



GERALD  
**HÜTHER**

**Co-creativity  
and  
Community**

**V&R**

and approach one another. This approach is important, because I can already let you in on a little secret: the pleasure we feel in thinking for ourselves and in building and shaping together with others never “just disappears”; it can only be lost as the result of painful experiences from relationships. But every single one of us can also rediscover it, even if we’ve grown so old that these experiences lie years or even decades in the past.

However, achieving this on our own is extremely difficult; to do so, the person in question would need to have a different, more positive experience in their relations with another person or even with several other people. In this way, they would need to see that their own ideas and suggestions do matter; that by sharing their ideas they don’t merely participate, but can actively contribute to jointly finding a solution to a problem – a solution that, by its very nature, is more complete, more comprehensive and as such more lasting than any that an individual could ever come up with on their own. Hence the book’s title, a call for achieving co-creativity through community.

In order to gather these positive experiences with the other members of a community, we have to learn to interact differently. Instead of looking at each other as the objects of their personal assessments, expectations or even ulterior motives, the members of these societies would need to be ready and willing to engage with one another as subjects. Granted, that would mean a completely different relationship culture from what most of us are familiar with in our day-to-day lives.

In this book I have sought to describe what such a culture could look like, which opportunities it would offer, and how we might succeed in creating it. From the outset it was clear to me that this approach represents an attempt to shake the foundations of our current societies. The way we live, learn and work together today is, after all, an expression of our current self-understanding. And these notions we have of ourselves, of that which characterises us, what we consider to be our human

nature, have taken firm root in our brains in the course of generations; they can't simply be changed overnight. As such, I chose to divide the book into three main parts.

The first part focuses on the question of where our insights and the beliefs we derive from them actually come from. In other words, the question is how certain and reliable all those notions of ourselves and how we shape our lives that we consider to be accurate, universal and therefore true, actually are. How can we ever reassess how we all live together if we're still convinced that it's part of our human nature to coexist in this way and not some other?

But even if we succeed in recognising that we could also live together in a different way, this insight alone won't make us treat each other differently in the future. In order for that to happen, what is more important than a new insight is a somewhat deeper understanding of our own development to date. Accordingly, the book's middle part addresses exactly this question: just what it was that made us and every other person we meet turn out the way they did, what made us and them into who we are today. After all, how can we ever decide to treat someone else differently – more compassionately, perhaps even more lovingly – if we only look at them as they are today, without ever asking how they came to be that way?

Ultimately the theory of relativity can be summarised in a single formula. In order to relativize the current state of knowledge concerning what defines us as human beings, and with it our own self-understanding, I had to address these two parts before turning to the insight they lead us to in the third and final part: namely, that it doesn't have to be that way.

And many of us are already acting quite differently. We don't have to keep treating each other the same way we always have; we could also start trying to truly approach one another. Instead of making other people the objects of our assessments, plans and ulterior motives, we could invite, encourage and inspire

them to rediscover their own joy in thinking for themselves and creating together with others. Only then will we succeed in tapping the potential slumbering in every individual and in every community.



## Part 1: Life as an Ongoing Learning Process

Everything's a mess; nothing works the way it should. Wherever you look, there are problems on top of problems: problems with our partners, with our children, within the family, at the kindergarten or at school, with our neighbours, at university or on the job. And this only gets worse when we look at the "big picture", at what happens in cities and communities, at companies and other organisations, in politics and the economy. When we open the daily paper, follow the latest news, tune in for political roundtables on TV, or check out online forums; everywhere we see the same thing: countless problems – whether personal, interpersonal, regional, national or global. And just when one problem seems to be solved, two new ones pop up to take its place ... and there's no end in sight.

No wonder that more and more people are losing their *joie de vivre* and, like sailors do when the storm-tossed seas threaten to capsize their ship, choose to batten down the hatches. This usually works for them; after all, no storm can last forever. But our problems won't go away on their own. On the contrary, if we don't find solutions, they'll only grow worse.