



THE CREATIVE EDGE:
THE WAY OF THE ARTS

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THE CREATIVE EDGE THOUGHTS ON CREATIVITY (NL 10)

by Donald W. Mathews
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IN THE BEGINNING

**Sometimes simplicity rises
like a blossom of fire
from the white silk of your own skin.**

**You were there in the beginning
you heard the story, you heard the merciless
and tender words telling you where you had to go.**

**Exile is never easy and the journey
itself leaves a bitter taste. But then,
when you heard that voice, you had to go.**

**You couldn't sit by the fire, you couldn't live
so close to the live flame of that compassion
you had to go out in the world and make it your own**

**so you could come back with
that flame in your voice, saying listen...
this warmth, this unbearable light, this fearful love...**

It is all here, it is all here

—David Whyte (from Fire in the Earth)

A Mythical Dream for 1992 in two parts. Part 1: The Overview.

All around in sunshine, bright green fields spring forth new growth cultivated by an unknown hand. I follow a faint trail to the center and observe three or four cycles parked in front of an old wooden barn. Entering the dark space, the poet David joins me as we sit quietly near the open door and relax together.

The dream for me heralds healing, new growth, and entry into a fourth life cycle that honors darkness at its center. The great arc of life has symmetry and meaning as we cycle through four major phases of approximately two decades each. In the initial stage we are nurtured into adulthood by family and culture. In the second phase, as we gain independence, we move actively into the outer world to gain experience and confidence from its vast knowledge. In accordance with

our spirit, we also begin to build a foundation for personal wisdom. A third phase starts near mid-life after we have encountered life's hardships and begin to quiet outwardly while learning to reconcile pain and opposing forces as they are reflected inward. In this phase we take the great inner journey that must be completed alone to develop compassion and soul. In the final phase, we begin the return to a community of deeply spiritual beings to give back to life—to nurture creation itself.

Orientation in these cycles is not so easy because there are many layers and overlaps to each and some people seem to reverse the order of the inner and outer journeys. We may also receive early insights or glimpses into the various phases of our life that may be confused with the actual full experience itself.

However, with divine abilities finally gained through these two epic journeys—outward and inward, we actively center into our true creative and compassionate nature and live more fully and authentically. We are each called to the responsibility of these spiritual journeys that prepare us to participate creatively with life and its evolution. We discover our own unique spirit by living the process of our heart and find our soul by grappling with all the difficult life forces along the way. Ultimately, we are called to live the truth of our soul as simply and joyously as we can. *Open and be a part of creation with your dreams and heart murmurings!*

I discovered recently how my interest and involvement with the arts in mid-life was the necessary vehicle and gateway to understanding the third stage of my development. I knew that our human artistic abilities—abilities of the fine arts—to sing, dance, imagine stories and images and express them were innate to all humans. Although these abilities are often guarded by great personal fears. In our culture most adults have not owned their artistic abilities—I had disowned them myself in the sixth grade and needed to reclaim this heritage together with the ability to work with dreams as the necessary vehicle to explore my inner world.

However, I intuitively knew the arts were leading me to something else beside a second career as a professional artist. I now understand the major transition I still am in—entry into the fourth and final stage. My strong goal oriented drive has always hid my capacity to simply enjoy the life process in what ever form it appears, so I have been learning to listen to the pleasure of my heart as it calls me to creative expression for its own sake, not for an outside goal. In the new year this pleasure is taking the form of singing with a group.

In some mysterious way, when we learn to listen to the murmurings of our heart and have the courage to act on them creatively, we are answering our personal call to participate in creation at the deepest level. Thus we fulfill our divine life destiny regardless of the phase or stage we are in.

THE CREATIVE EDGE THOUGHTS ON CREATIVITY (NL 11)

by Donald W. Mathews
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THE GREAT HALL

**Come with me
into the great hall of my heart.**

**I will light the candle
of my thoughts and
I invite you to light yours.**

**With these flames dancing together
we will explore the deep shadows
of our grief until the light of mourning
fills this sacred space with joy
and songs of our praise.**

—Donald William Mathews

A Mythical Dream for 1992 in two parts. Part 2: The Confrontation.

Suddenly, I am startled by dirt clods sailing past my head thrown from outside by David the poet. An unknown man is in the background with my brother John, a giant of a man who died recently of a drug overdose. The poet jumps up, grabbing the overhead power line, and sways side to side as the stranger watches. John who is being ignored, swings an old unfinished wood sculpture of mine hitting David the poet hard on the thigh. Unafraid of the huge man, David drops to the earth pushing the giant to the ground in a summersault. But in the maneuver, the poet twists his ankle and also falls to the ground with increasing pain as the dream ends.

At first I found this second dream sequence immensely disturbing as I struggled to find meaning in its war of characters from my soul. In this fourth month as we move through the Lenten season of forty traditional days tying dark winter to bright spring with a crucifixion, the dream now inspires me with new insights. I also realize this personal theme is a major collective theme.

Following my intuitions about the dream, I had the distinct sense the drama was being put on for my benefit. After the overview of the dark creative center, the content seemed to revolve around the relationship of opposing personalities and the meaning of pain in our lives. The element of earth—being awakened by dirt

clouds—also seemed important with the main characters finally coming into full contact with the ground. It was like coming fully into life where pain and death become real and necessary.

For me personally, my brother has always represented the shadow or Dionysian aspects of my psyche while I identified with the Apollonian poet, living out an enlightened, creative and successful life. As an abandoned infant he was adopted by my parents into a deteriorating family situation after I left home. His youthful choice was to follow a sensual life style in the drug culture leading to repeated incarceration, many painful relationships, and finally, difficult death.

As I looked into my childhood, I realized we shared early abandonment, but responded to life differently. I followed the accepted rational upward road of the bright imaginative outgoing child. The artist in me always seemed sheltered by a guardian angel, living in the sunshine of life's blessings protected from pain's sharp stab. While my brother, as a dark misfit in society, had one unlucky experience after another on the downward road. Contemplating both these paths as my own inner process, I discovered my hidden dark Dionysian child who is afraid of pain, shy, brooding, and sometimes destructive.

Finding it difficult to progress with the dream directly, I began studying the lives and stories of the Greek myths again where I discovered new levels of understanding of these life patterns and issues. It also gave me reason for appreciation and compassion of the frequently disowned shadow characteristics, such as the pain maker, and for all human traits and their necessary place in evolution.

What my dream characters showed me was life's continual struggle to resolve the difference between an ideal world of our imagination where peace and beauty reign supreme and the real world where tragedy and pain have been the ruling elements for both humans and the environment. Progress by individuals and civilizations has always come out of our creative nature. It's the ability for each of us to act as infinitesimally small channels of creativity to connect the ideal realms to real life by being present in our acts of experience. This means the willingness and courage to feel our pain and suffering so easily repressed psychologically and often manifested only in bodily illness.

The poets and poetry I respond to are the ones who have gone to the cross of their life experience and then found new grounded lightness and joy in all their shared human experience on earth. It is clear to me that many die in this difficult task, but in every heart this is the seed that yearns for awakening with coming of this spring season. It is a deeply spiritual task for us all—resurrection of a new passionately creative lightness out of our pain and suffering.

THE CREATIVE EDGE LETTER BOX (NL 11)

Carmel, CA:

Wayne and I have read and discussed your article in the Creative Edge Newsletter several times since it arrived. We both feel it is beautifully written and gives us a better insight into our journey. Thank you for your heart felt sharing. We look forward to the follow-up!

Phyllis Kelley

Pacific Grove, CA:

I just received your poem (*The Grandfather's Turn*—see next page) and I wanted to thank you for it and for your kind words—both really helped (with my Grandmother's death). You were right, of course, it had to eventually come out in writing and I'm sending you the poems that resulted from this...Death seems to be hovering over my life and it's beginning to tick me off! Can you imagine the poems that might result from that?

MEMORY BOOK

**Today, pain has become a violator,
searing into me, relentless and merciless.**

**I know it is pointless to grieve,
to feel so deeply the loss of my last link
to the generations where all old family ghosts now live.**

**But you were so much more than an old Grandmother
spinning stories to a willing child—you were, you see,
my future mirror, an older version of myself,
a beacon of the strength and love
so deeply embedded in both our spirit selves.**

**The mirror has now shattered and you are sea foam and smoke,
gone to a place beyond my reach but still alive here in my soul
because, as long as I live, you will be a pink rose,
tucked into the folds of my memory, faded but never lost.**

Olga Jarel

THE GRANDFATHER'S TURN

**In the gathering darkness
a closed door stands before him.
It leads down into the earth.**

**As the sun swept across the sky,
all the rooms above were explored.
Only this one last mystery remains.**

**No book yields its secret.
No experience lends a hand.
All who went before him are gone.**

**As he hesitates,
scars remembered
awaken old fears.**

**With puzzled look,
the child senses his caution
and seeks his callused hand.**

**They make a humorous pair
leaning in different directions,
with the end tied to the beginning.**

**Feeling the old man's strength,
the small head fills again with visions
that pull them eagerly ahead.**

**Now, with trembling hands
and growing excitement,
they will open the door together.**

—Donald W. Mathews

Saint Helena, CA:

That meeting on Feb 1, when Ted Hill brought me to your home (ritual space), has left a profound impression on me, and one which I would like to expand. I can think of no better way than to plant your poem, *The Grandfather's Turn*, and let it settle into the soil of the unconscious. And lo, it has already sent forth a sprig in the form of a heart-felt poem which I can return to your well-spring.

(Continued)

I was also pleased to get the last mailing containing your Thoughts on Creativity. Somehow, the 4-phase life cycle you envision seems easier to grasp and retain than even that of Eric Ericson...from my vantage point of 67 years, I can look back and see the Great Arc, although my phase of life may have been retarded some 5-10 years. (I hope there may be some delay at the far end as well.)

AUTUMN CHORES

**I sallied forth that Autumn morning
full of good intent.**

**I knew the eaves need clearing
of cast-off leaves and needles.**

**And tender things need mulching
against a killing frost.**

**The road to Hell, I'm told,
is paved with good intention.**

**But the soul is filled with fancy.
It has something else in mind.**

**So I find myself distracted
by a leaf hung-up upon a twig,
as though reluctant to conform
to the way all leaves must go.**

**I know I ought to pull it down—
compost-burn it with the rest.**

**Could be some insect's hiding,
snug in it's new cocoon.**

**waiting for the Spring to come before it will emerge
self-transformed as humans cannot do,
to chew my apples from within.**

**But as I stand there musing,
something makes me turn aside,
recalling, as a boy, those unforgettable occasions
when the forest canopy above
blazed with heart-bursting joy.**

**And I let the leaflet stay,
to celebrate this day
all the joys that came before,
and even those that may.**

John Erbaugh

Yakima, WA:

Thank you for keeping me on your mailing list. I'd dearly miss connecting with your thoughts and spirit. Please accept my contribution, not only as a desire to receive your newsletter, but also as my deep heart/spirit/soul-felt support for your efforts and energy. I've enclosed some thoughts I had one evening this winter. I think it speaks for itself. I'm thrilled that I'm not where I was, not where my father was. This journey remains an unfolding and blossoming adventure and you are a treasured jewel in the crown of my life.

FAILINGS

Have you ever tried to do something for your children...only to have it resented and rejected?

A new basketball..."I'd rather have the money."

Have you ever felt unappreciated and taken for granted?

"Kyle's dad gives him everything on his list...and more!"

Have you ever turned on yourself in those moments and blamed yourself for failing to raise your children to be grateful and appreciative? Have you ever found yourself questioning whether or not you were doing it (parenthood) right? Down deep...have you ever heard a voice remind you of how it was in your day? How you'd never have reacted like that to a birthday gift...or else! How you would have never said something like that to your father. How in your day you were grateful for whatever you got...and said so...even if you weren't.

How did I raise a child who's come to expect that life should give him what he wants? Where did he ever get this illusion/delusion? Surely not from my attempts to anticipate his needs...and meet them. Surely not by trying to do "a better job" parenting than my father. Surely not by trying to listen and be sensitive to his needs, wants, and wishes. Surely not because I want him to be happy. Surely not by assuming that I know what he wants and needs, That I know what's best...My father knew what was best..."Because I said so!" Even now I can hear his voice telling me that I'm not a good parent. I've indulged him too much, let him get away with too much, demanded too little from him..."You're not doing it right!"

As I try to shed these feelings I can still hear..."Don't dispute me!" He's right you know...just ask him. Am I filled with these feelings because I've tried to listen and to encourage freedom of

(Continued)

expression? Am I filled with these feelings because I've let the judgmental father voice within me fill my ears and heart with criticism? Am I filled with these feelings because I'm trying to be different from my father? Because I'm trying to examine my motives and emotions? Because I've never completely moved out of my parents home, even though I left over twenty years ago. Because I've opened myself to the pain and hurt of rejection...Or because, at moments like this, I feel the rejection from within as well as without.

What can I hang on to while I'm tossed and tumbled through this torment? Drowning in it seems too easy and still leaves me without an escape. As I search the depths and heights for anything that can offer support, handhold or toehold, I'm reminded of a kayaking phrase, "Lean into the danger!" What does that mean to me at this moment? "Lean into the danger!"

Is there hope in my son's fearless expression of disappointment and his freedom to say exactly what he's feeling? Is there hope in my introspective reflection on this moment rather than giving in to the critical voice within that wants me to become angry and physical, "Give him a real reason to pout!" Is there hope that I now know that the more important struggle is with the voice within me, rather than with my son? Is there hope since my mood has lifted and I'm feeling much better?

The voice of my father has been silenced, replaced by a warmth that flows from within. Is there hope since I now realize that reflection and silence, not anger and violence, are the handhold and foothold I sought so desperately? Is there hope since I realize that by my giving into the voice I would have caused more pain and heartache. There is hope! My inner despair has left and a golden glow has taken its place.

FAILINGS...Perhaps the best failing of all is the failure to listen to the advice and council of the inner critic when it has center stage and tries to exert full control over my actions as well as my thoughts. There is indeed hope in Failings. I hope I can fail more in the future. Perhaps if I fail enough...my child will turn out all right in spite of me.

Leo Figgs

Fair Oaks, CA:

I wanted to send a letter to you that I wrote a while back. I wrote it one morning, the day after I received your latest Creative Edge Newsletter. Writing it was quite an experience—it was very emotional. In ways I think it is an intensely personal letter—for me alone and for us together...And yet, I recognize a note of universal truth in it that might sing to others who are searching like me.

Dear Dad:

I find that your words have once again struck a chord within me. At this time in my life I keep getting great glimpses of the bright sunshine and deeply cold darkness that share the space of my inner soul. There are moments I recognize that another small chunk of the wall I've built around my spirit has fallen away, drawing me hungry for more—always more.

And yet I'm also compelled to recognize that I must be gentle with myself. I must bide my time here, on this side of that safety wall, before I can fully cross over and live fully with my spirit. It's a struggle sometimes to appreciate the "now" of my life. Always looking forward, I tend to shrug away the experiences that are teaching me at this time. But the inner peace I feel when I do listen to my own rhythm tells me that I am where I need to be.

It's especially difficult sometimes to watch as you, my Father, explore so freely your spiritual self. There's a small voice that says "I'll never catch up. I'll never compete. He'll always be ahead of me and he'll always do it first and do it better...". (Oh, how painful it is to write that. I can't stop my tears of shame and grief.) But I'm beginning to believe in my own journey. I'm beginning to appreciate my own strengths and weaknesses, and my ability to reach my inner world when my time comes, and in my own way. It's hard to wait, but in the waiting, I will find myself.

Carol Mathew-Rogers

Thank you for your letters and creative offerings. I invite you to look for emerging themes from your own or other's intuitions and creative works. Then, I invite you to comment on how they facilitate your life journey. I look for words and work I feel supports sharing and understanding of the creative process. I will add your address (Regular or E-mail) when you approve.

The Editor

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