About the Creative Impulse

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Panel: The Creative Impulse (this panel took place in St. Louis)
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To talk about the creative impulse in general is not as easy as it seems; in fact it is a difficult matter, because as soon as one starts to handle a couple of ideas one notices that there are as many exceptions to those ideas, as writers that exist. Anyway, I have to say something about it.

The creative impulse begins with the interest in books. Take a writer, any writer, he usually starts (just an example) in his childhood reading comics, then fairy tale books, then novels, and so on. Suddenly this writer notices that he likes to spend more time reading than, for instance, watching TV or studying school subjects, and soon he has favorite books, favorite authors, and secretly wants to begin writing himself. But what makes a favorite author? This is a very critical point; it is the first symptom of searching for a style. At this point our writer finds that the difference among authors is not only the stories (or poems, or whatever) they create, but the way they deal with language. He prefers one author over another, because that writer says things in a particular way. The creative impulse turns him towards imitation of those words, the beginning of a defined path.

What a writer looks for is to reach the level of language his favorite authors show. Our writer will always compare himself and his work with the authors and their work. The creative impulse can be understood as a kind of linguistic curiosity in progress. The young writer is in front of the world and for secret, particular, strange reasons, he chooses to define his relationship with the world by words, certain words. So the creative impulse is not, solely literature (everybody, I think, has a creative impulse that could be developed in some way) but the personal will to demonstrate something. As a writer becomes more and more aware about language, he can direct his own evolution, taking and changing some principles, methods, procedures: Language becomes the creative impulse by itself or as Gertrude Stain said “language became a physical object, which could be caressed, though that caressing could only take place in language.”

The poet Vicente Huidobro postulates that a poet “should not copy nature but imitate the way nature creates, for instance, a tree.” This means that the creative impulse could (and should) be consciously oriented in a specific direction which gives a specific form to that impulse. The writer, the poet, should not sing about how beautiful a landscape is, but create a beautiful landscape the way nature offers it to our eyes: without any kind of cultural justification. The creative impulse, from this perspective, is a force, a creative force that like nature evolves, must evolve, from the simple, basic levels to more complex and refined ones.