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Pre-Conference Workshop

*Untying the Knot to Creativity Beyond Thought:
A Trans-Egoic Perspective on Innovative Idea-ing*

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UNTYING THE KNOT TO CREATIVITY BEYOND THOUGHT

A Trans-Egoic Perspective On Innovative Idea-ing

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*Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception;
he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover.*

– William Blake

“Creativity Beyond Thought” (CBT) refers to “a-ha” moments of profound insight that are distinct from mere better understanding. Whereas one can mentate on finding a solution to a problem by thinking systematically, CBT solutions arise spontaneously, seemingly unbidden, out of the blue, when one is in a state of deep relaxation and presence. When Einstein had his biggest insight in arriving at Special Relativity, which he called “The Step”, (during a visit to Bern with his friend Michele Besso), he had temporarily let go of mentating a solution to the apparent incompatibility between relativity and the constancy of the speed of light, and had gone out for a walk. He recalled the momentous occasion as one of “chance”, “suddenness” and “inspiration”. [Interestingly, there is very little documentation or background to the discovery of Special Relativity, in comparison to the exhaustive amount for General Relativity]. This is not to discount all the work Einstein had put into what was to that point the limit of his knowledge – far from it. It formed the necessary scaffolding for a CBT moment to arise for him. While the example is an extraordinary one, CBT occurs to all of us, and is a powerful complement to various forms of lateral/divergent/incremental thinking formats. In his book *Creativity*, Matthew Fox writes: “Creativity is not a noun or even a verb—it is a place, a space, a gathering, a union—a where—wherein the Divine powers of creativity and the human power of imagination join forces”.

The Notion

In interviews I conducted to better understand the process of CBT, subjects have likewise reported that illumination came “like a lightning bolt”, “out of nowhere”, “just like that”, “an epiphany”. Often, the insight is the sudden and total completion of a puzzle which the mind had partially apprehended beforehand. It could be said that this type of creativity comes to the person, and not the other way around. In that sense, one cannot really say that they “had” a CBT idea – it would be more fair to say that the idea “had” them! When one deeply looks at the situation, it becomes impossible to take credit for the CBT insight, as it didn’t originate within the self, but from beyond. But from *where* beyond?

The physicist David Bohm (a colleague of Einstein’s, incidentally, whom he had named as his “intellectual successor”) has ascribed scientific language to the notion that (at least) two types of reality exist: the *explicate order* is that in which we normally reside, composed of physical reality in which space and time exist and are knowable. The *implicate order* precedes the explicate in that it is enfolded (infinite patterns of possibility) and gives rise to the explicate. This implicate order is synonymous with the dimension of being which saints, sages and mystics have variously described for millennia as “radiant emptiness”, “nothingness”, “stillness”, “oneness”, “infinity”, “timelessness”. The implicate order is therefore non-dual in nature (the One), and the explicate, dual (the many). Biologist Rupert Sheldrake describes the implicate order as the “Morphic Field”, an organizing field from which all manifest reality emerges. Contemplative scientists often use the general term the “Field”; Buckminster Fuller refers to “pattern integrity” as the primordial ground that is the whole out of which is spawned all concrete manifestations. Matthew Fox described the “where” of the union of Field and

mind as follows: "... 'where' offers an invitation to the imagination to stretch to extremes of nothingness and everythingness... and beyond." Spiritually speaking, all the major religions acknowledge the implicate order as the source of all creation, albeit by different names. In Christian tradition, it is the "Holy Spirit" (the apostle John wrote that through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is the incarnate form of the Logos, the structures of things, or that which makes things harmonize into structures, while mystic Ernest Holmes wrote "We do affirm the Spirit as transcendent, having the ability to create new thoughts while new thoughts create new situations"); in Judaism, the "World of Emanation"; in Islam and Sufism, the "Open Heart"; in Buddhism, "Buddha Nature"; in Taoism, the "unspeakable Tao"; and in Hinduism, the "Atman". Please feel free to use any term that best fits for you. I will simply use the "Field".

Joseph Chilton Pearce, in *The Biology of Transcendence*, distinguishes intellect (derived from the mind) from intelligence (inherent to the heart and the Field). In this book – highly recommended – he details the existence of the "fifth brain": neural matter found in the physical human heart as studied in the field of Neurocardiology. Pearce links the fifth brain to access to CBT. He too is curious about "What happens when we drop the intellect and let the intelligence of 'the other' [the Field] take over".

CBT arises in the non-dual Field, is downloaded/ received into the explicate order by the person, "unpacked" or interpreted by the brain, decoded through thought and articulated through language so that it may be disseminated into broader human consciousness.

Consciousness is stratified in various ways according to various models, and in general, these models agree on three main stages of evolution: pre-egoic, egoic and post or trans-egoic.

From the thinker's perspective, these are pre-mental, mental and supra-mental stages. The pre-egoic/pre-mental stage is generally up to 5-6 years of age, with the egoic/mental stage lasting the balance of most persons' lifetime. The trans-egoic or supra-mental stage occurs to few people in their lifetime. This stage is characterized by a switch in identity from selfhood centered in the ego to the Self which is in harmony with and listens to, the Field. [Please note that I use the term "ego" not to describe a narcissistic disposition of self-admiration, but as a stage of human evolutionary development characterized by a self-concept primarily defined by one's thought/feeling process and contents]. The ego continues but ceases to be the focus of one's identity – it is no longer in charge – it is now a part of, and serves the higher master of, *presence*, abiding in the trans-rational Field.

While most of us do not live in the trans-egoic/supra-mental *stage*, we do regularly visit it as a *state*. In deep meditation, deep sleep and throughout the day, whenever a total gap exists in thought streams, we are visiting this state. We are then available for CBT to arise. And arise it does (though not predictably) – most people have experienced CBT, though may not have known (or cared) to label it as such. Ernest Holmes said "The real creative power of the mind is deeper than the intellect. It passes into the realm of feeling and acceptance..." Regarding his creativity in working with clients, the great therapist Carl Rogers found himself "in tune with the forces of the universe" and that the experience caused him to "stand by with awe". As per Rogers, many report that when they experience CBT, it is profound and meaningful. How, then, can we have more consistent and frequent occurrences of CBT? Or to put it from the point of view of the Field: how can one more consistently and frequently align oneself into a state of being that is in harmony with the Field and promotes the receiving of CBT?

Untying the Knot

In my research and contemplation of the CBT process, five stages emerged. Subsequent to my articulating them, I found validation in a study by Margharita Laski on the topic of *Eureka* moments, also discussed in Pearce's book *The Biology of Transcendence*. My version of these stages are as follows:

1. Clarify the Topic and Question
2. Exhaustively research all possible avenues for an answer
3. Move beyond the mind and “wait without doubt”
4. Receive a CBT moment of insight (if one is granted)
5. Decode/unpack the insight

Stage 1: Clarify the Topic & Question

Sat Prem, a French writer, said “If you are thirsty, the river comes to you. If you are not thirsty, the river does not exist”. A desire for solution is a necessary ingredient to CBT – it serves as the focus into emptiness, from which insight may emerge. Lightning requires a (weak) charge from the ground and a (strong) charge from the sky for a bolt to form. Your yearning for an answer is the mind's reaching into the Field, generating the locus of energy in the Field which may eventually emerge completed, as CBT. The more you have yearned for an answer (and moved through the other stages), the more likely CBT is to arise. Some topics lend themselves to illuminated insight better than others – wishing for CBT to solve a checkbook-balancing dilemma is not recommended – stick with tried and true methods. But when a problem exists that has not yet yielded the fullness of its bloom, then CBT may prove useful. The more concise and cogent your question, the better.

Stage 2: Exhaustively research all possible avenues for an answer

The yearning animated by the topic and question motivates the search for puzzle pieces in the quest for a solution. In the *Laws of Form*, G. Spencer Brown says that new knowledge *comes* when one holds the problem, until it yields. Holding the problem consists of using research, contemplation and various other methods such as loosening assumptions, seeing the situation from a perspective of increasing wholes (per Taguchi’s injunction of concern for society as a whole) and laterally generating divergent possibilities. Many models for creativity have been developed and used successfully, such as Ackoff’s three-step process, DeBono’s Six Thinking Hats, etc. These egoic-based mental models are complementary to CBT in that they provide first, the context within which CBT arises, and second, how it is interpreted or unpacked. They are particularly useful in helping to set the mental conditions for the arising of CBT in that CBT “prefers” to communicate with a mind that is fluid, lateral and unbound by the shackles of rigidly held assumptions, such as described in the notion of “Beginner’s Mind” in Zen. And if that was sufficient, there would be no need for CBT. However, a mentally fluid and dynamic disposition is not in itself a sufficient backdrop for CBT. Since the mind is but one *aspect* of the system (the human organism), and that CBT originates from the supra-mental reality that is the ground of being (the Field) for the whole of the system (and indeed for the whole of everything), then if someone wishes to cultivate CBT, one must first prepare the whole of the garden.

Stage 3: Move beyond the mind and “wait without doubt”

The whole of the garden includes body, mind and spirit must be aligned in a state of presence within stillness. This can be done intentionally, and it also occurs without strategic intent –

either way, presence in stillness is the key. One of Poincaré's mathematical breakthroughs came when he was stepping aboard a bus: "At the moment when I put my foot on the step the idea came to me, without anything in my former thoughts seeming to have paved the way for it". Archimedes was having a bath when his Eureka moment arrived; Newton was sitting under a tree when his apple fell.

The intentional approach to presence in stillness is simple, yet not easy. How does one align body, mind and spirit? There is no one right approach, yet many approaches point the way. Alignment can be attained as a momentary state, or as a more permanent and all-encompassing stage. While the latter is a longer process, it also yields many more benefits. This is the focus of my company, miruspoint. In entering an aligned state, meditation/prayer is useful for some. For others, what works is following a path of subtraction: understand what is stopping you from being aligned, and dis-identify with that, until what remains is essence – the Self. Still, it's a vast field of possibility, with many approaches. Which is best? It depends on you. Whatever method enables you to come to a state of stillness will be useful. Once in stillness, listen from your heart, without entitled expectation. Again, this is simple yet not easy. Often, the inquiry/questions that we wrestle with for long periods of time are the ones that matter most to us. And as we are strongly identified with our minds, it seems paradoxical that we must let go of our mind to move beyond it to find the solution. In essence, we must abandon the search fully, as if any hope of finding a solution had finally dimmed into darkness. The experienced bird-watcher (who is practiced at waiting in stillness) knows that the best that can be done is to be prepared for a desired bird to appear. The bird can be called and yearned for, but not bidden into view.

Explore the edges of your knowledge – feel the texture of your being as you approach those limits. Then, rather than trying harder, or going laterally, surrender to the abyss of what you do not know, and abide (at least momentarily) in the vastness and emptiness of not knowing. Be an explorer of this yawning chasm. Simply notice what your mind/feeling system does (if anything). Are you plunged back into repetitive thoughts about what you already know? Do you become afraid? Do you submit by imagining what the chasm is like (rather than actually being in the chasm)? Do you rebel and claim that the exercise is silly and useless? Few of us willingly embrace not knowing and stillness and emptiness – it is antithetical to an egoic identity. And yet, if we do, CBT may arise thrillingly as the product of the dynamic interplay between mind and no-mind. The trick is to let go of the mind so that we can match resonant frequencies with the Field...Practice will help immeasurably. Think of yourself as the lookout on the crow's nest of a ship – you must be alert and present at the post to be able to spot distant shores.

So you must drop the mind and seeking altogether and sink into the Self – beyond your assumptions of who you have thought, felt and believed yourself to be. Stand prior to all this in formless essence, in your heart and in the heart of all – with no shred of a doubt that CBT is available. Once in this Field awareness of already-always, *listen in the stillness to that which wants to emerge*. The prevailing attitude is one of exploration into experience rather than attainment through thought. How does one reconcile listening “without entitled expectation” with having a certain belief that CBT is available? George Fox, the founder of the Quaker movement, put it this way: “Wait without doubt”. This is a garden in which CBT flowers.

And there are no guarantees.

CBT cannot be commanded to arise. As it arises from the mystery of the Field, it manifests in unpredictable and mysterious ways. As Paul Tillich said in his sermon on Grace and Acceptance: “It happens; or it does not happen. And certainly it does not happen if we try to force it upon ourselves, just as it shall not happen so long as we think, in our self complacency, that we have no need of it.” The arising of CBT is therefore stochastic – apparently random, but purposeful.

Stage 4: Receive a CBT moment of insight (if one is granted)

If the preconditions have been met and fate smiles upon you, then CBT arises. Think of the time(s) you have experienced it. Usually, it is such an extraordinary moment that we remember details about it – not just what the idea was, but where we were, what we were doing, the smell in the air, etc. This is because we were fully present at the time. Notice if you were actively mentating on a solution, or if your mind was momentarily at rest. Many report a “distorted” perception of time, as if they were in slow-motion. This is because “no-time” is a feature of profound presence. There is often an accompanying sense of deep peace and elation or joy – other features of presence within stillness. Other frequent features of CBT include simplicity and a (seemingly paradoxical) admixture of obviousness and strangeness, as in “I didn’t believe I could have thought of that, but now that I have – of course!”.

CBT is therefore “outside the system” (again with Einstein: “Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them”). As such, it provides illumination that is

unfettered by conditioning or assumptions (except in the process of “unpacking” the idea, Stage 5). It is another dimension –depth – to be plumbed within the system thinker. If lateral and divergent thinking is the egoic tool of choice for creativity and innovation, then CBT is its trans-egoic complement.

Stage 5: Decode/unpack the insight

When a CBT moment does occur and illuminates or conceptually solves a problem, then what? It can be unpacked and made concrete by the mind. As the CBT insight is first perceived by the right hemisphere of the brain (details below), it is manifested metaphorically/symbolically as a whole concept. The left, analytical hemisphere needs to then articulate it into language and concepts suitable for dissemination. Many have required as much or more time to competently articulate the CBT insight as it took them to perform all of the research that originally took them to the edge of their knowledge, prior to illumination.

Meanwhile, Back in the Brain

The five-step process described above can be tracked physiologically. Joseph Chilton Pearce describes it as follows:

“[Step 1, topic & question] has its origin in the novelty impulse of the left hemisphere – prefrontal connection. This circuit is then sparked by the passion of the right hemisphere and its connection to the emotional-limbic brain, which is itself the connection to the heart. Through the fronto-orbital loop, the prefrontals connect to the limbic and heart as well as the neocortex. The heart’s EMF functions

holographically with all the fields of potential and draws on materials from them, the body of universal knowledge [the Field]. When [Step 4, CBT] forms, that energy follows or retraces the same neural route the seminal question and search originally followed, through the limbic-prefrontals into the right hemisphere. The holistic right hemisphere can't feed the material to the left in the neat, digital, linear style of left brain thinking, but only as that singular whole knowing by which the right hemisphere functions. [The CBT] traverses the corpus callosum to the left hemisphere, literally a discharge of energy from the creative to the analytical structures of the mind. This whole knowing appears to the left's digital process as a lightning bolt gestalt of metaphoric and symbolic form.”

As Pearce describes above, the moment of apprehension of CBT occurs in the right hemisphere. In studies, physiologists (John Kounios of Drexel University, and Mark Jung-Beeman of Northwestern University) have studied the firing patterns of various regions of the brain during “a-ha” moments, and it turns out they are qualitatively different than during the course of problem-solving that did not involve insight. Studies using FMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) and EEG (electroencephalogram) show increased activity in part of the brain's right temporal lobe; specifically, the anterior portion of the superior temporal gyrus (STG), associated with conceptual processing. The STG is not active in a standout manner in the course of methodical problem-solving activity. This is not to say that the STG is the cause of the insight, but rather, that it is associated with it.

The Tennis Dance

Like a friendly tennis exchange, each player (mind and Field) has a role to play. The mind works to the edge of its knowledge (Stage 2), then surrenders the ball to the Field, which may yield the ball back in the form of a CBT insight (Stage 4) for the mind to then take up and midwife into manifest reality (Stage 4). Perspiration (Stages 3 and 4) precedes inspiration (Stage 4), and follows it (Stage 5). CBT and mind are thus complementary partners in the process of breakthrough idea-ing.

If we are to solve the urgent global problems we face in this generation, Creativity put to noble use is essential. Since the mind is the decoder of CBT, and since our minds are capable of applying ideas to good or evil uses (remember Oppenheimer upon the first nuclear explosion: “Now we know evil”), let us resolve to tap into this wellspring of Creativity, with good intent to leave our planet as a living legacy of our ability to clean up our own messes through the right use of our open hearts and minds in partnership with the Field. The passion involved in pursuing answers needs to be transformed to purposeful action through the Field. As Meister Eckhart put it, “Creator and created giving rise to each other”.

Andrew N. Johnson – Biography

Andrew Johnson brings a rich history in facilitation, coaching, training, economics and national politics to his role as founding partner of miruspoint Facilitators Inc. His articulate insight, passion for individual transcendence and strategic execution of change processes have helped shape miruspoint's remarkable development as a force in the world of transpersonal psychology and evolution.

Andrew graduated with Honours in Economics from Carleton University and worked on Parliament Hill as a Committee Officer, notably on the Meech Lake Accord, and later as Assistant to the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. As the Vice President for an economic consulting firm, he authored policy papers for the Canadian and foreign governments. In the early 1990s he launched Andrew Johnson Associates Inc. which specializes in partnering, team building, strategic planning, executive coaching, organizational management and facilitation. His clients range from the municipal, provincial and federal governments to major construction and design, oil and gas, and forestry and transportation industries as well as small businesses. Andrew's exceptional work in these varied sectors has garnered him a reputation for applying creative approaches to understanding people, conscientious attention to detail as well as commitment to win/win outcomes in both career and personal paths.

Andrew's joyous life with his wife, Nancy, and their daughter, Gemma, inform and illuminate his perpetual curiosity about how to live with greater congruence, compassion and freedom.

*"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."*

– T.S. Eliot