

The Sense of Wonder and Imagination as Windows into the Creative Process

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"We continue to evolve and transform who we are in relationship to where we are. We do not live in isolation from the physical world around us. Nature beckons our response. It is in the doing, the being, the becoming that meaning is made. What becomes sacred is the act itself — not what remains. Something inexplicable is set into motion." - Terry Tempest Williams



The topic of creativity is so vast that I can only give the barest take here, just a few ideas to consider. I am not an expert in this area at all, but someone who has been in a deep study of ITP and has engaged in a few creative projects. To start we could ask, what do we mean by creativity? The definition Miriam-Webster gives is to bring something into existence, to cause, or to design. Who or what is bringing something into existence, or doing the designing, isn't specified but we'll let that go for now.

In the introduction to *The Life We Are Given*, Leonard and Murphy ask, "What if the our hearts and the world's heart are one in their self-surpassing?" And they answer, "We believe that they are." From this perspective we can say that when we create, we join with the universal, evolutionary flow, the Cosmic Imagination. We connect with the universal drive for greater expression and fulfillment, which some call Eros. Why would we create, or even exist, at all if it weren't for that ineffable pull, the urge to go beyond, that we share with the universe? For the word universe, we could substitute consciousness. So we could say that we create out of consciousness, from our unique perspective, which is also consciousness. As George Leonard often said, "We are the universe, from a particular point of view."

So, from this perspective, we can say that we are all creative. We create our experience every moment with our thoughts and actions. The Buddha is quoted as saying, "With our thoughts we create the world." We bring thoughts and things into existence. We cannot help but create whether we are conscious of it or not, and most of what we create we do unconsciously. To become more consciously creative could be our goal - to realize that in each moment we create our world, and that through conscious participation we can create ourselves anew; we can ourselves embody the world that we would like to see.

In ITP, we use affirmations to recreate ourselves, focusing our intention by using imagination to empower the positive changes we see for ourselves, and then surrendering our striving ego to the

“unseen forces of grace.” Consider for a moment that imagination doesn’t have to be only images in the mind, but also the knowing of the heart. How would that be different? Perhaps the heart can grasp the all-at-once, the all-at-oneness, the complete picture.

By and large, our experience is that we are individually, personally creative. We bring thoughts and actions into existence every moment, but actually we co-create within a fabric of many interwoven strands - both familial and cultural influences - those of our peers, and, I believe, others beyond our understanding.

In addition to our inner creativity, there is often an intentional desire to bring something new or improved into material existence – a song, a building, a new kind of bicycle. Maybe creativity is, at root, about solving problems. What we need doesn’t exist yet, or it exists but isn’t working the way that we would like, or we can’t figure something out. We then enlist our imagination to help us imagine what could be. Sometimes the answer comes in a dream, or a flash of insight.

Few can be creative on demand, but we can create an environment conducive to creative flow, both inner and outer. In Integral Transformative Practice, we speak of involving and integrating our entire being, body, mind, heart and soul. This synergy sets the stage for transformation. With clear intention, transformational imaging, and focused surrender, we can also set the stage for creative endeavors. We can be confident in ourselves as creative beings, as we express the universal. Reminding ourselves that we live in a miraculous universe, being present to the wonder all around us, and if you wish, asking for guidance, can help us be open to flashes of insight, what we can call “downloads” coming from who knows where, be it the subliminal, the super-conscious, the collective consciousness, the soul, our divine connection? Maybe we can just call it consciousness. Remembering George again, *“Expect nothing; be ready for anything!”*

What channels this awesome creative power? I think that a primary vehicle is the imagination. Perhaps in our early days as humans, the imagination was a survival skill that helped us to figure out what that rustle in the bushes was, or the howl in the night, and imagine the consequences of any action we might take: should we stay in bed or prepare for a fight? Was that a rabbit or a wolf? This could have led to the ability to imagine what kind of tool would make life easier, to imagine how we might communicate with the animal kingdom to provide for the community, to symbols, language and written script to communicate our imaginings to others. Allied with the imagination, is memory. If we couldn’t remember what came before, we couldn’t predict what might be coming next. Michael Murphy has said that he would, given the opportunity, now include imagination and memory in addition to the twelve types of supernormal capacities he catalogued in *The Future of the Body*. Both are capable of giving rise to supernormal versions of themselves.

New people, new kinds of experiences, and new environments, such as the stunning beauty of Asilomar on the Pacific coast, where we will gather for our upcoming conference, can lift us out of our habitual ways of being and relating to others, allowing for opening, safe experimentation and exploration of the possible. We will be present to extraordinary beauty, light and air and co-create as a community.

The routine of daily life can dull our senses. We can get stuck in what we think we know, in learned

patterns of perception, always judging the future by past experiences, leaving little room for novelty. Surprise and the sense of awe and wonder, like the lightening flash of a bird speeding past us, can interrupt our habitual preoccupations, and for a brief moment, the suspension of the sense of self and our agendas. Here is a moment to stop, then pivot, reframe and create the next moment anew.

“We must be prepared to entertain the astonishing claim men like Blake lay before us, that here are eyes which see the world not as commonplace sight or scientific scrutiny sees it, but see it transformed, made lustrous beyond measure, and in seeing the world so, see it as it really is.”

-Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*