



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

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8 Stratford Place, Monterey, CA 93940

e-mail: cedonald@aol.com

(408) 373-7809

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THE CREATIVE EDGE THOUGHTS ON CREATIVITY (NL 15)

by Donald W. Mathews
(cedonald@aol.com)

“The day will come when, after harnessing the winds, the tides and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.”

—Teilhard de Chardin

Culture is the art or practice of cultivating and refining both the material world and the intangible realms of mind and spirit. It is an art because it implies *high quality and beauty*. For culture to develop, it is essential individuals cultivate a sense of pleasure. It is the way we acknowledge beauty. There are many ways to trigger pleasure. In the arts it includes originality and excellence of craft. Beyond object and physical attraction for the beauty in each other, we find pleasure in commonly held values of sincerity, integrity and honesty. Finally we find beauty in the Sacred.

In the modern world with its wildly conflicting mixture of values and rapid change, cultural roots are destroyed. Thus, people lose their sense of excellence and beauty associated with old traditions. Change in culture occurs in cycles—cycles of stability and chaos. Consequently, in the chaos evoked, many social problems arise. To a lesser degree, this has always been true between each generation. However, now with mass communication and the resulting compression of time, the forces of change are often overwhelming. We are in a chaotic cycle now where significant forces are ripping through all cultures of the world. The forces demand new relationships and new values. It is a creative opportunity and a challenge for the world. Patience, understanding and great creative effort are required to cultivate both material resources and the human spirit while new more inclusive values emerge to bond people of all cultures together.

Recently, I joined a small group from the Institute of Noetic Sciences on the active volcanic island of Hawaii to share the experience of *Wahi Pana*—inner and outer sacred place. The group was led by native Hawaiian guides who run a program to restore their values. For many Hawaiians, access to the sacred spaces of the heart and the land were lost during cultural exchanges on the islands over the last 200 years. Consequently, they lost their roots and personal sovereignty.

During our visit, basic cultural differences arose that sometimes led to painful misunderstandings even between our two cooperative groups. Yet, when we faced our problems with integrity and respect for each other’s personal sovereignty, we found a new common ground to seek excellence together. The struggle ultimately bonded us with love beyond our cultural differences.

We all seek sovereignty in our lives. It is the human freedom and ability to be fully present in life with the richness of our growing experience. It is following our

sacred inner process in a creative way—in a fearlessly open and adventurous way. It is following the muse, not blindly, but willing to struggle consciously in relationship with what life gives using all our highly developed skills to bring something better to our collective life.

Beside having supreme power or autonomy, my dictionary defines sovereignty as *supreme excellence or an example of it*. I like this definition of supreme excellence—it ties in to the high quality or excellence in culture. It also cultivates my creative imagination and touches an inner force pulling me toward the spiritual traditions.

At first, this definition evoked for me a commitment of service I associate with the ancient royalty of Kings and Queens—supreme excellence with sacred power to serve the common good within a culture. At its root, royal implies the harmony of peace and love throughout the kingdom. Further, when I cross cultural limits, the definition infers a higher order, a collection of kingdoms royally united as an empire. This empire is for me the all encompassing realm of the spiritual that gives sovereignty *and* unity to life.

Another example evoked was Jacob wrestling in the dark with an angel. He sought a blessing from the stranger even though wounded and the outcome uncertain. The creative person finds peace in wrestling with the unknown for beauty and excellence. Inner peace comes from the loss of fear of the unknown or darkness of the outer and inner worlds. This is how sovereignty is truly won. It is because the Divine forces have been challenged and a blessing found.

For the experienced creative artist, what comes mysteriously into the work beyond expectation is always given serious consideration. In acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Muses, artists are sensitive to the unexpected in both the outer world and the inner world at the same time. Thus, arrival of an undesirable event or thought is welcomed as a possible gift from the Gods.

When I lift the image of sovereignty from the material world to the realms of mind and spirit, there is a special meaning and responsibility attached to personal desire for independence and autonomy. It is not sought just for personal reward or pleasure alone. It also serves the greater community of all life across the boundaries of all cultures and beyond.

To develop this inner resource takes time and lots of experience. It requires wrestling with what we choose in the light, and whatever chooses us in the dark. True sovereignty requires artful cultivation and practice to cut through many layers of conditioning to the core of our own soul, and thus to universal spirit. It is what is implied with eldership—a person with sovereignty and royal wisdom who has wrestled with the unknown forces of change beyond cultural boundaries and won life's blessing.

THE CREATIVE EDGE LETTER BOX (NL 15)

Fair Oaks, CA

I wrote this poem for you to help you get well.

GRASS

**Grass is green like a blade,
The smell of fresh cut grass,
It is fun to hide in,
It is hard to mow tall,
It is fun to rake up,
It is alive in the summer
And dies in the winter,
It comes back every year.**

James Mathew-Rogers

Laguna Beach, CA

You asked for poems. Here's one from me.

TODAY I SAW MY BELOVED

**Today I saw her with new eyes,
And touched her with new heart,
And felt the joy of wonderment,
That she should be my part.**

**Today I saw the empty room
And felt his breath rush in,
Artesian waters, ember coals,
A joy beyond my ken.**

**Today I saw my mirrored self,
Embraced my present, future, past;
These three loves, less separate now,
Could they be one at last?**

Bruce Willats

Cedarville, CA

I have been reflecting on the rich depth of thoughts in the last two “Creative Edge” publications (#13 & #14) and attempting to link them with my recent experiences and beckonings.

As you said when we were there, our isolation has forced us to do the inner work. I have long had a love/hate relationship with change: Wanting to have things stay the same, yet strangely striking out so often to overturn it all and finding all changed. The poem by C.P. Cavafy speaks of going against convention and societal expectations to achieve wisdom. I had an almost asleep dream that revealed to me that the inevitable result of change is death. By resisting change I wanted to push death away; to stop time. To embrace death or at least look it truly in the eye can be a freeing thing just as your powerful poem about the labyrinth says.

Lately as I have snuggled my beloved cocker spaniel Muffie, I have thought “well she is over 8 now and someday she will die,” and while not a happy thought, it is a true one. This has made me really give her my attention the way one sees when doing a piece of art, rather than just looking.

In the same vein the little physical things that go wrong at my age are signposts of the death that is there someday. The message is still “pay attention”—use your time wisely, see with bigger eyes, help others, and appreciate with childlike wonder the magnificence of it all.

In addition to my usual technical readings (resists change) I have recently been reading the *Apocrypha* in the Oxford Bible (thanks to Ron Barton), *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels, *The Quiet Mind*, sayings of White Eagle, and *The Book of The Samurai-Hagakure* by Yamamoto Tsunetomo.

I notice too that I have been aware of dreaming more than I can remember since childhood—not sure what it means but I am paying attention to it.

Jerry Blanchard

Laguna Beach, CA

I enjoy reading your quarterly thoughts on creativity - please continue sending if you please to my new address.

Lisa Guest

San Luis Obispo, CA

Although I'm not proud of the fact, I am currently incarcerated. My reason for writing you is that the arts were an integral part of my "waking up" so to speak. I compiled a program called "Drawing Towards Wholeness." What this is, is a combination of psychological principles in self-assessment and goal setting that I learned and applied to basic drawing techniques from Betty Edwards work, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. These two concepts compliment each other well because of the linear aspects of goal setting and the meditative qualities of drawing.

I have been conducting these workshops since 1989 and with the help of community support, they are now being worked in prison systems in four other states and recently introduced into a prison in France.

I have plans to continue this program even after my release next year because I know from personal experience how hard it is to obtain psychological guidance while in prison. This is one small step that I can contribute towards social change in regards to crime.

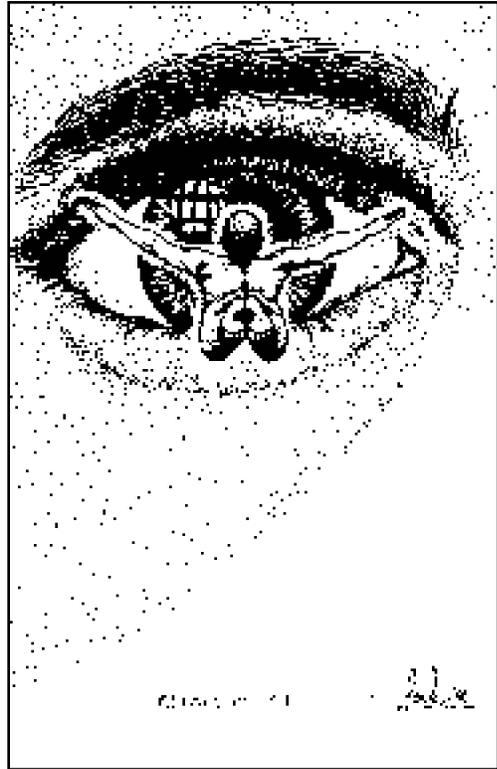
It is my firm belief that if we all work together, in time we can "take a bite out of crime" but in a constructive and more compassionate manner by utilizing the arts.

My work has been rewarding to say the least. It's provided me a new constructive life. If it had not been for this path, I would have remained among the millions that process through this system and only gain more bitterness and resentment. Now the way it has evolved I have had the opportunity to grow personally and act as a liaison between both worlds. The stereotype of a "convict" is quite misleading and not even a truth. Granted, many of the traits included in that stereotype are parts of some peoples life in here, but fear can be a big motivator for someone to seek anonymity. Tattoos, muscles, gang affiliation or religious obsessions each provide that mask. Unfortunately, those that seek power usually remain in denial of the issues they need to explore.

Boy, can I relate to your "A One Man Operation!" I must write thirty or more letters a week to keep up. Sound familiar? I think I'm developing carpal tunnel syndrome from writers cramp. But that's where I get my moral support so it's worth it. I am often humbled by getting letters from mentors of mine which give me the tools and motivation to keep going.

These samples of my work aren't characteristic. I drew them after the death of my parents and Grandmother.

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Kevin Lock

Lansing, NY

I have been wanting to respond to your thoughts in the last issue. I really appreciated your bringing the Cavafy poem and Labyrinth together.

I was recently reading John Welwood's collection of essays *Ordinary Magic: Everyday Life as Spiritual Path* and one of the first paragraphs struck me as resonant with your thoughts in the last Creative Edge.

Welwood writes: "At any moment, whatever we are experiencing, only one of two things is ever happening: either we are being with what is, or else we are resisting what is. Being with what is means letting ourselves have and feel our experience, just as it is right now. When we choose to be actively present with what is, we radiate a powerful energy that is most compelling. This is where genuine creativity, health, and communication, as well as spiritual power arise from."

There is a mystery or paradox that lies just under the surface of the injunction—be with what is. It is the mystery you speak of, of learning to handle a broader range of human emotions. How can we learn to be with our great emotions and not be swept away by them? From my reading in psychology (specifically Psychosynthesis) I come to explore what it is to deeply feel human emotion without placing my full sense of who I am, my "I," into that emotion. To the extent that I identify myself with an emotion, for example, "I am sad," when I feel sorrow, I tend to exclude from my awareness other experiences. If my awareness is fully tied up in "I am sad," I will miss "I feel comfort in the touch of my friend's hand" or "I am delighted by the light playing on the garden." The practice of expanding and intensifying the experience of "I"—fully experiencing the range of human experience, without collapsing into any certain corner of that experience—seems to me to be what wisdom and creativity and living the "passionate and abundant life" is about!

Patty Matthews

Canoga Park, CA

Thank you for your newsletter... tantalizing!

Katherine Stadler

Yakima, WA

The Labyrinth rings with the sounds of my own struggles. I've been writing a lot lately. It seems the words beckon, and I greet them and invite them in.

If you recall my visit, the first time I ever read anything I'd written, you put your arm around my shoulders and encouraged me. Little did I know then that as I broke open my sheltering shell, my path would lead me down the same smooth stone steps of the labyrinth. Thank you for lighting the way and for leaving a trail for others, like myself, to follow.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Decked out, overlooking the Olympics, reflecting on dreams and aspirations, I wonder, "What is required of a new beginning: a new home, a new job, a new relationship or... a new me?"

New beginnings may require that I break old ways of being, old ways of thinking, old ways of acting... and reacting.

Looking back, I can see the illusion of new beginnings repeat itself over and over in my life.

How many new beginnings have I had in my life... without beginning anything new?

I'm starting to see that for me, at least, a new beginning starts every time I break an old cycle... move myself along a road less traveled... follow an insight off the freeway of my habitual, cultural, and archetypical ways of being... and onto a new path. One free of the limitations of my persistent prior perceptions.

My sense is that new beginnings only flow from changes within, not without.

As I allow newness to spring forth from within, it shines anew on whatever is...

New beginnings are really... new ways of being.

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Truth will only bounce away from a proud, hardened heart.

**Great Spirit—guide me toward Truth,
soften my heart and make it receptive to receive Truth,
melt away my pride like the morning sun lovingly melts frost.**

**Prepare me, like a garden, to be a nurturing sacred space for
the seeds of Truth.**

**Help me prepare myself and purify myself to receive your
Truth in all it's forms.**

Help me surrender to your will.

Leo Figgs

Fair Oaks, CA

SUMMER

**The light feels like an oven.
The trees protect me from the fire.
A memory of the taste of watermelon.
Children fly with their purple wings on.**

Lynn Marie Mathew-Rogers

North Olmsted, OH

The image of whales flying in the sky as described by Elaine Wing, literally jumped off the page and into my mind. Amazing, how much I could relate to this image, see it in my mind's eye, play with the idea. Whales, wow... Dance of the Flying Whales, Dances With Whales, Jonah and the Journey to the Center of the Whale, Whales World, Party Time. Silly, yes, but it feels so good to feel silly. Serious me, silly? That, too, is amazing. Whales, wild, wonderful, wooly, wacky, wistful whales. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Dianne Borowski

Helena, MT

I am so appreciating your Creative Edge Newsletter. Please add my son's name to your mailing list.

Bob Holmes

Seoul, Korea

Thank you for continuing to send me the wonderful Newsletter. I really enjoyed reading it over and over (in the tub with music). Life here is an experience! I've learned so much from living here. Your thoughts have inspired me to continue being creative, in everything. Anyio kay say oh! (Thanks again, long life.)

Lisa Stoshak

Volcano, HI

Mahalo Nui Loa for all the special inspiration. I enjoy the newsletters too, and look forward to submitting something... a connection has been made, a cultural bridge begun.

Kaluna West

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

(cedonald@aol.com)

<http://www.creative-edge.org>