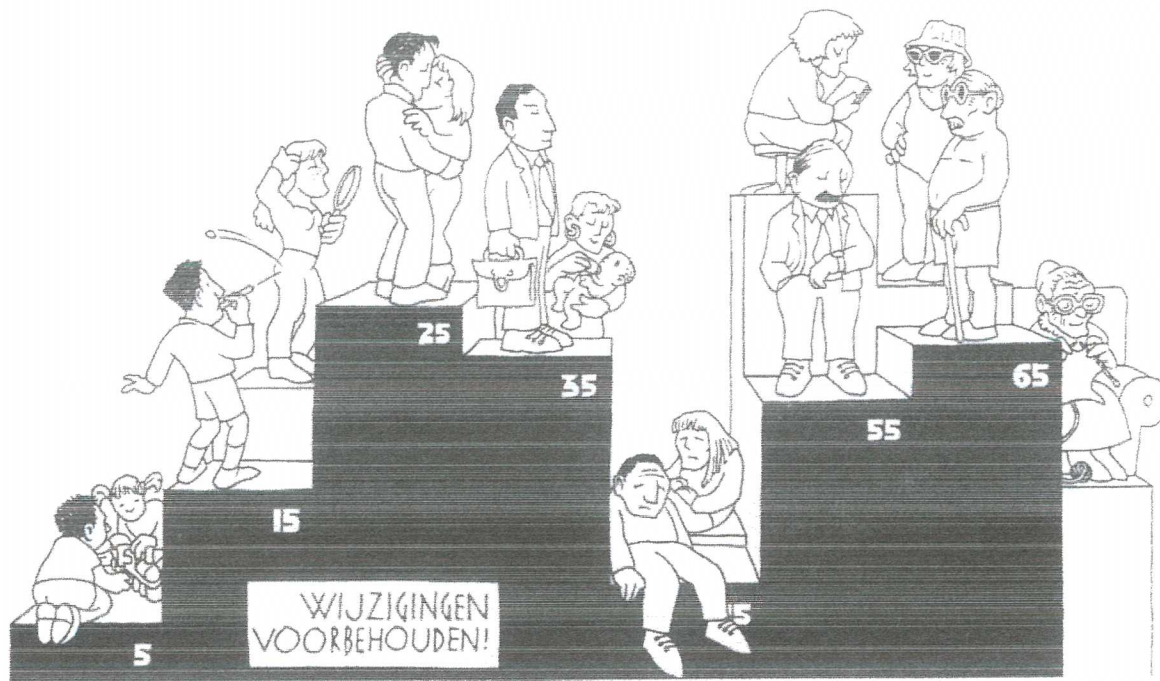
Creative activity in 2 professions in time



With all reserve!

Though this is interesting, it is only quantitative and in general. It doesn't answer questions like: What is your destiny? What is your personal contribution to the world? And probably your profession – businessman, consultant a.o. – is not included. Besides that, how do you feel about life at the moment. Where are you in your lifecycle?

Niels Bongers, the Dutch drawer, named one of his pictures (see below): 'Wijzigingen voorbehouden!' which means something like: 'With all reserve!'. I like his picture, because it shows clearly that the old, completely symmetric life-step-ladder should not be taken as the standard. Ascending, up till 45 and then descending, it is too rough to be the truth for everyone. Questions should be raised: What *is* my destiny? Where can *my* personal contribution be? Did *I* hear the Voice? Only really *personal* answers will satisfy. And no one – not even the brightest physicist – should aim at equalling or surpassing Einstein. For I believe that success needs to be redefined.



Defining success

I'm working with an international organisation, operating in 108 countries. Lorne Sanny, the former president of the Navigators wrote me and my colleagues once about watching an American TV program on which there was an Olympic swimming coach and also the chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness. The chairman said his vision was to increase the physical fitness of *all* Americans a little bit. He could do that if each person gave just six minutes a day to a fitness program. The Olympic swimming coach scoffed at that. "Why," he said, "we expect our swimmers to swim five hours a day. You can't do anything with six minutes a day."

Sanny posed the crucial question: What is the vision of your organisation? Is it to raise the level of all co-workers a little bit? Or, is it to find and develop the superstar, the Olympic champion? His choice – and I agree – is both. "We want each person to become the best that he can be. If that means he can only wade across the shallow end of the pool one time, that is success for him. If he can break the Olympic record, that is success for him. The same is true of all levels of performance in between."

Success is not beating the other fellow or succeeding where others fail. It is not a matter of winning or losing, or of being promoted. It is doing the best of which you are capable. Success is measured, not by comparison with another, but by comparison with yourself. Did I do the best I can do? Am I the best I can be? As Paul, the apostle, wrote to Turkish Christians in the 1st century: "Each man should examine his own conduct for himself. Then he can measure his achievements by comparing himself with himself and not with anyone else." (Galatians 6:4 NEB).

The second investment

Apart from following our personal destiny an even more important contribution can be made. That is to invest in enabling a younger generation to do the same. Help them discern what their destiny in life may be. For that we have to explore and exercise new ways for equal conversation. In this regard even Einstein should have been a learner.

Some time ago I asked 12 young people, varying 11 till 14 years: "What does the world need? What would you grant everyone in the world?" They – in pairs – discussed this and we had a talk about it. I really wished Einstein had been around at that group meeting. For he could have learned a lot from these 12 youngsters. Especially if he would have tried to apply their answers to his own life. Because the top 3 of these young was: 1. love, 2. peace, 3. good health. That is what they'd grant everyone in the world.

In another *I.Q.*-scene we see Einstein, Catherine and Eduard in a cafe. Catherine explains to the car-mechanic that Einstein divorced his first wife, Mileva. Einstein explains: "I live too much here," and he points to his head, "Not enough here," pointing to his heart.

Then Catherine explains that Einstein got two sons: Hans Albert and Eduard. The mechanic in turn points to his heart and looks at the scientist: "You must have lived here at least twice."

But... no answer is given.

The facts are that Einstein did not care about his sons. He didn't even take notice of them. His youngest son, Eduard, became mentally ill and spent a long time in hospital. His father, Albert Einstein, *never* visited him.

The oldest son, Hans Albert, bore his father a grudge as long as he lived. Once Hans Albert had to register at an office and when he mentioned that his last name was Einstein the government official replied: "Impossible, Einstein has no sons." Tragically Albert Einstein lived as if this man spoke the truth.

Conversing in an equal way

He not only failed in relating to his own kids. The British historian Theodore Zeldin, wrote in his book *Conversation*: "The Princeton Institute of Advanced Studies, established to bring all the world's great minds together was disappointed to discover that they did not converse much. 'Einstein', a colleague said, 'didn't need anybody to talk to because nobody was interested in his stuff, and he wasn't interested in what anybody else was doing.'" Zeldin shows that the world needs something better than that. In his opinion the 21st century is helped if we explore and exercise new ways of equal conversation. As Zeldin says: "A satisfying conversation is one which makes one say what one has never said before." It is possible if we start

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relating on equal basis. So that learned men are approachable. Becoming mentors or sparring partners for the young.

The Spanish cultural philosopher José Ortega y Gasset wrote about these 5 stages of human life:

0 - 15	Childhood
15 - 30	Youth
30 - 45	Initiation
45 - 60	Dominance
60+	Elderly

In his analysis he shows that the relationship between two generations is decisive for the course of history. He means the relationship between the Initiation-generation (the people that develop their own authority, create their own ideas) and the Dominance-generation (the ones who realise their objectives in every sphere of society – arts, religion, science – and are fully responsible for all generations)

As I suggested before even a learned scholar of 75 can really learn from children around 13 years of age. I truly hope that Einstein's final remark in the movie *I.Q.* is authentic. He says: "Don't let your brain interfere with your heart." I would paraphrase this with: Don't let pursuing your personal destiny interfere with chances to enable a younger generation to do the same.