



**THE CREATIVE EDGE:  
THE WAY OF THE ARTS**

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## THE CREATIVE EDGE THOUGHTS ON CREATIVITY (NL 14)

by Donald W. Mathews  
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### GROWING IN SPIRIT

**He [She] who hopes to grow in spirit  
will have to transcend obedience and respect.  
He'll hold to some laws,  
but he'll mostly violate both law and custom,  
and go beyond the established inadequate norm.  
Sensual pleasure will have much to teach him.  
He won't be afraid of the destructive act:  
Half the house will have to come down.  
This way he'll grow virtuously into wisdom.**

—C. P. Cavafy

Last summer as we sailed for Crete, the Captain presented me with this poem by the Greek poet C. P. Cavafy (1863-1933). Crete was the ancient home of the devouring half-human and half-bull Minotaur who lived in the palace labyrinth of Knossos. As I wrestle with the secrets of life and their mysteries seeking spiritual purpose and authentic direction for my life, it yields important advice. Read it with both genders for it certainly applies to all.

Contemplating the meaning of this poem and the earlier journey of Theseus to Crete to face the Minotaur, I realized the central importance of the Greek God Eros and Hade's important helper, Thanatos or death. I realized love and death are essential companions for human growth and creativity.

When caught in life's many transition stages, two powerful energies are required for movement. Eros is the unbounded fiery life preserving instinct containing the sexual drive. It is a fiery love. It is also the subtle power of our attention and attraction. It is a call to action, a call to create new life and relationships.

Death is love's mate with an ever present violent instinct toward destruction. It is the dark urge to kill or make disappear. We also know this energy through death's important underworld brother Hypnos or sleep. So, this energy also reflects the stillness of meditation or contemplation. In my recent surgery, anesthesia was the deep sleep or approach to death used for healing. It is strange paradox that the root meaning of the word violent is vital force and is often the carrier of death. Thus, when we get a taste of death, it is

not surprising it often opens us to the glory of new self-preserving energy. Perhaps in the long view of our lives these two energies cycle appropriately like the seasons of the year.

We have not learned how to use these often terrifying energies found in our human emotions. Frequently, we find individuals unconsciously caught in one force or the other unable to relate to life. Our prisons are full of violent people and we are just learning the importance of love's healing power through intimate sharing. Therefore, each of us must continue work on our relationship with these inseparable energies—to deepen our conscious understanding and use of them. Creatively, it is helpful to discriminate when an energy, thought or idea should be lived or expressed symbolically.

The death wisdom in harmony with the life giving force of love can be a container or regulator to channel powerful vital energies. It is found internally or externally from a wise teacher, but it must be present in loving relationship with the unbounded creative Eros energy of youth for us survive. This eldership wisdom is earned through direct engagement with the terrifying forces of death as life slowly evolves. In all the great stories of love, there comes a time to face death and finally be reborn with the wisdom and wild energy of the Gods. The time has come in evolution for each of us to do the preparatory inner work to overcome our fears of this painful engagement, or as Cavafy put it—our fears of sensual pleasure and destructive acts, so we can grow virtuously into the wisdom of eldership the world needs right now.

In my previous newsletter I mentioned the importance of the Epiphany Season as the time of revelatory manifestation of a divine being. Ultimately it is a time of union of divine soul and human spirit that evokes fiery creative service in the world. What I discovered was the important period between the birth of the human child and the coming of the wise men twelve days later to recognize and declare him divine. This union of wisdom with the child is essential for conversion to Divinity. We hear a lot about finding our inner child and it is easy to assume the child is our Divine Creative Child.

In an age of affluence as a society, we have become isolated from our divine creativity and abusive with our inner and outer children. In any case, most of us have a dark inner child that feels abused—that feels the weight of life's sudden harshness and wants to free itself from its painful grasp and just have a good time. The Divine Creative Child—Wise Elder combination was lost somewhere and is not generally available in the modern world. Like the twelve day period to Epiphany, there is a necessary developmental step as adults between the popular inner child's rebirth and a later union with our own elder wisdom. It is a time of learning from true elders or teachers how to face and experience the trans-forming wounds, and consciously handle a broader range of human emotions.

In Theseus' story, it was Ariadne's love of the hero that provided a way out of the darkness after the monster was slain. He could not return without her creative help. Initially, she dared violate or kill the law and custom of her Father, King Minos, by providing the guiding thread—a ball of string. But as a consequence, she nearly died herself from the pain of grief when she was abandoned by young Theseus on his way home. However, her deep wounding and sorrow brought the God Dionysus. His later marriage to her gave her a new life blessed by the Gods—a rebirth blessed with the life bringing wisdom of Dionysus' later life.

Meanwhile, the King's son Theseus, possessed by his youthful triumph, left his love behind and forgot to change the sail on his homeward bound ship from black to white—a typical youthful error. This signaled to his Father the son's death. Consequently in grief, the old King leapt to his own death. Theseus felt the great pain and deep sorrow from this tragic experience with his recently found Father. However, through his own wounding, he gained the maturity necessary to be King—to wisely lead his generation farther along the path of evolution—beyond the inadequate norm where the old King could not go.

Theseus gained leadership ability tempered with new found love and wisdom that does not tear the whole house down. Life needs unbounded energy unafraid of death, heroic energy to face undefinable monsters and break the stalemate of old inadequate or destructive traditions. Youth's natural fire has the sensual procreative wild life force of Eros. However, we humans in our development must also become conscious of the pain and wounding associated with Eros—the violent death force that accompanies unbounded Eros energy.

Theseus learned it was not enough to be the hero who could use death energy to slay the monster enthralled the kingdom. There was a price to be paid, a sacrifice to be made by him. The nurturing love energy was only acquired through this painful personal sacrifice that turned him into a King. For the maiden Ariadne to become Queen, love by itself was not enough. She had to find the fearless strength of the hero. She found it in Dionysus. Both youngsters went into the dark underworld of sorrow and death, returning with wisdom and the light of consciousness. This was their rebirth. The experience transformed and matured both of them for service to the larger community and society.

Thus we discover another great paradox. The good news always is accompanied by bad news from another point of view. Bad news yields a gift when we search for it. Love is always mated with the pain of a great wound or death. The story teaches us not to be afraid of the destructive act even though it often leads to pain,

sorrow and grief. Sensual pleasure—the pleasure of the body's senses often leads us into the transformational process of growth and creativity. When we follow our heart, wounds will occur—this is the nature of life. But follow our heart we must.

We all have painful memories from past experiences that would stunt our growth and destroy our self-worth. Youthful errors, shameful mistakes, punishments, violations of social conventions, all build a protective wall around our private evolving inner nature in order to preserve the outer illusion of respect. As we gain experience in life and grow strong enough to carry self-inflicted wounds and the wounds given by others, we see how we all have contributed to the pain of the world. Ultimately, these early transgressions must be felt and seen as important teachers in a mysterious sacred process. Then, a great lightness of heart and humor about life is discovered from the wisdom of experience that can carry us to the creative edge and beyond.

Today, current events regularly challenge all of us. In the society, the theme is change. But for change to happen, something must also die or be destroyed. As a new generation takes over leadership of our country, the inadequacies of the established norm are being challenged from all sides for many different reasons. Major themes of sex and violence fill the headlines. Law and custom are being forced into new territories by some, and strongly resisted by others. Chaos seems to be having a destructive field day in many parts of the world. Old and new fears are deeply aroused—the devouring Minotaurs of fear and violence have returned to life!

In the last several newsletters, I have been working with the theme of unity—the spiritual unity of all life and the natural relationship of opposite or opposing energies. However, this inclusiveness requires acceptance of the ever present conflict of opposing forces and the associated risks from the rip tide of their emotional interface. Successful creative people have somehow always learned to do this. Our instinctual sensual nature helps guides us.

The creative process is sensual and sacred. It provides a guiding thread. A thread calling us beyond the boundaries of convention, tradition and experience into a turbulent ocean of our own emotions and the high seas of collective issues. It calls us to find new fertile territory—a rich soil where we can stand firm and plant the unique roots of our soul. Not all survive this journey where we enter the whirlwinds of paradox and storms of uncertainty, where there is always personal hardship and danger. However, our soul calls us into our inner psychic world where self-confidence and self-acceptance finally overcome self-doubts and fears, where we eventually find the hero's courage and unconditional love.

The following poem is my view of this ancient journey downward.

## **THE LABYRINTH**

**Over the centuries  
sheltered by damp walls  
rough stone steps are worn smooth.**

**The opening leads down into the darkness.**

**I know who dwells here!  
It is the devouring minotaur.  
It is born from the mother of all fears.**

**Shaking with terror,  
most stumble in alone.  
But for those with courage,  
dignity is your companion.**

**King and queen,  
servant and slave,  
child and sage,  
all seek light in this great darkness.**

**There is only one way out.  
Turn around and embrace your death.  
Bait yourself on its painful hook, and wait.**

**She will come for you when you are ripe.  
She will slice open your belly with her sharp claws.  
She will reveal your heart locked in a secret tomb.  
She has the only key.**

**Gently, she will turn the frozen tumblers.  
Tenderly, she will lift your bones and  
kiss your parched lips.  
Firmly, she will hand you the thread to a  
passionate and abundant life.**

—Donald W. Mathews

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## THE CREATIVE EDGE LETTER BOX (NL 14)

*Pleasanton, CA*

I enjoyed reading your recent newsletter and was surprised to hear about your surgical journey. As I said on the phone last week, when the time is right for me I expect to show up on your door again. I value your mentorship and friendship.

I do continue to write poetry to express my thoughts and feelings as well as to work my way through this life. I've enclosed one poem that is important to me which describes my most recent years on this earth. I wonder what is next, yet am learning to be more curious and receptive to the present moment, knowing that the next moment will be more alive by fully living my now moments.

### VALLEY WALKS

**I took off my shoes and tread upon the earth.  
Walked miles in deep valleys cut between mountains  
And crawled in harsh valleys of low desert lands.  
I've stood in circles of people singing praise  
Hands raised upward, and in unison, exalting god.  
I've sat in circles of pillows with people  
Watching another's fear, curious wondering why.  
I've jumped into cold mystic island waters  
And I've cried many rivers to fill salt seas.  
I've been in and out of relationships  
With men and women, the world, and with me.**

**Hard thick callouses now cover my feet.  
My heart has softened, opened and split.  
My eyes see so much yet know so little.  
My persistent mind sorts and ponders.  
Dreams reach back for the safety of the womb,  
Then reveals the deeper fear of missing life.  
And yet, in all this, a quiet peace emerges  
An opening to the center of all things.**

*Kirk Ridgeway*

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*Santa Rosa, CA*

LaVerna and I find your Creative Edge material stimulating and inspirational. Enclosed are excerpts from some of Thornton Wilder's writings and plays I think are beautiful and insightful—they were read at his memorial service.

From: THE IDES OF MARCH.

**“The mind is easily wearied and easily frightened; but there is no limit to the pictures it makes; and toward those pictures we stumble. I have often remarked that whereas men say there is a limit beyond which a man may not run or swim, may not raise a tower or dig a pit, I have never heard it said that there is a limit to wisdom. The way is open to better poets than Homer and to better rulers than Caesar. No bounds have been conceived for crime and folly. In this also I rejoice and I call it a mystery. This also prevents me from reaching any summary conclusion concerning our human condition. Where there is an unknowable there is a promise.”**

From: THE MATCHMAKER.

**“There are some people who say you shouldn't have any weaknesses at all—no vices. But if a man has no vices, he's in great danger of making vices out of his virtues, and there's a spectacle. We've all seen them: men who were monsters of philanthropy and women who were dragons of purity... No, no—nurture one vice in your bosom. Give it the attention it deserves and let your virtues spring up modestly around it. Then you'll have the miser who's no liar; and the drunkard who's the benefactor of a whole city.”**

**“I want to say to someone... that I have known the worst that the world can do to me, and that nevertheless I praise the world and all living. All that is, is well. Remember some day, remember me as one who loved all things and accepted from the gods all things, the bright and the dark. And do you likewise.”**

From: THE BRIDGE OF SAN LUIS REY.

**“But soon we shall die and all memory of those five will have left the earth, and we ourselves shall be loved for a while and forgotten. But the love will have been enough; all those impulses of love return to the love that made them. Even memory is not necessary for love. There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning.”**

*Jim Brown*

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*Whistler, B.C.*

Thanks so much for your newsletter. What an inspiration. We hope you will send us another. Excitement is building for the coming adventures and we look forward to a fulfilling six months back on the boat.

*Irene & Al Whitney—Pacific Synergies Ltd. (The Darwin Sound)*

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*Pacific Grove, CA*

I really miss the circle with the Creative Edge and hope to rejoin you at some future time.

In trying to live creatively, I have published a book of 56 poems called Smoke from my Chimney that I am quite pleased with.

I am enclosing Boxed In (not in my book). Incidentally, your publication keeps me “in touch” and I appreciate it.

### **BOXED IN**

**Too many of us grow up in a box  
No fun nor adventure in being boxed in  
If I'm all wrapped and tied  
How can anyone get inside?  
Or how can I get out?  
Even if I shout no one will hear.**

**I must learn to open up  
To free myself, to venture out  
to view the world. And when I've seen  
what I can see, and learn what I should know  
I'll learn there's always more to see  
and ways to grow. When I return I'll leave  
my box unwrapped, untied and  
welcome whatever, whoever comes inside.**

*Julie Houy*

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*Perris, CA*

Please keep me on your mailing list... I do read a bit and it reminds me of a part / world within. Perhaps such contact may yet awaken some means to my creative inner being...

*Chris Maat*

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*Hood River, OR*

It was good to receive another of your newsletters. I enjoy reading and witnessing their evolution. I am still very much interested in your work and explorations!

There have been many changes in my life. I now live in Oregon in a town called Hood River (wind surfing capital of the universe). I left California and the familiar / comfortable surroundings of the Monterey Peninsula so I could try another rhythm of living. Changes in latitudes / changes in attitudes. Things have been tough but they are starting to improve rapidly.

Enclosed is a check to help with postage and handling costs for the newsletter. Keep up the good work. I hope to speak with you soon and thank you!

*Brett LaSorella*

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*Sonora, CA*

The Creative Edge, it is simple marvelous, getting better and better, I keep trying to think up something good to write for it. I love Thoughts on Creativity. However, last night I dreamed of whales flying in the sky, they were beautiful. During my ride today I kept thinking about them, what could I write about Whales in the sky.

Also enclosed is a small donation for the Creative Edge. Keep up the good work!

*Elaine Wing*

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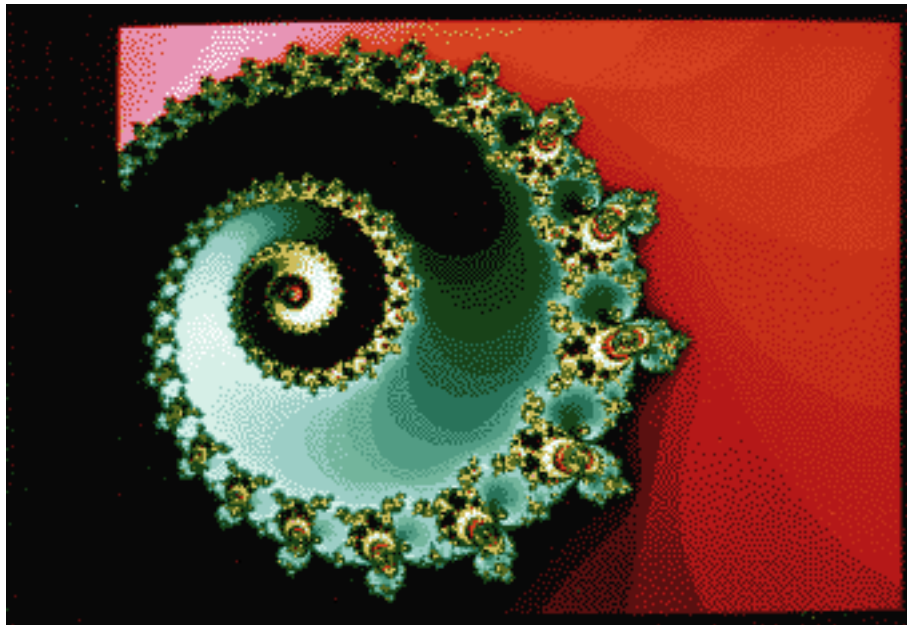
*Yorktown, VA*

I was delighted to see my letter and Janine's poem in your newsletter. My own path seems to be leading me in a similar direction as yours. I am not an originator, but I can certainly be a disseminator and can facilitate connections between people.

One of the members of our Noetic Sciences Study Group, Kerry Mitchell, is a NASA mathematician and a computer artist who creates fractal art. Fractals have always seemed to me to be a perfect visual interpretation of my own belief system which also matches the description of "sacred unity" you expressed so well in the newsletter.

**"We, all peoples, all life, all creation, are inseparable bonded together at some mysterious level and yet at another level, we stand uniquely and creatively alone and different."**

I'm sending you an example of Kerry's work. I give them as special gifts. I hope you don't mind if I borrow your quote to use with them.



*Lois Winter*

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