

Chapter 6

Beauty and Grace in Making Artifacts: An Anthropological Gaze Upon Crafting in the World



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Tao is eternal and not to be spoken of in words (Lao Tzu, sixth-century BC China)

Art without Craft is Cruelty (John Ruskin, nineteenth-century UK)

Introduction

My bold suggestions in this paper, as an artisan-anthropologist-therapist, are as follows: (a) human manufacturing of objects brings about individual/collective (deep well-being) experiences of beauty and grace and (b) 'making artifacts' represents an important ancient continuity in (social-cultural-biological) humanization. Combining these two assertions suggests a universal existence of 'crafting in the world'. The argument was ignited by the termination of both my mother's and father's family blacksmithing workshops in the twentieth century. Being a technical engineer/craftsman in my first career, and being one of six sons, I was deeply puzzled about why and how our transgenerational arts and crafting family tradition would die out when my father closed down his metal construction workshop in 1986. My great-uncles from mother's side had already closed down their smithy decades earlier.

In this paper I follow the US 'artifact' instead of the British spelling 'artefact'. This makes the concept etymologically more congruent with the terms artisan and artisanal. In these terms human faculties of arts and crafts are (still) together. I introduce concepts like 'arts and crafting' and 'arts and crafts impulse' (ACI) to overcome the European-bound dualism between 'artists', 'artisans' and 'craftsmen'. This is also to denote the ancient continuity of the 'contextual universality' of this human faculty.

The names and cases of the real persons are changed to respect and protect their privacy.

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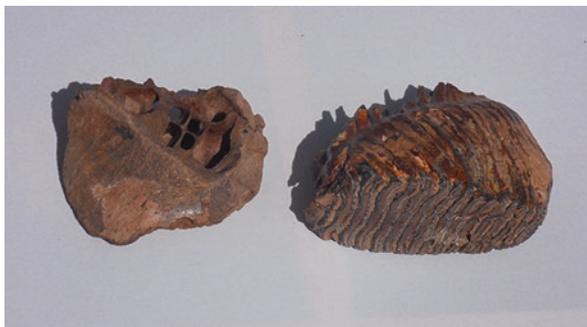
Figs. 6.1 and 6.2 Stone-hand-axe (front- and backside)

Another rather unexpected event fuelled my wondering in arts and crafting. In May 1980, I found an artifact, a hand axe about 60,000 years old, in a small sand quarry at the *Grenzweg* in the Reichswald on the eastern border of the Netherlands (De Plak) and Germany (Galgesteeg). The dating came from other findings nearby (see Figs. 6.1 and 6.2).

A few months later on a Sunday morning walk with my children, on the outskirts of Beuningen (where we then lived at the time) to the Wijchense Steeg I found a mammoth molar with a piece of its jaw (Fig. 6.3) in a raised sand slope.

Finding this hand axe and the mammoth molar less than 20 km apart was a deep and intense experience for me and my families' artisan traditions. I started to consider if the person who made the hand axe was possibly part of a hunter-gatherer community that hunted mammoths. Finding, holding and feeling this beautiful

Fig. 6.3 Mammoth molar (right) with part of the jaw (left)



artifact was, and is, a journey through time connecting with another human being with similar crafting skills. At that moment I was speechless and got into ‘grace’: where there is no language.¹ A next decisive chance to probe my ‘family-bound’ puzzling took place between 1983 and 1993. Partly synchronic to my anthropological studies, I took the opportunity to undertake fieldwork in clinical psychiatry, with troubled/troubling young men, as a creative/occupational therapist (Van Bekkum 1994; 2017). I found that as a non-academic anthropologist, entering and pursuing 10 years of ‘clinical’ research as a therapist later in life (at 36) based on rather personal/familial motives, I was inclined to transgress (academic, therapeutic and professional) disciplinary boundaries (Van Bekkum 2017).

My main recursive observation during these 10 years of fieldwork was that only five of about 500 young men couldn’t be motivated to immerse themselves into arts and crafting processes. Crafting impulses could be ‘ignited’ across class, ethnic, religious and national boundaries. The gender sensibility of this observation is still open to research/validation as during the 10 years of anthropological fieldwork I guided only about 30 girls and women in occupational therapy. This sample is too small to draw any valid conclusions, but I could not find any signs that the crafting impulses could not be ignited in females if ‘contextualized’ and ‘personalized’. It should be noted that in the argument of this chapter, I include making a beautiful meal, decorating a house, knitting, quilting and weaving in ‘crafting the world’ (see Burt and Atkinson 2012; Garner 2015).

In preparing my MA thesis, I tried to find answers for the paradox of this ‘universality’ observation, with the terminating of my family’s smithies and at that time, the still decreasing esteem of creative craftsmanship in education and the labour market (Van Bekkum 1988). The low status was obviously part of Dutch national, and global, pressures marginalizing arts and crafting, due to long-term develop-

¹The experience of grace is coined by Bateson as restoring ‘our interrelated membership of the community of living organisms on this planet’ (Charlton 2008, 1). It can also be described as a pleasurable, temporarily conjoint awareness (conscious) and feeling (unconscious) of ‘being in the world’ in humbling co-dependence with all living systems (Bateson 1987/1972; Bateson and Donaldson 1991; Charlton 2008, 101–158).

ments like industrialization, automation and digitization, but I also found that the increasing dominance (high status) of (cognitive) white-collar professions had a devastating effect on the status of blue collar ‘arts and crafting’ occupations. The enhanced status of white-collar jobs pushed young men away from experiences of getting into grace during making artifacts. At this moment in time, the tides seem to be slowly turning (Sennett 2008).

In my MA thesis, I compared arts and crafting in ancient Egyptian and Inuit (Eskimo) cultures with European artisan traditions in my fieldwork experiences and occupational therapy (Van Bekkum 1998). I wanted to understand what role arts and crafting played in transgenerational continuity and survival of these indigenous peoples and in urbanized societies. My hypothesis was that if arts and crafting disappears, humanity would die out because crafting was/is a pivotal cornerstone of becoming and being human. In this thesis our crafting is creating an adaptive and survival capacity. This awareness led me to the two next questions:

1. What fuels and maintains the tenacity of the arts and crafting in humanity?
2. How is this continuity of craftsmanship created and maintained over hundreds of generations, in all its glorious varieties, in thousands of human groups?

These questions led to a long-term process of searching and constructing conceptual frameworks to bridge therapist-client and academic and professional disciplinary boundaries. Procedures from the medical and psychological sciences to find/test fitting concepts from ‘clinical practices’ were available. However, after studying these research practices thoroughly, with my supervisors, I stumbled upon serious epistemological problems. All these knowledge-validating procedures leaned, in my view, too much on two European culturally rooted dualisms: (a) mind (psychology) versus body (medicine) and (b) individual (psychology) versus society (sociology) (Chavers 1972; Bateson et al. 1976; Harries-Jones 2010).

For example, in my fieldwork I had experienced numerous times that seeking and finding psychiatric syndromes in the individual minds of young men was only one side of the coin. Family and peer group contexts played a more important role in emerging and maintaining psychiatric symptoms than this specific (Dutch military) context of psychiatric diagnoses and treatment allowed. My later lecturing/training experiences in about 20 other mental health institutions confirmed this assumption (Van Bekkum et al. 2015). My observations in occupational therapy made clear that during ‘making an artifact’, mind and body (and heart) were not separated but on the contrary ‘integrated’ (see Appendix I). Abdelkarim’s regaining his stability and the temporary disappearance of Feisal’s psychosis, in the case vignettes outlined below, demonstrate the stabilizing and mentally integrating potential of arts and crafting.

I was introduced by my academic lecturers and supervisors to some excellent examples in which these European based dualisms could be targeted and avoided (Chavers 1972, 1985). Anthropologist Jules Henry, for example, translated his insights from ethnographic observations of the Kaingang indigenous peoples comparing them to our ‘urbanized societies’ such as the USA. This work led to his seminal publication *Culture Against Man* (1963), in which he ‘culture-criticized’ modern

education, using cross-cultural comparison. His fieldwork amongst urban families with psychotic children, discussed in *Pathways to Madness* (1965) impressed me as he considered the family/community of the ‘patient’ as the unit of analysis required to understand individual communication patterns. Henry’s approach strengthened the ‘marginalized/forgotten’ complementary aspects of the dualisms I mentioned above: how can we conceptualize ‘trialectics’ between mind, body and soul and between individuals (young troubled men), their families/communities and societies? (Chavers 1972; see Appendix I). Psychiatrist John Weir Perry developed, from a similar (non-dualistic) epistemological position, ‘social-systemic’ treatment programs for psychotic adolescents in the USA (Perry 1953, 1974).

This kind of group/system and non-dualistic-oriented anthropology supported my dedication to find/develop concepts which were of use in my communications with the young men and their families, and with my colleagues in the psychiatric multidisciplinary team of which I was a member. After years of screening anthropological theories, ‘social system thinking’ like Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979) and Mary Douglas (1986) and family therapy theoretical concepts (Ruesch and Bateson 1951; Böszörményi-Nagy and Spark 1984) turned out to be closest to my epistemological ambitions. By sticking to these communicative-systemic premises and choices, I categorized four clusters of data:

- (a) Learning (socializational) needs of young men during their transition into adulthood (Van Bekkum 1998a, b)
- (b) Young men’s transitional needs connected with their families, communities and Dutch society (Van Bekkum et al. 2010)
- (c) Young men’s psychiatric syndromes and learning disorders as signalling ‘system errors’ in their families-communities and in Dutch national settings, like schools, public spaces and youth mental health care (Van Bekkum 2015)
- (d) Arts and crafting as part of ancient (evolutionary tested) vocational/occupational education (Van Bekkum 1993, 1994)

This paper focuses primarily on the last cluster of data and will occasionally tap into the other clusters. In the next section, I position my theoretical assumptions, and then I present the case vignettes. Finally, I try to make sense from the theoretical assumptions of these ethnographic vignettes.

Theoretical Background and Argument

Arts and Crafting as Socially Embodied Learning and Kinesthetic-Embodied Communication

I began by asking where could I find concepts more congruent with my observations and interactions of well-being, of pleasure and of mental integration during young men’s crafting in multicultural fieldwork practices? The research process turned out to be a long-term self-reflective cultural process; the more I got involved with clients/

students from ‘foreign’ cultures and their families, the more it challenged me to reflect, reveal and find language for what is self-evident in young men’s therapeutic and vocational-educational Dutch contexts (Van Bekkum 1988, 1994, 2001, 2006).

Social science is about creating/validating ‘parsimonious’ theories of (non) human realities. Parsimonious means to favour the simplest theory which explains the most in different contexts. This coincides partly with my ambition to find/modify an interdisciplinary conceptual framework to study the enigma of arts and crafting. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s proposal to develop ‘experience-near’ next to ‘experience-distant’ concepts and language suited this ambition well. An experience-near concept is, roughly, one that someone – a patient, a subject or in our case an informant – might themselves naturally and effortlessly use to define what he/she or others see, feel, think, imagine and so on and which he/she would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one that specialists of one sort or another – an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist – employ to forward their scientific, philosophical or practical aims (1993/1983, 57).

Studying Art in Anthropology

To thoroughly understand the importance of ‘making art and crafting’ to survive and thrive as human communities, some rereading of cross-cultural studies of art among many different indigenous peoples is needed. What role does crafting artifacts have in the reproduction of human societies? Studying art in anthropology has a long tradition (Boas 1955/1927; Bateson 1967; Dissanayake 1980,2000). My anthropological-theoretical position towards crafting in the world builds on frameworks of recent work of Tim Ingold and Diederick Raven and on older work of Franz Boas and Gregory Bateson (Boas 1955/1927; Bateson 1967; Dissanayake 2013; Pröpper 2015). Tim Ingold is a forerunner in bridging anthropology, archaeology, crafting/material studies and the arts. He challenged ‘tabooed’ dualisms in human studies in anthropology for decades, such as arts-crafts, mind-body, cultural-biological patterns (Ingold 2000) and humanity-animality (Ingold 2003: 14–32). He holds onto a broad demarcation of anthropology: ‘an exploration of the conditions and possibilities of human life in the world’ (Fiori et al. 2012). One expertise of Ingold is on an interactive and processual approach to materials in human lives. Things (including artifacts) according to Ingold:

...are active not because they are imbued with agency but because of ways in which they are caught up in these currents of the life world. The properties of materials, then, are not fixed attributes of matter but are processual and relational. To describe these properties means telling their stories. (Ingold 2007: 1)

He defines human and non-human life processes ‘...as the name for what is going on in the field of relationships within which organic forms emerge, develop and are held in place...’ (quoted in Fiori et al. 2012). Following on from Ingold, crafting in

the world in this chapter denotes everyday human processes of making ‘things’, such as manufacturing a dinner table, model building, weaving a scarf, painting a painting and crafting a standing lamp (see [Appendix I](#)). Ingold tries to find concepts to avoid falling into the trap of treating ‘processing artifacts’ as ‘static objects’, which is a common pattern in material culture studies (Ingold 2010: 3–4).

Developing Ingold’s perspective, Raven, as an anthropologist of knowledge, dissects an epistemological dualism in Western science in which a propositional conception of knowledge cannot account for artisanal knowledge (2013: 6). Propositional (non-kinesthetic = not body-mind-driven) knowledge is mostly defined as ‘a proposition – that such-and-such is so – is the object of producing knowledge’. Raven defines artisans broadly as experienced crafts people working in an educational and professional tradition (2013: 22; Ingold 2013: xi). ‘Because a craft is at once a form of knowledge and a form of practice, it is monistic in a way propositional knowledge is not’ (Raven 2013: 22; see Ingold 2000: 268). He concludes that artisanal knowledge is produced socially and embedded/embodied in human collectives/systems. Crafting practices and skills according to Raven are social, interactional and ‘fundamentally non-cognitive’ (2013: 15, 28).

Others too have argued that cognition is fundamentally social and communicative, and in terms of crafting, exists in human groups as collective fluid knowledge embodied in crafting skills and localized materials (Boas 1955/1927; Bateson 1987/1972; 1979). This idea of knowledge being socially embedded and understood through learning skills goes against the grain of widespread psychological conceptions. Psychological conceptions of cognition are seen as predominantly operating individually and are researched by comparing individual behaviour and individual brains (Eysenck and Keane 2010). The conception of predominantly cognitive learning is commonly taken as mental, not necessarily bodily, processes involved in gaining knowledge and comprehension (Lemke 1997). These cognitive processes include thinking, knowing, remembering, judging and problem-solving. Raven explicitly differentiates between the concepts of experience connected to propositional knowledge and interaction-embodied artisanal knowledge (2013: 32). This represents his critical position towards psychologizing knowledge as individual cognition while claiming that (individual) cognition unifies humanity (Raven 2013: 8).

Social psychology, sociology and anthropology, compared to other academic disciplines, approach cognition from a more collective (systemic) perspective (Durkheim 1912; Douglas 1986; Bateson and Bateson 1987, Krause 2012). These scholars took ‘contextualized’ (located in place and time) social systems (families, communities, occupational organizations) as their basic unit of analysis to study individual learning and cognition. One mainstream purpose of cultural anthropology is producing knowledge from ‘situated’ fieldwork research in hundreds of human communities which are separated from each other in space and time and are at the same time both similar and different from each other (Bateson 1991; Chavers 1972: 143; Fabian 1983; Stroeken 2014).

Franz Boas and Gregory Bateson: Connectedness in Grace

Anthropological research into art as ‘crafting in the world’, rooted in the process of humanization, is almost a century old. Franz Boas cross-culturally studied arts and crafting among Native American peoples in Canada and the USA, and wrote a seminal book on ‘primitive art’ (1955/1927). The indigenous peoples he studied produced artifacts that gave both crafters and users aesthetic pleasure. His cross-cultural comparison of form, style and skills in making/using artifacts suggested that the relatively low level of accessibility of arts and crafting found in my ‘artisanal’ fieldwork is connected with some intrinsic, universal, human gratification. Nearly 95% of the young men I guided could enter such an aesthetic experience. An important conclusion in Boas’ study is ‘one way or another aesthetic pleasure is felt by all members of mankind’ (1955/1927: 9).

Almost half a century later, anthropologist Gregory Bateson studied, in a joint research project with Margaret Mead, ‘Balinese character’ (Bateson and Mead 1942). Bateson does not mention Boas but ‘invented the wheel again’ in examining aesthetics and beauty in making/experiencing art. From his fieldwork data on Bali, he wrote a seminal paper on Balinese art: *Style, Grace and Information in Primitive Art* (1967). Grace was defined as pleasurable, temporary, knowing (conscious) and feelings (unconscious) of being in the world by an awareness of being co-dependent with all living systems (Bateson 1987/1972, 1991; Charlton 2008, 101–158). Bateson’s claim was wider than Boas’s, as the latter did not include animals in his thesis as being capable of being in grace. Bateson studied motor patterns in partridges, dolphins and sea otters and granted them with aesthetic experiences (Welsch 2004). He started from biological (evolutionary) systems (organismic) theory to understand the reproduction and workings of human communities and societies (Bateson 1979; Hoffmeyer 2008).

Bateson, as an anthropologist and biologist, was to me in his thinking a (tough) guide to rearrange my consideration of a more collective consciousness and ‘systemic’ minded ‘gazing’. The most difficult to grasp for academics and nonacademics is his concept of MIND, which is immanent in the living world. Bateson took the epistemological position that all living organisms on earth are interconnected by one continual information exchange that is collective and cognitive (1972, 1979). In those days few social scientists and philosophers dared to think that all living matter is ruled by interwoven mental processes (Lovelock 1968; Maturana and Varela 1972; Naess 1973). Endowing plants and animals with mental processing and communication was, and still is, a sacrilege to the foundations of Western science. European culture in the last hundred years tries to overcome a deep dualism between humans and animals and in the last five decades, these ideas are gaining momentum. One contemporary leading thinker is biologist and artist Andreas Weber with his ‘enlivening’ conceptions of being whole and connected (Weber 2016). A global movement in this way of ecological thinking is coined as ‘commoning’ (Bollier and Helfrich 2012). Following Bateson’s conception of MIND in our endeavour into crafting in the world, means that all human materializing is mentally connected *and*

embedded into the earth's biological functioning. Because of living systems, all organisms on earth are interconnected, survive and thrive by immense intricate complex 'patterned' communication. Our crafting skills and experiences are part of these mental processes of which aesthetic pleasure is a vital component. This Batesonian thinking overlaps with the phenomenological perspective (Morris 1970; Carpendale 2002; Whitehead 2003; see also conclusion). Here we arrive at the point where Lao Tzu mentions: 'The *Unspeakable* is eternal and is *not* to be spoken of in *words*'. In the cosmology of the Chinese Tao, and in Bateson's thinking, human language is just one of thousands of coding systems. Acting and doing with other people or animals or plants, without human language, is getting near the Unspeakable. It gets harder and harder to find words for the non-rational, the non-verbal, the deep emotional and intuitive. According to Bateson beauty is inherent to nature, hence, to biological systems and thus to humans. He argues that, as a cultural outsider, experiencing beauty in artisanal work in Balinese culture depends on how the viewer integrates conscious and unconscious (non-rational) elements with a specific piece of art (Bateson 1967; Charlton 2008: 101–104). Cross-cultural experiencing/understanding of pieces of art and other artifacts regarding beauty is connected with 'successes' (getting into grace) of this integration. He never claimed to have developed a 'theory' but offered ways and concepts to 'learn to think how nature works' (Nora Bateson 2010). His thinking was firmly rooted in cybernetic system theory by which he means that organisms, when in grace, are self-generating, self-organizing and self-correcting and have 'unconscious purpose' (Darrell 2013).

Bateson's importance for the argument in this chapter is in his conception of grace, and in the interconnectedness of the human individual's 'thinking/acting during crafting' with the 'collective minds' of (contextualized) wider systems like families, communities and societies (1967). He states on the issue of beauty and grace in making/experiencing art:

The point... I am trying to make... is that mere purposive rationality unaided by such phenomena as art, religion, dream and the like, is necessarily pathogenic and destructive of life... its virulence springs specifically from the circumstance that life depends upon interlocking circuits of contingency, while consciousness can see only such short arcs of such circuits as human purpose may direct. (Bateson 1967)

Rational knowing; science; planning, when unaided without art, humor and dreaming, with engaging in nature's cycles, lead to disruption of ourselves as systems and in the long term to disaster.

Following Bateson, when humans make artifacts, conscious (mental/intentional) and unconscious (emotional/intuitive) levels of experience are inclined to merge into deeply pleasurable states of grace. Experiencing grace during making artifacts seems different than experiencing art in a museum or during visiting sites and during travelling in other cultures although these are deeply social and socialized experiences. The 'bystanders' experience of grace is evoked by sensory, predominantly visual, observation. Beauty and grace in making artifacts, in the described occupational therapy setting, are evoked by using and integrating more senses: eye-hand coordination, motor patterns, hearing, smelling and touching. Emotions of beauty and grace in making artifacts are more 'embodied' in the sense of more self-

generating, self-organizing and self-correcting processes. These three dynamic concepts are central in Bateson's cybernetic system thinking (1979). A recurring creative, manual, hand-eye coordinating activity 'gets into the body'.

Following Ingold, Raven, Boas and Bateson, I assume that crafting is (1) accessible across cultures (universal, human), (2) interactive (relational/between people), (3) contextual (situated, localized) and (4) communicative (loaded with meaning). I represented this conception in my 'conscious and unconscious balanced' arts and crafting *MiBoSo* (Appendix I).

Evolutionary Therapeutic and Educational Art Theories

In social science, disciplinary walls, also on arts and crafting, still firmly exist. Alongside the anthropological tradition outlined above, there are also well established scholarly communities in psychology and in literature/language studies with a more educational application of/and approach to art as being evolutionarily rooted (Boyd 2005). Both of these scholarly communities regularly rely on anthropological literature, but publications on art in occupational therapy and art therapy rarely cite members of the literature/language based school of thought and vice versa. I will outline a more applied 'educational and therapeutic' tradition in approaching art as embedded in evolutionary processes. For example, in occupational therapy and in art therapy, there is a growing body of evidence that arts and crafting has an evolutionary and hence a neurological basis (Gutman and Schindler 2007; Dissanayake 1992, 2000, 2013; Aiken 2013; Mendoza-Straffon 2014). Although not traditionally trained as an academic, anthropologist and art practitioner Ellen Dissanayake became, like Bateson, a maverick, transgressing disciplinary and professional boundaries. She builds her evolutionary arguments of art, being inherent to the beginnings of humanity, on anthropological, psychological, evolutionary, philosophical and ethological studies (1980). Although not referring to Bateson she shares the idea that making (tools, utensils, masks, etc.) and doing (playing, singing, dancing) art is targeted at creating beauty and feelings of well-being. With her first publication, she starts her studies on play, art and beauty from the 'animal world' (Crain 2001). With this evolutionary and psychological approach to the function of art, she broke away from traditional approaches and crossed disciplinary boundaries between scholarly communities studying art. The 'pleasure and meaning of making' remains a key theme in her publications (Dissanayake 1995).

Similarities and Differences During Crafting in the World

Imitation and mimesis, difference and alterity, for decades, are central concepts in cross-cultural understandings of learning processes (Benjamin 1986/1933; Taussig 1993; Gebauer and Wulf 1995; Horvath and Thomassen 2008). As discussed above,

Bateson takes all communication as learning, and vice versa, and both are present in all living systems (1972). Human learning is both synchronizing to nature's cycles and principles, which is adaptation to permanent change (Bateson 1979). Everything in nature, and in and between humans, is always both the same and different (Van Bekkum 1999). For example, all beech trees are similar, but every tree is different – hence nature produces differences and similarities at the same time. Mimesis (mimicking) and alterity (otherness) are connected; when one moves the other moves too. To Bateson these natural 'cybernetic' processes, as stated above, are complex beyond human imagination, and therefore we humans have to enter 'unconscious purpose' (intuition/syncing with nature's principles) in crafting/making art. Too much 'conscious purpose' (rational thinking, planning and acting), as in recent technological revolutions, tends to create disruption of nature's self-correcting processes and disaster in the end. Bateson gave many examples, for example, about the pollution and restoration of Lake Erie in the USA. He takes the increasing pollution of this lake as a process of driving this ecosystem insane and restoring the natural balance as 'mental healing'. Global warming is such a process on a dangerous macroscale. In both the making of artifacts and in educating/teaching arts and crafting, this universality, of be(com)ing the same and be(com)ing different, can be retraced/rediscovered (Van Bekkum 1999). These theoretical conceptualisations can also be related to Levi-Strauss' work on 'savage thinking' as untamed thought, which considers the metaphor of the bricoleur (tinkerer) as a systematic improviser. The bricoleur will use things that are readily available in order to craft, in contrast to 'civilised' scientific, measured and systematic thought used in order to provide the optical outcome (1962a). He equates our minds-bodies-hearts 'crafting the world', with the 'mental crafting' of stories and mythologies. In his study of Totemism, Levi-Strauss concludes, 'to end a study of a mentality we hoped was primitive. Because this (primitive) mentality is, in the last analysis, only our own' (Levi-Strauss 1962b, 62). However, whilst challenging the idea of 'savage' vs. 'civilised' thought he simultaneously, presents manual crafting (bricoleur) as being a lower status in comparison to mental crafting, so in the end, he re-creates (re-affirms) an old dualism: white collar (intellectuals/scientists) is not equal with blue collar (arts and craftsmen) (Van Bekkum 1988).

Presenting Case Vignettes

In this paragraph I present three cases to outline the main clusters of data collected. Gratifying interactions during crafting artifacts were rediscovered and reframed in my clinical fieldwork in psychiatry (Van Bekkum 1988, 1993, 1994). A recurrent issue was getting patients started in making artifacts. As mentioned earlier, during the entire fieldwork only about 5 out of 500 hundred young men could not be motivated to make an artifact.

Abdelkarim: Crafting as Intercultural and Healing Communication

One example was a patient in occupational therapy was Abdelkarim, a non-European man of 22 of Amazigh (Moroccan) background. He has emigrated from Morocco to the Netherlands 2 years prior to meeting him, and was hospitalized for depression evident from being apathetic at home and at work. Welcoming him into occupational therapy, I offered him different possibilities for manufacturing a piece of metalwork. I stressed the option of making something for himself, which was my usual approach. His reaction on a verbal and non-verbal level was both yes and no. I interpreted this as doubting, connected with his mental condition, and narrowed the number of options. Abdelkarim's indeterminate reaction continued, and I showed him artifacts from other clients hoping he would make a choice, to no avail. We both felt uneasiness. The next time he came to therapy, the same sequence started, and I got more and more annoyed, and at one moment I expressed my frustration by raising my arms in the air. At this point, Abdelkarim smiled, and I smiled, and he said that making something for himself wasn't right. I asked him why, and he started talking about the Quran and explained that making something for himself would be an expression of vanity. He said that making something beautiful is much more accepted in the field of religion but belonging to Amazigh (Berber) culture meant making something had to also fit in the family and clan interests. Furthermore, he later explained, as an Amazigh it is not done that an older man (me) would give him so much freedom in a labour context such as occupational therapy. He taught me more of Islam, and after a while I brought a book with Islamic calligraphy, which helped Abdelkarim decide to saw out and chisel a 'sura' (verse) from the Quran in brass. The artifact came out very beautifully. This interaction with Abdelkarim pointed me in the direction of the symbolic aspect of crafting that is intentionally embodying an artifact with meaning and the different cultural norms around crating practice.

Feisal: Crafting as Regaining Mental Stability

In addition to unexplained motivational events and how cultural self-reflection works in communication, I discovered in my fieldwork that crafting artifacts evoked emotions of well-being and temporary mental integration in patients. An exemplary case is Feisal who was a 19 year old Surinam-Hindustaniman (see for elaborate case description Van Bökkum 2001). He migrated at the age of 13 with his mother from the former Dutch colony Surinam to the Netherlands. He was hospitalized in a psychotic condition, initiated by the tough outdoor 'bootcamp' training he experienced as a drafted soldier. In occupational therapy, just as at the psychiatric ward, Feisal's connection with reality was thin and vulnerable. In situations with too much stimuli, he shifted to and fro into incoherent speech and got lost between different worlds

Fig. 6.4 Incense burner for a puja ritual



from home, Surinam and psychiatric therapy workshop. He was deeply restless, walking around while talking out loud and swinging his head and arms around. From my experience I knew that ‘safe’ interaction and crafting could stabilize him and reconnect him with reality (van Bekkum 1994; Van Bekkum et al. 2010). Feisal appreciated the ‘open’ occupational therapy sessions because he had been secluded at the closed psychiatric ward at the hospital. After several sessions Feisal noticed a brass cup among the exemplary pieces in the workshop and asked if he could make an artifact for *puja*. He explained to me that *puja* is a sacrificial ritual with incense meant to restore balance and good life. In his family it required a little bowl-shaped brass holder with a lid with holes to burn incense sticks (Fig. 6.4).

After years of experimenting, Feisal helped me put my finger on the beneficial effects of crafting artifacts. During my interactions with Feisal, I saw how the decision process, the designing and crafting of the incense burner, temporarily restored his distorted connection with reality, and mitigated his desperate feelings that accompanied his psychosis. Every time Feisal immersed himself in crafting his puja bowl, his psychotic experiences disappeared. He showed more ‘being at ease’ and expressed even feelings of pleasure in smiling at and communicating with other patients. Most of the time shortly after bringing him back to the closed ward, his psychotic communication pattern returned.

Later on in the therapeutic process, Feisal explained to me why making the incense burner for *puja* meant so much to him. When living in Surinam, Feisal used to go to his grandmother’s house after school, even until late in the evening, sometimes staying there to sleep. His grandmother had a little puja bowl in which she burned incense for his deceased grandfather. After several sessions he presented his puja bowl proudly during group sessions and at the ward. At his release from our hospital, he told me that his little puja bowl would get a spot beside his bed next to the photo of his grandmother and deceased grandfather.



Fig. 6.5 Author's father and grandfather, both with pipe, with other craftsmen in the smithy of his family in 1933

Artisanal Blacksmithing as a Social-Communicating Transgenerational Socialization and (Family) Continuity

The third case study will discuss the manufacturing process of a balcony railing from my father's, my family's, arts and crafting tradition (Fig. 6.5).

The occupational workshop in which I offered therapy, and did my fieldwork, shows similarities to my father's smithy. My father, linked to generations of blacksmiths, with his employees produced numerous metal artifacts, such as the balcony railing crafted for a customer. Crafting this railing was an intricate interactive and communicative social process. Communication between the customer, my father, the house building contractor and the coating firm, from the nature of the railing design, agreeing on the price, to sending the bill and in checking the payment, marks the deep communicational and sociality involved in producing this artifact.

Further, the manufacturing and installing of the railing is loaded with meaningful communication from both my father and the customer. The crafting process is filled with moments of what the customer wishes in kind of materials, form, aesthetics, paint colour and the possibilities of my father's skills, the material and tools' availability, costs and construction properties. Both the making of the railing and putting it in place, are filled with negotiations of meaning between the customer and my father. Meaning here is defined as the process of negotiating between what both systems (blacksmith and house owner) consider as functional, as beautiful, as strong enough, as fitting, etc. for a balcony railing. Crafting the balcony railing couldn't be coined as 'symbolic' like the front door ornament my father crafted for the catholic

Fig. 6.6 ‘Christogram’ that was beautifully interwoven



bishop’s residence in which the sign (a monogram of Christ) was beautifully interwoven (see Fig. 6.6).

From 10 years of age, I co-experienced, in numerous occasions, my father’s non-verbal gratification, enjoyment and pride being involved in these crafting processes and looking at the finished artifacts afterwards. These co-experiences became more verbalized when I, as a young man, participated in the building process of the last, of three, sailing yachts my father designed and manufactured for family use. Being socialized by my father in craftsmanship and being an artisan and occupational therapist myself, make defining characteristics of ‘crafting in the world’ learning processes possible. Crafting/creating processes between ‘seniors’ (teachers) and ‘juniors’ (students) in crafting include :

- (a) Mimetic ‘mesmerizing’ urge to observe, visualize in your head, motor patterns of craftsmanship (skills).
- (b) Time-consuming one-on-one ‘non-verbal demonstrating-mimicking’ communication of gestures, sounds and motor patterning, like little children do in being their favourite TV character or superhero, for example ‘Bob the Builder’.
- (c) Regularly non-verbal signalling from master to apprentice to ‘preview and pre-act’ what is needed to make the next move in the manufacturing, repairing and engineering process. It demands a deep communicational concentration by both apprentice and master.
- (d) Continuous ‘self-correcting and affirming’ during the communication in both apprentice and master.

These characteristics are reminiscent of Raven’s analysis of craft: ‘...a craft is at once a form of knowledge and a form of practice’. I would add ...and is it deeply social, learning, communicating and symbolizing (filled with meaning). This conception of ‘socializing-embodiment’ learning processes gains more and more attention in educational settings. Psychologist Howard Gardner opened up a ‘Pandora box’ with his ‘multiple intelligences’ (2011/1983). One of these suggested ‘intelligences’ – kinesthetic intelligence and kinesthetic learning – seems to be at the heart of crafting in the world.

An important remark at this point needs to be made from my own, and my families’, experiences as artisans and sailors. Making an artifact demands craftsmanship and skill. According to Richard Sennett mastering a skill, such as making metal

(iron/stainless steel/copper/brass/silver) artifacts, takes about 10,000 hours of practice (Sennett 2008). When we talk/write about making artifacts, this is mostly forgotten. Another forgotten aspect of crafting is connected with ‘embodying artisanal knowledge’ in these 10,000 hours of practicing. To get into a state of making beauty, of creating pleasure and grace, everytime you start or continue a crafting process, demands discipline and perseverance. Beauty and grace in making artifacts asks for wisdom to connect with the collective soul of your gender, class, family, community and culture. Rational choices and willpower are of no use and can even be a burden to enter grace. Getting into grace just happens. Most of the time you become aware of it when you get out of it.

Relating Case Vignettes to Theoretical Argument

I began this paper with two bold assumptions that (a) human manufacturing of unique material objects brings about individual/collective experiences of beauty and grace and (b) this ‘making artifacts’ represents an important ancient continuity in humanization. Next we distilled two questions from these assertions to make sense of the puzzling termination of my families’ smithies:

1. What fuels the tenacity of the arts and crafting in humanity?
2. How is this continuity of craftsmanship created and maintained over hundreds of generations, in all its glorious varieties, in thousands of human groups?

Summing up my theoretical arguments to explain the data in the case vignettes:

1. Persistent European-bound dualisms, e.g. mind-body and individual-society, blind us to how non-European cultures, far away in time (for example, ancient Egypt) and place (for example, Inuit), are ‘trialecting’ what we split up in mind-body-soul and in individuals-families-communities. Although providing an important insight into crafting activity and cognition, craftspeople, like my father and ancestors, never went into this kind of deep reflective thinking about their craft and practices.
2. Artifacts are living things that are filled with meaning and continuously communicate with us and their environments. A stone-axe communicates with us over millennia (Ingold 2013).
3. A craft is at once a form of knowledge and a form of practice (Raven 2013).
4. All human cultures create beauty when crafting (unique) artifacts (Boas 1955/1927).
5. All living systems create always similarities, differences and beauty (Bateson 1967, 1987, 1991).
6. All living systems can enter states of grace when synchronizing with nature’s cycles/principles. When individual humans and collectives of humans balance their conscious purpose (rational-cognitive controlling intentions) with ‘uncon-

scious purposes' (integrated mind-body-soul intentions) inside and outside themselves, in that context, they get into states of grace.

7. *Bricolage* (systematic improvising) constitutes both savage and civilized thinking, but white collar does not equal blue collar in terms of status and value (Levi-Strauss 1962a, b).

Following these theoretical reflections on Ingold, Raven, Boas and Bateson, I propose that beauty and grace in crafting:

- (a) bridges intersectional differences (Crenshaw 1991) and is accessible across cultures (universal human)
- (b) is interactive and communicative (relational/between people, filled with meaningful messages)
- (c) is permanent contextual learning (situated, localized)
- (d) can be symbolic (loaded with intentional meaning)

Abdelkarim's case vignette showed that crafting works across cultures and religions. In our frustrating but vulnerable connection-seeking communication a breakthrough, by inviting humor and irony in, emerged, and that crafting, in a 'safe space', brings about beauty and grace. The brass-chiselled *sura* was filled by him with personalized meaning. It lifted his spirit, and his depression slowly diminished. Feisal's dramatic condition improved when he was able to submerge himself into a crafting process. The making of the puja bowl was an extraordinary feat for him which brought him back to the loving-healing energy of his grandmother. His case suggests that reconnecting ties with, and memories of, loved ones can cure psychosis when the person in question is contained in the right arts and crafting atmosphere. My father's balcony railing and bishop's front door ornament crafting bring a possible differentiation of analytic levels to light: the railing has a functional and an aesthetic level, but the door ornament is functional, aesthetic and symbolic.

The whole process with Feisal opened my eyes to what to me is so self-evident: how important the activity of crafting artifacts was. I was at the time (1986) already-looking for theories and concepts to explain the integrating and 'feel good' effects of creative manual (bodily) activity (Meyers 1977/1922; Hendrick 1943; Van der Drift 1959). Crafting artifacts seems to revitalize a 'gratifying' ancient human motor, synchronizing eye-hand coordination, patterns which appear to have equivalents in neural circuits of our brains (Van Bekkum 1993; Bergland 2007; Stein et al. 2009).

Cases like Abdelkarim's and Feisal's taught me, at the time, that intentionally 'filling an artifact with symbols' was, for me as a white Western-socialized male from middle-class background, almost non-existent. Young men like them pushed me into a learning process of a new level of making artifacts. Abdelkarim also made me aware of my personal, Westernized, way of individualizing in therapy and education. He pushed my button of 'cultural self-reflection', which opened my awareness to other cultural ways of crafting in the world and more social and hierarchized ways of therapy and teaching. Even more important, interacting with Abdelkarim taught me that expressing my helplessness and humbleness (small ego) in communication

can be a great tool in transcultural communication and transcultural therapy. This is coined as the ‘not-knowing stance’ in system therapy (Defehr et al. 2012, see also Devereux 1967). Moreover, he helped me think about how strong my/our Western focus is on the functional purpose of the artifacts we produce (Van Bakkum 1994). Last but not least, interactions with patients from non-Western families like Abdelkarim led me to reflect on Western-bound gendered value patterns in which the ‘secularized’ breadwinner role of adult males is devoid of beauty and symbolic meaning in making artifacts (Van Bakkum 1994, 1998a, b, 2001).

When I performed these manufacturing processes myself and helped psychiatric hospitalized young men to craft artifacts, I observed and experienced these feelings of gratification and well-being with almost all young men. An increasing number of studies show that performing motor skills, crafting and perceiving something aesthetic in making artifacts release ‘happy chemicals’, such as endorphins (Young 1996; Tomohiro and Saki 2013). People intensively interacting and cooperating are likewise producing emotions of well-being and bonding (De Dreu 2012; Sennett 2012). In several recent publications, the well-being, stabilizing and integrating (neurological) effects of everyday (community) arts and crafting and of occupational therapy, is recognized and validated (Ramsden et al. 2011; Burt and Atkinson 2012; Keats 2014; Garner 2015).

Combining the three case vignettes with Bateson’s efforts in cybernetic systems to think ‘how nature works’, and the idea of grace and beauty in making artifacts, leads to his conception of balancing unconscious principles of nature and our human runaway form of ‘conscious purpose’.

Concluding Remarks

In anthropology there exists large scepticism about universalities of human traits/faculties. My claim in this paper is that there exist human universalities if we, social scientists, cross-culturally redress our Western civilization-based ‘dualisms’ into ‘trialectics’ like mind-body-soul (Bateson et al. 1976; Harries-Jones 2010, see Appendix 1) and individual-family-community (Keeney 2010; Van Bakkum 2015, Van Bakkum 2017). Following the idea of ‘crafting in the world’ seems to lead to a recognition of occupational and art therapy (Gutman and Schindler 2007; Dissanayake 1992) and of socially-bodily (kinesthetic) forms of learning and communicating (Reynolds and Reason 2012).

The Batesonian conception of MIND overlaps the phenomenological conception of collective consciousness (Salice and Schmid 2016, 165–66; Krause 2012). However, phenomenology seems to focus much more on individual consciousness than on Bateson’s conception of MIND, with which he means: the collective learning/remembering of social systems like a mountain forest or families and communities of sea otters or humans. Crafting, as the author himself and the young men experienced in their ‘manu-(hand)-facturing’ processes, is both a sensory learning and a (precognitive) ‘re-knowing’ experience. What is re-embodied unfolds

itself from what is already somewhere there in the MIND (mental collective archives) of our families and communities. The context (mise en scène) of my workshop ‘luxated’ (dislocated) everyday experience and opened doors to arts and crafts impulses into MIND. A process of bodily remembering sets in, while several barriers during the making process are overcome (Carpendale 2002). ‘The creative act has its origins in the givenness of consciousness’ (Whitehead 2003).

Together with the older fieldwork reports on ‘primitive art’ (Boas 1955/1927; Bateson 1967) and more recent anthropological publications (Ingold 2013; Raven 2013), there seems more appropriate conceptual frameworks to research and analyse human practices of ‘crafting in the world’. Combining these conceptual approaches with consideration of the three case vignettes presented suggests a rather promising everyday, clinical, educational, cross-cultural and historical (interdisciplinary) approach to studying ‘crafting in the world’. This claim is based upon the ancient human universality of what I coined as the ‘arts and crafts impulse’ (Van Bekkum 1993). This impulse is an indispensable part of the humanization process which started with the manufacturing – arts and crafting – of stone tools.

To redress the fieldwork findings into more experience-near and more applicable concepts to educate young men in vocational training, their families and to other (academic and professional) disciplines, I coined the concept of arts and crafting impulse (ACI) (Van Bekkum 1994). The idea of an ACI serves multiple purposes. It is:

1. A diagnostic therapeutic device
2. An educational concept in craftsmanship learning contexts
3. An analytical concept in material and archaeological studies
4. A reflexive cross-cultural comparative concept to bridge arts and crafting practices in both ‘indigenous and urban communities’ (Fig. 6.7)

My observation/experience during clinical fieldwork was that all the young men managed to integrate the first two levels, but only a minority merged all three levels. In this minority those from families with non-European (Asian/African) roots were over-represented. This may be related to the prevalence of industrialized labour in

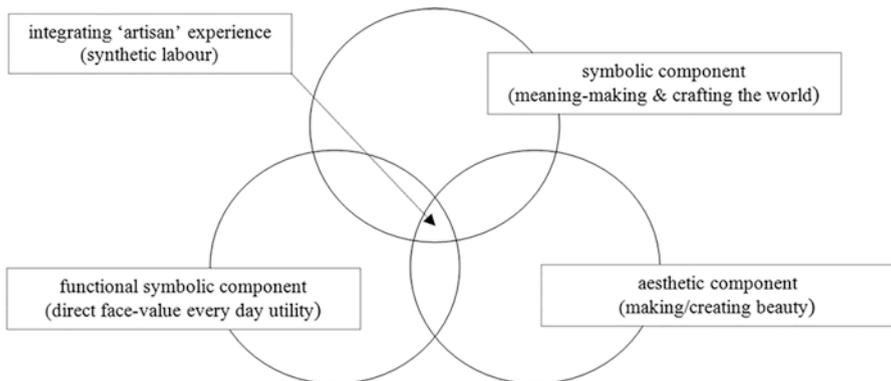


Fig. 6.7 Arts and crafting impulse in making artifacts

European societies, producing functional, and less aesthetic, objects. Unskilled, less gratifying, labour is connected with mass-produced assembly-line labour (Marx 1844). In almost all Western material objects, the symbolic, making special-international, filled with meaning component is missing. Product designers are educated to combine functional-aesthetic components in arts and crafting. Still, mass production produces 'soulless' objects. Western fascination with 'exotic and tribal art' (and an exorbitant elitist market) could be a sign of craving for a lost capacity to integrate functional, aesthetic and symbolic components in arts and crafting. "The Times, they are A-Changin'" (1963 song by Bob Dylan (2001)). Handmade functional-aesthetic-symbolic (*MiBoSO*) artifacts are returning (see <http://www.creatingcommunities.net>; <http://www.handmadeinamerica.org/index.html>; <http://www.craftscouncil.nl/?About-us>).

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Appendix I

Lost Powers Returning

MiBoSo: An Ancient-New Sacred Trinity

Reuniting Mind-Body-Soul

Whenever, in Western-socialized persons, mind unites with body and soul, something extraordinary happens. In whatever situation, awakening from a night's sleep, at a dance party, being together in a peer group, during a delicious dinner, in an erotic sexual encounter, while dancing, sporting or drugged, the experience is overwhelming. This, however, as such is not extraordinary while for thousands of years humans from cultures all over the world have mind-body-soul (MiBoSo) fusions. Many peoples all over the world have names for this individual and collective experience: Satori (Zen), Inner Light (Quakers), Samadhi (Yogic), Khum (San) and Communitas (see Edith Turner 2012).

What **is** peculiar in Western (modern) cultures is the isolation you are thrown in after an individual mind-body-soul fusion experience.

Western Christian-Nation-State-rooted culture does not seem to offer a cultural framework in which the individually experienced fusion can be linked to religious, educational, political, occupational, gender and age realms. This is the source of many (family) dramas, (mental) illnesses, violent encounters, misunderstandings, etc.

The pictured object is a standing lamp and a manifestation of my shamanistic awareness that we are in the middle of a macro-process of bridging the gaps between individual, social and cultural levels of the mind-body-soul fusion experience. It is

Fig. 6.8 Standing lamp.
Lost powers returning:
reuniting mind-body-soul



also a time-location bound (Utrecht-The Netherlands; 1990–1996) representation of the maker's life plan and in that sense a strategy and blueprint for action.

The lamp has a height of 1.86 m., and the carrying rods are brass 13 m.m. \varnothing which are forged into their spiralling form with blazing torch and my hands.

The base is made from Dutch Elmtree wood and the bouncing bodies from American Cherry tree. The halogen bulb is fuelled from the electric mains and a 220/12 volt transformer. The top light can be softened by a dimmer switch in the base. The Lotus leaves are hammered brass sheet 0.5 mm. The light spreads a lotus form to the ceiling. The imagination crafting took 6 years (1990–1996) of my artisan development. The complete meaning and narrative of the artifact emerged in the last 2 years of manufacturing (Fig. 6.8).

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