

# Creative Agency

## *Changing Life Trajectories*

Larry J. Green

### ABSTRACT

In this article, I describe a practice that employs somatic awareness as a method for both disclosing and working with internal conflict. In the two cases described, transformational change became a possibility for one client, and an actualization for another, I instantiate these abstract claims in two case studies. In the first case, I describe the initial launch into the transformational process and, in the second, the unanticipated and beneficial results occurring later. This process is produced by a creative act that replaces limited foundational premises with ones that transcend those limits – thereby changing the person’s life trajectory. Creative agency is both the source and force capable of generating this fresh psychic form. This capacity is accessed by stepping outside the confines of personal consciousness. Once there, one can operate from an impersonal consciousness. This possibility is based on the notion that humans are endowed with impersonal consciousness at birth. Originally it is employed to construct a personal self that will eventually become a sedimentation of that individual’s experiential history. Transformation requires access to the same psychic powers that produced the original self. Both the original creation and its subsequent transformation occur through the exercise of impersonal consciousness. Throughout the piece, I interpolate theoretical interpretations that clarify how my approach taps into somatic, existential intelligence – creative agency.

**Keywords:** impersonal consciousness, transformation, agency

Submitted: 12.10.2023

Accepted: 08.04.24

International Body Psychotherapy Journal

The Art and Science of Somatic Praxis

Volume 23, Number 1,

2024, pp. 41-50

ISSN 2169-4745 Printing, ISSN 2168-1279 Online

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**I**n the following article, I discuss an approach that resulted in a transformative experience for two of my clients. When I began my career, I had thought that the therapeutic project was similar to religious conversion: a shift of the fundamental ground or foundational premise that governed the person’s psyche. However, after five decades, I’ve come to realize that many therapeutic projects only “tweak” the default network. However, the cases I present below refreshed my belief that therapy could be transformative. In both instances, that outcome resulted from the exercise of existential agency. “Do I make a new path or stay with the well-trodden?” I see parallels

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between this notion and Bergson's<sup>1</sup> (2022) term "creative emotion." Both terms point to a capacity to make an originary move that first disrupts, then replaces, the previous "settings" that governed the trajectory of one's life.

The capacity for making that shift is ontologically primary, while the mind and will are secondary derivations. I understand the mind as a conceptual distillate of life experience. Therefore, it can only develop variations on themes already in place. Creative agency, on the other hand, is an activity that isn't dependent on past experience. It is employed to create concepts for the mind, but in itself is non-conceptual. Furthermore, it is dynamic, always on the move. The mind, on the other hand, works with stable concepts, repeating patterns, and the will for continuity. At the end of this paper, I offer a theoretical explication of the transformational process both clients experienced.

## Methodological caveats

The model that I employ assumes certain family resemblances among different terms. For example, creative agency and existential choice are transformative capacities that are exercised by pre-personal or impersonal consciousness, whereas the structures of the psyche – the pre-reflective self, ego, identity, and personal consciousness – all refer to the products of creative agency. Thus, I am pointing to the relationship between the creator and the created.

Moving through my account, the reader might be tempted to attribute the radical outcomes to the technique or strategy employed. They might try that technique, experiencing success with some clients, and not with others. This mixed outcome would trouble the implicit or inferred promise of many journal articles – "Try this technique and you'll be masterful". My caveat? The outcomes that I describe are not exclusively the result of my intervention – although it seemed to be a deciding factor. Other contextual factors amplified its power. For example, most clients come to me through word-of-mouth recommendations. They arrive expecting me to be helpful. Our therapeutic rela-

tionship continues building on that initial platform. Mutual respect and trust quickly characterize our intersubjective field.

Perhaps the most significant contextual factor is my fifty years of experience – I trust my intuition and skills. I don't rely on an agenda to feel confident. I look forward to our exploration into the unknown – something that previously frightened me. I relax, knowing that my unguarded receptivity will eventually generate rapport. I begin by encouraging them to "plug into," and express, their reality as accurately as possible. "Most of the day you're adapting, responding, and receiving others' reality; here, you get a chance to experience and explore your own." When clients do that, a deeper intelligence begins to guide their speech toward a more accurate construal of their relationship to their circumstances. They begin to distinguish "off the shelf" meanings from those that demonstrate fidelity to their unique experience. My function at that point is to apprehend and mirror their emerging description, to accompany them as they explore and describe their reality.

For that exploration to continue they also must summon courage – to make the leap of faith without presupposing a specific outcome (which could only be an iteration of what the mind already knows). As the following accounts testify, these clients did their work; my support gave them a foothold from which to begin or continue their climb.

I've organized the article into sections. With each client, I present my version of the session, followed by theirs. I wanted to make it clear that dual realities are interacting, not some final truth that was in my possession and to which I was guiding them. Second, these accounts reveal that much of therapy is like dancing in the unknown; one must think on one's feet. Recounting the session afterwards never quite captures the twists and turns of the process, including the paths entertained but not taken. Likewise, the sequence or pattern of the interaction that I recount is a verbal sketch that leaves much out. For similar reasons, the phrases that I remember are often not the ones recalled by the client.

1. The concept of creative emotion in the philosophy of Bergson does not depend on intellectual representation; it is primary in regard to the mind and the will, and it comprises the fundamental matrix of creative acts of the human being. "It is the impulse which leads us to seek out new paths..." (p. 4, 2022)

Nevertheless, under these surface verbal disparities, some implicit underlying unity is generating both accounts.

## First case study

During the session, Louise (not her real name) talked about the differing rate of change between her and her partner – his speed was slower than hers. When I commented that this might be frustrating for her, she corrected me: “No, it just made me sad [for him].” She continued, “My sadness was at the thought that he may never escape the damage that was done to him in his childhood.” She began to cry. I instructed her to say to herself, “That feeling belongs here,” and then to notice her body’s reaction. (I had previously talked to her about Gendlin’s (1997, 2020) notion of the felt sense, which she seemed to intuitively understand). She did as instructed. I then asked her to let that feeling fade away and say a second sentence: “That feeling doesn’t belong here.” Typically, when someone rejects their experience, their anxiety intensifies, and when they accept it, they relax. But with Louise, something unusual happened. When she uttered the second sentence, she reported that she went into a vast space, initially described as fearful. Then she remarked, “Decisions have to be made.” She was glimpsing the possibilities and demands of existential agency. Then, to my surprise, she said that she felt relief, and that many possible “roads” had been presented to her. Furthermore, she reported feeling empowered. These were unusual responses to this approach. No previous clients had spoken of “vastness.” Nobody had spoken of empowerment. Rather, they spoke of their relaxation when they “owned” their previously rejected experience. I then referred to Chogyam Trungpa (1973), a Tibetan Buddhist teacher. He described a way of utilizing that vastness to access the required energy for the completion of tasks. I wanted her to know that someone other than herself had identified that space, and connoted it positively, as a place of empowerment. I wanted to suggest that the vastness wasn’t her idiosyncratic creation, but rather had some transpersonal validity.

## The felt sense

Setting aside this narrative account for the moment, let me offer some theoretical support for this intervention. I am leaning on Gendlin’s (1997,

2020) work regarding the “felt sense.” It is an embodied awareness of what is existentially significant for this particular person at this particular time. It is not to be passed over lightly, like some intellectual possibility that could just as easily be dropped than explored. Rather, it is an existential marker. Many of the clients who show up in my office have lost the ability to “tune into” that embodied knowing. To help them regain access to that source, I ask them to attend to the sensations arising from the sole of their right foot. I give them a moment to do so. Then I ask, “Were you making any judgments about those sensations – for example, labeling them good or bad?” “No” has always been the response to this question. “Fine,” I reply. “Now expand your awareness to take in the sensations of your whole body, the whole force field that your body is generating, that your consciousness is inhabiting. Don’t think about it, don’t judge it, just register it. Now I’m going to give you a couple of sentences to repeat, and I want you to notice how that force field responds when you entertain those thoughts.” Typically, I reverse the order that I employed with “Louise.” That is, I start by aligning my suggested sentence with their presenting complaint; that sentence expresses their rejection of some aspect of their experience. For example, one of my clients announced that she had dreamed of her previous partner the night before. “I want my ex out of my dreams and out of my mind.” Later in the session, I asked her to repeat that sentence. “Pay attention to how the force field responds,” I add. Then I instructed her to let that feeling fade away, after which I offered the second sentence – something like, “I have to admit that, yes, my ex is still preoccupying me.” Typically, clients report that their anxiety or tension goes down when they say the second sentence. I attribute that result to the shift from denying to accepting their experience. With Louise, however, I reversed the order of the questions that I offered: first accepting – “That feeling belongs here”; then problematizing – “That feeling doesn’t belong here.”

## Competing agencies: The ego and impersonal consciousness

Because my client’s reactions were so unexpected, I found myself wondering if different domains of her psyche were responding. Could it be that the first utterance is welcomed by the ego because it eliminates self-contradiction, whereas the second

elicits a response from beyond the ego – that impersonal part of the psyche that makes existential decisions? Let us delve a bit further into the first response, where acceptance of what was previously denied might produce relaxation. Could it be that anxiety is a signal from the psyche to the ego that something is being overlooked, that some bit of reality has not been accounted for? When that bit is allowed to enter, and then integrate with, the ego's system or network, there is no further need for anxiety. As for the second sentence, does it catapult the person beyond the ego's "default network" – into creative agency?

Let us return to the case study. In a follow-up email, I asked "Louise" to write an account of our session. In my request, I employed the term "guardrails," as that which had confined her within a limited set of possibilities. I wondered about their function. I did so because it seemed to me that she had moved past those rails when she said the second sentence: "Many possible roads had been presented." Many young people, seeking to establish their independence, often discard their parent's rules, moralities, guidelines, choosing instead to make their path. They were attempting to construct their lives by first abandoning or deconstructing their parent's admonitions. Often, they get lost and can't find their way "home." Fears of homelessness or loss of sanity begin to arise. To avoid that disaster, they begin to construct their own rules – intended to return to and maintain them on safe ground. At first, they follow their rules consciously, but eventually they "forget" that they authored those guardrails. Now their consciousness is operating from inside that construction – the outside is non-existent. As a result, the limits are experienced as objective givens – this is the horizon of the world. However, when they're in enough distress – "I can't go on like this!" – then, out of desperation, they approach and begin to critically inspect those guardrails. In doing so, they are invoking their creative agency. They begin to realize that the rules they designed to protect themselves also restrict the range of responses available to them.

For example, another client of mine has an alcoholic mother and an ineffectual father. She is enraged by their impotence. Why? Because she has a rule that she must be sweet, generous, and helpful. In short, she believes that she is responsible for her parents' well-being. Her rule demands that she give up her life and serve theirs. She feels like she would be vi-

olating a taboo if she were to critically inspect that rule. To do so would risk an identity crisis. It is an existential dilemma. Resolving it requires the courage to think beyond those guardrails. Out there, she might decide to keep, revise, or replace them.

I offer this description because it instantiates the transitional journey as one moves from operating within the parameters of the constructed ego to an acknowledgement of one's affective experience as expressed through the felt sense – from "I'm a sweet, nice person" to "I'm becoming a rageful monster." From there, it is a short step to "I can't go on like this." Do I resign myself to my fate, or do I call upon my creative agency to discover or invent fuller possibilities for myself?

### The client's version

The following account describes the first client's experience. When I thought it necessary, I inserted a word to make her meaning clearer. Those insertions are indicated by [...].

I believe what kicked off some of the deeper conversation in the session was an initial discussion of the concept of "felt sense," and my curiosity to learn more. I made a comparison to somatic therapy that I had experienced, and you offered some helpful clarifying info to illustrate the difference between them, which then segued very naturally into leveraging the felt sense to go deeper into what was at the bottom of some of the relationship issues I was feeling. The main feeling that surfaced was one of sadness on my part, and your effective paraphrasing helped to further clarify my feeling of "It's such a waste," and a deeper frustration because I can't change [my partner].

This is where it continued to go deeper. You had me "try on" the statement "This sadness belongs here," and say it out loud. In my stomach, there was a heaviness, and at the same time a release, because I hadn't allowed myself to feel the sadness to this level. It created space and permission for the feeling to show up fully and be realized. In addition to heaviness, there was a feeling of a confined space, perhaps a subtle constricting feeling. [She was uncovering and exploring the ambiguity and ambivalence present there.]

Then you had me try on another statement to say out loud, which was "I don't want this sadness." I sat with this, and a lot of emotion and tears welled

up immediately. The most fitting word that came up for me to describe sitting in this space was a “vastness,” which came with the initial reactions (and in retrospect some resistance) to this place as “overwhelming,” “scary,” “uncertain,” and “unknown.” I remember you holding this space, and then specifically asking if I felt okay to go into the vastness a bit more. This was a key moment, because it gave me the pause I needed to truly think about whether I was ready. In that pause, I realized I felt very supported by you (particularly by how the question was asked), so I knew I was in a safe place. I also became aware of both my inner courage and a desire to keep going. [By asking her about her willingness to go further, I was acknowledging that it was her choice. If she chose not to go further, that would have been accepted and explored.] I think deep down there was also a recognition that we were on the verge of a big discovery that could unlock something important. [By staying present through the process, the client begins to experience an evolving, rather than a concluding understanding.]

I remember taking what felt like a good amount of time. It felt like at least a minute, but it was likely less, and I consciously closed my eyes and went deeper into the vastness. What happened next was what I remember to be the most profound moment of the session. I recall having a very clear image emerge of what looked like a vast canyon, and blue skies with clouds (it has stuck with me even as I write this). And then what followed was a flood of recognition of what truly lives in this vastness, which is love, possibility, openness, strength, and acceptance for what is, what could be, and what is yet to be. There are many roads and potentials in this space, and whereas [predefined] outcome has been my overt focus in the past, the most important [thing] is the beauty of the journey, no matter the outcome. I remember describing this to you as a deep knowing that this is where love lives. It felt like an empowering space, versus one of fragility and fear. I remember putting my hand on my chest to connect to myself, and perhaps to lock in my memory of that important moment.

To wrap up, overall I felt there was a sense of natural flow, despite the many twists and turns of the session. There were difficult topics covered that could have resulted in some sticking points, but I didn't feel that happened at all; there was a consistent, healthy pace that felt natural and not rushed at all.

I felt this was largely in part to your guidance and intuition of where to go, and then me tapping into my inner courage to go deeper in the right direction. As you said, I really “showed up.” Well, we both did.

## Second case study

I had been working with “Glen” for some time when I related the therapeutic interaction described above. I did so because of the experiential parallels between her experience and one he had undergone previously in our work together. In that earlier interaction, he had moved from a long-standing position of “Everything would be better if I didn't exist” to an existential decision to live. As he began to recall the experience, I wondered if it would be revived. Would his memory come to life as he discussed it? After a short time, he said, “Just talking about it is bringing back some of the sensations...my hands are tingling.” His existential sense was being reactivated.

I initiated this exploration because I thought that hearing an account of another's parallel experience had the potential to validate his own. Feeling validated, he might be encouraged to explore his experience further. Before describing that further exploration, let me take a moment to describe outcomes that had prepared the ground for this further investigation. At the beginning of our work together, he protested that his wife was disconnected and unavailable to meet his needs for intimacy and authenticity. His relationship premise seemed to be that if she loved him, she would always be available. He also referred to her as his life source. In light of that, his constant need for intimacy and authenticity would be understandable. However, in a subsequent session, he reported a conversation in which he told her, “You are my life source [responsible for my well-being], and that is totally not fair to you... that is too much of a burden to put on you.” He had begun to loosen his identification with, or attachment to, his initial premise. By so doing, he was able to make explicit what previously had governed him implicitly. That is, his consciousness was no longer compelled by his yearning for connection. Rather, he had enough psychic distance to be able to “see” the attachment to which his yearning had fastened. Now, he was seeing, rather than being, that attachment. By seeing it, he was confronted with an existential choice. He could now choose to take responsibility for his well-being, rather than



continuing to offload it onto his partner. He could see the road not previously taken.

My account has now arrived at the most recent session. During our conversation, he related an incident that occurred the previous evening. He had put his arm around his wife; she shrugged him off. He was okay with that – actually okay, rather than pretending to be. Later, she asked him if he was okay, and he responded authentically, “Yeah, I’m fine.” Then he revealed to me that he had interpreted her manifest question as a camouflaged version of her real question – “Are you okay with the fact that I pushed you away?” He answered the question she asked, rather than the one he surmised. This move invited her to be responsible for her communication, rather than expecting him to mind read her intent, as had been their habit. That is, their shared history had established the expectation that all she had to do was imply intent, and he would fill in the missing content. Now, he was performing a new interactional pattern. Just as he no longer expected her to be an extension of his needs, he no longer needed to be an extension of hers through “mind reading.” When I shared my interpretation of their exchange, he replied that he previously didn’t have genuine conversations with others. Rather, he responded to what he surmised the other was thinking. No reality checking. Ultimate loneliness.

One criterion for transformation is that the new premise is applicable in a variety of contexts. His new premise was, “I’m responsible for my behavior, and others are responsible for theirs.” This is not tethered to one specific context (e.g., his relationship with his wife), but also generates new responses in other contexts. For example, he described a recent meeting with government bureaucrats who were attempting to set up a jobs program involving his business. He was able to bring clear communication to their meeting. He observed that when he was clear about his position, they became clearer about theirs. In the past, when he was conflict-avoidant, he would have joined them in their obscure, inoffensive communication style, and nothing would have been accomplished. I’m relating these two instances – first with his wife, and then with these bureaucrats – as evidence that transformation had occurred.

He then went on to say that the event that initiated these changes occurred after I “walked” him through the same therapeutic procedure as I had

used with the first client. When “Glen” began therapy, he related a recurring thought: “Everyone would be better off if I was dead.” That is the sentence I asked him to repeat. “As you repeat those words, notice how your body or felt sense responds,” I added. Almost immediately after uttering the sentence, he said, “That’s not true; I want to live.” As best I can recall, he added, “I could feel a protest rising within me as I was saying it.” That protest was irrefutable existential evidence that he wanted to live. “Since then, I haven’t considered my non-existence, with one fleeting exception. I was under a lot of stress having to deal with a fractured family’s issues when my grandmother died. The desire for my absence arose and departed almost in the same breath, and it hasn’t come back. It’s almost like I’ve forgotten to think about it so completely that I don’t have to stand guard over these negative thoughts.”

This remarkable outcome seems somehow existentially connected to an experience that originally brought him to therapy. Here’s a sketch of what happened. He had been raised by a drug-addicted father. During a recent phone call, his father said, “Well, despite all your faults, you’ve done a good job of raising your sons.” This set off an intense emotional reaction: “I don’t want to talk to you ever again; if you have something to say to me, do it through my uncle.” He then drove over to a friend’s place, went immediately to his basement, and had an intense cathartic release that lasted for about twenty minutes. He was quietly supported through that existential storm by his friend.

Subsequently, he seemed to, at least partially, have left the old “Glen” behind, and now inhabited or was giving life to a new one. Did his cathartic experience involve tapping into his life force? Or did his life force, his prepersonal consciousness, simply push aside the defenses of his personal consciousness? Perhaps he had stopped waiting for his father to be the father that he had always wanted and needed. I can’t help but notice the theme of dependency that was being worked through both with his father, and later with his wife. He had found his own ground.

### **The client’s version**

I started my session today not knowing what I was going to discuss, and frankly, I thought it started out a little light, talking about the news and ar-

thritis. It [shifted] when I began sharing about my partner and the disconnect I had been feeling with her. I recounted an experience where I was initiating intimacy but was pushed away. In past experiences, this would have been very upsetting to me, as I would have felt rejected or dismissed. But this time, I was completely fine, accepting that my partner wasn't interested at the time, and wanted her own space. The work I have been doing over the past eight months has resulted in amazing growth and understanding of myself. [In the past] I would quickly go to a place of feeling unwanted and rejected when things didn't go the way I was hoping. I would say that it would just be easier if I wasn't here, if I was dead. In a previous session, I was particularly feeling this way, and Dr. Green asked me to repeat two sentences. The first was, "I want to give up," and I said this sentence with ease. The second was "I don't want to give up." An immediate overwhelming emotion came over me as he said this sentence. I broke down and got very emotional, crying uncontrollably, trying to say the words "I don't want to give up." Once I finally composed myself and was able to speak these words, I was more at ease.

In our session today, I mentioned to Dr. Green that that moment was a turning point for me, a new normal [a new foundation?] almost. I knew I wanted to be here, and that I wanted to fight, to work, to live. I didn't want to quit or give up. Since that moment, I have had those feelings again, but they are just a blip. I feel them for a second, and I say to myself, "I want to live, I want to be here." The funny thing is now when I'm in a place where the feelings used to creep in, they don't, but I am aware that they don't, and I can remember that they used to, and now they don't. Another meaningful moment in our session today was when I was talking about my growth, and how in the past, I felt connected to my partner and wanted her to have the same growth [as I was experiencing] at the same time. Dr. Green called it being tethered, and that was a perfect description. That I was tethered to her, and as I grew, the line or elastic became tight, and was strained or stressed. It's almost as if my growth was hindered by the tethering. I realize now that I can regress [or progress] on my own, unaffected by my partner. We can be in different places at different times, and it's okay. I used to say we were like a balance scale or a seesaw; when one of us was down, the other counterbalanced to make it

straight. But that's not true; we are separate beings completely on our own just sharing the same space.

As the reader has probably noticed, mine and the client's account don't always line up. Even the rendering of the chronology differs. Nevertheless, I hope the underlying existential theme generating both versions can be recognized.

## Interpretation

How can I account for these events theoretically? I offer my provisional and revisable explanation. My counseling approach involves first identifying my client's internal conflict. In other words, they are paralyzed by ambivalence, and typically try to eliminate it by banishing one pole of their experience. For example, "I don't want to see myself as a jealous, insecure person; I want to get rid of that part of me." They've previously thought that it would be just a matter of willing it away – until they can't help but notice that insecure persona continues to show up. They are futilely trying to use their mind to resolve the conflict.

Next, I introduce them to a reference point other than their mind – their affective responses. I am showing them how to become aware of the interaction between their conceptual meanings and their existential, affective response. When they initially come to me, they are mostly aware of their conceptual processing, with its explicit and distinctive meanings. Their affective experience, on the other hand, is implicit, and initially murky. I direct them to move back and forth between those two regions of "knowing" – trying on words, phrases, and metaphors that have the potential to capture and express their experience faithfully. When they find the apt meaning, clients momentarily experience wholeness, or a totality where both conceptual and affective factors refer to the same existential source. This is the moment when the mind catches up to the body, no longer disowning the ambivalence. Instead, both sides of the conflict are acknowledged as expressing some aspect of the self. The client begins to look for some arrangement where they can live together. The previous experience of internal conflict and its resultant anxiety is replaced by an experience of integrity, bringing with it a sense of empowerment.

In addition, the client consciously experiences their vitality affects. That is, they get direct evidence of

meanings that increase or diminish their energy or vitality or life force. That evidence supplies them with the means to navigate through the multiple choices that everyday living requires. They can present their action options to the totality of their being, and observe how the life force responds to each of those alternatives. The option that produces the most congruence is the best bet – not as a guarantee, but as a probability.

Furthermore, having noted what spontaneously increased their energy, the person will be on the lookout for associated or related phenomena. What other people, books, and movies might stimulate further enlivening? If reading Rimbaud generates excitement, read more of him. If the theme of identity becomes compelling, read what philosophers and psychologists have to say. If transition and change seem to be daunting prospects for continuing the journey, read everything you can on liminality. On the other hand, when your vitality falls, notice if the meaning assigned to the event, or the brute event itself, initiated the withdrawal. For example, your partner leaves you and you feel wounded by the loss; that is a tragic event, and the resultant grief is a necessary if unpleasant emotion that needs to be respected and worked through. However, if the meaning that one attaches to that event is “I’m unlovable,” then further possibilities are foreclosed by that conclusion. The process of becoming has been arrested.

## Conclusion

Let us end by returning to the title of this paper: *Creative Agency*. What is meant by that term? The creative agent makes decisions and engages in actions that will have real consequences (some intentional and some not). An apt metaphor would be hiking a treacherous mountain trail for the first time. As you move through the fog-enshrouded landscape, you come to a branching path. You don’t know where either branch leads, but still you must choose. Should I marry, divorce, have an affair, start a business, or move to a region that will have fewer climate change catastrophes? Should I speak my mind instead of flying under the radar? One makes those decisions knowing that they entail risk, that the unanticipated, as well as the intended, will show up; one’s life might get worse – or much better.

I contrast the movement or progression that characterizes creative agency with the circular, conceptual “looping” that characterizes rumination and obsessing. These processes are a misguided attempt to do away with signal anxiety without having to act. Signal anxiety is the implicit awareness that something important is being overlooked – the affective or felt sense. The mind is trying to solve the dilemma without acknowledging and factoring in that “important something.” It prefers to stay within its pre-established framework – recycling, even rearranging, familiar meanings while giving the illusion of “doing something.” One eventually arrives at the same unsatisfactory conclusions that leave one’s circumstances unchanged, because no ordinary action had been attempted. A sense of resignation develops when one fails to open and critique those “given” meanings (which would undermine their absolute status). Thus, critiquing opens new potentialities. Obsessing, on the other hand, is a futile attempt to find an interpretive framework that masks the internal conflict with a rationalization. Often, the ruminator just circulates around the question like a leaf caught in a whirlpool. The creative agent, on the other hand, decides, acts, and registers the result. That fresh information is factored in as the basis for their next decision – action guided by perception in an ongoing dance between the subject and their circumstance.

They realize that they must choose, and act based on that decision. If the choice enacted makes their situation worse, then they have the confidence and courage to course correct. Client number one had many “roads” presented to her, and she knew that the choice was hers and not mine.

There were interesting differences in the transformational process of each client. The first client was at the beginning of the process; options were being revealed, and a decision would have to be made. The second client was remarking on his transformation retroactively. He noticed that he no longer felt “tethered” to his wife. His account made no mention of a conscious intention to untether. He was aware of the result, but not of the intention that produced that result. I’m surmising that something other than his mind or will was responsible for this outcome. Recall Bergson’s claim that “creative emotion” was primary, and mind and will were secondary. When my client was reporting outcomes to me, it was from his mind, whereas the untethering was the result of creative agency.



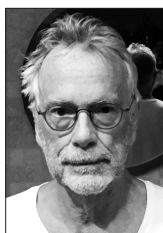
My provisional explanation is that he got in touch with his life force during his cathartic experience. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that his life force got in touch with him – revealing its presence to his personal consciousness. Much to his surprise, he wasn't torn apart by the encounter. Rather, he discovered that he was stronger than he thought. That realization made his dependency on his wife less critical. She was no longer his "life source," because he had experienced his own. Our sessions since then have been characterized by a kind of shuttling process where he first attends to his felt sense, and then employs his mind to generate meanings that capture and express his affective experience. A momentary sense of wholeness is achieved through matching meaning to experience. By so doing, he creates a new point of departure for his next move...and so on. Creative agency at work.

To summarize, many seek therapy when the forward momentum of their lives has come to a halt. The first task for the therapist is to help such clients realize that their "stuck" state is a result of unrecognized internal conflict. I teach the client to attend to their felt sense as a method for revealing that their existential self might be at odds with the injunctions that their mind or personal consciousness deems worthwhile. This revelation encourages the patient to "outflank" their personal consciousness, and enter the realm where creative agency is possible – impersonal consciousness.


From that vantage point, they can become aware of their mind's injunctions, their affective responses, and the situational demands. Transformation is then a two-step process.

First, the creative agent or impersonal consciousness can discover and critique the limiting premises that produced the "stuck" condition. Second, it can discover or create premises that transcend the limits of the previous personal consciousness. For example, a person who has been torn between competing needs to be their authentic self and to belong – first one, then the other demanding priority in an unstable flux – finds a position where they can be their authentic self and belong.

The implication in much of the above is that the subject invents these new premises *ex nihilo*. However, in studying developmental psychology in children and adolescents, it seems that the movement from one stage to the next is facilitated through encounters with classmates who are operating at a more sophisticated developmental level. That is, the struggling person has concrete models available who instantiate a more satisfactory way of being. As we move deeper into adulthood, encounters with others who might serve that purpose become rarer. As an alternative to creation *ex nihilo*, one can access the mythic dimension and wisdom traditions as cultural resources. As Joseph Campbell said, "Myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life."



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