

# **Creative Transformation**

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## Abstract

As a teacher of movement in many contexts (from dance classes in a performing arts school to facilitating personal growth and exploration in schools, addictions treatment, workshops, etc.) and as a therapist (licensed Marriage & Family Therapist), I have experienced and witnessed the beneficial and therapeutic effects of the creative process. In workshop settings, participants sometimes move even further into transformative experiences that can stimulate healing, growth, and evolution. What are the elements that encourage this process? Creative process can play an important part of the conscious creation of transformative context, particularly in the use of ritual. This paper explores how encouraging everyday creativity benefits participants in therapy and learning situations, explores the therapist/teacher's own creative process as essential to creating a context for healing and growth, and examines the role of creativity in transformative experiences in the personal realm as well as in cultural healing and evolution.

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## Introduction

Several years ago, a close friend of mine had an intensely powerful response to the results of a presidential election. He fell swiftly into a deep depression, motivated by a sense that he had wasted his life on doomed causes, and that any spiritual faith he had was falsely placed. His conclusion was that life truly has no meaning. As he put it:

Everything that I have devoted my life to, everything that I have cared about, everything that has motivated me professionally is now over. Finished. A meaningless effort, now erased. (personal communication, November 3, 2004)

His words brought to mind Frank Barron's (1995):

We must have a graspable meaning in our life if we are to live. If there is no hope for meaning, then only a hopeless courage or a cynical self-serving of the appetites is left. Can civilization survive a world of desperados? (p. 7)

To me, and the others in our circle who sent inspiring and hopeful messages to my friend, he had this to say: "Sorry to those of you in the 'helping professions,' but the abundantly obvious fact at this point is that this country--this world--is not growing more mentally healthy, nor more peaceful, and it's not going to." Again, my thoughts shoot from here to the words of Barron (1995), this time to his concerns about the meaning of the work of psychology. He questions what to make of the changes in our field as "counseling and psychotherapy and advances in psychodiagnostics are creating a mini-medical society within the framework of an organization that had its origins in the drive for basic knowledge (p. 8)." He asks, "So what is a psychologist, that thing I the individual have been in the process of becoming (p. 8)?"

This question is certainly one I have wondered about over years of exploring the terrain of the psyche, as well as teaching and working with groups and individuals, both before I was a licensed psychotherapist and after. My friend's insinuation that none of the work we in the "helping professions" are doing is of any value in supporting or encouraging the ongoing evolution of human consciousness is not one that I shake off lightly. This concern merits consideration, though I am certainly not the first to consider it - Hillman and Ventura's (1993) work comes to mind as a major exploration of this topic.

In the end, I come back to Barron's (1995) vision of a world  
. . .that doesn't just live with but truly embraces appreciatively the mutual interdependence of all its peoples, of a world that values the full development of potentialities and consciousness for itself and all its members. To this end, we must summon up the creativity within us. (p. 9)

My hope is that I can offer to others, like my friend, the possibility of connecting or reconnecting with the creative impulse that awakens meaning. For all of our sakes.  
From Teaching Dance to Teaching Creativity

Since 1972 I have “guided individuals and groups into the realms of psyche and spirit, bringing movement and trancework to the fields of addictions, eating disorders, psychospiritual crisis and ecopsychology.” This is the description I include in my bio, capturing in one sentence the work that I have done since I moved out of the professional dance world and into the field of what we might call “transformative personal work.” My work with movement evolved over many years of teaching dance and developing approaches for exploring movement with a variety of populations.

I have been dancing since early childhood, studying ballet, modern dance, ethnic dance forms, theater, and later exploring yoga and other spiritually based systems of movement. At fifteen, I apprenticed with my primary dance teacher until that time—my mother—and began teaching the youngest children (3-5 years old) attending classes at the dance school she directed. At that early age, dance technique is gently introduced within the context of creative dance, working at a level that is developmentally appropriate. Although some of these young students do continue on to pursue dance seriously and professionally, for many these classes are an enrichment activity, supporting the development of physical coordination and strength, rhythm skills, and creativity.

While my teaching career began with these creative dance classes, it was within the context of dance technique; the classes introduced more structure as the children grew and developed longer attention spans and greater physical strength. My progression from teaching dance technique to teaching everyday creativity is an example of a creative process in itself—a problem presented itself for solving. While teaching groups of junior high students from the ghetto in a program to introduce them to the arts, I saw that classes in dance technique (which they did not have the patience or interest to learn) did not serve them. The most important work we could do with them was to introduce creativity-developing exercises, using this time to give permission for some expression of so many parts of these adolescents that have no space or freedom to be expressed elsewhere in our culture. I used movement improvisation, rhythm games, and whatever my own creative impulses led me to in response to the group, creating exercises that encouraged curiosity, self-confidence, openness to experience, imagination, and expression, attributes ascribed to creative people (Russ, 1993).

As I moved beyond the realm of techniques of dance and into the realm of creativity development, my teaching focused on opening the imagination. Improvisation exercises are useful for the dancer or actor to open channels for ideas and bursts of insight that might lead to new creative work. The exercises are also invaluable for opening those same channels for ideas and bursts of insight about oneself and one’s relationships with others and the environment. The exercises for encouraging creativity in the narrow sense (for performing artists) apply as well to training creativity in the more general sense of everyday creativity:

The notion of everyday creativity . . . involves the basic capacity of human beings - indeed of all living things - to adapt flexibly to changing environments (also see Sinott, 1959). Everyday creativity, in this view, might even be considered a generic form of creativity, with other forms representing special cases. Defined in terms of adaptive capacity, such creativity logically pertains to many types of activities at many levels of complexity; it serves, after all, as a basis for human survival. (Richards, 1997, p. 140)

The task of developing eminent performing artists grew less and less interesting to me as I began to see my work as that of developing artists of life.

(in Plato's Symposium) he described what he called the true artists - namely, those who give birth to some new reality. These poets and other creative persons are the ones who express being itself, he held. As I would put it, these are the ones who enlarge human consciousness. Their creativity is the most basic manifestation of a man or woman fulfilling his or her own being in the world. (May, 1975, p. 39-40)

My question became “How can I encourage the flowering of my students as human beings fulfilling their own being in the world? How can I inspire openness, flexibility, resiliency, and willingness to experiment so as to enhance their ability to move in the world in a creative way?” This was not just idle wondering. With dysfunction in so many areas of our civilization, I truly felt that this work might be my way to serve the whole of the earth, the good of the universe--however one might describe the larger mission of raising consciousness and creativity for human evolution to move forward, rather than end in the various disastrous ways imaginable, given our current trajectory.

This question, posed in terms of how to inspire breakthrough insights from the unconscious, is the theme that Harman and Rheingold (1984) address. To them, It is a state in which the floodgates of thought seem suddenly thrown open and profound ideas and images, often solutions to our deepest problems—questions about life, our work, or our relation to the universe around us—are revealed in an instant. (p. 3)

They propose that the insights available through this opening are not only available to the talented few, but to all of us, as a learned skill. Application of that skill need not produce art masterpieces or changes in our understanding of science, but rather a new way of life. A deep source of wisdom and intuition is accessible inside each of us that can direct us on the path towards healing and aligning the fragmented parts of ourselves. Assisting people to access that wisdom and move towards integration and wholeness in their lives aligns us with an evolutionary current of development that can heal not only each individual on that path, but the community and world they live in.

### Structure and Openness

The underlying assumption in my early dance teaching was that to develop dancers as creative and performing artists, we must first teach the skill and technique of using the body as an instrument of art. The next task is to inspire artistic creativity in improvisation and choreography. My own process of development in the field of dance led me to see both aspects of this training in terms of personal growth and development of general creativity rather than only as career training. The discipline involved in learning technique and training the body, and the freeing of imagination to open up creative possibilities provide the two elements that McNiff (1998) sees as partners in every creation—structure and openness.

We might also look at these two elements in terms of the external conditions that Rogers (1961) suggests are necessary to foster constructive creativity: psychological safety and psychological freedom. Freedom can be seen as a prerequisite for creativity, “an inward balance of constraint and abandon, an openness to the movements and actions of the mind, spirit, and emotion” (Dacey, 1998, p. 150), as well as emotional space and work space. The container of the workshop or class lays a foundation for this freedom, with the safety of a structure (the physical room, the time parameters, the ground rules concerning acceptance, non-judgment, and non-harm, the guidelines and directions for each exercise, and the witnessing teacher) as well as the permission the teacher gives through verbal guidance and imagery for students to explore the edges of their comfort zone. Within that container, the teacher creates a context for experimenting and exploring, providing the freedom that is the other half of the equation for supporting the growth of creativity.

Nečka delineates three elements that are necessary for creativity (cited in Cropley, 1997), two of which correspond easily to the two polarities we are exploring here. Content related knowledge and skills are the technique, the structure. Creativity-facilitating abilities are the second element he describes, such as the ability to get new ideas, see the unexpected, make new combinations, and branch out from the known—all part of openness, freedom, and the inspiration of artistic creativity. Nečka’s third element is motivation, the “willingness to expend energy in producing some product or other” (Cropley, 1997, p. 234). In the case of developing everyday creativity, the “product” that a student or client is engaged with may not be an externally manifested object or event, but rather the goal of personal growth (Rogers, 1961). Motivation may be the most difficult element to teach of the three.

Motivation is the internal drive that leads one to the dance class, workshop or psychotherapy session. It is possible to work with those who have been led by an external stimulus—mandated therapy can be as effective as voluntary therapy (Chick, 1998). I have experienced this teaching movement awareness and yoga in a drug rehabilitation program, where those in the residential treatment program were required to take my class, something they would never have been interested in on their own. I heard directly from many of those people that what they experienced in our sessions was meaningful, and now they would seek out opportunities to continue this kind of work after they left the program. Is this a case of an external support acting as surrogate for the missing element within students and clients until they are able to find that element in themselves? Could it be that the intrinsic rewards of creative activity then contribute to the motivation that is necessary to sustain the creative activity? Certainly, there are ways for teachers and therapists to nurture confidence and guide students and clients through exercises that support their connection to something deeper in themselves, or to a transpersonal source. It seems important to remember that to develop creativity in a holistic way, teachers must nurture this aspect of students as well as assisting them with technical skills and creativity-opening exercises.

Creativity researchers and theorists have compiled lists of cognitive processes that are involved in creativity. I could easily go through these lists and describe exercises from workshops that develop these abilities. These activities are not presented specifically as a way of training creativity, but participating in them provides opportunities for personal growth in the sense that Cropley (1997) describes: going about activities in a divergent way, and encouraging people to approach situations in a creative way does seem to promote personal properties such as self-confidence, fantasy, and openness to new situations. The workshop is experiential practice

in creativity, developing the skills of creativity by doing, rather than learning about them in an abstract way.

A person who has developed skill in the creative process might not only be unconsciously affected by the enactment of the process, but also more able to use this kind of a process consciously in coping with and adapting to life. (Rhodes, 1997, p. 249)

### Divergent and Transformative

Within the container of the workshop or class setting, students practice the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, trying out new ideas and experiences, taking risks physically and emotionally, all in a playful, experimental atmosphere. This is a natural environment to develop divergent thinking, one of the two cognitive categories Guilford (as cited in Russ, 1993) proposes as essential to creative process. Divergent thinking encompasses free association, broad scanning ability, and fluidity of thinking (Russ, 1993). These are all qualities that can be practiced in movement exercises.

For example, after developing a relaxed light trance state, I might guide students into movement as an extension of the natural processes in their body, beginning with breathing. After guiding them through individual exploration, I might suggest they begin to find ways to connect with others in the room non-verbally. My words bring their attention from the internal scanning and movement improvisation to all that is going on in the room. This is practice in scanning, while responding to several possible stimuli: the music, their inner movement impulses (physical, emotional, and to a lesser degree, cognitive), the movements and emotional energy of others in the room, and the physical environment in which the exercise takes place.

This is truly an exercise in free association and fluidity, as participants move from one response to another, seeing where each movement takes them. There are no right answers in an exercise like this; multiple responses may emerge as students follow their impulses. Not only is there encouragement for students to find their unique individual response without regard to what their neighbors might be doing, they are encouraged to find many responses, to continue following the creative impulse into multiple possibilities. This practice in divergent production, a process central to Guilford's view of creativity (Richards, 2000-2001), is one of the basic exercises I use, a wonderful warm-up for whatever might come next. Part of its utility is that the "answer" to the problem is never the same – each experience is an opportunity to see what is present in the moment, and each moment is different, to varying degrees.

At the same time, this is also practice in tuning in to the unconscious, creating a conduit (movement) through which the unconscious can express itself. This is what Harman and Rheingold (1984) say many people call "inner listening," the breakthrough of something from another part of the mind.

It is a state in which the floodgates of thought seem suddenly thrown open and profound ideas and images, often solutions to our deepest problems— questions about life, our work, or our relation to the universe around us—are revealed in an instant. (p. 3)

These exercises, then, can be a practice in the skill of inner listening, as the body's experience in the exercise extends into other areas of one's life. When people have access to information from the deeper parts of themselves there is more possibility for divergence as they follow inner impulses that may take them in many directions rather than attempting to conform to a rigid, prescribed, specific way to move.

The group setting contributes to the opening of creative flow as well. Participants respond to the permission they perceive through a combination of factors (the teacher's verbal guidance, the teacher's movements as he or she models risky or unexpected possibilities, the diversity of responses in the group) that allows them to push through the hesitancy that we often feel about accepting our creative impulses (Richards, 1996). Exploring creative expression in a group relieves some of the pressure of responsibility for being outrageous. The group and the stimulation of working together may help people to escape from the rigid channeling of social acceptability and allow space for new possibilities and risk-taking.

The second cognitive category relevant to creativity is transformation ability (Russ, 1993), allowing one to "transform or revise what one knows into new patterns or configurations" (p. 5). This is really the essence of all the work I do with others—supporting their ability to transform their understanding of themselves and their place in the world as they gain further insight and wisdom from the unconscious mind. It was certainly the process by which I took all that I had learned in the world of performing arts and applied it to guiding journeys in personal development and creative growth. I have worked intuitively in my teaching, following much the same process as I guide my students to follow – only in my case I apply the *sensitivity to stimuli* and the *ability to scan* to all that goes on in the room. Responding not just to my inner impulses, but also to the energy and movement that I perceive in the group, I guide students from where they seem to be at each moment into the next set of possibilities, bringing to their conscious attention what I perceive through my somatic and intuitive attention to the individual and group process.

From a handout I give to students:

The essence of meditation is tuning in, focusing on the absolute present moment and watching it as it moves into the next moment and change flows onward and we follow it, staying in the moment . . .

This is how it works with movement—tuning in to the body frequency and then following what seems to be the natural course of the body's flow at that moment. Sometimes this involves awareness of a particular need, and as I follow this I discover another and another. For example, I might feel an impulse to stretch out the side of my waist, the side of my torso, and then that stretch leads into an awareness of the front abdominals and pulls me into a contraction where I discover my breath is almost completely out and I complete that breath and as I breathe in I feel the front of me opening up and awareness comes in from the spine of straightening up, unfolding upwards, and as I follow this I become aware of my neck and shoulders and a small wriggle, more like a wave, moves through my upper torso, filling me with breath as the centrifugal force pulls my head out to the side and I feel the work going on in the muscles on either side of my neck to keep my head aligned as it is pulled out by gravity.

This is stream of consciousness applied to kinesthetic sense. As I follow that, periodically the observer part of me (who is watching the part that is engaged

in the movement) has an insight that might include the process I am engaged in, perhaps something about another layer of meaning in my movement, or an awareness of an emotional state that has surfaced. Each additional thought is part of the overall flow and I am continually brought back to that as I watch the balancing process that must occur physically for me to stay with the flow of movement without losing it. That means I can't stop flowing with the body's movement even for the few seconds that another thought calls for my attention. I must keep my primary focus going, and all other interesting places to focus are secondary.

The inner listening involved in this process can open the channel for breakthroughs that are the essence of creativity. One of the things that can dam that channel is repressed or suppressed emotions that feel too intense to find a place in ordinary consciousness. To block access to “intolerable” emotions, the channels are blocked to other unconscious information and insights as well. Movement, because it goes directly to the somatic being that the cognitive mind might be out of touch with, can draw into consciousness emotions people might not be able to access easily any other way. Movement then offers an avenue for expressing and working through what emerges. At the same time, “affect may be key in motivating and channeling creative cognition” (Richards, 1990, p. 312). The physical effects of movement may elevate the mood, thereby enhancing the mood elevation associated with creative states (Richards, 1990, 1997).

I describe my movement therapy group sessions as bringing participants into direct contact with the information that is stored in their bodies. Some of the exercises focus awareness on how the body feels. These feelings may be physical (aches and pains from actual injuries or muscular tension) or they may be sensations that are expressing emotional or mental states (emptiness at the heart, sharpness in the eyes, deadness in the feet). It is difficult to separate the physical components from the psychological components and perhaps it is not necessary to make this distinction, because even the physical aspects offer psychological information (Gendlin, 1991). Awareness of these various sensations may well lead to awareness of emotional content that underlies them. Often people are better able to know what they are feeling when they see/feel it clearly expressed in their body's position or movement. Once the feelings are uncovered, they can be explored through talking or worked through with further movement.

Pennebaker (1993) shows, in terms of writing about upsetting experiences (and extrapolating to talking about those experiences), that emotion-based therapeutic work and catharsis as well as cognitive insight are important factors in healing. The implication that “openly expressing negative emotions” (p. 546) increases health improvement supports the idea that the pain and discomfort of uncovering negative emotions are rewarded by gains in physical and psychological health. In movement workshops as well as psychotherapy where clients and I sit and talk, this is most likely an important aspect of the healing process.

Another aspect is closer to the work of cognitive therapy: recognizing the programming and the beliefs that limit us and bringing them to consciousness to be transformed. The beliefs held in the unconscious mind concerning human potentialities and limitations, both individual and in general, can have an enormous effect on the creativity individuals exhibit. (Harman, 1984)“These limits tend to be confirmed by experience, not because they are true but because they are believed” (p. 60). Harman and Rheingold believe that we can deliberately reprogram unconscious beliefs. It may be difficult to change these unconscious beliefs if we are not

conscious of them, so the first step in transformation is to bring these beliefs to consciousness. Often, the exercises in workshops serve to point out some of these beliefs, though that may not be the particular focus or point of the exercise.

As facilitator, I may have a reason for picking a particular exercise for a group to do, some experience that I sense would be a useful one for the group, but I need to remain open to individual experiences that do not fall into that agenda. This was brought home to me once in a group of women who I led through the Sculptor exercise. I had hoped that they would have an experience of being seen by each other in a deeper way. One woman shared the revelation this work had brought her concerning her fears of touching and being touched by other women and the meaning this might have, and how she had cut herself off from healthy touch because of those fears. In this exercise she had felt permission and safety to experience touch in a way she had denied herself for most of her life. Her experience had not even entered my mind as I chose that exercise, but I was delighted that she had the opportunity to open up that avenue for connection. She was a wonderful example of the healing possibilities that exist beyond our conscious planning for them, and a reminder to leave space for them to happen. (Vega, 2004, p. 326)

Once unconscious beliefs emerge into consciousness, we can make new choices. The woman in this example had an opportunity to experience a new behavior that conflicted with her prior belief system, bringing to consciousness the fears that she had not even realized she had, and proving to herself that at least in this instance, that belief was not true. This is the beginning of reprogramming, as she makes a new choice in that moment and opens up the possibilities for new choices in the rest of her life.

#### A Therapist's Creativity

When I was in my MA graduate program learning to become a psychotherapist I had an encounter with one of my professors who emphasized that we needed to make interventions consciously, to plan them and know exactly why we chose the words or actions we used in sessions with clients. I had little client experience to apply this to at that time, but I knew that my experience leading workshops had felt very similar to working with a client, at least in terms of my own process. I asked the professor, "Do you mean that I should be able to tell you after the intervention all the reasons why I did it? Because that is definitely something I could do in my teaching – if you asked me afterwards, I could give you all the reasons I made the choices I made in my class. In the moment of doing something, though, I am following an intuitive impulse that guides me to make that choice." The professor responded that no, she truly expected us to consciously reason through our choices for interventions *before* we made them. This interchange stopped me cold in my development as a therapist. I found myself unable to do anything. I felt incompetent, after having felt that I was doing reasonably good work with my clients until that time. I am grateful to my practicum supervisor, who gave me permission to use the gift of intuition again – and reserve my analytical perceptions and understanding for afterwards.

The work of psychotherapy is not always a rational endeavor, although we certainly need to have training as a foundation for our work. Returning to the theme of structure and freedom,

training gives us the structure. We then need the freedom to follow insights and wisdom that break through from a deeper part of our being if the work we do with clients is to have a profound effect. Both are necessary to the process of helping people develop the three internal conditions Rogers (1961) suggests as being necessary for creativity: openness to experience, internal locus of evaluation, ability to toy with elements and concepts. There are specific interventions that can help someone to develop these conditions through practice in the psychotherapy session (Gestalt empty chair techniques, for example, would encourage all three), but how and when a therapist introduces any of those interventions has a huge impact on how open the client is to the experience. The therapist's insight and intuition can be profoundly important guides in this process.

My own creative process is essential to my work with clients as I respond to each client's needs individually, rather than applying a rigid agenda to everyone.

Assisting a client with their healing process is a form of spiritual midwifery. . . My presence as a therapist is primarily informed by my connection to a spiritual source. I am able to form 'an emotionally charged, confiding relationship' and create 'a healing setting' (Frank, 1991, pp. 40-43) through the self-reflective and therapeutic work I continue to do on myself, which has its roots in a spiritual context. The conceptual scheme (my understanding of why we are doing what we are doing) and techniques brought to the therapeutic work with each client varies with the client's needs, expectations, desires, and the therapist's intuitive sense. (Vega, 2005, p. 16)

The training I have received provides me with the many possible techniques that I might bring into each therapeutic relationship and process, but it is the intuitive sense that determines what will occur in each moment of psychotherapy. Creative process is an essential element in my psychotherapeutic work.

### Creative Ritual

As I moved away from the professional dance world, I explored dance and theatre as ritual, looking to other cultures where dance and the arts are an integral part of daily life and transformative ritual. Rituals serve in many cultures to connect individuals with their deepest selves, the community of which they are a part, the environment in which they live, and the transpersonal realm (Vega, 1983). Rather than duplicate the rituals of other cultures, the challenge was to create time- and place-appropriate rituals that could serve as a vehicle for connection in this culture. Feeling a need for more structure and cognitive understanding for the intuitive teaching I had developed at that point, I returned to school. I was seeking to understand what had been evolving through experimentation with my students and myself as I had mixed my theatre and dance training with the metaphysical and spiritual studies I had pursued on my own. At the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC), I was blessed with guidance from a number of professors who brought their knowledge and experience to bear on my developing work. One of the most important influences on my actual teaching (as opposed to background knowledge that provided intellectual grounding) was Philip Slater (1977), who provided me with support and guidance as I taught "Movement Explorations: Experiments in Ritual" class. Slater's

expertise in group process and psychodrama helped me to move more overtly from teaching dance and movement into using dance and movement, along with other techniques, for self-exploration and development of creativity and human potential.

Human beings develop rituals to face challenges, to come together in groups, and to provide form and guidance in our lives (Achterberg, 1994). In the sense that I am using the term, a ritual is a sequence of events set apart from ordinary existence (as opposed to empty and meaningless repetition, another use of the term). A ritual may have a history that links us with our ancestors as we perform a sequence that has been repeated uncountable times. It may connect us with our community as we share the repetition of familiar words, gestures, sounds, dances. It may be something new, created specifically for a particular time, place, and purpose. It is “the ineffable structured into an event, an interaction of forces by which something else arises” (Highwater, 1977, p. 35). This definition brings to mind the concept of creativity, and points to my sense of ritual as a particularly useful provider of the structure and container I discussed earlier, by which “something else arises.” Something new is created – a concept inherent in many creativity researcher’s definitions of creativity (Richards, 2000). As I use the term, ritual involves intentionality – the participants hold a consciousness that their performance of these actions is something special, set apart from the ordinary. Perhaps part of the effectiveness of ritual as a catalyst for creativity may be that it serves as a protocol for structuring the elements of creativity (preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification, (Dacey, 1998; Richards, 2000) in a symbolic way using various techniques (non-ordinary states of consciousness and the means for inducing them, expressive arts, etc.). Ritual may invite the transformative aspect of creativity (the second cognitive process Guilford describes (Russ, 1993) to take place, as participants use the ritual to make a shift in their perspective and in the way they organize themselves in relationship to others and the world around them.

An example of this may demonstrate the part ritual can play in the transformative process. An “Art and the Spirit” workshop included three sessions each day for five days. Participants experienced movement work in the morning, creative arts in the afternoon (either poetry writing or collage), and then a ritual-creating session in the evening. The evening ritual provided an opportunity to integrate all that was emerging in the other parts of the workshop, to make a whole of something that might have felt like fragmented parts. Harman and Rheingold (Harman, 1984) address the necessity of this process:

Unless the various fragments of one's being can be induced to align themselves toward the same end (producing a state of integration, or a "person of integrity"), this fragmentary nature can indeed become a breeding ground for the kind of inner conflicts that came to life on Freud's famous couch. But, when they are brought together and aligned, the ground has been prepared in a way possible for deep personal breakthroughs to take place. (p. 13)

Ritual can be a means to structure this alignment, to invite the integration of the hidden parts of each participant that surfaced during their day’s process. If we understand ritual as a sequence of events that allows communication with the collective unconscious and hidden portions of the self to take place (Adler, 1986; Vega, 1983), it seems an appropriate structure for encouraging the kind of breakthrough insights that Harman and Rheingold describe.

The meta-message of ritual is integration, unity, or wholeness (Rappaport, 1975). The experience of this meta-message may be what we call a peak experience (Maslow, 1964) or

grace: integration of the diverse parts of the mind, specifically “those multiple levels of which one extreme is called ‘consciousness’ and the other ‘unconsciousness’” (Bateson, 1972, p. 129). It may also be an example of what can be called “collective resonance” (Levi, 2005), “a felt sense of energy, rhythm, or intuitive knowing that occurs in a group of human beings and positively affects the way they interact toward a common purpose” (p. 1). Given these understandings, ritual can be seen as a potent technique for catalyzing and enhancing creative process, particularly in its ability to bring in a “world orientation” (Gruber, 1989), as opposed to the two commonly understood motivations for creativity, ego (extrinsic rewards) and task (intrinsic nature of the task itself). The world orientation acknowledges the claim that the planetary situation makes on us in terms of motivations for creativity. It brings us back to Harman and Rheingold’s (1984) assertion that the solutions to the current global dilemmas facing us lie in the breakthrough capacities of creativity.

### Is Creativity Enough?

Our unconscious beliefs shape our behavior considerably more than our conscious beliefs, leaving us to find approaches to making these conscious and changing them.

When individuals have gone through major change, whether by virtue of formal therapy or weekend workshops or spontaneous life experience, the process has typically involved one fundamental discovery: When the seemingly overwhelming life problems that have brought one to a point of basic life crisis are viewed from another perspective, *not only do they appear solvable, but one finds their origins in the unconscious beliefs and finds that all the resources necessary for their satisfactory resolution were present all along.* The basic problem was one of psychological resistance to that discovery—to changing one’s unconscious beliefs.

We suggest that an analogous statement can be made for problems at the societal and global level. (Harman, 1984, p. 206)

Richards (2003) describes creativity as providing “new pathways to meaning, to greater purpose, to truer knowing, and to spiritual growth” (p. 29). She speaks of creativity bringing us to conscious awareness, one of the primary goals in my explorations of creativity as a means to personal growth. If consciousness is defined as both awareness and the aspects of self and environment that we are aware of at any given moment, then we might understand the cultivation of creativity as the cultivation of consciousness, and vice versa.

Hart (2000) proposes that “love, acceptance, trust, and appreciation are often the outcome of inspiration” (p. 35) and that the sense of connection leads to empathy and compassion. Frank Barron (personal communication, November, 1981) described a Christian mystic who wrote gloriously of his mystical inspirations, and then proceeded, immediately after writing, to stone a woman to death for some sin she had committed. Much as I would like to believe that creativity and inspiration are a form of transpersonal knowing that can create transformative openings in people that lead to compassion and the other heart-full ways of being that Hart describes, it seems to be a more complex equation.

I believe in creativity and inspiration as a means of achieving transpersonal knowing and the heart-openings that I associate with spiritual growth, but the key may be in the source of

inspiration, a question Hart addresses. He looks at the historical assumptions about whether the source of inspiration is inside or outside and cautions that this dichotomy is false; that at the deepest level of opening and connection, our inside is no longer distinct from our outside. I wonder, though, about the levels above that “deepest level,” and the layers of constraints and beliefs that perhaps limit the experiences opened through inspiration. Opening to breakthroughs from the unconscious is not an either/or proposition—it seems that a person may have breakthrough insights about some aspects of life while still being in the throes of their unconscious beliefs in other aspects.

In creating a context in which people can open to creative and inspirational states, we create a container through intention that may inform the possibilities that emerge and move us towards the heart-opening transpersonal knowing possible with inspirational states. Just as intentionality is a profoundly important ingredient in ritual, it may also be a key part of creative and inspirational states moving individuals and our world towards peaceful, healing solutions to the dilemmas that face us. If creativity is to be used to heal the world (Richards, 2003), it will take this kind of intention to move us beyond splendiferous visions and into true healing.

So we return to the dilemma of my friend from the introduction to this paper. He is not willing to “find meaning” if by that we are referring to a way to trick himself out of his discontent by superimposing a meaning on what is “in reality” a meaningless world. The meaning that can emerge from the creative connection with the unconscious mind goes beyond the individual meaning-making process that is merely an extension of limiting unconscious beliefs. It must kindle a reasonable hope for a world where that creative connection is part of a shift that can move us towards global shifts in consciousness that are essential to the survival of our species (and many others) on this planet.

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